I. Meeting Call to Order

After confirming a quorum present, the meeting was called to order by Acting Chair, Shane Sharp at 12:31 p.m.

II. Adoption of Agenda

Strid moved to adopt agenda, seconded by Myles. Motion to adopt was APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. Approval of Minutes from 2022.09.15

Sharp confirmed that the minutes of the 2022.09.15 meeting had already been approved by electronic voting and the approved minutes were distributed to the membership in advance of this meeting.

IV. Announcements

There were no announcements.

V. Discussion Agenda

Sharp called for a motion to discuss and vote on Section V.A.1 of the agenda, a single item from CLAS. Strid moved approval, seconded by Myles. After brief discussion and clarification, the vote was called and item V.A.1 from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, CLAS22.23.02.09, was APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.
A. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

CLAS 02 (AY 2022-2023)
• CLAS22.23.02.09 / OCC Gen Ed Requirements updates. Revising title of COMS 36 and deleting HIST 386.

VI. Old Business

A. It was noted that the general education syllabus statement that GEC passed on 03.24.2022 has been included on the BC agenda for November 10, 2022. Sharp noted that BC may pass the statement back to GEC for revisions or questions or may simply approve. After the GEC acts, Sharp noted that it may need to go before the Faculty Senate for final approval.

B. Continuing discussion on 300/400 level courses and PRQ/CRQ courses. Spring 2022 General Education Excel with PRQ data included is available in Teams. This item had been tabled from 03.24.2022 meeting. Sharp opened the discussion by noting that there are two aspects to this discussion – the course level and the PRQ/CRQs required for a course. He pointed out that technically there can be 300- and 400-level courses without PRQs, such as the Honors courses that we do as general education requirements. Sharp observed that those are all 300- or higher-level courses and have no PRQs other than being an Honors student. If the GEC chose to remove 300- and 400- level courses from general education, Honors would either have to change their numbering or not have their Honors courses eligible for general education. Sharp also noted that there are many 100- and 200-level courses that have PRQs or CRQs, and asked how the membership wanted to proceed – leave things as they are; delete all 300- and 400-level courses from general education program; or disallow PRQs or CRQs from general education courses. Sharp invited discussion from the floor.

Ghrayeb noted that this is good discussion, and he is leaning towards focusing the discussion on the pre-requisite/co-requisite more than the course level. If there is a course at 300- or 400-level that has no PRQ and students can take it, if it is open to all majors, and it counts as general education, that is good for those students and good for that department that offers that course. That course naturally can double-dip in certain majors, counting toward free electives for that major as well as general education, which is great. But the problem is with the PRQs.

Just to give the GEC some background, Ghrayeb noted, there was a reason why, a few years back, when they revised general education that they allowed for certain courses with PRQs like physics and chemistry to count as general education because it was a compromise to allow certain majors to use required courses to count toward general education. Ghrayeb observed that it will not be as easy as the GEC simply deciding on this issue and implementing it.
Sharp noted that the issue of 300- and 400-level courses and the PRQ issue is very tied to the Pathways issue because many of the Pathways have courses that are 300- and 400-level and have PRQs. Sharp explained that he believes before GEC can try to do anything on this issue, we need to know the status of the Pathways proposal and what is going to go forward.

Myles asked if there is a problem that GEC is trying to fix by looking at the course levels and PRQs of general education courses. Is there something happening that says we need to no longer allow courses that have PRQs to be general education courses?

Sharp responded that in his view, people overthought general education and tried to make it too fancy with the Pathways, and it has led to huge confusion with the students. He pointed out that there is also a philosophical issue surrounding general education. Should a general education course be something that anybody could take? If it does have a prerequisite, does that negate the philosophy or spirit of general education? Does it stop being general education if you need to have a prerequisite to take the course? That is something that we can discuss.

