

General Education Reflection

Although a majority of my time during college has been spent solving math equations, applying physics formulas/principles and writing/debugging code, I was able to break apart the typical engineering workload by taking general education courses at Iowa State University. Courses like these have been very enjoyable to take, as they work my brain in a different way. Being an engineering major, the left hemisphere of my brain is always working overtime. Courses such as the ones I will touch on shortly, allow me to exercise my right hemisphere, by tapping into the more social, intuitive and creative side. I believe that it is important for students to be exposed to many different courses in college, not just required courses that pertain to their specific degree.

My favorite general education course I have taken at Iowa State is Politics and Society (POL S 3340). Our main project in the course was conducting a policy brief. Luckily for me, one of the topics we were able to choose from was cybersecurity. I believe that this class truly benefitted me as I was able to look at cybersecurity, through a different lens.

I was always learning and practicing the skill of cybersecurity, but never knew how it was applied or discussed, widespread. The research I had to conduct for the brief, showed me how cybersecurity was thought of, from the perspective of people who don't work/study in that field. It also gave me an understanding of how it was applied to government, and showed me a broader background about the general policies of it. Although this class did have an aspect that was directly related to my area of study, the perspective in which I learned was completely new and helped me understand the broader terms/implications of cybersecurity.

Introduction to International Studies (INTST 235) and Introduction to Women's Studies (WGS 201), were two classes I took that gave me more perspective in general, everyday life. These classes had almost no direct correlation to my engineering major, but I enjoyed them. Being a woman in a male dominated field such as engineering, I found WGS 201 especially eye-opening as it helped me understand the historical and systemic challenges women have had to overcome, in order to achieve equality in professional and academic aspects of life. It made me more aware of biases that women still face today, even after fighting for decades just to obtain equality. This class motivated me to work hard and never give up, even when all odds are stacked against me.

I have always enjoyed history, and I believe that INTST 235 gave me the ability to learn more about non-American history, on a deeper level. In high school, we were required to take a history class every year, but they were mostly about United States history (understandably so) or a very broad summary of world history. In INTST 235, we read the book "Crossing Borders", which was a very

interesting story about an indigenous woman and the experiences she faced while navigating life under oppression. This course taught the significance of political conflict, social injustice and cultural resilience in shaping individual and/or communities. Although I might not have made the connection at the time, looking back, I think this course encouraged me to critically analyze global issues from perspectives outside of my own personal experience. It taught me to consider how culture, politics and history all play a big part in people's backgrounds, decision making and overall outlook on life.

Due to transferring from the University of Iowa 2 years ago, those three courses are the only general education classes I have taken at Iowa State. Later in this semester, I am taking Russian Today (RUS 375). I anticipate this course will give me perspective on politics, the current economic state and social aspects of Russia. I chose to take this course to complete my diversity credits, as that part of the world is the area I am least familiar with and think it will be beneficial to learning more about different cultures and people's perspectives, based on where they were raised.

Although all of these classes didn't teach me technical information regarding engineering, I believe that I gained a high level of knowledge that I can apply to my future career(s). Each course allowed me to learn about different perspectives through a variety of cultures, political ideologies and social systems. These classes have taught me about communication, ethical consideration and critical thinking, all of which I believe I can use to my benefit in engineering workplaces in the future. I valued the experience I had in each of these courses and will apply the knowledge obtained in all future aspects of my career and life.