

FOCUS FIELD CHECKLIST

COMMITTEE ON DEGREES IN SOCIAL STUDIES

A focus field is a group of four to six classes that center around a topic, social phenomenon, or pressing intellectual concern that you want to focus your studies around. It's usual that your ideas and interests change—sometimes substantially—between junior and senior years. Your final focus field, submitted senior fall, must relate to your senior thesis.

- Most focus field titles include both a theme and a region (or time-period) that helps to clearly locate the social phenomenon or intellectual idea you're focusing on.
- It's important for your focus field to be coherent. That is, make sure that your explanation for why your focus field is academically interesting to you fits with the title of your focus field and with the courses you list.
- Focus field courses must be drawn from at least two departments (e.g., history and economics) and include at least one historical course. Four of your courses must be from a Faculty of Arts and Sciences (which includes MIT and study abroad as well as Harvard FAS). Generally, courses you want to include from professional schools (HKS, GSD, etc.) should be listed as a fifth or sixth class.
- Up to two of your focus field classes can be from study abroad. If you're a junior planning on studying abroad but don't know exactly what classes you will be taking while abroad, you can give an indication of what you intend to take. By senior year, however, you need to have actual courses listed.
- Focus fields should not include introductory language courses or methods courses. Nor should they rely on GenEd courses.
- Junior tutorials are a separate requirement and should not be included in a focus field unless you have already taken (or are currently taking) a third junior tutorial. If that is the case, you may use any one of the three junior tutorials in your focus field.
- A single course cannot count for more than one requirement (e.g., a focus field course cannot also fulfill your economics requirement).
- All of the courses in your focus field must be letter-graded (except when taken during the Spring 2020 semester), which means that you cannot include Freshman Seminars, courses from Harvard Law School, or courses from the GSD for which you are not receiving a letter grade.
- A historical course is typically one that is taught in the History or History of Science departments or is cross-listed by the history department. In unusual circumstances, we will consider whether a course is a historical course based on its content. If you want to petition to include such a course,

please attach a syllabus and explain why you think it is an appropriate historical course for your focus.

- You do not need to submit a syllabus for any course taught in our five overlapping disciplines (anthropology, economics, government, history, or sociology).
- We will consider any course from HKS, HGSE, or the History of Science department to be a social science course. If you are petitioning to count a course from one of these programs, you do not need to attach a syllabus.
- Many focus fields include courses from across FAS. If you want to include a course that is not taught in one of our overlapping departments, you will likely need to include the syllabus. To determine whether you should include a syllabus for a course, please see the decision tree below.

