This course supports the assessments for SST1. The course covers 4 competencies and represents 2 competency units.

Introduction

Overview
Welcome to the General Education Social Science domain at Western Governors University!

This course introduces you to social scientific perspectives on how humans organize themselves in society and how they seek to resolve and understand the problems they encounter in society. The social sciences provide people not only with knowledge about the development and nature of human society, but also with the means to ask critical questions about the institutions, cultures, and behaviors that people encounter every day.

Watch the following video introduction to this course:

Competencies
This course provides guidance to help you demonstrate the following 4 competencies:

- **Competency 113.1.1: Social Science Theory and Methodology**
  The graduate examines the distinctive characteristics and forms of social scientific inquiry; recognizes various behavioral, cognitive, and social phenomena; and applies social science theories and methods to evaluate and explain phenomena.

- **Competency 113.1.2: Social Science and Human Development**
  The graduate examines fundamental social science concepts and theories that relate to the development of human thought, behavior, and social relationships.

- **Competency 113.2.1: Modern Institutions**
  The graduate examines the development, characteristics, functions, and interdependence of modern economic, social, and political institutions.

- **Competency 113.2.2: Culture and Physical Environment**
  The graduate recognizes and analyzes connections between human cultures and the physical environment, and applies knowledge of these connections to explain social and political change.

Course Instructor Assistance
As you prepare to successfully demonstrate competency in this subject, remember that course instructors stand ready to help you reach your educational goals. As subject matter experts, mentors enjoy and take pride in helping students become reflective learners, problem solvers, and critical thinkers. Course instructors are excited to hear from you and eager to work with you.

Successful students report that working with a course instructor is the key to their success. Course instructors are able to share tips on approaches, tools, and skills that can help you apply the content you’re studying. They also provide guidance in assessment preparation strategies and troubleshoot areas of deficiency. Even if things don’t work out on your first try,
course instructors act as a support system to guide you through the revision process. You should expect to work with course instructors for the duration of your coursework, so you are welcome to contact them as soon as you begin. Course instructors are fully committed to your success!

Preparing for Success

The information in this section is provided to detail the resources available for you to use as you complete this course.

Learning Resources
The learning resources listed in this section are required to complete the activities in this course. For many resources, WGU has provided automatic access through the course. However, you may need to manually enroll in or independently acquire other resources. Read the full instructions provided to ensure that you have access to all of your resources in a timely manner.

Automatically Enrolled Resources

You can access the learning resources listed in this section by clicking on the links provided throughout the course. You may be prompted to log in to the WGU student portal to access the resources.

Soomo Learning Environment
The following learning environment will be utilized as the primary learning resource for completion of this course:

- General Education Social Science

This learning environment will contain links at the activity level to the following additional learning resources:

VitalSource E-Texts
The following textbooks are available to you as e-texts within the Soomo learning environment. You will be directly linked to the specific readings required within the learning environment activities.


*Note: These e-texts are available to you as part of your program tuition and fees, but you may purchase hard copies at your own expense through a retailer of your choice. If you choose to do so, please use the ISBN listed to ensure that you receive the correct edition.*

Pacing Guide
The pacing guide suggests a weekly structure to pace your completion of learning activities. It is provided as a suggestion and does not represent a mandatory schedule. Follow the pacing guide carefully to complete the course in the suggested timeframe.
Note: This pacing guide does not replace the course. Please continue to refer to the course for a comprehensive list of the resources and activities.

Theories and Methods

The activities under this subject will introduce you to some of the basic questions related to social science theories and methods.

Consider the following questions:

- What is the role of science and the scientific method in the social sciences?
- How do the social sciences differ from natural and physical science?

Scientific Method in Social Science

To prepare for further study in this domain, you will want to familiarize yourself with ways in which the scientific method is applied in the social sciences. Keep in mind the crucial comparison between social and natural science.

Consider the following questions:

- What is the scientific method?
- Does the scientific method refer to the same process of inquiry in social science as it does in natural sciences?

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 113.1.1: Social Science Theory and Methodology
  The graduate examines the distinctive characteristics and forms of social scientific inquiry; recognizes various behavioral, cognitive, and social phenomena; and applies social science theories and methods to evaluate and explain phenomena.

