Activities defined, and expectations for faculty and students. . . Expectations and evaluation of student reading, study and learning, and Access to and Pursuit of Required and Recommended Readings

Development of WISR's Course Syllabi

Each course syllabus at WISR is designed by one or more faculty members, and then once in use, each syllabus is continually reviewed by WISR faculty. The review of syllabi draws on the breadth and depth of WISR faculty's collective expertise, as well as feedback from students and faculty observations of the effectiveness of each syllabus in contributing to student learning.

The Central Ingredients of Each Syllabus

Each syllabus includes a course description; the learning objectives for the degree program for which the course has been designed; the learning objectives for the specific course; a list of reading requirements, recommendations and options; some reflective writing assignments that are designed to help students think critically and imaginatively about the readings and some of the ways in which their insights from the readings might be used; and provision and expectations for a major action and/or research project, culminating in a written paper, that the student designs with faculty help.

Activities Common to Most WISR Courses

Students meet regularly (face to face, by phone or video conference), typically twice each month, with one or several WISR faculty, on a one-on-one basis. During the majority of the period of time during which they are enrolled, students are expected to participate in two seminar sessions each month, either on site or by video/tele-conference. Faculty encourage and support student efforts to collaborate with one another in their studies and coursework, and students wishing to engage in serious and formal collaborative efforts are asked to meet together with a faculty member to help them plan out the details of their collaboration. Informal collaboration is always encouraged, so long as each student involved contributes significantly to the collaboration, rather than one person doing most of the work.

The readings and the reflective written assignments represent about 30% of each course. The major project for each course constitutes approximately 70% of the course. That action and/or research project is designed by the student, in consultation with a faculty member, so that the student can use the course content and learning to pursue in greater depth one or more of his or her interests, while also fulfilling course learning objectives. The project culminates in a paper, with the faculty member reading a draft of the paper, making some suggestions for revision, followed by what is typically a modest rewriting of the paper and the student's submission of a final version of the paper. At the end of the course, the student uses WISR's Student Self-Assessment Form to describe the main learning activities that he or she did during the course, and then to self-assess and discuss in some detail the ways in which she or he most benefited from the course—especially in terms of the degree program's

objectives, the course's learning objectives, and WISR's meta-competencies (the areas in which all WISR students are expected to grow and learn during the course of their studies).

The Major Project for Each Course

Students will design, with the guidance, support and approval of a WISR faculty member, their major project for each course. These form of these projects may vary considerably—some may be based primarily on library research, but most will involve a modest, or a significant, amount of practical work, exploratory and/or innovative action, and/or action-inquiry. Some students may initiate important interventions in their workplace, profession or community. Some students may seek insights and information by interviewing others to learn about the interviewees' ideas and experiences. Students may often reflect on their own experiences and write about the insights and questions gained from their own "life stories." Students can also pursue multimedia projects—making videos, audio recordings, or websites that are instructive for others. This could include the student demonstrating to others some skill or competency, or conducting an educational training session, among other options. (Even art work and creative writing are possibilities!) In any case, every project culminates in a written paper. The form, content and length of that paper are discussed with the faculty advisor, who ultimately approves the design of the project and the completed projct. The project design may be very detailed and formalized, or more informal—depending on what the faculty and student involved think will best serve the student's needs and purposes. In any case, it is expected that most project plans will change and be refined once the student is in the midst of working on the project.

Access to Course Readings and Other Library Resources

WISR has purchased, and has on reserve in its library, almost all of the books required and recommended for each course. Students may check out these books that are on reserve for one week at a time, subject to renewal for a second and then a third week, unless another student has requested access to the book. Students outside the area must generally plan on spending about $50/course to purchase several required and recommended books. If WISR does not have a required or recommended reading in its library, then the student may ask us to consider buying the book back for half price once they are finished reading the book.

WISR *expects* all California residents to obtain a San Francisco Public Library card as a way to access some excellent collections of online journals and other books, if for no other reason than the access *from your home, place of work, or anywhere with internet access,* that that card provides to EBSCO journal articles. All California residents can obtain a free library card from the San Francisco Public Library with proof of California residence (e.g., Driver's License; San Francisco Residence not required). This Library Card provides the student with their own account# so that they can access (for free!) a variety of excellent online academic databases from any location (home, work, anywhere).