Ghrayeb agreed with Sharp that the conversation should focus on discussing and making a recommendation on whether a general education course – doesn’t matter what level it is at – should have prerequisites. If it is 300- or 400-level, has no prerequisite or corequisite, and it fulfills the general education outcomes, let it be. But courses that have prerequisites, whether 200-, 300-, or 400-level, Ghrayeb notes, those should not be general education because that requires students, to be able to take that course to have to take the PRQ, and that might add additional requirements for certain majors. Maybe it serves the students within those majors, but other students will not be able to take it. An example is physics or chemistry. If a student has to take physics or chemistry because it is required for that major, and it counts as general education, that student is happy. But why should it count as general education when a majority of students cannot take it?

Sharp reiterated that the issue of getting rid of 300- and 400-level courses with PRQs from general education is very much tied to the Pathways, and as long as those Pathways remain, those courses have to remain. Sharp pointed out a couple of examples of such courses.

Ghrayeb noted that regarding the Pathways, the Provost’s Office is in the process of hiring an Assistant Vice Provost for Assessment and General Education. There is a lack of bandwidth in his office, Ghrayeb explained, and once that position is filled there will be extra help to tackle the Pathways. With the GEC recommendation we are going to reduce the number of Pathways from seven to three and improve those three. One of the reasons the Pathway did not work out, even the popular ones, was because of the type of courses. Even with all the benefits of having a Pathway on the transcript, a student may not want to take an additional course just to get the Pathway. So even within the Pathway, we should
have enough course options for students without prerequisites.

Ghrayeb further explained that for those courses that are general education with PRQs, there are deeper reasons why that was allowed. It allowed certain majors to kind of double-dip general education and major requirements. Ghrayeb noted he was not part of that discussion and did not know the rationale behind that thinking. But a course with a prerequisite helps students in that major, and does not help students outside that major, whether it is part of a Pathway or not.

Estes noted that thinking that it would only help students in one major may or may not be true. He observed that with the changes being discussed, he sees a situation being created where hundreds of biology, chemistry, and physics majors, and perhaps a few others, are likely going to be disadvantaged. They are not the majority, because the majority of our students are not those particular majors, but they are going to be making requests and asking why these courses don’t fit the nature and technology knowledge domain if we forbid, say, a physics class from counting, and it clearly meets the spirit of nature and technology, which is why it was approved in the first place.

As far as non-majors, Estes shared that in a recent discussion with the advising directors, the point was raised that it may allow students to create their own “pathway” right through the gen eds. For example, a political science major has some interest in psychology, and they take PSYC 102, which does not have a PRQ. Then they take PSY 225, which has the PSCY 102 PRQ, or they take EPS 300, which also has a PSYC 102 PRQ. Estes asked if perhaps that isn’t something the GEC cares about, and maybe would rather have students sprinkle their gen eds around between different types of departments where a second course wouldn’t necessarily come after an intro course for Gen Ed. Estes explained that he is really concerned about the idea of chemistry and physics courses in particular being pulled from Gen Ed.

Sharp explained that PHYS 101 wouldn’t be pulled from the gen eds, but PHYS 102 perhaps would because you don’t need a PRQ to take Intro to Physics 1 but you would need that for Physics 2. He noted that he didn’t think the discussion was about pulling all those science courses, just the ones that would have a PRQ.

Ghrayeb noted that he had just used physics and chemistry as an example, and that we have more courses than those that have a prerequisite. We saw that this semester as we were observing the enrollment in general education courses to make sure that we had enough seats for freshmen, and we still had hundreds of seats available, but advisors could not find seats for their students. When we looked at the number of seats available, they were available in courses that freshmen cannot take. When you dig deeper into these courses, you see physics and chemistry courses and other courses with prerequisites on that list.
Ghrayeb observed that Estes’ point about the psychology example is great if the data shows students are taking the intro class which is a gen ed and then taking higher level general education psychology courses because they did take PSYC 102. Ghrayeb noted, that is actually the whole idea behind creating Pathways to start with, but that did not launch. So as a concept, that is great – but are we doing that, or are our students taking advantage of that design?

Estes expressed that it’s a matter of creating opportunity. To Ghrayeb’s point about running out of classes when summer ends, there are freshmen who are eligible for PHYS 210, and CHEM 210, and PHYS 273. They come in with AP credit for math, they have high math placement, so they can do the corequisites. Granted at the end of summer those were classes that had some space in them and freshman who were coming in August weren’t prepared to ascend to. But if we pull those out, then we’re also going to have to replace with enough seats in something else for these chem and physics majors who walk in the door with the AP credit for the calculus and the high physics score and the ability to take the corequisite. We’re going to have to come up with seats for them in something else and recognize that we’re adding classes to their plan throughout their time here.

