

Travel Course Selection Criteria

The January Term Committee's goal is to offer a diverse array of travel courses that students will find enlightening, challenging, and enjoyable. The Special Guidelines that follow will help you to develop and market a travel course that will represent a unique educational opportunity for your students and yourself.

Safety: The Threshold Criterion

First and foremost, Saint Mary's College has an unwavering commitment to student safety, a commitment that must be explicitly addressed in your course proposal. You must consider certain questions carefully at the time of your proposal, especially for international travel, questions such as: Is the destination country politically and socially stable? Does the destination culture have values greatly at variance with those that the students are used to? If so, how do you plan to ensure that students are not taken entirely by surprise with behavioral and social standards different from their own? For the point of view of safety, what measures will you take to ensure that students are supervised? What measures will you take to ensure that you are available to them at any time they should need your help? If you have taught a travel class before and safety questions were raised, have you dealt with them? Your proposal must address these concerns to the January Term Committee's satisfaction before any judgments can be made about your proposal's fulfillment of the Special Guidelines. However wonderful your course proposal sounds, without explicit consideration of safety issues the proposal will not be considered.

Seven Key Criteria:

For proposals that meet the January Term Committee's concerns about security, the following criteria will be considered in the approval of travel courses:

1) Is this course academically rigorous with clearly thought out and assessable learning outcomes?

The January Term Committee seeks to offer students a rigorous, intense, and focused academic experience. Consequently, travel courses must have a clear academic focus, with clearly articulated learning outcomes. Important as they are, course descriptions designed for our online course catalog do not supply enough information for the January Term Committee to

assess a proposal's academic quality or to determine if its means of assessment are sufficiently rigorous. Hence, a portfolio of information documenting your methods of evaluating student work must be submitted. There is an upload field for this in the course proposal form. This portfolio should include detailed descriptions of the means used to assess student achievement on coursework, including formal written work, essay prompts, assignments, and exams. For veteran travel instructors, the portfolio should also include past syllabi and itineraries. (Please do not upload actual student work.)

This request is consistent with the Faculty Handbook provision 3.1.3 which states that copies of the final examination be given to the chairperson for department files. To assess how well the learning goals are being achieved, in some cases the committee may request a random sampling of student projects.

2) Has this course been offered before?

Courses that are being repeated, especially repeated often, must be held to a high standard. Questions about a course's academic rigor and its organization are particularly significant, especially when they are persistent. The committee also looks to see that the instructors are addressing criticisms seriously. Instructors of a course that is being repeated are asked to describe areas in which their courses are growing and developing. Since courses being repeated often can possibly block the development of new and stronger classes, instructors are also asked to address how their courses continue to serve as part of their own faculty development, research interests, and growing expertise.

3) How much will this course cost?

The January Term seeks to provide opportunities for travel courses to as wide a range of students as possible, including students with limited financial means. Consequently, courses that are less expensive (or more cost-effective for the period of travel) may be given priority over courses that are more expensive.

4) Could this topic be studied just as well in Moraga?

The proposed course should have a clear academic reason for the travel component to a particular destination. Courses that could be taught equally effectively in an on-campus setting will not receive preference. Thus, an appropriate course will provide a compelling reason for why it must be taught in the selected location. Be sure to include your justification for location in your learning outcomes.

5) Do the logistics of this proposal seem well-thought-out?

Preference will be given to courses that evidence the best advance logistical planning, including an evidence-based cost estimate for travel, transportation, and lodging, a clear itinerary, etc. This may be somewhat difficult to provide when a new course is proposed. Please address this issue regardless. In cases where the proposed course has been offered before, please provide detail regarding logistical planning, cost estimates, itinerary, etc.

6) Will the course appeal to students (i.e., will it enroll adequately)?

Along with the above criteria, especially academic quality, the January Term Committee will attempt to evaluate the overall appeal of the course to a broad range of students, keeping in mind that academic rigor may not be sacrificed in pursuit of appealing to students. A breadth and balance of course offerings are needed as we try to avoid too many courses of the same genre, theme, or to the same region. If the course does not enroll adequately (defined as the minimum number of students needed to operate the course at the advertised course fee), it will be canceled.

7) Is the course open to a wide range of students?

Preference will be given to course proposals that are open and available to a wide range of student interests. January Term courses are meant to provide opportunities for students to explore subject matter outside their declared majors and minors. While we recognize the importance of prerequisites, the committee discourages proposals that appear to be restricted to students of a particular school, program, or department.

IF ALL CRITERIA ARE MET, THE COMMITTEE CONSIDERS THE FOLLOWING:

1) Does this course involve ranked faculty?

If all the above criteria and concerns are met to the committee's satisfaction, preference is given to classes that involve ranked faculty (including in the role of co-instructors and second instructors). Why? While supplying students with the best panoply of travel courses is a natural priority for us, one of the distinguishing features of January Term is that it offers students and faculty alike the opportunity to pursue what captures their imaginations. Furthermore, the experience gained from teaching in January Term contributes to what faculty members bring to

their regular semester classes. Hence, January Term's significant role and responsibility in faculty and curricular development should not be overlooked.

2) Does this course involve faculty experienced with Jan Term?

If all the above criteria and concerns are met to the committee's satisfaction, preference will be given to courses whose faculty have taught an on-campus Jan Term class or have been mentored to teach a travel class.

3) Does this course further the mission of the College?

If all the above criteria and concerns are met to the committee's satisfaction, preference will be given to courses that show a focused commitment to the Catholic, Liberal Arts, and Lasallian mission of the College.