Understanding Human Behavior

I. Description of Purpose and Content
Courses in this area will focus on theories and/or methodologies commonly used by social scientists to understand human behavior. Human behavior is broadly defined and can include the behavior of social, cultural, economic, or political institutions. Courses in this area will explore social science methods which are based on the assumption that human behavior is ultimately understood or explained through rigorous, systematic, and evidence-based inquiry. Drawing upon a variety of theoretical foundations, principles, and methodologies, these courses engage students in explorations and interpretations of how people organize, govern, understand, and explain individual and social phenomena.

II. Learning Outcomes
A course that fulfills the Understanding Human Behavior requirement must address the following. In this course, students will:

• Understand what defines a social science, including its methodologies, and how it differs from other fields such as humanities.
• Understand theories and methodologies developed from empirical observation.
• Be familiar with the results of selected research that systematically and empirically examines how individuals, groups, or institutions interact in different contexts.
• Value the need to support theories and hypotheses with empirical evidence in order to understand individual, group, or institutional behavior in society.
• Critically examine outcomes of social science research.

III. Defining Characteristics
A course that fulfills the Understanding Human Behavior requirement must:

• Explore theories and methodologies that have bearing on contemporary individual and social life.
• Examine theories and methodologies that are relevant to real world problems.
• Cover similarities and differences in individual, group, or institutional behavior.