Sharp asked if it was policy that AP credits can’t count for general education. Estes responded that was not the case and most of them absolutely do count for gen ed. Estes noted that it depends on the combination. We might get a student who has credit for AP Calc and credit for AP Psych, so they get the PSYC 102 and MATH 229. But they want to major in chemistry or biology, and they need the chemistry or physics classes that have the PRQs, which currently count as Gen Ed. But they may not have the AP credit for chemistry and physics coming in the door. Some of those kinds of students have designs on graduating early, and this wouldn’t feed their path to do that.

Estes and Sharp discussed the number of hours required for general education, the number of hours required for most majors, and the hours that majors require outside of the major. Sharp observed that some of those courses required outside of the major may count as general education. Estes agreed that they currently do, but under the policy being discussed, some may no longer count as gen eds.

Estes expressed that he does not understand why, if we have too few gen ed classes with available seats at the end of summer, that we would take options away from freshman who are already inhabiting those classes. He noted again that these students are not the majority, but it is not going to make it easier in terms of providing additional options. He re-affirmed that the policy under discussion will add some classes to some students’ schedules. He also noted that it is very common for a biology major to want to minor in chemistry, of a physics major to want to minor in math. If we put a few of these additional barriers in the way by taking away the opportunity to count the physics and chemistry classes as general
education courses, we're limiting the chances that they can pick up that second credential.

Myles noted that this brings the discussion back to her earlier question, what are we trying to fix? By doing this, Myles noted, it feels like we are taking options away rather than creating a richer environment for students.

Strid commented that these are difficult choices to weigh. What is the purpose of general education? What do we expect of our students? What do we hope that they gain from general education? How much do we want it to tie into their program already or expect additional requirements from them? These are very difficult things to weigh. We need some kind of guidance of what the priorities are for general education at NIU, Strid observed, noting that that is what he sees is lacking in the current discussion.

Sharp observed that a part of the discussion was to get back to the spirit of general education, and that it is in service of helping students gain a true liberal arts education, to make them go outside of their major more. Maybe gen ed has sort of lost its way in that regard, Sharp noted.

Brown asked if we have an example of a student that did not get a good general education experience at NIU. Sharp noted that he didn’t know if we had any examples but was simply summarizing what the spirit of this conversation was meant to be.

Ghrayeb observed that this was a great discussion to start, but maybe it is not ripe enough to make a decision or a recommendation. This discussion is within the context of the work that the GEC did last year when we looked at the general education learning outcomes. At that time, we realized that there was no intentionality; in other words, all courses and their different knowledge domains can map to the same outcomes. So you might find two courses in two different knowledge domains, but they map to the same outcomes. That’s why assessment was simply collecting data and that data does not translate into information to give meaningful feedback to the programs. The GEC started with each knowledge domain and identified three outcomes that relate to each knowledge domain. For a course to be in a given knowledge domain, it has to meet one required outcome, and the second outcome can be one of the other two. That way, courses in each knowledge domain have a unique identity.

Within that context, Ghrayeb noted, this item arose. What about courses that are 300- and 400-level? Do they really fit within this new direction or new understanding of our general education? So now it is healthy to start thinking about 300- and 400-level courses, and courses with PRQ. The picture will become even more clear once we go through the exercise of asking departments to review their general education courses and identify what learning outcomes each course is supporting; whether a given course is in the right knowledge domain or not; and if they want to keep it in that
knowledge domain or change the knowledge domain based on what outcomes a course is serving.

Ghrayeb observed that, as Estes had noted, if certain courses are meeting the requirement of a knowledge domain, they can be in that knowledge domain. But the thing that the GEC focused on last year was that we want the general education to be intentional – a program, rather than being counted as a list of requirements that you just have to check off without specific outcomes that we want them to attain. So that is the context of this discussion. Ghrayeb clarified that he is not asking for GEC to make a recommendation to delete all these courses. It is an agenda item for GEC to discuss what they think about gen ed courses with prerequisites.

