

GEOC Meeting September 14, 2009

In attendance: Katharina von Hammerstein, Anabel Perez, Kate Capshaw Smith, John Ayers, Bill Lott, Robert Cromley, Jane Goldman, Cora Lynn Deibler, Eric Schultz, Tom Deans, Xae Alicia Reyes, Michael Young, Anke Finger, Tom Roby, Rosa Helena Chinchilla, Murphy Sewall. Not present: Douglas Kaufman.

Meeting called to order at 12:05pm.

1. Minutes of the September 4, 2009 meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes as written. Motion approved with no abstentions or objections.

2. Announcements

- *Writing in Freshmen English Assessment Report.* Scott Campbell. 380+ writing samples in Freshmen English courses were collected. Highlights of assessment findings will be reported at the Senate meeting this evening; primary discussion about writing at UConn and the W requirement in particular will take place once the Writing Taskforce has had an opportunity to make recommendations to the Senate.
 - One of the key findings of this assessment was that good assignments result in good writing. The report contains suggestions for “good assignments.”
 - Tom Deans reported that the W Center is holding a workshop about these findings on September 28th. Throughout the semester, the W Center also holds lunchtime faculty seminars, including one on W assignments.
- *Library Learning Commons.* Tom Roby announced that the Learning Commons- of which the W Center and Q Center are part- will have its grand opening on September 24th at 3pm. He was not aware if the planned Second Languages/Cultures commons is a part.
- *Comparative Assessment of Writing in FE and in Majors.* Tom Deans has started the writing of this report based on findings of discipline-specific W assessment in AY 07-08 and AY 08-09 and the FE Writing Assessment that has just concluded.
 - Important Points:
 - Discussion with faculty throughout the assessment process suggests there is very little agreement about what constitutes good writing across disciplines. It is very important to have departments discuss discipline-specific writing and to set their own standards for writing.
 - Largely, the same patterns emerged in FE assessment as in the W in the majors courses assessed in AY 07-08 and AY 08-09. The vast majority of students are crossing the threshold into minimal proficiency (college level academic writing proficiency); few are writing at a moderate proficiency level and very few at a high proficiency level.
 - Other points raised by GEOC members:
 - How can the University support faculty-- many not full-time faculty-- to teach better writing?
 - It is important to keep in mind that the way we are teaching writing now is very resource-intensive and a decision has to be made about whether this is worth the cost.
 - Often, when faculty are told they are teaching writing they think about issues of grammar and punctuation and not about the concept of writing as a critical-thinking process. We need help faculty emphasize the latter.
 - Most assignments should not be about flat text but, rather, about communicating wisely and effectively. Most communication in the world is via multiple media, not simply text.
 - Is there anything defensible about singling out writing as the sole way to teach students how to communicate effectively?
 - Is this just about writing or about translating different modes of multimedia into one media—writing?
 - A more holistic approach to communication could be envisioned, with a writing requirement that included different media elements.
 - Should GEOC propose that UConn’s Gen Ed program move from the concept of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) to Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC)? Should the W Task Force entertain this? Eric Schultz thinks this goes beyond the capability of the W Task Force.

3. Subcommittee Reports

CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

CA4 recommends **approval** of the following courses for inclusion in the CA4 content area:

International

SPAN 1010	Contemporary Spanish Culture and Society through Film
SOCI 2XXX/W	Sociology of Anti-Semitism (there will be W and non-W sections of this course)
WS 2255/W	Sexualities, Activism and Globalization (there will be W and non-W sections of this course)
WS 2105	Gender and Science (W and non-W sections of this course are planned. W approval has not yet been granted.)

Motion to approve the above courses for inclusion in CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism, International. Motion approved with no abstentions or objections.

As an update to the written CA4 report, PRLS/SPAN 1009 Latino Literature, Culture and Society will be reviewed again on Thursday following receipt of the missing information.

The following course will be reviewed at the next CA4 meeting, September 17, 2009:

MUSI 100X	Popular Music and Culture in American Society
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Writing Competency

W recommends **approval** of the following courses:

WS 2255W	Sexualities, Activism and Globalization (there will be W and non-W sections of this course)
WS 3XXXW	Gender Representations in US Popular Culture (course approved for W in Spring 2009)
SOCI 2XXXW	Sociology of Anti-Semitism (there will be W and non-W sections of this course)
BADM 4070W	Effective Business Writing (change in department and level from MGMT 3070W to BADM 4070W)
EKIN 4510W	mechanisms and Adaptations in Sport and Exercise (reduction of credits from 4 to 3 and removal of laboratory component)

Motion to approve the above courses. Motion approved with no abstentions or objections.

