

Methods of Inquiry Description and Format

Course Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will have:

1. demonstrated an understanding of how each of three different disciplinary methods of inquiry approached the selected course theme, and of the similarities and differences between them
2. articulated what specifically appealed or did not appeal to them about any of these particular approaches
3. reflected on what this tells them about themselves: their individual strengths and weaknesses, intellectual tendencies, curiosities, etc.

Description for *Bulletin*:

This variable topic course compares and contrasts the approach of three different disciplines to common theme. It asks students to reflect on what disciplinary methods they find most appealing or challenging, and why.

Rationale/Summary

A central feature of the Core education at Marquette is to provide students with a structured experience in which they can forge their own critical worldview in the complex multidisciplinary environment at Marquette and in terms of the fundamental values of a Catholic, Jesuit education.

The fourth Foundations course provides students with their first opportunity to engage a particular theme in an explicitly multidisciplinary setting, in advance of deeper multi- and interdisciplinary explorations in the Discovery tier. It builds on the skills of inquiry and communication developed in the first three Foundations courses in Philosophy, Theology, and Rhetoric, and follows the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm linking context, experience, reflection, and action.

Faculty from different departments and/or colleges pursue a given foundational theme drawn from documents such as the Marquette mission statement—e.g., social movements, global citizenship, justice, compassion, entrepreneurship, the environment, etc., according to the methods of their particular disciplines. Working as a team, three faculty members each rotate throughout a given group/class of approximately 100 students divided into three equal sections. Each faculty member presents an approximately 4-week module (eight class meetings) to each section, exploring how one would approach the course theme in light of their own area of inquiry. A common assignment at the end of each module asks students to identify that discipline's particular approach to the theme. A shared final assignment at the end of the course asks students to consolidate what they have learned about each discipline's approach, to reflect upon which ones they find more or less compelling and why, and to consider what this tells them about their own contexts and ways of thinking.

Activities, Assignments, and Modification Options:

Students will begin with their first assigned module's professor, with adequate time reserved in the first week for general introductions and explanation of the course format and expectations. The third module will end in the penultimate week of the semester to allow adequate time for discussion and preparation of the Final Reflection paper (see below).

Within each module, which establishes a specific disciplinary **Context**, students and professor will attend to:

Experience: How do the professor's and the student's own positions, world views, values, and prior experiences intersect with this discipline's approach to the theme? This implies short assignments or discussions that explicitly require students to reflect on what they bring to the table: their assumptions, fears, affinities, prior training, and any other experience with or thoughts about this discipline. Professors may likewise wish to share their own personal experiences that led them to this discipline.

Reflection: What specific questions does this discipline bring to the theme? What for this discipline counts as convincing evidence and persuasive argument in answering those questions? This implies discussion, short reflections, and other exercises designed to clarify the fundamental methods and approaches to the theme being employed within each module.

Action: How does this discipline pursue the questions it asks of this theme, in real and practical terms? This implies assignments that allow students to try out the methodology of the discipline in a way that is informative without being overwhelming. For instance, a history professor might have students analyze a primary document; a mathematician might have students consider an example of real-world statistics; a professor of literature might have students read and analyze a short story; an engineer might guide students through a simple demonstration of fluid hydrostatics, etc. The goal is not for students to master a skill, but to experiment with and better understand an approach by doing some kind of well-defined exercise that allows them to put what they've learned in the module into practice.

Students will remain with their third assigned module's professor for the final week to discuss and engage the shared Final Reflection Paper. In this Final Reflection Paper, students are asked to:

1. demonstrate an understanding of how each method of inquiry approached the course theme and of the similarities and differences between them
2. articulate what specifically appealed or did not appeal to them about any of these particular approaches
3. reflect on what this tells them about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, intellectual tendencies, curiosities, etc.

Professors are free to pursue the Context-Experience-Reflection-Action model within their module in whatever way they wish, with low-stakes assignments that cumulatively will constitute 15% (5% per module) of the student's final course grade.

To ensure fairness, promote a common understanding of the goals of the course, and increase student confidence, *evaluation* in all "Foundations in Methods of Inquiry" classes will be mostly weighted towards three identical end-of-module assignments (20% per module), and a standardized Final Reflection Paper (25%). The end-of-module assignment will be graded by the professor in charge; thus, each professor will grade every student's end-of-module assignment for his/her own module over the course of the semester.

A Final Reflection Paper (5-6 pp.), although not required, can provide a more common experience across groups and themes, and in keeping with the Jesuit pedagogical emphasis on "adequate reflection on experience, grasping the meaning and implications of what we study, [in order to] proceed freely and confidently toward choosing appropriate courses of action that foster our growth as human beings... whose aim is not merely the assimilation of subject-matter but the development of the person...[and which] broaden students' awareness and impel them to consider the viewpoints of others." The Final Reflection Paper will be evenly divided for grading between the three professors, either randomly or going back to the first assigned module as a 'home base.'