Referring to Myles’ question, what are we trying to fix? Ghrayeb noted that if there’s nothing broken to fix, great – let’s not fix something that is working. And then the question is, is it working? In other words, students who double count courses, do they get enough liberal education to meet the requirement of general education? These are the basic questions we need to ask, and if the answer is yes, great. If the answer is no, how can we fix it?

Myles noted that having the departments go through their gen ed courses maybe is step one, observing that there are gen ed courses that haven’t been offered for several years. Students see the course in the catalog and get excited and want to take it and can’t because we aren’t offering it. She recalled that we have talked before about whether our Gen Ed is too big, do we need to shrink it down, are there just too many options? Myles shared that she would rather approach the issue from the perspective of what courses actually satisfy the Gen Ed that we want to satisfy and see what happens in the fallout before we talk about whether a gen ed course can have a PRQ or not.

Liu observed that there are two sides of the story. Students will choose to maybe double count on general education credit. There might well be students who have the mindset that this is my major, I just want to focus on all the major relevant topics – I don’t want to explore my learning passes into other domains. But also at the same time, we want students to open their mind and explore different topics. To address this issue, Liu feels that GEC should consider adding a requirement that says for any students completing the general education requirement to not just count the credit hours, but also count how many credit hours a student has completed outside of their major. We can decide how many credit hours we think would be appropriate for students to meet this requirement, but this would still leave the possibility for students who want to use the credit toward completion of their major requirements. But also at the same time, motivate them to explore other fields or disciplines as we hope they would do. All students must complete, for example, six hours outside of your selected or declared major to meet the general education requirements. Or we can make it even more general. Instead of students defining their major this early, because we have students who are undecided, we can say they should take at least three or six credit hours outside of their college they
are currently enrolled in.

Ghrayeb noted that given the majority of general education courses are offered by Liberal Arts & Sciences, that would be a problem for Liberal Arts & Sciences. He pointed out that when he taught in the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology, engineering students could not enroll in general education courses within engineering. We do have some restrictions in certain general education courses, like the survey of manufacturing course that is intended for non-engineering majors and PHYS 150 that is for non-physics majors.

Myles pointed out that prior to this iteration of general education, there was language in the requirements about how many gen ed courses you could count from your home department. Estes also recalled when students could not count any courses from their major area toward general education. He observed that that kind of rule does not necessarily hurt the students he has been defending with his focus on chemistry and physics. Estes explained that he is focusing on CHEM and PHYS because he believes a chemistry major should be able to count the physics classes that are required of them toward the knowledge domain, and vice versa, so he wouldn’t have a major problem going back to that earlier iteration of not allowing gen ed courses from your home department.

Sharp posed the question, could this issue be solved by basically not allowing students to count gen eds from their majors? Myles observed that if the issue that is of concern is prerequisites, that change does not solve that concern.

Ghrayeb suggested that, as Myles said earlier, maybe this discussion becomes clearer once we go through the exercise of the departments evaluating their general education courses with respect to the new requirements in terms of outcomes. He noted that he expects some shift in where courses are located within the knowledge domains. Some departments might have chosen certain knowledge domains, and after they look at the required outcomes, they decide this course does not belong to this knowledge domain, it belongs to another knowledge domain. So maybe once we do that and have a clean list of viable general education courses that meet the spirit of the General Education program, we can look and evaluate whether we need more policies or not.

Myles asked if departments are wanting to pull classes or move them into a different domain, do they have to go through approval in some way through GEC, or are we just trying to get the courses in shape so that anything that’s on the list, departments can do their own thing? Ghrayeb explained that there’s a form that will be shared, and the form has to be filled with justification, and then it will come back to GEC. It is not so much a question of approving, but this committee oversees General Education, so will need to know what departments are saying about their courses. The approval is kind of automatic unless something stands out or does not comply with what GEC is intending to do.
Myles asked for clarification as to whether GEC will be re-evaluating any courses that are on the list. Ghrayeb noted that as long as the departments identify the knowledge domain and the two outcomes that the course is meeting or supporting, he thinks that is good enough for now. When the real evaluation comes is after they’ve been updated and are subject to assessment. That is why he needs the Assistant Vice Provost for Assessment and Accreditation to be in place to help with this process.