W recommends **approval of the following courses contingent upon noted changes in the webCAR:**

WS 2105W	Gender and Science (there will be W and non-W sections of this course)
DRAM 4711W	The Director in the Theatre
DRAM 4135W	Period Studies in Theatre

We recommend that GEOC approve the following courses for W, contingent on proposers making promised changes to the CARs as described below:

From W report 9/14/09:

- “WS 2105/W Gender and Science: Changes to item 25 (replace “yes” with “no” on whether course will be taught in English), to item 42.f (replace #3 with “Students will receive formal guidance from the instructor and will be encouraged to consult with members of the Writing Center staff and university librarians about the research and writing process.”), and to item 39 (insert agreed-upon W section description because current CAR

includes only the non-W version). Also, in item 38, include links to *both* the W and non-W syllabi (the W syllabus has been reviewed by the subcommittee, but currently only the non-W syllabus is linked to the CAR).

- DRAM 4711W The Director in the Theatre
- DRAM 4135W Period Studies in Theatre
- Both DRAM CARs requested only changes in enrollment restrictions for existing courses, but the subcommittee noticed two major problems with the W criteria in each: Item 23, which currently reads “Clarification: the W and non-W sections are combined for a total enrollment of 20 between the two sections” will be changed to “Non-W students may not be enrolled in this W course and enrollment will be capped at 19.” Item 42.f, currently blank, needs to include details on how the W requirement will be met (pages assigned; how revision will be structured; how student writing will be supervised; etc.). The syllabus for DRAM 4135W : Period Studies in Theatre, linked to Item 39 in that CAR, must be revised to remove the differing expectations, assignments, and grade weighting for students enrolling with W versus non-W status in the same course. Both course syllabi must include the “F Clause”: *To pass the course, students must pass its writing component.* The proposer (David Stern) has agreed to make these changes and to discuss them with the full DRAM faculty at its next departmental meeting.”

Motion approved with no abstentions or objections.

Upon resubmission of these CARs with appropriate revisions, the courses will be forwarded to Senate C&CC as approved by GEOC for W inclusion.

CA1 Arts and Humanities

The CA1 presented an oral report.

The CA1 subcommittee recommends **approval** of the following course for inclusion in CA1:

SPAN 1010 Contemporary Spanish Culture and Society through Film

Motion to approve SPAN 1010 for CA1 inclusion. Motion approved with no abstentions or objections.

The CA1 subcommittee recommends **more information** from proposers of the following courses:

CLCS 2XXX Intercultural Competency for Global Perspectives
(Subcommittee chairs Cora Lynn Deibler and Kate Capshaw Smith recommended that the proposer provide more information in the outline syllabus about assessment methods and possible technical aspects that may be used.)

MUSI 100X Popular Music and Culture in American Society
(Cora Lynn Deibler will get in touch with proposers Bob Miller and Eva Gorbants.)

4. General Reports and Discussion

Membership to GEOC and its Subcommittees

GEOC:

- One person has expressed interest in joining the GEOC and serving as co-chair of CA4. Katharina von Hammerstein asked for other suggestions and several people were identified.

GEOC subcommittees:

- CA2
 - Susi Wurmbrand and Ronald Sabatelli will not continue on the CA2 subcommittee in AY 09-10.
 - Subcommittee chairs Robert Cromley and Jane Goldman will identify other faculty to join the subcommittee.
- CA4
 - Subcommittee chair Anke Finger will invite one more person to join the subcommittee.
- IL
 - Subcommittee chairs Sarah Winter and Mike Young would like to recruit one more person.
- The following subcommittee have reported they are not in need of additional members:
 - CTC
 - W
 - Q

- CA1
- SL
- CA3: As the subcommittee chairs were not present, it is unclear if this subcommittee will need more members.

Cross-Content Area General Education (CCAGE) Courses

Background: In April 2008, GEOC approved a proposal to amend the general education curriculum to allow CCAGE courses. In April 2009, Senate C&CC approved a slightly amended version of the GEOC proposal.

At the September 11, 2009 Senate Executive Committee meeting, the issue CCAGE courses was raised. In particular, there were questions about whether the PeopleSoft technology could handle this change. It was decided that before this proposal is presented to the Senate, issues about technology should be resolved to ensure the proposal can be implemented if approved. Veronica Makowsky has agreed to provide a limited amount of money toward the project should PeopleSoft need to be modified to accommodate these changes.

The rationale for approving the CCAGE courses proposal was that some course proposal submissions to CA1, 2, 3 do not fall neatly in one content area, but span two. As problem-based interdisciplinary thinking becomes more and more important for our graduates, it is vital that the general education system be a model for this kind of interdisciplinarity. Added to this, part of the university's academic plan is to increase interdisciplinarity.

