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**Signature Course Essential Elements**

*Distinguished Faculty •* Signature Courses may be taught by distinguished faculty from any college or school at the university. These must be regular departmental faculty who have been recommended as good teachers by their department chairs. The program calls for regular faculty in the hope that incoming students will come to know faculty with whom they may wish to work in later years. Regular faculty include tenured and tenure-track professors, as well as senior lecturers and, in special cases, adjunct or emeriti professors.

*Interdisciplinary & Contemporary Content •* Signature Courses will allow students the opportunity to acquire knowledge through symbiotic relationships in interdisciplinary study. For example, science will inform your interpretation of a painting and vice versa, or you will see how law, foreign policy, marketing, and education all influence the economy. Also, all classes will have contemporary content, though it may not be evident from the title. A history professor teaching a course about the Peloponnesian War can use the course’s content to inform students’ understandings of modern day conflict.

*Critical Thinking •* As defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking (1987), critical thinking is “the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.” At its best, it “transcends subject matter divisions” by being interdisciplinary and multifaceted. In addition, critical thinking is often best prompted by real-life, hands on, experiential learning. Therefore, interactive, engaging, and student-driven methods of pedagogy should balance or outweigh traditional lectures.

*Writing •* Signature Courses will introduce students to [college-level writing](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/faculty/writing) and thinking. [Writing](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/faculty/writing) overlaps with other Signature Course goals, giving students an arena for grappling with interdisciplinary concepts, and allowing them to demonstrate critical thinking and inquiry skills. Whether you teach a UGS 302 seminar or a larger UGS 303 lecture, your class should give students a solid platform of writing skills that will serve them well in subsequent classes.

*Oral Communication •* All students, through writing and oral presentation, will become effective communicators at the college level. Direct instruction and practice of oral presentation skills early in a student’s college career can provide a solid foundation upon which to build competency in the classroom and beyond.

*Information Literacy •* Signature Courses help students learn to critically examine valid sources of information. Most first-year students know how to get answers from the internet, but for many the ability to find other types of resources and to process all of the information they find may be a skill that has yet to be honed. Signature Courses ensure that all first-year students receive instruction in basic research and information evaluation skills, otherwise known as information literacy skills, which serve them throughout their time at the university. Students will leave their signature courses as discerning research consumers.

*Gems of the University •* Signature Courses are unique to The University of Texas at Austin and should similarly highlight resources unique to this large research campus. The collections, tools, and artifacts at this Research I university can complement and enrich your course, while making tangible connections for students to course content. The use of experiential learning on our campus is encouraged and supported through various campus partnerships.

*University Lecture Series •* The [University Lecture Series](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/uls) gives students an opportunity to interact with leading members of our faculty—scholars, scientists, and civic leaders—who are nationally and internationally renowned. Signature Course students will be required to attend one of these lectures, designed to create a campus-wide conversation.