

Approved October 28, 2009

College of Arts & Science  
COMMITTEE ON THE CURRICULUM

Meeting Minutes  
October 14, 2009

Present: Linda Angst, Franya Berkman, Jim Bunnelle, Diane Crabtree, Julio de Paula, Stuart Kaplan, Tatiana Osipovich, Stephen Tufte, Jayson Estassi, Alex Rihm, Tamara Ko, recorder

Absent: Jeff Feld-Gore, Rishona Zimring

Chair Bierzychudek convened the meeting at 3:20pm.

The minutes from September 30, 2009 were approved.

**I. Course Proposal Subcommittee**

*History Department*

Professor Osipovich informed the Committee that the History Department is proposing five new courses; four of them to be one-time offerings and the fifth to be a permanent course offering as an elective in European History Studies (HIST 325). While the subcommittee had no problems with the quality of this elective course, some members did raise the question of how many electives a department should be able to offer. Currently, the History Department offers 13 electives.

Registrar Crabtree clarified that the course proposal form specifically asks for the impact on teaching load and department staffing when a new course is being proposed. Does the creation of this new course mean that another course is being offered less frequently? As a general rule, departments should follow the Course Catalog; if it lists that a course is being offered every year then the course should be offered every year. Dean de Paula responded that there is currently no written policy for how infrequently a course can be offered and still be listed in the Catalog but the Committee can suggest to departments the possibility of removing such courses. Certain courses are specifically tailored to an individual faculty member's teaching strengths and if those individuals leave the College, other faculty members may not be able to teach that course. He added that the sequencing of courses needs to be such that department courses are offered as specified in the Catalog and students will be able to enroll in those courses as needed.

Dean de Paula had looked at the resource issue of HIST 325 and queried whether or not this would affect teaching load. He was told that this course would be part of the instructor's regular five-course load.

It was asked why a 300-level course would have no prerequisites but clarified by Registrar Crabtree that this is standard practice for courses in the History Department, which do not necessarily build upon each other. The only restriction of a 300-level course would be to have junior level standing.

Registrar Crabtree wondered about the possibility of creating a policy that could explicitly state how infrequently a course could be offered and still be listed in the Catalog. The statement of a course being “offered alternate years” is simply a guideline and not necessarily binding. However, it is not sufficient to keep a course that has not been offered in a certain number of years listed in the Catalog simply under the possibility of hiring an adjunct instructor later. In the past, departments have submitted a four-year plan to the dean and this would be the time for them to specify the courses being taught in the next four years.

Professor Angst asked about the similarity of HIST 325 in regards to other courses currently offered and the possibility of the overlapping of material. If there are already other courses teaching the history of Islam, why would another new one be created? This issue was touched on in the course proposal form, explaining that this specific course will allow students to pursue more deeply the material encountered from another Religious Studies course, which would then make the context more robust.

Registrar Crabtree added that she had spoken to Professor Elliott Young and explained that the minimum restriction for a 300-level course is sophomore standing, which Professor Young agreed to change.

*Proposal 09.01*

This proposal adds HIST 325 History of Islam in Europe as a new permanent course.

*Proposal 09.03*

This proposal adds HIST 298 Ancient Rome: From Republic to Empire as a one-time course offering in spring 2010.

*Proposal 09.18*

This proposal adds HIST 198 History of Modern Africa as a one-time course offering in spring 2010.

*Proposal 09.19*

This proposal adds HIST 298 African Slavery as a one-time course offering in spring 2010.

*Proposal 09.20*

This proposal adds HIST 398 Senegal as a one-time course offering in spring 2010.

These proposals were passed unanimously as a package.

***Art Department***

*Proposal 09.11*

The Art Department is proposing a small change to ART 333 Dante and the Visual Arts by adding a prerequisite/co-requisite: a choice of either ART 101 History of Western Art: Ancient to Medieval, ART 111 History of Western Art: Renaissance to 20<sup>th</sup> Century or English 280 The Medieval World.

This is a small change and requires no vote.

## ***Gender Studies Program***

### *Proposal 09.12*

This proposal adds GEND 298 Intro to Queer Studies as a one-time course offering in spring 2010. It will be offered by the College's Postdoctoral Mellon Fellow.

This proposal was passed unanimously.

## **II. Response to Faculty Meeting**

In the Curriculum Committee report to the faculty, Chair Bierzychudek reported that the Committee was electing to not move forward with the full General Education Proposal and was vetting the possibility of bringing forth the MNS requirement separately for approval. She also called for the submission of ideas to the Committee.

