

General Education at UC Merced

“A Common Experience for
All Undergraduates”

Valerie Leppert, Chair, General Education Program,
Office of Undergraduate Education (gechair@ucmerced.edu)
General Education Website (<https://ge.ucmerced.edu/>)

Our Distinctive Institutional Context

- A Small Research University with an ethos of discovery, creativity and rigorous questioning
- In Merced, California, at a crossroads--culturally, socioeconomically, environmentally, geographically, historically--for addressing local, regional, and global problems
- With An Undergraduate Student Body Unique in the UC System--predominantly first-generation, under-represented students

leads to

The Hallmarks of Baccalaureate Degrees at UC Merced

- Depth and breadth in academic and intellectual preparation, consistent with the values of a research university
- Cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness
- Community engagement and citizenship--local and global
- Interpersonal skills necessary to the outcomes identified above, as well as to lead productive lives after graduation
- Self-awareness and intrapersonal skills

Upper
Division

Lower
Division

<div>Culminating Experience</div> <div>A Capstone Course, Senior or Advanced Seminar, Service-Learning Course or Portfolio</div>					<div>E-Portfolio</div> <div>Demonstrates Learning</div>	
<div>Crossroads</div> <div>A Specific Topic From An Interdisciplinary Perspective</div>		<div>Writing in the Disciplines</div> <div>UD Writing or Writing- Intensive Course in Major</div>		<div>Approaches to Knowledge (3A+3B)</div> <div>A: NS+ENG B: SSHA</div>		<div>Intellectual Experience Badges (11)</div> <div>Curricular + Co-curricular</div>
<div>Language</div> <div>Exposes Students to Different Ways of Structuring Thought</div>	<div>Written Communication</div> <div>Develops College Level Skills</div>	<div>Quantitative Reasoning</div> <div>Used to Support Arguments and Solve Problems</div>				
<div>Spark Seminar</div> <div>Introduces Students to Life at the Research University</div>						

Spark Seminars

The Spark Seminars introduce students to life at a research university. They ask students to focus on the nature of inquiry by exploring a particular topic over the course of the semester, engaging with campus and local resources, generating research questions, and presenting original ideas in writing and other forms of communication. Topics will be broad enough to be viewed from multiple perspectives, but focused enough to engage with the issues of the topic in some depth. Topics will be related to an area of research and/or interest to the instructor allowing students to engage with a faculty member who is sharing his or her expertise and passions.

Selections from Fall 2019:

- Archaeology in Popular Culture
- Belief in Conspiracy Theories
- Central Valley Stories
- Energy Future
- Engineering Inspired by Nature
- Exploring Leadership
- Global Grand Challenges
- The Border and Chicana/o Texts
- The Economics of Globalization
- National Parks and Landscapes
- On Meritocracy
- Vaccines, Health and Society
- Weird Math and Human Behavior
- What Do Things Mean?

If you would like to teach a Spark Seminar: <https://ge.ucmerced.edu/faculty-and-staff-resources/faculty-resources/teaching-spark-seminar>