

Academic Affairs Committee Minutes April 4, 2017

Present: Marta Ameri, Nadia El-Sharaawi, Sahan Dissanayake, Jim Scott, Lisa McDaniels, Jacob Adner, Jenner Foster, Muheb Esmat, Margaret McFadden, Jim Sloat, Adrienne Carmack, Fernando Gouvea, Lori Kletzer. Guest: Michael Donihue, Chair of Economics

I. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

II. Consent agenda: course approvals

After some discussion about the structure of the International Diversity requirement, which some members find problematic, the following courses were approved as submitted, with a few exceptions noted in parentheses:

- AM1XX: The Practice of Digital Scholarship
- CI 2XX: Cameraless Film
- CL 1XX: Myth and Cosmos in Ancient Greece
- CS 397: Software Engineering I (not eligible for the N)
- EA 2XX: Buddhism Across East Asia (not eligible for the I)
- EN 2XX: Geographies of Home
- EN 2XX: History of the Book
- EN 2XX: Poems, Paintings, and Printing
- EN 2XX: Literature Against Distortion
- EN 3XX: Hawthorne and Melville
- GE 363: Paleoceanography
- GS 4XX: Insurgent Mobilities Lab I and II
- MA 398: Mathematical Neuroscience
- PL297: Taking Philosophy Public
- RS 1XX: Introduction to Christianity
- RS2XX: Religious Life of Things (should have U)
- RS 297: Sports, Religion, and Inequality
- SP 298: Latinx and Chicana Feminisms
- SP 398: Mexican-US Border Studies

III. Proposal from Economics: Collaborative research experience

Michael Donihue attended to take questions about the Economics department proposal to add a two-credit lab to a three-credit senior seminar (currently four credits) and one select 300-level course. Some details about the change: It would apply to rising seniors. It is a change of major requirements by changing co-requisites. The lab is a new, required course, and thus would increase the number of required courses for the major. They have modeled their proposal on a similar structure in Psychology for 300-level seminar-lab courses. They will manage losing six or seven courses from the curriculum by making the 200 and 300 level electives bigger (20 to 24).

Donihue explained the history of the research requirement in Econ. They have a long history of doing research in Economics—used to be that every student had to do a 391—which created a nice culture of students thinking about their research projects. They couldn't sustain the workload. So they created EC 345 independent studies, but got no real teaching credit for supervising those enrollments. Econ has increased the writing requirements in 300 level courses

and want seniors to do more intensive research; they see the Psychology model as workable for them. Students would collaboratively share their research with other students, instead of each faculty member having to meet individually with the students in the seminar.

Committee members raised a number of questions. These included the impact on major requirements; the course-counting effects of counting this senior capstone as two courses in faculty load while adding only a one-credit additional lab meeting; and how to make up for lost seats in other courses. There was considerable skepticism expressed about how this proposal was formulated, as it was very different from the curricular overhaul that created the Psychology model; there was also considerable concern about the precedent this might set with regard to teaching loads on campus. Other concerns included changing a curricular requirement without grandfathering students; why did this not come up when the major was re-structured earlier this year? The precedent of changing major requirements by redefining courses was also of concern to some. Students on the committee were not concerned about the extra hour of class time. It must be said that there was considerable concern that this proposal was really just a way to get to a four-course teaching load, not about enhancing the student experience. The economists insisted that this was about giving students a better senior capstone experience. The question of why a 300-level course was also being included in the new capstone model was raised; the response was that the lab would add a more rigorous research component to that course. There was also a discussion of the losses that come with raising course caps in lower-level courses. The committee was far from consensus about this proposal and discussion will be continued next week. There is time pressure, as students will begin to register soon, but we cannot be rushed in our deliberations, as these changes are significant.