

Minutes
College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee
March 12, 2002

Present: Profs. Simon (secretary), Hannafey, McSweeney, Epstein, Phelan (chair), Hill, Rosivach, Boquet, Schlichting, Rakowitz, Wolfsdorf; Dean Snyder

1. Minutes of meeting of Feb. 12 were approved
2. Chair Phelan distributed procedural guidelines for one-week courses. The committee also began evaluation of Prof. Kathy Nantz's proposed one-week version of EC114 The Economics of Race, Class and Gender in the American Workplace.

Prof. Wolfsdorf asked about the EC114 grading system, which totaled 375 points without specifying what would entitle students to an A. Committee members said they assumed an A would be 90% of the potential points; Prof. Hill said she had seen other course proposals with a similar grading system. Prof. Simon encouraged the chair, in any letter to Prof. Nantz, to encourage her to spell out the grade distribution. Prof. Rosivach commended the course proposal for stretching the time period beyond one week, with assignments before and after the one-week class duration. Prof. Hill said Prof. Nantz had answered the substantive questions, as required in the procedural guidelines for one-week courses. Other committee members spoke favorably of the course proposal.

3. The discussion turned to how one-week courses are administered by Continuing Education. Prof. Rakowitz asked if students could register one day before the class starts; if so, how does that affect the four weeks of initial work required in the EC114 proposal. Prof. Simon said, based on his experience in teaching one week courses, no students would have signed up four weeks in advance; he suggested grouping the work together and assigning it for the two weeks before class. Prof. Epstein said it made no sense for the curriculum committee to create procedures, based on pedagogical concerns, if Continuing Education was going to ignore them in practice. Committee members asked how and when syllabi get distributed; Prof. Simon said he sends a copy to CE one month in advance and students receive it when they register. But he added some students fail to do the prescribed work before Class 1; some even fail to buy books ahead of time. Prof. Rosivach said students in CE courses were getting the same credit (and potentially the same diploma) as students in the day school. He suggested Prof. Nantz be asked to report back on her experience with the one-week format. Prof. Simon suggested that CE officials be invited to the committee meeting to answer questions.

The committee unanimously approved EC114 in the one-week format.

Prof. Hill noted that the faculty's CE committee is surveying faculty on concerns with the program; curriculum committee members said they would enjoy seeing the results. Prof. Rosivach noted that the Journal of Record called for every FU course to have a student evaluation.

4. The committee began a discussion of use of Special Topics courses. Prof. Simon said he and Prof. Boquet had examined use of such courses at FU and elsewhere and found no consistent pattern. There were several models: 1) rotating different courses under ST heading, as done in physics, psychology and art history at Fairfield; 2) using ST for independent studies, as done in applied ethics and biology; 3) using ST to experiment with courses and try innovative approaches, then seek curriculum committee approval for subsequent offerings of the same course; 4) using ST for one-time special courses such as The '60s Project at Fairfield. The English Department was seeking approval of several Special Topics courses as a way of avoiding Dean's Approval of courses while maintaining strong departmental control over courses being taught for the first time. Prof. Boquet said she was surprised when she arrived at Fairfield that there was no consistent pattern in use of ST, as done at other schools

Prof. Rosivach said he worried about the lack of departmental oversight. Prof. Hill said that under the English Department plan, allowing a course to run twice under ST before submitting it for curriculum committee approval might be too much. Prof. Boquet said she worried that if the curriculum committee approved a course the first time it ran, it might get listed in the university catalog and never taught again, leading to truth in advertising type problems. Prof. Wolfsdorf suggested a subcommittee be formed to study the issue.

Committee members discussed the broader issue of getting all new courses submitted to the curriculum committee, as required. Prof Hill said there was a disconnect between the committee approving new courses, the dean's office supervising the catalog and the registrar including new courses. Dean Snyder suggested a 30-day review model where a department might propose a Special Topics course, demonstrate it had reviewed it, then run it unless the curriculum committee responded within 30 days. Dean Snyder said part of his unease with Dean's Approval centered in the fact that the academic expertise in a given area rested with the department, not the dean's office. The committee created a subcommittee composed of Profs. Rosivach, Wolfsdorf and Simon to study the issue.

No action was taken on pending Special Topics courses proposed by English and Philosophy.

4. The committee considered EN253, African-American Literary Voices, proposed by Prof. Tomlinson. The course was approved.

5. Prof. Epstein moved to adjourn; Prof. Hill seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Jim Simon