Scientific Method Reading

Engage in the "Theories and Methods" learning module by visiting the General Education Social Science learning environment, and complete the following:

- 1.1 Scientific Method in Social Science

Pay close attention to and take notes on the following questions, concepts, and ideas:

- How do the textbook authors define the scientific method?
- What are some of the major challenges encountered in any form of scientific observation?
- What is the role of objectivity in scientific work?
- Do social scientists form hypotheses?
- What are some of the most significant research methods in the social sciences (case study, participant observation, etc.)? And how are they used differently among the
various social science disciplines?

**Approaches to Social Science**

One remarkable aspect of the social sciences is the wide range of perspectives and approaches found within them. History, for example, is considered by many to be a social science. Yet, its basic approach to social analysis and explanation differs in important ways from that of sociology, economics, geography, or other social science disciplines. In addition to the various disciplinary approaches to social scientific work, there are also different ways of applying social science knowledge to real world problems. Competence in general social science requires understanding that social science is diverse in its approaches yet bound together by some basic questions.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 113.1.1: Social Science Theory and Methodology**
  The graduate examines the distinctive characteristics and forms of social scientific inquiry; recognizes various behavioral, cognitive, and social phenomena; and applies social science theories and methods to evaluate and explain phenomena.

**Social Science Reading**

Engage in the "Theories and Methods" learning module by visiting the [General Education Social Science](#) learning environment, and complete the following:

- **1.2 Approaches to Social Science**

Pay close attention to and take notes on the following questions, concepts, and ideas as you read these selections:

- What are the distinctive features of cultural anthropology?
- What kinds of questions do economists ask about the nature of society?
- What kinds of questions do psychologists ask about human development?
- How do the textbook authors define sociology? How does sociology differ from psychology? In what ways does sociology overlap with other social science approaches?
- What kinds of research do political scientists conduct?
- How does the study of history differ from other social sciences?
- What are some explanatory limitations for historical research?
- In what ways can social science explain social inequality?
- What is social stratification?
- Why have social scientists concerned themselves with social classes?
- What are some reasons for the existence of poverty and homelessness in a world of plenty?
- In what ways does social science influence social and public policy?

**Human Development**

The activities within this subject will introduce you to fundamental questions related to the
nature of human development.

Social science is distinguished in part by its novel approaches to the question of what constitutes human nature. Social scientists (mainly psychologists) have focused on how individuals develop from infants into mature human beings. Development is a constant process across the lifespan, comprising the biological and social influences that transform infants into adults—the ability to think abstractly, identity, morality, and relationships with family and friends.

**Nature Versus Nurture**

One of the fundamental questions in the study of human development is whether basic characteristics are given to people by nature or developed through their social and interpersonal experiences—nurture. Consider the following questions:

- Are personalities determined by biology?
- Do personalities reflect the environment?
- Or is the answer somewhere in between the two?

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 113.1.2: Social Science and Human Development
  The graduate examines fundamental social science concepts and theories that relate to the development of human thought, behavior, and social relationships.

**Nature Versus Nurture Reading**

Engage in the “Human Development” learning module by visiting the General Education Social Science learning environment, and complete the following:

- 2.1 Nature Versus Nurture

Pay close attention to and take notes on the following questions, concepts, and ideas:

- What are the central claims of the theory of evolution?
- How has the theory of natural selection shaped the social science views of human behavior?
- Why is the study of genetics significant to social science?
- What specific roles does biology play in the development of personality?
- How does learned behavior shape personality?
- What do social scientists mean by socialization?
- What kinds of interplay exist between heredity and environment?

**Theories of Human Development**

Major theorists of human development include Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg. Each theorist focuses on a different fundamental psychological process. Take note of the basic questions that they ask about the nature of development. Consider the following questions:

- What are the causes of human progression from one stage of development to the next?
How do people develop morality?
What does it really mean to be human?

By examining theories of development, you should gain extra insight into the behavior and traits that you encounter on a daily basis.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 113.1.2: Social Science and Human Development
  The graduate examines fundamental social science concepts and theories that relate to the development of human thought, behavior, and social relationships.

**Human Development Reading**

Engage in the “Human Development” learning module by visiting the General Education Social Science learning environment, and complete the following:

- 2.2 Theories of Human Development

Pay close attention to and take notes on the following questions, concepts, and ideas:

- How does Sigmund Freud explain the development of personality?
- What are the key elements of Erik Erikson's developmental theory?
- On what issues do Freud and Erikson agree? In what ways do they disagree?
- What are the key elements of Jean Piaget's developmental theory?
- How does Lawrence Kohlberg explain moral development?

