

General Education Reflection

Throughout my undergraduate career, my general education electives have given me a greater understanding of the world outside of the typical engineering classroom experience. This experience started in high school where I was able to start taking college-level courses as dual credit classes. This prepared me for my future college career and allowed me to form better questions when I first entered Iowa State University and to connect with other students. It also prepared me to think deeper than the basic material of the class and to apply my knowledge that I gained in class to challenge myself and generate my own problems and solutions to those problems.

The first general education classes I took in high school were U.S. Government and Introduction to College Literature for dual credit at DMACC (POL S 215 and ENGL 201). I took these classes during my senior year and they aligned with the historic 2016 election cycle which allowed even more discussion of the US election process. The most important skills that I learned throughout the classes were that discussions with my peers were very important in order to make sure that every one of my peer's ideas was presented. Alongside that, I was able to understand how the United State's government functioned and how the election process was completed and how to understand the information presented at a college level. This translated directly into my first semester at Iowa State by allowing me to have a base understanding of how to have discussions with my peers to understand new topics, make new connections, and understand the information presented inside and outside of the classroom.

At Iowa State, my first semester I was able to take my first 300-level course POL S 350, Politics of the Middle East. This course was daunting due to the fact that I was

still adjusting to college life and the new structure of classes. However, this course allowed me to better understand how the Middle East politics have been affected by the West and Europe after World War II and the history of the area going back to the Islamic revolution. This gave me insight into world politics and how the United States has a world impact. One of the most striking sections of the class was the focus on Syria and the Islamic State and how the action of the United States in the region could have affected many different nations in the region. This also changed my thought process of how the Israel/Palestine conflict and how the actions after World War II by the United Nations changed the region without consulting with the native peoples in those regions. Since this was one of the first classes I took at Iowa State, it changed my perspective to one with a bigger picture of the world instead of with one with a smaller focus of just my city or state.

The most important general education course, in my opinion, that I took at Iowa State was POL S 333, Democracy and Diversity in America. I consider it the most important due to the discussion and connection to the weekly reading, connection to the real world, and the understanding of American life starting near the start of the country's founding. This course allowed me to understand how America started and how an outside observer, Alexis de Tocqueville, viewed America in the first half of the 1800s. The observations of Tocqueville allowed me to see parallels between then and now that I had never noticed before such as the deeper problems with race and how the wounds of our country run deeper than slavery. During the course, we also talked about the problems facing our country right now such as immigration, gender equality, and sexual

harassment. This gave me a better view of the United States and the struggles of people throughout it.

Overall, my general education courses taken in high school and at Iowa State have broadened my view of the world, changed my understanding of the United States, and allowed me to work better with my peers. During my junior and senior years at Iowa State, I have noticed that I am able to connect and work with my peers more effectively than I was able to in high school and during my freshman year at Iowa State. I believe that this was because of the general education courses and the other opportunities that I was able to take advantage of at Iowa State.