

Academic Affairs Committee Minutes April 18, 2017

Present: Nadia El-Sharaawi, Sahan Dissanayake, Marta Ameri, Jim Scott, Lisa McDaniels, Barbara Moore, Margaret McFadden, Beth Schiller.

I. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved, with the correction that Beth Schiller was in attendance on April 11, and as excellent as ever.

II. Consent agenda: course approvals

EN 2XX: Science Fictions was provisionally approved, pending the completion of some parts of the course proposal form.

PL 2XX: Philosophy of Law was approved.

GO 2XX: America and the World. Margaret will follow up with the instructor about the course title, which seems very general.

GO 314 was approved to fulfill the US diversity requirement.

III. Data Science minor proposal was approved

The committee continued discussion of the proposed new interdisciplinary data science minor, which combines courses from Mathematics, Computer Science, and Statistics. It offers a good credential to students not already specializing in one of these fields, and good experiences to students interested in how to do applied quantitative analysis. With current staffing, the departments can all handle the anticipated increased demand for the DS required courses. (For comparison, the current Statistics minor currently has ten students enrolled.) There are only two other NESCAC schools with DS programs, so this will help differentiate us.

About courses that might be substituted, 2 semesters of Economics or Psychology statistics courses could be taken, instead of SC 212, for students in those fields. This may also apply to Sociology once their new statistics courses can be evaluated.

We also discussed the question of the minor being interdisciplinary and having no departmental home. Math and CS faculty can co-direct, much like in the interdisciplinary Computation majors. We also discussed the need to be more expansive in our views of administrative structure, so as to enable the kinds of interdisciplinary fields that are developing to be able to thrive at Colby.

Finally, the committee discussed when the minor would go into effect, if approved by the faculty in September. The decision was to begin to allow students to enroll immediately, despite the fact that it wouldn't be in the fall catalogue. We could add it to the online catalogue, which is now being archived, so we could track the change and have it be part of the official record. The committee voted unanimously to approve the minor.

IV. Change to requirements for the Science, Technology, and Society minor.

The committee approved the request of the STS program to eliminate the requirement that STS minors complete a second semester of thesis research (ST 486), after the research-intensive capstone W3 course (ST 485). Students may take ST 486 as one of their electives, but it will no longer be required. The number of courses required for the minor is unchanged at 7.