**States and Government**

The activities within this subject will introduce you to fundamental ideas related to modern political institutions.

While the study of politics has existed since ancient history, modern social science has brought into sharper focus questions about the nature of power and government. In order to understand the complexity of modern institutions, social-scientific approaches to politics have been focused on many aspects of political life, especially the emergence of the modern nation-state.

**Political Theory**

Political theory focuses on the nature of states and government. Consider the following questions:

- Why does government exist?
- What kinds of government are best suited to modern life?
- What is the proper role of the state in political society?

Political theorists have answered these questions in many different ways, and their diverse answers have both shaped and reflected the different forms states and governments have taken.
This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 113.2.1: Modern Institutions
  The graduate examines the development, characteristics, functions, and interdependence of modern economic, social, and political institutions.

**Political Theory Reading**

Engage in the “States and Government” learning module by visiting the General Education Social Science learning environment and complete the following:

- 3.1 Political Theory

Pay close attention to and take notes on the following questions, concepts, and ideas:

- How does conflict theory explain state development?
- How does functionalist theory explain state development?
- How do the ideas of Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau differ concerning the nature of the state?
- How do totalitarian regimes maintain power?
- What is legal-rational authority?
- What are the major forms of government that have existed in modern history? What features distinguish them from each other?

**The Nation-State**

The rise of the nation-state, a political state that coincides with an ethnic or cultural grouping, has been one of the central features of modern history and modern politics. While the nation-state is a modern political form, it evolved from earlier forms of government, such as the city-state, which existed prominently in ancient Greece and early modern Europe. Consider the following questions:

- How has the rise of the nation-state shaped the modern United States?
- How does the existence of the nation-state influence your own daily life?

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 113.2.1: Modern Institutions
  The graduate examines the development, characteristics, functions, and interdependence of modern economic, social, and political institutions.

**Nation-State Reading**

Engage in the “States and Government” learning module by visiting the General Education Social Science learning environment and complete the following:

- 3.2 The Nation State

As you read "The Athenian Origins of Direct Democracy," pay close attention to and take notes
on the following questions, concepts, and ideas:

- What is an oligarchy?
- What is a timocracy?
- Which characteristics of democracy originated in ancient Greece?
- What were the distinctive features of citizenship in the city-states?
- What were the limitations on democratic activity within a city-state?

As you read the remainder of the assigned text, pay close attention to and take notes on the following questions, concepts, and ideas:

- What are the defining features of the nation-state?
- How do educational institutions help maintain the nation-state?
- What philosophical ideas helped shape the modern nation-state?
- Why was the rise of nationalism important in the development of the nation-state?

**Global Society**

The activities under this subject will introduce you to the central features of the modern global society.

Modern society is characterized by the globalization of states, economies, and people’s everyday experiences. Social science seeks to understand how this has happened and what the consequences of the global society will be for the future. In the following activities, you will want to focus in particular on forms of organization that have emerged in the global society.

**Modern Organizations**

Many different types of organization shape modern life. As you study the organizational forms that exist in the global society, you will want to focus closely on non-state actors. Consider the following questions:

- What are non-state actors?
- Why are they so important in a global setting?
- Do you encounter any of these organizations?

This topic addresses the following competency:

- Competency 113.2.1: Modern Institutions
  The graduate examines the development, characteristics, functions, and interdependence of modern economic, social, and political institutions.

**Modern Organizations Reading**

Engage in the "Global Society" learning module by visiting the General Education Social Science learning environment, and complete the following:

- 4.1 Modern Organizations
- 4.2 Living in a Global Society
Pay close attention to and take notes on the following questions, concepts, and ideas:

- What are the defining features of modern bureaucracies? Why do bureaucracies exist?
- What is a nongovernmental organization (NGO)? What functions do NGOs serve? What are some examples of NGOs?
- Are multinational corporations NGOs?
- What are some other important types of non-state actors?
- What are some examples of multinational political organizations? How have they shaped the global society?

**Final Steps**

Congratulations on completing the activities in this course! This course has prepared you to complete the assessments associated with this course. If you have not already been directed to complete the assessments, schedule and complete your assessments now.

**Task Review**

Review the following community blog posts for information on completing the tasks for this performance assessment:

- [SST Task 1: The Nation-State, Foreign Policy, and Transnational Entities](#)
- [SST Task 2: The Scientific Method](#)