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General Education Reflection

Throughout my time at Iowa State, I've taken a wide variety of General education courses to supplement my degree. Through each of these experiences, I've learned about various issues that affect society, along with skills and ideas outside of my engineering curriculum that I can use to enhance my professional career. In addition to this, I've been able to expose myself to different disciplines and educational experiences that I have found interesting, and useful. Throughout this reflection, I will be discussing how these experiences have influenced and aided me towards becoming a better engineer.

The first, and what I would say is the most influential class I've taken at ISU, was my ARCH 3210 History of the American City course. This class studied the development of urban areas in the United States from the colonial period to modern times and how people and architecture influence each other. This class was interesting and influential to me because it showed how the design of architecture around us can affect people's lives, in both positive and negative ways. More specifically, it demonstrated the social consequences that urban displacement from architectural projects can have on people, and how what we design as engineers may sound good on paper, but can have large consequences and negative impacts on communities. From this class I have learned that for future projects I need to consider that the things I create have a larger role in society and their impacts need to be considered. I believe that this class has given me the ability to look at the things I create in a more ethical and conscious way with how they might affect society, and gives me confidence that I can solve future engineering problems while considering how my solutions may affect others.

The second general education course that I feel has given me useful skills for my professional career was my Art H 3960 History of Photography course. This class discusses the progression and history of photography from its creation to modern times, delving into the technical and cultural impacts it has had throughout history. What I think was particularly useful from this course was that it showed the iterative process that design often follows, and that as technology develops it may become bigger than its original purpose. Studying this course has helped me understand the larger effects that technology has on society and how innovation can very easily change the way the world works. For example, not long after its creation, photography was used to document world events and became a widespread tool for spreading information. In many cases, however, photography was used to spread misinformation before people adapted to understand that it may not always be used for good. I think this topic is especially relevant in current times as we deal with the modern technology of AI and its effects on society. Overall I think this class made me consider the communicative effects that innovation can have on society, and how quickly it can change our lives.

In conclusion, during my time at Iowa State I have learned a variety of important skills in my general education classes that I can bring into my professional career when I graduate. From the classes listed in this reflection, I feel that I have learned about important societal issues, and have gained knowledge that will allow me to better solve engineering problems in the future. While I did take more classes than the ones I listed above, I feel that the ones that I have chosen for this reflection gave me the most valuable experiences and knowledge that I can continue to use in the future.