

Academic Affairs Committee—February 19, 2019

Present: Sandy Maisel, Steve Saunders, Loren McClenachan, Dale Kocevski, Christy Woodside, Chasity McFadden, Sam Lee, Sam Scott, Lindsey Nelson, Katie Donahue, Jim Sloat, Luke Parker, Barbara Moore, Russ Johnson (by phone).

I. Minutes from the previous meeting (February 12) were approved.

II. One course proposal was considered.

RE282 (Jews of Germany, Past and Present) H, I

Based on feedback provided from last week's meeting, a revised proposal for RE282 proposal was submitted to the committee. In the revised proposal, the spring break trip is fully optional, and the proposed course does not rely on work done during spring break to justify the number of credits awarded. This course is still proposed to have a rather complex meeting schedule (partially overlapping with RE182) and a complex crediting arrangement – with different amounts of credit depending on whether a student is concurrently enrolled in RE182. Some questions and concerns remained about this structure.

After considerable discussion, the committee chose not to approve the proposal at this time. As an alternative, it is recommend that the course be proposed as a “One-time/Experimental“ course. Courses proposed in that manner are permitted to run a single time without specific approval from the AAC. This would allow a test of how many students would be interested in such a course, and how easily the crediting system could be implemented. After the running the course once, it would be easier for the AAC to make an informed decision on whether it should become a more permanent part of the curriculum.

III. The committee continued the conversation (begun last week) on a proposal from Jill Gordon. The proposal asks that Colby's current policy (a student must have specific permission from the academic advisor and the Dean of Studies to enroll in more than 20 credit hours) be changed to require permission to enroll in more than 18 hours. To help give us a more informed perspective, registrar Lindsey Nelson presented a comprehensive data set on how many students have recently enrolled in higher than a ‘normal” course load. Over the past few years, approximately 1% of students in any given semester enrolled in >20 credits. In each semester, an average of about 8% of students enrolled in >18 credits. Among first-year students, only about 4% enrolled in >18 credits. As a general rule, the students enrolling in high course loads do not appear to be struggling academically (based on their GPA) compared to other students.

Based on the current data, the committee did not see a sufficiently large problem to warrant a policy change. However, it will be wise to revisit the issue in a couple of years to see if any increase occurs in the number of students taking on extra heavy course loads, and if students appear to struggle as a result of doing so.