Sharp observed that we might need to table this discussion until that person is in place. Ghrayeb stated that he would recommend that. Sharp asked if it would be helpful to pull the transcripts of 50 randomly selected recent graduates to look at the Gen Eds that they completed and see what learning outcomes they achieved while they were at NIU – were they heavy on one side or the other, did they get a good distribution of learning outcomes through what we already have? Ghrayeb noted that the requirements guarantee that. We have three knowledge domains, and each student must take a minimum of two courses in each knowledge domain. That’s six courses, and then one course can be in any knowledge domain, for a total of seven courses of general education.

In terms of counting, Ghrayeb explained that yes, those graduates did that balanced learning. That’s the reason behind all the work the GEC did last year. But did these two courses in each knowledge domain support the intended learning outcomes of that knowledge domain? That was not clear because there was no assessment of these courses. Some of these courses were submitted or approved or added to the catalog so many years ago. Even the people who teach them don’t know the general education learning outcomes they had intended the course to help students attain when they submitted them many years ago. Some faculty members don’t even know the course they teach is general education. So, in reality, it’s difficult to answer your question as to whether students attained the intended learning outcomes of the General Education program. Once the review is completed, we will know if a course is in a given knowledge domain, then that course supports two outcomes – one outcome is required to make that course unique in that knowledge domain.

Sharp observed that is seems the bigger issue is not prerequisites or corequisites, it is if the course is fulfilling a knowledge domain that it is supposed to be fulfilling. Ghrayeb responded that yes, it is whether students are gaining the intended learning outcomes or not. With what the GEC did, that guarantees that because if a department says my course is in nature and technology, and these are the outcomes my course supports, then when we do the assessment and the assessment data collected shows that students are attaining these outcomes, then we will know if students are attaining the General Education outcomes – which are part of the regulatory outcomes.

Sharp suggested that the discussion of PRQs and CRQs in general education courses be tabled until we get the finalization of the data,
because that will tell us whether we need to do something about PRQs. If students are achieving the intended learning outcomes that they need to, then perhaps we don’t need to fix what isn’t broke. Ghrayeb agreed, suggesting that we wait and see how many of the 300- and 400-level courses or ones with prerequisites pass the test – in other words, they truly support the learning in the knowledge domains. Maybe some of them, the department realizes that no, their course is deeper than that and so it should not be part of the general education program, so they may self-select to not include their course.

C. Update on Pathways proposal – next steps. Ghrayeb summarized that we currently have seven Pathways, and GEC did some great work last year. They came up with two recommendations. The first was to just delete all the Pathways because not many students are taking advantage of the Pathways. The second recommendation was to reduce the Pathways from seven to three and improve how those three are or can be fulfilled. Ghrayeb shared that he talked to the Provost, and the feedback from the Deans and Associate/Curricular Deans, and everyone is leaning toward, or wanting to keep, some of the Pathways. So, we are going to go with that recommendation from the GEC. Ghrayeb noted again that his office lacks the bandwidth to execute, so one we have the new officer in place, we will execute as part of the overall review of the General Education program.

VII. New Business

A. Sharp provided an overview of the new General Education framework with the three knowledge domains, a fixed primary outcome, and one other selected from two identified outcomes. He suggested that the discussion on developing a plan and process to communicate changes to the General Education Curriculum, including if an assessment subcommittee is needed, be postponed until the next meeting. Ghrayeb agreed, noting that this work has to be completed this year, at least the communication to start the process, because it is critical to our HLC accreditation.

VIII. Next meeting of GEC will be November 17, 2022

IX. Adjournment

Myles moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Strid. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 1:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol McFarland McKee
Curriculum Coordinator/Catalog Editor
AGENDA

General Education Committee Meeting
Second Meeting/Academic Year 2022-2023
Virtual on Teams
12:30 – 3:00 p.m., Thursday, October 20, 2022

I. Meeting Call to Order by Chair, Alicia Schatteman

II. Adoption of Agenda

III. Approval of Minutes from 2022.09.15

IV. Announcements

V. Discussion Agenda

   A. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

      CLAS 02 (AY 2022-2023)
      • CLAS22.23.02.09 / OCC Gen Ed Requirements updates. Revising title
        of COMS 36 and deleting HIST 386.

