

Minutes for the Curriculum Committee for March 21, 2005

Members present: Ken Rousslang, Lisa Wood, Joyce Tamashiro, Lori Ricigliano, Suzanne Barnett, Christine Smith, Jim Jasinski, Brad Tomhave, Bill Barry, Carrie Washburn, Karim Ochoi, Richard Anderson-Connolly (Chair), Carlo Bonura (Secretary)

Minutes for the February 28, 2005 meeting of the Committee were approved.

SCIS sub-committee report:

Rousslang **moved** Curriculum Committee approval of the following course for the Seminar in Scholarly and Creative Inquiry core category.

1. HIS 137, The Black Death: Medieval and Modern Perspectives, Katherine Smith, History (beginning Fall, 2005)

He suggested that Katherine's course proposal meets both the learning objectives and guidelines for courses proposed in the core category of Scholarly and Creative Inquiry Seminar. In particular, the committee is gratified to see each and every learning objective and guideline addressed individually, and in some detail. In Katherine's words, the course will force students to "grapple with the following major modern debates surrounding the plague: was the Black Death an outbreak of the bubonic plague or something different. How did medieval people respond to the plague, in terms of seeking to understand and ameliorate its effects? To what extent did the plague, together with other late medieval crises (such as destructive wars and widespread famines) mark the end of the medieval period in Europe?" Further, quoting Professor Smith, "Students will become acquainted with the late medieval culture of Europe on the eve of the Black Death, and major components of the class will be devoted to in-depth considerations of medieval medicine, religion, and class structure, all of which factors determined the reactions of medieval Europeans to the Black Death."

The course was unanimously approved by the Committee.

Washburn reminded the Committee that action needed to be taken on department reviews.

Continuation of the consideration of the question of transfer students and freshmen seminars:

Various members of the Committee offered their own summaries of the debate over whether to allow freshmen to petition into transfer student seminars. Points emphasized included the "freshmen experience" (as intended in faculty legislation), the tension between the integrity of first year experiences and course flexibility (in terms of student's selection of courses) and the role these seminars play as an introduction to the content of individual courses, to college itself and to Puget Sound as an institution.

The Committee again discussed the particular needs of transfer students. This conversation raised the question of how transfer students come to Puget Sound (namely, in which cases students may be able to claim that credit from other institutions fulfill the requirements of the freshmen seminars).

Barry restated the case for maintaining the separation between freshmen and transfer students by arguing that the two categories of students represented to “distinct audiences.”

A concern was also raised about the assumptions being made concerning the quality of scholarship within both groups of students.

The Committee debated what strategy should be followed in terms its possible options (whether to delay action, collect more data to try to more accurately describe the current situation, or send a recommendation just about transfer students to the senate).

Christine Smith raised the possibility that this issue may be best handled through advising.

The conversation returned to the question of special concerns related to transfer students’ first year experience. Tomhave suggested that transfer students do not seem to make admissions decisions based on first year requirements (in terms of required classes).

The Committee then briefly considered broader changes to the seminar system.

Jasinski, as a way to conclude the meeting, asked the Committee to reaffirm its original decision (allowing petitioned entry while also recognizing that the issue of transfer student seminars needs more attention, but not allowing transfer students to enter freshmen seminar).

It was clear after Jasinski’s suggestion that there was not a consensus among members on this issue. As the meeting came to an end, this topic was placed on the agenda of the next meeting.