

Arts and Sciences Committee on Courses

Annual Report, 2011-2012

Cary Moskowitz and Susan Wynn, Co-Chairs

Submitted June 12, 2012

Meetings

The committee met once per week for 1 ½ hours per meeting throughout most of the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters. Total number of meetings per semester: 9 fall, 10 spring; total number of meetings during the academic year: 19.

Basic Activities and Accomplishments:

The committee discussed and approved a total of **443 course requests**, broken down as follows:

COURSE ADDS: 168

COURSE CHANGES: 15

SPECIAL TOPICS: 233 [First year seminars: 63; Other Special Topics: 170]

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

HOUSE COURSES approved: 26

In addition, the following issues were discussed:

Cross-listing and Course Ownership: policies and practices

Modes of Inquiry Code Oversight Issues

Requiring minimal syllabus for all course requests (adds, changes that involve curricular codes, special topics)

Process for implementing the new QS criteria

Challenges

Course Concerns

Over the past several years the Courses Committee has noticed a proliferation of regular (non-Special Topics) courses. A growing number of course requests also ask for two Areas of Knowledge, and the committee must make decisions about the appropriateness of these requests based on minimal information.

Standards

The committee is responsible for ensuring high quality and standards. To what extent should the committee be concerned about courses in different departments that appear to overlap? Is the committee responsible for reducing redundancy in the curriculum? It is also difficult to determine, on the basis of brief course descriptions, whether we are giving appropriate credit, not to mention ensuring high standards and intellectual demand.

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.

Modes of Inquiry Oversight Issues

The committee discussed concerns that once curriculum codes are approved for a given course there is no oversight mechanism. Cary Moskovitz did some research into practices at other institutions, including conversations with those who are involved in administering such programs. The committee discussed the merits and drawbacks of options ranging from periodic recertification to possibilities for online notification tied to the registrar data. The committee decided that while there is merit in the concept of a periodic recertification process, implementation was impractical at this time. The committee agreed that (1) a notification process for the W and R codes is a reasonable first step, and (2) email notification is the best option for making instructors aware of which of these codes their courses carried, to alert them to the need to change inappropriate codes, and instruct them in how to do so.

Plans for Next Year

Requiring more information

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.

Implementing a notification procedure for W and R codes

The committee will develop a process 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. We believe that this process would be most effective if these emails can contain links to the online forms that contain the rationale proposed for these codes so instructors who inherit codes can know what is expected for their courses. We will investigate the feasibility of doing this.

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. Consider a course release for service on this committee.

Committee Member

	NAME	DIVISION	DEPARTMENT	TERM OF SERVICE
Faculty	Cary Moskovitz (Co-Chair)	Humanities	Thompson Writing Program	2005-present
	Susan Wynn (Co-Chair)	Social Sciences	Education	2008-present
	David Kraines	Natural Sciences	Mathematics	2010-2013
	Joshua Sosin	Humanities	Classical Studies	2011-2014
Ex Officio	Ingeborg Walther		Assoc. Dean (Curriculum & Course Development)	2007-present