Inventing Reality and Satisfying Division I Learning Goals

Hampshire College has defined 7 “learning goals” on which all Division I students are expected to make “satisfactory progress” through one or more of their courses. Specifically, when evaluating a student’s performance in a 100-level class, the instructor must choose from among three possible choices for each of the learning goals: satisfactory progress, needs improvement, or not applicable. At present, successful completion of Division I is ultimately at the discretion of each student’s advisor; some advisors may insist that all 7 learning goals have “satisfactory progress” checked off by at least one course, while others may decide to allow students to pass through to Div. II without them all checked off. You should consult with your advisor to determine what his or her specific philosophy is on this issue.

For Inventing Reality, the TAs and I have identified the following three learning goals that in most cases will be satisfied through the successful completion of the course: REA, WRI, and PRJ; more complete descriptions are given below. Since these three goals are directly incorporated into the course, you will be evaluated as either satisfactory progress or needs improvement in these areas; if the TAs and I feel that you are not making satisfactory progress in any of these areas, we will let you know by early April, and recommend specific steps needed to improve the situation by course’s end. For the other 4 learning goals, not applicable will be checked in the evaluation for most students. We say “most”, since it is possible to satisfy them through this course, but it is not expected. To be specific:

1. **REA** (Learn to read and interpret intellectual or artistic works.) This is of fundamental importance to Inventing Reality, and it is anticipated that nearly all evaluated students will be evaluated as having made satisfactory progress in this area.

2. **WRI** (Write critically and analytically.) This is of fundamental importance to Inventing Reality, and it is anticipated that nearly all evaluated students will be evaluated as having made satisfactory progress in this course.

3. **QUA** (Understand quantitative methods of analysis.) Although some quantitative work will be done in this course, it is not sufficient, on its own, to satisfy this learning goal, and it will therefore be evaluated as not applicable. However, you do have the ability to satisfy this learning goal by doing extremely well in all quantitative parts of the class and by completing a quantitatively rigorous final project. To achieve this, you should work closely with TA Sam Singer to help you design an appropriately “scientific” project to merit satisfactory progress on this learning goal.

4. **EXP** (Develop creative abilities in expressive modes (e.g., creative writing, visual and performance arts, and music).) While there are certain outlets for creativity in Inventing Reality, this learning goal is, in general, not applicable to the course. However, you may be able to satisfy this learning goal by doing outstanding work in the “creative” portions of the weekly assignments (e.g., the “thought questions” and “reflections”) and by carrying out an exceptionally “creative” final project. Again, you should work closely with TA Sam Singer to design your final project in such a way that it will allow you to satisfy this learning goal, if you wish.
5. **PRS** (Effectively present ideas orally.) At the conclusion of *Inventing Reality*, all students will give short, oral presentations on their final project to the class. However, the main emphasis of *Inventing Reality* is not focused on student presentations, and so, in general, this learning goal will be evaluated as not applicable. However, for a few students that show exceptional “class participation” by regularly asking thoughtful questions and offering meaningful contributions our discussions, and do a great job on their final presentations, satisfactory progress can be achieved on this learning goal through this course.

6. **PRJ** (Conceive and complete project-based work.) All students will complete a significant project in this course, and this learning goal is therefore of fundamental importance to *Inventing Reality*. It is anticipated that nearly all evaluated students will make satisfactory progress in this area.

7. **MCP** (Understand multiple cultural perspectives on intellectual or artistic subjects.) *Inventing Reality* is focused mainly on the Western intellectual tradition. While we will occasionally consider some “non-Western” cultures’ approaches to scientific inquiry, the degree to which this is done will be relatively minor, and this learning goal is, in general, not applicable. However, if you have a particular interest in this area, it is possible to satisfy this learning goal through careful selection and execution of your final project (for instance, investigating and writing a thorough report on a non-Western society’s astronomical or other scientific achievements). Again, close consultation with TA Sam Singer on your final project will allow you to achieve satisfactory progress on this particular learning goal if you wish.

**To summarize:** For most students, successful completion of *Inventing Reality* will result in satisfactory progress of the REA, WRI, and PRJ learning goals, and in not applicable for QUA, EXP, PRS, and MCP. If you wish to pursue any of the four learning goals that are not formally required as part of this course, please indicate this interest to us early on, so that we can help you achieve your goal(s).