Starting Fall 2014, the University of Washington will launch an option for 2 year associate degree holders to complete a four year Bachelor of Arts degree online. One of just two online only bachelor’s degree programs, the Integrated Social Sciences degree is intended to be a flexible, lower-cost option for individuals looking to complete their degrees off-campus — and notably, it integrates a selection of course offerings through the Department of Economics.

The degree is comprised of four ISS courses, as well as several credits within the paths of seven learning concentrations, or Thematic Areas of Inquiry: Information and Technological Society, Population Dynamics and Movements, Conflict and Cooperation, Diversity and Global Justice, Societal Inequalities and Power Relations, Social Contexts of Health and Risk, and Societies and Environments. Students pursuing the path of Information and Technological Society are required to take ECON 200, ECON 201, and ECON 282.

Principal Lecturer in economics Haideh Salehi-Esfahani teaches courses in principles of economics and international trade at the undergraduate level at UW, and has developed a curriculum for the online offering of ECON 200. She believes that Economics coursework will be a strong component of the interdisciplinary program.

“I believe the conceptual framework and foundational ideas of the Economic way of thinking will make a huge contribution to students’ intellectual development, problem solving, and critical and analytical thinking skills,” Salehi-Esfahani said.

Salehi-Esfahani’s curriculum is centered on a detailed blueprint of the 10-week-long course, which includes recorded lectures, discussion forums, external resources, practice problems, and outside projects that allow students to do independent work outside of the online structure. While she believes distanced learning will pose a challenge, she is confident that students will receive a quality education through the online program.

“I think one of the advantages of the online degree is that it allows for space where there is a synergy between the different topics,” Salehi-Esfahani said. “Online forums and video sharing are going to cater well to the interdisciplinary nature of the ISS degree.”

Salehi-Esfahani plans to regularly check in with students to compensate for the lack of in-person learning through weekly video casts and feedback through online forums.

“There is definitely going to be interaction,” Salehi-Esfahani said. “It may not be meeting in a lecture or a classroom, but it will be meeting online. I think this program is going to have the promise of interdisciplinary collaboration between faculty and students where they can make comparisons between frameworks and points of view.”
Learn more about the Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Social Sciences.

News Category: Announcements

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