Also, students may wish to consider purchasing a monthly subscription to www.scribd.com –for $9/month you can have access to thousands of books and articles online. You try it out for 30 days and then cancel at any time. ScribD is for book readers what Netflix is for those who watch a lot of videos.

WISR has purchased access to a very good online library of journals, magazines and other databases through the Library Information and Resource Network (LIRN). **You can access the LIRN database and begin to use it by going to: www.lirn.net/services and enter WISR's ID: [this can be obtained by contacting WISR's President: johnb@wisr.edu or WISR's librarian: librarian@wisr.edu]**
By the terms of our contract with LIRN, we are not permitted to share our ID# with those who are not currently enrolled students or faculty at WISR.

Students are also given access to the entire reading list of all books required or recommended for every course at WISR. We do this because students may find on the list some valuable books that are not on the "required/recommended options" list for the course in which they are enrolled. There are overlapping themes among the content involved with WISR courses in all degree programs—most notably, action-research, social change theories and strategies, multiculturalism, leadership theory and practice, writing clearly in one's own voice, building bridges to one's future and career, current issues in education and in society, critical analysis in writing and reading history, the importance of science and technology in today's society, expert and creative professionalism, and community and civic involvement. **Students may find that some books on WISR's comprehensive list that are not required or recommended for a particular course, but that are required or recommended for another course and may still be of use in a course for which they are not specifically recommended or required.**

To obtain assistance in identifying and accessing other books and articles for further research during this course, whether through WISR's library, or other nearby libraries, you may consult with your WISR faculty advisor(s) and the WISR librarian (librarian@wisr.edu).

Pursuit of Required and Recommended Course Readings

Most courses are designed to give students some reading options from which to choose. It is the experience of WISR faculty that content can be covered in many ways, and course readings have been selected based on the following criteria: 1) quality—based on assessments of WISR faculty, and in many cases based on reviews of others in the field and/or laypeople interested in the particular area; 2) relevance to the course's learning objectives in particular, as well as to the degree program's objectives and/or the development of WISR's stated meta-competencies; and 3) with a view to offering students some different choices—different content emphases (within the scope of the course) as well as some different styles of writing and perspective.

For some courses, there will be **readings that are "required"**—that is, readings that are very important and that should be read by all students, or at least some substantial portion of each of the required readings. For all courses, there will be some **"required options" with the idea that students will read substantial portions of two or three books from among the required options**. Finally, there will generally be quite few "recommended readings." **Students are expected to read portions of at least several of the recommended readings**. The designations "required" vs. "required option" vs. "recommended option" is our way suggesting to students a sort of hierarchy of priorities among the readings.

There are two websites that may be especially helpful to students in learning more about each of the required and recommended readings, so that students may make informed decisions about which books to read: www.goodreads.com and www.amazon.com Almost all books can be found by using the search function for each website, and then the student will find a summary of what the book is about, and in many cases, reviews of the book. And, students outside the Bay Area, who do not have easy access to WISR's library, will be able to order books through amazon.com

In addition, it is quite possible that students may have read one or two of the required options or recommended books for another WISR course they've previously taken. It is not uncommon for a reading to be used in several different WISR courses, given the overlapping content themes across the WISR curriculum. Students will not be discouraged from re-reading a book *and from studying the book in greater depth and from doing more intense and inquisitive reflection on the implications of a previously read book.* However, students cannot just say "I've read the book before" and not do any further study of it. Furthermore, WISR faculty encourage students to develop the skill of making judgements about which books to read in their entirety, when to read some parts of a book in great depth while just skimming other portions of the book, and when to use a book to get a general overview of its main points without spending a lot of time scrutinizing the book in detail. Students should read at least several books in each course in sufficient depth to understand each book's main perspective(s), and to be able to identify some of the books strengths, limitations and possible uses (to the student and/or others). Also, the student should read and understand some significant range of details articulated in the book—specific arguments, evidence cited, stories told, and/or examples and illustrations given.

For each course, the student is to discuss and negotiate, with the faculty member working with them on that course, what they are reading and why, which books are being given the greatest emphasis, and which books are being used but more as a supplementary reading and in less detail and studied with less intensity.