There was some lengthy discussion about the Committee report at the faculty meeting and a faculty member vehemently objected to the Committee proposing separate pieces of the General Education Proposal. The idea of setting a precedent for using the language of "competencies" was also objected. There is now currently a motion on the floor (to be voted on at the November Faculty Meeting) that would essentially prevent the Committee from proposing a motion that treats the general education requirements separately from each other.<sup>1</sup> Chair Bierzychudek mentioned the possibility of speaking directly with the faculty member to see if she would consider withdrawing said motion.

Professor Tufte asked the Committee to consider how strongly it felt towards recommending the MNS requirement separately. While he personally supports the newly configured requirement, the key question is how strong overall resistance from the faculty will be and whether this will contaminate further discussion of general education as a whole.

Dean de Paula theorized that there are three possible elements in driving the motion that was made:

1. Any endorsement of the language of "competencies" would be premature given the fact that the faculty have not reached the end of that discussion; how should the College ultimately frame general education? As it currently stands, the wording of "competency" is still in the proposal.
2. If the MNS requirement is separately approved and adopted right now, will there be resource implications later on in the future?
3. The faculty seeing this as a "piecemeal" discussion, which is a matter of both style and substance.

There may be a way of phrasing this rhetorically so that the faculty can see that the Committee is trying to capitalize on the efforts of last year's GETF without implementing significant change. This possibility would be fully investigated and then brought to discussion; as it currently stands, the Committee has not been able to complete a thorough investigation yet.

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<sup>1</sup> The exact wording of the motion is not remembered by those present but should be in the October 7, 2009 Faculty Meeting minutes.

It was queried what would be explicitly gained from implementing this new MNS requirement. Chair Bierzychudek explained that when she was previously working with department chairs on determining the courses that would satisfy the requirement, the newly structured MNS requirement is just different enough from the old structure that it would be substantially more rigorous. Departments would need to employ subtle but important shifts in context in order to fulfill the new Quantitative A requirement, changes that are well-received by the department chairs. The new MNS requirement would really be less of a cosmetic change and actually clearer in terms of academic advising and do a better job of educating students on scientific skills.

Dean de Paula and Professor Kaplan both agreed that such a reasoning is compelling and shows that the need is present. Chair Bierzychudek personally feels that there is a lot of merit in the new MNS requirement and would be saddened to see the opportunity for discussion not take place.

Overall, the Committee supports the idea of a representative talking to the faculty member about considering withdrawing the motion from the floor. Chair Bierzychudek will speak to that member and this may serve to clarify the situation for all parties involved. She also requested the Committee to consider possible language for a new motion that would not use the language of “competency”.

### **III. General Updates & Announcements**

#### ***SPAS***

Professor Berkman reported to the Committee that a proposal has been submitted for a Gender Studies major. Although a great proposal, she questioned the precedence for turning a minor into a major. Registrar Crabtree answered that it is rather common for students to design a major out of a minor and is often the case for self-designed majors. Eventually the minor may turn into a major which is similar to how the Environmental Studies major started.

#### ***October 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting***

Chair Bierzychudek will be unable to make next week’s meeting; Professor Tufte has volunteered to serve as chair in her absence.

There is a possibility of cancellation for next week’s meeting if there is not enough business to warrant one. Professor Tufte will inform the Committee prior to next Wednesday to confirm the meeting upon receiving an update from the Course Proposal Subcommittee. Registrar Crabtree informed the Committee that there is one time-sensitive proposal but if it is relatively straightforward and recommended by the subcommittee, its approval can be conducted electronically.

#### ***Assessment Visit***

Dean de Paula thanked everyone who participated in the visit. He reported to the Committee that the assessors’ preliminary report of the College was a positive one and that the assessors commented on the College having made significant change in how it assesses curriculum, especially in terms of assessment itself. Many department chairs gave tangible feedback to the assessors.

In terms of general education, the assessors affirmed the College's initial efforts while recognizing that there is still some work to do. Dean de Paula was also informed that this would be the final visit for the College for some time but that the ten-year cycle will be shortened with more theme-based visits occurring in that period.

For the current discussion, Dean de Paula asked the Committee to utilize the new Moodle forum designed exclusively for faculty members to discuss general education. Additionally, "affinity" groups (as opposed to individual departments) are being brought forward for discussion.

***Additional Credits Counting Towards GPA***

Registrar Crabtree informed the Committee that her office allows up to 24 credits from AES to count towards graduation. If a student takes more than 24 credits from AES, those additional credits are not factored. However, should grades from those additional credits count towards a student's GPA? There is currently a written policy for when students retake a course in which the two grades are then averaged but no policy exists for additional courses taken.

The Committee ran out of time at this point and Chair Bierzychudek reasoned that it would take more time for the Committee to vet this issue. Discussion will resume at a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:31pm.