

Humanities *and* Social and Behavioral Sciences

Between them, these two areas cover Humanities and Social Sciences – the broad middle ground of what most educated people consider liberal learning. Taken together, these two areas have accounted for more than half of all course outlines submitted for GE credit in California. To ensure the breadth of learning expected of a baccalaureate degree, it is important that courses in these two areas be distinguished from each other:

Study in Humanities	Study in the Social Sciences
A personal and singular focus on the human condition: its limits, potential, and creative expressions	Uses social scientific techniques of experimentation and empirical evidence to explore human experiences
Relies on critical analysis of specific texts or works to support its claims	Focus on methodologies, examination of society, social scientific techniques
A pathway to a broader understanding of the human condition	Use empirical evidence to explore human experiences in civilizations, groups of people, social dynamics
Analysis and appreciation of works of philosophical, historical, literary, aesthetics, and cultural importance	Includes theoretical perspectives, methods of the discipline including quantitative and qualitative analysis

Although the areas are distinct, some disciplines such as Ethnic Studies may comprise significant coursework in both kinds of inquiry, and so count in both areas of general education.

The CSU and UC systems take their cues from the discipline and may categorize history in the humanities. However, if participating institutions submit a history course for approval in Area D/Area 4 Social Sciences and the course outline supports the designation, then that is where the course is approved.

History is among the hardest disciplines to categorize, by historians' own admission:

Since the 1980s, the discipline of history, which has always straddled the humanities and social sciences, has become more identified with the humanities.

Guiding Notes for General Education Course Review

Indeed, the American Historical Association has recently urged the National Research Council (NRC) to classify history with the humanities in its periodic ranking of departments. For the institutional purposes that motivate the NRC rankings (and the methodologies used for them), the formal shift in category makes sense. But this change of institutional location in the national organization of research should not be understood as an intellectual abandonment of the discipline's historical association with the social sciences. History should value and maintain its Janus-faced position in the world of scholarship—looking to both the humanities and the social sciences.

-- The Education of Historians for the Twenty-First Century
American Historical Association, 2004