The current general education system allows for courses overlap in content areas ONLY when one of the content areas is CA4. Under the current system, overlap between content areas 1, 2, 3 is not permitted. Students must take two courses in each of the CAs 1-3, two in CA 4, though one of the CA 4 may overlap with CAs 1-3. Content area courses in CAs 1-3 must be taken in six different subject areas.

In the Spring 2008 GEOC discussions about CCAGE courses, the following key points were made:

- Keeping the integrity of each content area is vital for a course to be approved in more than one CA. A multiple-content area course would have to fulfill all of the criteria of each content area for which it is approved.
- Multiple-content area courses would allow for the building of important bridges between content areas.
- Courses proposed for multiple content areas would be thoroughly reviewed by each of the content area subcommittees. The filter for content area inclusion- the GEOC subcommittees- are very rigorous in their review so there is little reason to believe that watered-down versions of content area courses would be approved.
- There are probably *very* few courses likely to meet the thresholds of multiple content areas Gen Ed courses among CA1, 2, 3. Yet, GEOC would like to propose opening the door to this option.

The 2008 GEOC CCAGE courses proposal consisted of:

- Allowing courses to overlap within CAs 1-3
- Allowing CAs 1-3 courses, with multiple CAs 1-3 designations or not, to overlap with CA4.
- Each student would have the *option* of taking ONE multiple-content area course per content area. So, each student, at the completion of his or her general education courses, would have taken at least ONE single-content area designation course per content area.
- Students would make the decision for which CA a course would count on their final plan of study.

Technical problems identified in SEC and in Katharina von Hammerstein's meeting with Registrar Jeff von Munkwitz-Smith, with relevant discussion points raised by GEOC members:

- Deferral of selection for which CA a multiple-content area course would be counted.
 - If a student does not have to select how a multiple-content area course should be designated until the submission of their final plan, the degree progress report will show that a requirement is still outstanding. This has negative implications for student athletes and others needing to show they have completed particular courses.
 - The GEOC proposal to Senate C&CC proposed that students choose how a course should be counted at the time of registration. The Senate C&CC amended the proposal to have the student choose how a course should be counted at the time they file their final plan of study. However, the Senate C&CC amendment in no way prohibits a student from making a temporary choice for how a particular course should be designated, with final decision about particular designations at the final plan stage.

- One other problem with this deferral is that not all students must file final plans of study (e.g., Nursing, Pharmacy, CANR, and some CLAS majors.).
- Minimum of one single-content area course required per content area, as opposed to the possibility of two multiple-CA courses.
 - It could happen that some students, for whatever reason, might end up with two multiple-content area courses in the same content area. They would then need to take a third course, without a multiple-content area designation, to fulfill his or her requirement. This could pose serious confusion for students.
 - If one of the principle points about multiple-content area courses is that each course must fulfill all of the criteria for each content area for which it is designated, why do we need to draw a distinction between students taking single- and multiple-content area courses?

Suggestion:

- Eliminate the distinction between single- and multiple-content area courses. Keep the requirement at two (2) courses per content area, regardless of whether it is a single- or multiple-content area course. However, the total number of general education courses each student must take would remain at seven (7).
 - Concern: breadth of general education courses students would take.
 - Under the proposal to remove distinctions between single- and multiple-content area courses, it is possible that students could take courses across gen ed that would be through one lens. For example, psychology has many different areas and a student could conceivably take multiple-content area courses CAs1, 2, 3 and 4.
 - The 6 area rule would prevent them from completing their gen eds in this manner.
 - However, a student could take two multiple-content area courses that would fulfill two content areas and then take the balance of the required Gen Ed courses in one content area.
 - The proposal could reduce the breadth in disciplines some student would have needed to obtain while fulfilling their gen ed requirements in the current system.
 - The six area requirement is an enforceable diversity in gen ed that should be maintained.
 - One GEOC member expressed the opinion that draconian scenarios have an extremely low probability of taking place and it may not be worth GEOC spending a lot of time on them. The good of the proposed change outweighs the bad that may come of possible small loopholes. For the sake of innovation, GEOC needs to move forward.

Other points:

- Multiple-content area courses would serve to help students “cross-pollinate” in disciplines that are primarily silo-driven.
- There is a real issue of breadth in this proposal.
- The proposal offers really valuable possibilities for engaging students in disciplines outside of their comfort areas.
- Is there danger that a course might drift from the multiple-content areas and toward a focus on only one?
 - The danger of a course drifting from the Gen Ed CA criteria is a potential danger for any Gen Ed course.

Katharina von Hammerstein asked the GEOC if the committee is interested in continuing these discussions. It was determined that, yes, these discussions should continue.

Meeting adjourned at 2:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anabel Perez
GEOC Administrator