VI. Old Business

   A. The syllabus statement that GEC passed on 03.24.2022 has been included
      on the BC agenda for November 10, 2022.

   B. Continuing discussion on 300/400 level courses and PRQ/CRQ courses.
      Spring 2022 General Education Excel with PRQ data included is available
      in Teams. Item was tabled from 03.24.2022 meeting.

   C. Update on Pathways proposal – next steps.

VII. New Business

   A. Discuss developing a plan and process to communicate changes to the
      General Education Curriculum, including if an assessment subcommittee
      is needed.

VIII. Next meeting of GEC will be November 17, 2022

IX. Adjournment
General Education Requirements

Knowledge Domain Requirements and Course Descriptions

Creativity and Critical Analysis Course Descriptions
- ANTH 102 - Temples and Tombs: Rise of Civilization Credits: 3
- COMS 310 - Advocacy and Critical Thinking Credits: 3
- COMS 356 - Critical Interpretation of Film, Television Media Analysis Credits: 3
- COMS 480 - Communication and Conflict Management Credits: 3
- WGSS 202 - Women and Cultural Expression Credits: 3
  WGSS 202 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.

Nature and Technology Course Descriptions

Society and Culture Course Descriptions
- ANTH 104 - Anthropology of Pop Culture: Making the Familiar Strange Credits: 3
- HIST 382 - Modern Latin America Credits: 3
  HIST 382 is a writing infused course.
  HIST 382 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.
- HIST 386 - History of Human Rights Credits: 3
  HIST 386 is a writing infused course.
- HIST 388 - The Cuban Revolution and Its Legacy Credits: 3
  HIST 388 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.
- WGSS 350 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Credits: 3
  WGSS 350 is a writing infused course.
WGSS 350 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.

Pathways
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Health and Wellness
↓
Select one of the following Society and Culture courses:
- ANTH 465 - Medical Anthropology Credits: 3
- HDFS 280 - Human Development, the Family, and Society Credits: 3
- HIST 361 - History of Health and Medicine in the United States Credits: 3
  HIST 361 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.
- HIST 386 - History of Human Rights Credits: 3
- KNPE 111 - Sport: Culture and Society Credits: 3
  KNPE 111 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.
  ↓
- SEVI 205 - The Blindness Experience Credits: 3
  SEVI 205 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.

Learning
↓
Select one of the following Creativity and Critical Analysis courses:
- COMS 356 - Critical Interpretation of Film/Television Media Analysis Credits: 3
- EPFE 400 - Foundations of Education Credits: 3
- EPS 300 - Educational Psychology Credits: 3

Select one of the following Nature and Technology courses:
↓

Rationale: Revision to the title of COMS 356 and deletion of HIST 386.
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

ALL UNIVERSITY SECTION

Other Catalog Change  CLAS22.23.02.09U  2022-23 Undergraduate Catalog  LINK

General Education Requirements
↓
Knowledge Domain Requirements and Course Descriptions
↓
Knowledge Domain Course Descriptions

Creativity and Critical Analysis Course Descriptions
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  WGSS 202 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.

Nature and Technology Course Descriptions
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- ANTH 104 - Anthropology of Pop Culture: Making the Familiar Strange Credits: 3
- HIST 382 - Modern Latin America Credits: 3
  HIST 382 is a writing infused course.
  HIST 382 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.
- HIST 386 - History of Human Rights Credits: 3
  HIST 386 is a writing infused course.
- HIST 388 - The Cuban Revolution and Its Legacy Credits: 3
  HIST 388 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.
- WGSS 350 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Credits: 3
  WGSS 350 is a writing infused course.
WGSS 350 also fulfills the Human Diversity Requirement.

Pathways
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Health and Wellness
↓
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↓

Rationale: Revision to the title of COMS 356 and deletion of HIST 386.