Finding Audience-Based Reasons—Readings to go with the “Responding to Objections and Alternative Views” chapter of your text

Directions: I’m assuming that anyone attending SJSU can make an argument *against* the need to take gen. ed. courses. It seems to be the majority opinion that these classes are a waste of time. Therefore, I’ve collected two essays that make the opposite stand.

Read them carefully, then consider what you would say on this subject if you were going to refute these arguments (not just make the opposite argument, but specifically address what these particular writers say here). Also consider what you would say if you wanted to agree with them and add to their case. This will be easier once you’ve read the text’s chapter on the subject.

Also, consider what you would say for different audiences on this subject: your parents, university administrators, the university’s Gen. Ed. committee, or a Spartan Daily audience.

General Education Courses: Not a Waste of Time

by [Jennifer Werts](http://www.collegexpress.com/authors/Jennifer%20Werts/)

It used to be standard that a student could expect to finish their bachelor’s degree in four years, but many factors, including changing majors and holding down a job while studying, have contributed to many students finishing in five or even six years. At first glance, it may seem as if general education courses only exacerbate the problem. Why should you have to take a bunch of “fluff” classes when you’re having a hard enough time finishing school? We’ll take a look at scenarios in which general education courses can actually help you.

**Scenario #1: You haven’t yet decided on a major**

This is where general education courses are particularly useful. Say, for example, you excelled at math and history in high school, but you’re not exactly sold on committing four years to either subject. General education courses will expose you to a wide variety of subjects, ranging from geology to anthropology to drama. In college, you’ll find that the variety of courses you can take is much broader in scope than what you experienced in high school. While you’re still mulling over the possibilities for your major, you can take a year or more of general education courses, which may introduce you to an area you’re passionate about that you didn’t even know existed.

**Scenario #2: You have many interests and wish to dabble in them as much as possible**

Imagine that you enter college your freshman year knowing exactly what you’d like to study. Let’s say, for the sake of argument, that you’re determined to earn your degree in business administration. You know you’ll be working hard in the classes toward your major, but you also excelled in choir in high school and would like to continue to pursue singing. There may be a general education course in vocal arts, and if not, there’s bound to be a musical elective at your university. This is an important point: don’t be so focused on earning your degree that you feel obligated to participate in courses only if it’s required. By all means, if you have other passions, pursue them. This is what college is for!

**Scenario #3: You want to become a more well-rounded person**

This is another important way in which general education courses can enrich your life. For example, if you’re majoring in marine biology, it doesn’t hurt to take a course or two in journalism. Although not directly related to your major, developing writing skills may help you in your career down the road. If you’re called upon to write a grant or a professional paper, you’ll have acquired the tools you need to excel at these tasks.

So before you start grumbling about your general education courses, consider the factors outlined above. Universities don’t require these courses in order to make graduating more difficult. They truly want you to succeed and come through your college education a stronger person.

<http://www.collegexpress.com/articles-and-advice/majors-and-academics/articles/college-academics/general-education-courses-not-waste-time/>

From a website called College Xpress, apparently designed for those looking ahead to college but not yet enrolled.

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# Why You Need to Take Gen Eds and How You Can Appreciate Them

Every fall, millions of eager college freshmen move into their dorm rooms with high hopes of finally being able to only take classes that they specifically select. However, these students find a rude awakening when receiving their proposed class schedules from their academic advisers. Computer Science majors will find that they are taking history, political science, and geology courses along with their major's requirements. English majors will find that they have to enroll in some quantitative reasoning courses in addition to taking their literature and writing classes. Thinking they are free from the rigors of high school classes that they found boring and uninteresting, college freshmen will soon realize that they will be now be taking the advanced versions of those courses that they abhorred.

So, why do colleges require their students to study these general subjects that they may have already partially covered in high school?

The purpose of a college education is to not only make our future professionals and leaders erudite in their intended fields of study, but to also make them well-rounded. College is intended to make students aware of as much as possible about the world they live in, while at the same time preparing them for the specific profession that they have chosen to pursue. Therefore, a great portion of a student's first two years at a college or university is devoted to rounding out their knowledge base and making them as educated as possible in many varying fields. Students are then able to completely focus on their major and chosen field during their remaining semesters. These short four years of intense studying eventually translate into knowledge, discipline, and responsibility across several areas. Needless to say, college is where students grow up, and receiving a well-rounded education is one of the ways that happens.

Why take Political Science when all you plan to do is program computers or write software for a living? Why try to master a science lab when you're only hoping to start a marketing career? It may not feel like it now, but being able to have a wide breadth of knowledge in so many vastly different topics will prove to be incredibly beneficial to your career, whatever it may be. Every field teaches you certain, basic skills that can (and probably will need to) be applied to whatever profession you end up pursuing. Tasks such as composing well-written emails and reports, calculating mental math to determine financial solutions, or applying examples from history to identify the best course of action in a challenging situation are all examples of skills you acquire by taking various Gen Eds. In short, a business consultant's or editorial manager's knowledge is not complete without what he or she learned from these first few semesters of general education classes.

So, if you are an incoming college freshman -- be prepared. Although college will a be a fantastic time for you to learn more about yourself and the subject you excel in through the study of your chosen major, you must still be ready to take the courses that you may not want to take. Don't worry, you will still be able to do what you love if you study well dedicate yourself to each course. Also, who knows? Maybe that Political Science class you take freshman year will take you by surprise and lead you to switch to this field of study. It is extremely common for college students to change their mind early on and pick a different major than the one they originally selected. Gen Eds are a great way to make sure you give each of these areas a chance; you could end up learning more than you expected, ultimately identifying the career path that is ideal for you. Don't miss out on this potential discovery just because you failed to take these classes seriously. Appreciate these general requirements and see where they take you on your journey.

Chuck Cohn, Founder and CEO of Varsity Tutors, for the Huffington Post

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<http://www.utc.edu/sociology-anthropology-geography/advising/why-gen-ed.php>

Forum: University of Tennessee, Chatanooga, dept of sociology, anthropology and geography