

# Arts and Sciences Committee on Courses Annual Report, 2012-2013

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## Meetings

The committee met once per week for 1 ½ hours per meeting throughout most of the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters to handle regular business. In addition, the committee had a number of extended and additional meetings this year:

- Special meetings of Courses Committee: 5
- Meetings of DKU ad hoc committee on courses: 3

Total number of meetings per semester: 13 fall, 12 spring; total number of meetings during the academic year: 25 + 3 Kunshan = 28.

## Basic Activities and Accomplishments:

The committee discussed and approved a total of **468 course requests\***, broken down as follows:

COURSE ADDS: 168

COURSE CHANGES: 38

SPECIAL TOPICS: 229 [First year seminars: 67; Other Special Topics: 162]

House courses were brought to the committee if issues needed to be addressed.

HOUSE COURSES reviewed: 33

\* Please note that an **additional 850 course requests** were reviewed and approved by the Associate Dean and her staff in the Office of Curriculum and Course Development.

## Special Tasks:

The Courses Committee had a number of special tasks this year:

- DKU Course review (including joint membership in Ad-hoc DKU Courses Committee)
- Develop a philosophical statement on "What is a Course?"
- Guidelines for giving credit for online courses
- Thoughts about issues with and possible changes to core curriculum
- Surveying DUS's about oversight of curriculum codes
- Input for adding curricular codes to course assessment survey

## Challenges

### *Course Concerns*

The committee discussed a number of persistent concerns regarding issues of course overlap, curricular coding, and standards. Given the difficulty of determining, on the basis of brief course descriptions, whether we are giving appropriate credit, ensuring high standards and intellectual demand, as well as appropriateness of curricular codes, the committee will propose to the Council requiring more detailed information about new courses being

proposed, including a syllabus containing a fuller description and specific learning objectives (see below).

#### *Logistical Concerns*

The committee's work is time-intensive with weekly meetings of one and a half to two hours each for at least the first half of each semester, when course requests pour in by the hundreds. As noted, the information provided is minimal and often the committee must go back to departments and request more information, very often including a syllabus. This past year the committee met every week for almost the entire year, a situation which is untenable in the long run. This was largely due to the extra business with which the committee was tasked this year. We expect that the addition of 3 new faculty members will help greatly to speed up the work flow and ultimately reduce the number of meetings needed each semester.

#### *Course Oversight Issues*

The committee created and implemented a survey of Directors of Undergraduate Studies to determine their practices with regard to regular review of courses and course proposals, as well as their view of faculty knowledge of and engagement with the Trinity College curriculum in general, and with the curricular codes attached to their courses in particular. The results were revealing. While most DUS's are familiar with the curriculum and with the curricular codes, they vary widely in their practices of oversight and review; they felt that most of the faculty in their units were not very familiar with the curriculum or with the objectives of modes of inquiry attached to their courses.

### **Plans for Next Year**

#### *Requiring more information on course requests*

The committee is considering requiring departments and programs to provide a rationale for new courses, as well as a syllabus, which may have the effect of getting departments to be more thoughtful and deliberate about proposing new courses. Requiring more information will also aid the committee in making decisions about requests.

#### *Notification procedure for W and R codes*

The committee will continue to notify instructors whose courses carry W and/or R codes about the need to determine whether their courses should continue to carry these codes and, if not, how to make the needed changes.

#### *Policies related to Course Credit and Online Courses*

Because the policies the Courses Committee had proposed relating to online courses were not passed by the Council this year, the committee will need to consider a process and proposal that will be more acceptable to the faculty. The committee will also need to revisit the issue of course credit vs. semester hours in light of a proposal from the Physics department to give extra credit for courses that require labs as well as discussions and recitations.

*“What is a Course?”*

At the beginning of the year, Dean Patton charged the committee with thinking philosophically about “what is a course”? to guide the college’s thinking on course and curricular issues. The committee devoted a lot of time to discussing this question, and drafted a 6 page document that attempts to answer this question in light of contemporary pedagogical and technological innovation and change. No doubt further discussion will be needed on a variety of related issues, but we hope this document might provide a useful foundation for further deliberations.

**Suggestions for the Future**

The administration should see that this committee is properly staffed—both to ensure sufficient disciplinary representation and to allow for a reasonable workload for its members. We would also urge the administration to consider a course release for service on this committee.

	<b>Members</b>	<b>Division</b>	<b>Dept. / Program</b>	<b>Term</b>
<b>Co-Chair</b>	Cary Moskovitz		Thompson Writ. Prog.	2012-2014
<b>Co-Chair</b>	Susan Wynn	SS	Prog. In Education	2012-2014
	<b>David Kraines</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>2010-2013</b>
	Paul Manos	NS	Biology	2012-2015
	Joshua Sosin	Hum	Classical Studies	2011-2014
	Barbara Dickinson	Hum	Dance	2012-2015
	<b>Vacant</b>	<b>SS</b>		
	<b>Vacant</b>	<b>SS</b>		
<b>Ex Officio</b>	Tom Robisheaux	A&S	ECASC Liaison	2012-present
	Ingeborg Walther	A&S	Curriculum & Dev.	2007 - present