Faculty Written Evaluations of Student Learning and Work in Each Course

The faculty member with whom the student has worked most closely during the student's studies in a particular course will be responsible for granting credit for the student's work in the course, and for articulating the main reasons and evidence supporting their evaluation of the student's work. The faculty member's written evaluation of student learning should refer to at least several criteria from the course learning objectives, and from WISR's designated "meta-competencies" and the faculty member may also choose to refer to degree program learning objectives. If two faculty members worked closely with the student, they may choose to write a joint evaluation of the student's learning, or this task may be delegated to one faculty member. In exceptional cases, if a student believes their learning and work has not been fairly and accurately evaluated, they may request a "second opinion" from another faculty member who is qualified in the area of the course.

For Detailed Information about Each Degree Program and their Requirements:

BS in Community Leadership and Justice: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/bs-community-leadership-and-justice/

*MS in Education and Community Leadership, program track in Community Leadership and Justice: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/ms-community-leadership-and-justice/

*MS in Education and Community Leadership, program track in Education: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/ms-education/

*These two degree programs tracks are the result of our having merged two separate, but closely related degree programs in Fall 2015. The two program tracks will have the same objectives and course requirements as the previous two, separate degree programs, and as was the case before, there is about 50% overlap in the content and requirements of the two program tracks.

MS in Psychology/MFT (to academically qualify for MFT and LPCC licensure): http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/ma-program-for-mft-license/

EdD in Higher Education and Social Change: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/edd-program-in-higher-education-social-change/

Grading and Awarding Academic Credit: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/grading-and-awarding-academic-credit/

Meta-Competencies: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/grading-and-awarding-academic-credit/meta-competencies/

Required Seminar Participation and Annotated Bibliographies: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/required-seminar-participation-and-annotated-bibliographies/

Graduation Review Boards and Assessment of Student Progress: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page-2/graduation-review-boards-and-assessment-of-student-progress/

Learning the WISR Way: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page/learning-the-wisr-way/

Cooperation Betweeen Students: http://www.wisr.edu/academics/sample-page/cooperation-between-students/

Expectations of Students at Different Degree Levels

Faculty expectations for student learning—in their pursuit of readings, in the written reflections on their readings, and in their major project and paper for the course—vary from lower division undergraduate to upper division, to Master's programs, to Doctoral program. For lower division undergraduates, expectations focus on the student exploring the course content, particularly exploring the breadth of the content being studied, while also showing a strong engagement with the content, demonstrating curiosity and efforts to take a critically-minded and imaginative stance toward the content. Upper division students are expected to show some progress in identifying a few areas where they can delve into greater detail—areas where their understanding goes beyond what would be expected of a novice first exposed to the material. The upper division student should signs of becoming a self-directed learner who is in the process of developing at least some beginning signs of being an expert in at least part of the course's content. The Master's student is expected to demonstrate that they are becoming expert in most of the areas being studied for that course, so that by the end of their Master's studies, they will indeed be an expert in the areas they studied. Doctoral students are expected to not only be experts in the areas they study, they are expected to demonstrate that they are beginning to make some creative contributions, to at least some of the areas they are studying. They may be contributing to new knowledge in the field—be it ideas and theories, important new questions, recommended practice founded on some solid analysis, observation or practical experience, or even actually demonstrated new and valuable actions or practices. In each course, there should be at least some indication that they are building on what they learned in the course in ways that show that they are developing the ability to make such creative contributions.

Passing the Course

The faculty member evaluates the student's work and learning using the various criteria stated above. Given the high level of motivation evidenced by almost all WISR students, and given the productive mentoring by faculty of WISR students, it is extremely rare that a faculty member would grade an undergraduate's work lower than equivalent to a C, or a graduate student's work lower than a B—these are the two levels necessary for successfully passing a WISR course and receiving credit, even though at WISR, we are opposed to listing grades on transcripts. In those exceptionally rare cases where a faculty member believes that the student has not met these criteria, the student has an opportunity to repeat the course at a later date, or alternatively to make further improvements in the work submitted for the course, in order to attain the minimum acceptable grade. Although the above noted grade equivalents are necessary to get credit for a class, the student's transcript simply shows credit or no credit for the class, and the faculty member's in depth narrative comments about the student's work and learning are placed in the student's official learning portfolio. [further note: If the student eventually fails to pass a course and receives a "no credit" on their transcript, they must either re-take the course, or if it is not a required course, get the equivalent of an A in the necessary number of courses (and for the necessary number of units) to bring their equivalent grade point average up to a C average for undergraduate students, and a B average for graduate students).]