

To: Lee Willard, Associate Dean, Trinity College of Arts and Sciences
From: Paul Manos, Chair, A&S Courses Committee
Re: Annual report for the Courses Committee

The Arts & Sciences Courses Committee meets weekly for 1.5 hours during each semester. Our workload for the past academic year is presented in Table 1. We thank Kim Travlos and Laura Jackson for their efforts and patience in supporting our work.

Committee Members for the 2015-2016 academic year:

Paul Manos (Biology), Chair
Carol Apollonio (Slavic and Eurasian Studies)
Clark Bray (Mathematics)
Denise Comer (Thompson Writing Program)
Barbara Dickinson (Dance)
Kip Frey (Sanford School of Public Policy)
Mark Leary (Psychology and Neuroscience)
Shane Goodridge (Associate Dean), *ex officio*

Table 1. The numbers of courses reviewed by the A&S Courses Committee.

<u>5/15/2015-5/13/2016</u>	<u>Committee Review</u>
ADD	171
CHANGE	33
SP. TOPICS*	226
DROP	0
TOTAL:	430

* includes 33 First Year Seminars

TOTAL # Kunshan requests: 16

The implementation of the new Course Request System in summer 2015 was met with general success. After the initial training sessions, Duke faculty and staff were able to navigate the system with only moderate support from the Office of Curriculum and Course Development. As of summer 2016 the system will undergo its first round of major revisions after a year's worth of user feedback. Major changes to increase functionality will include the ability to search for existing requests by splitting the "courses" column into two separate "subject" and "catalog" columns; the addition of a "send back to department" button so departments will be less dependent on the office's staff person to modify requests and resolve errors; the "notify directors" button will be modified to include department auxiliaries and any cross-listed department directors on all course notifications, ensuring more complete communications between departments; a help link will be added at the top of the page; and a pre-populate feature on the special topics request form will be added to end the manual duplication currently required. This final feature is particularly important and will greatly reduce faculty and staff time spent on repeated special topics requests. These changes will be addressed in the fall 2016 training session.

During the year, several topics were discussed regularly by our committee in reaction to subsets of course proposals. A short description of these, including recommendations for training opportunities, is presented below with the goal of streamlining our efforts.

The role of research (R code) in introductory courses. The committee generally had negative reactions to most of the requests for the R code in first year seminars and focus courses. The consensus is that training first-year students to understand the nature of research and to read and discuss primary literature are important components of particular introductory classes. Courses of this type should be encouraged. However, the R code is best reserved for more advanced courses wherein mature students can build on the development of the skill set needed to conduct meaningful research.

Recommendations to improve course proposals and pedagogy. A significant number of course proposals submitted each semester could benefit from a more thorough vetting within the home department/unit. Our committee encourages stronger communication between standing departmental curriculum committees, DUSes, faculty, and graduate students in the process of preparing a course proposal. For example, new and visiting faculty unfamiliar with the Duke Curriculum should discuss their course proposals prior to submission. Graduate instructors in particular would benefit from short workshops on writing course descriptions etc., including opportunities for feedback on proposal drafts from the DUS and curriculum committee. Graduate instructors also should be encouraged to meet with experienced Duke faculty, including major professors, graduate committee members, and departmental curriculum committee members as they develop course proposals.

There appears to be ample opportunity through the Thompson Writing Program (TWP) to seek advice on how to conceive Writing assignments for course proposals seeking the W code, as well as other aspects of course preparation. The following opportunities on campus should receive greater visibility.

For TWP faculty, we recommend the intensive three week-long postdoctoral summer seminar in teaching writing that runs every August, and for graduate students working in the TWP, a week-long seminar in writing pedagogy is run every year. These are paired with closely mentored supervision and collaboration on syllabus development, writing project design, workshops across the academic year focused on responding to student writing, cultivating space for writing, using writing productively in class, etc.

For the broader faculty, Cary Moskovitz and Jennifer Ahern-Dodson both run workshops and consultations, as requested, with faculty and/or units/departments on writing pedagogy, integrating writing instruction through a disciplinary lens, faculty writing, etc. Cary is the former Chair of our committee. His understanding of writing within the Duke curriculum is without peer.

Courses committee member, Denise Comer, has just signed on to be one of three faculty mentors for A&S faculty to serve in a consultancy role talking with people and units about integrating portfolio pedagogy into their courses, which often involves writing pedagogy and course design.

Also, the TWP writing studio works directly with undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty on their own writing. The Studio also trains undergraduates and graduate students in how to be a writing consultant through an undergraduate course, workshops, and a summer seminar.

The TWP just launched a graduate level course in writing pedagogy (Writing 591) in which MAT students enrolled during Term I to develop syllabi, writing assignments, and learn about writing pedagogy.

Harder Deadlines? Late course proposals undermine our efforts to evaluate them in a timely fashion, and with a full staff of committee members. Our committee works hard during the semester and we work best reviewing proposals in our weekly, face-to-face meetings. We also need time to request for clarification/revision in order to engage Duke instructors about our expectations and standards.

Late proposals are fairly routine for our committee, and we are still receiving course proposals for the fall semester. While late proposals are sometimes unavoidable (e.g., new instructors), the fact that so many are submitted after bookbagging and course registration is not fair to students. *The impacts of late course proposals on enrollments are not clear, but a reasonable goal is to improve course planning within each department/unit.* In addition to re-assessing our own deadlines, we ask for the assistance of the Deans in reaching out to the DUS of each department/unit to enforce course proposal deadlines. This no doubt will involve chasing down faculty and graduate instructors who are planning new courses or considering code revisions to existing courses. We believe that this extra effort would be worthwhile to students and faculty alike.

Respectfully submitted by,



Paul Manos
Jack H. Neely Professor &
Associate Chair of Biology

June 29, 2016