

## **Portfolio 494: General Education Reflection**

As people make the transformation from young students to professional engineers, there are a few very important things to keep in mind. First, they need to be competent with the most essential fundamentals of their field of choice. An employer is not looking for someone without a basic idea of the type of work they will be doing. Second, is that a good engineer tends to “know what they don’t know”. In other words, they are aware of their shortcomings and can approach working on them effectively. In addition to these two things, they should be aware of the world they are a part of, and the goings-on of modern life. It is arguable whether general education courses adequately stimulate personal student growth in any of these areas. However, I hold the position that they contribute with some significance, should a person be seeking growth in the first place.

Technicality and straightforward engineering principles are not a topic of exercise in most general education courses. Societal and self-awareness betterment are primarily the things these courses excel in teaching students. As stated, a person must possess a desire to gather something meaningful in order for these courses to take full effect on their education. One societal issue that pervades modern dialogue is the topic of inflation, and ever-increasing cost of living. This paper is not meant to debate this topic, but I do have a strong opinion on the matter that could partially be attributed to some of the knowledge acquired during my time in ECON 102 and to an extent BUSAD 250. Macroeconomics gave me some of the building blocks for understanding how inflation, GDP, interest rates, and other metrics have an effect on one another. Crucially, it began to bridge my perception of the cost of living to the abstracted actions or policies that are frequently enacted.

The overall economic health of the world’s nations have universally agreed-upon measurements to evaluate them by, but the people that an economy is built on are varied ideologically, culturally, and politically. One class that illustrated this effectively for me was RUS 375, the study of Russia in the modern era. The history of this nation is rich with cause and effect scenarios that can be understood and applied to other places in the world. Russian attitudes toward their leaders and their self reflection of their condition affected people on an individual level, a concept that can be used to draw parallels towards Russia and other countries even today. Additionally, conflict in Russia and eastern Europe today continues as a direct or indirect result of leadership and cultural conditions that have roots in history more than a century ago. Russian citizens have long been inspired to create expressive and sometimes particularly bleak pieces of media to share with society.

Importantly, a general education course should require its students to think critically about the subject of study. The knowledge provided should be accessible and easy to grasp at a high level, yet simultaneously contain fundamental ideas that can be applied to more complex issues as a student progresses in their learning at college and beyond. My experience as an engineering student has had its positive and negative aspects, general education being one of the positives for no greater reason than the way it provided opportunities for me to put more thought into how I view the world.