

General Education Oversight Committee
Report for 2009-10
4/22/10

1. Course Review: The primary work of the committee continues to be reviewing proposals for courses to be designated to meet critical perspectives requirements. During the 2009-10 academic year, the committee approved (and the Committee on Instruction and the Faculty confirmed) 21 courses to fulfill the Diverse Cultures and Critiques requirement, 7 courses to fulfill the Scientific Inquiry requirement, and 3 courses to fulfill the West-in-Time requirement.

As a reminder, the committee meets on the first Wednesday of each block, so that courses may also be reviewed by the Divisional Executive Committees and passed on to Committee on Instruction at the beginning of the second week of each block. Course requests that reach the committee after that first Wednesday will be considered in the following block.

2. Assessment: The bulk of the committee's work this year was in working with faculty teaching courses in the various critical perspectives to develop common statements of expectations for what students will learn by taking courses in these perspectives. Our goal was to have faculty teaching the courses reach consensus on expectations that would serve as learning outcomes complementing the program goals as stated in the current requirements. Faculty teaching West-in-Time courses gathered in large groups (twenty or more) several times to discuss ideas and wording. This ad hoc working group has produced a document that is circulating among all faculty who are on the record as teaching west-in-time courses over the last three years for comment before the end of this academic year. A similar document has been drafted for faculty teaching scientific inquiry and diverse cultures and critiques courses and was circulated among a small group of faculty for comment and should be circulated to all faculty teaching these courses for comment before the end of this academic year. GEOC will ask faculty teaching Critical Perspectives courses to include one assignment for assessment with respect to these expectations/outcomes in their classes next year, with the intention of having some results that can be reported to the accreditation agency next spring.

3. Diverse Cultures and Critiques: Two years ago the faculty voted unanimously to review and consider changes for the Diverse Cultures and Critiques perspective. GEOC initiated meetings with the Curriculum Committee for this purpose, and Curriculum followed through on the conversations (see report of the Curriculum Committee, this year). The assessment process further underscored the difficulties in defining the Diverse Cultures and Critiques perspective and its expected learning outcomes. In large part this is due to the breadth of what is covered under this perspective (as one person put it-defined more by what it is not than what it is) and the large number of faculty teaching this perspective for a wide variety of purposes. GEOC recommends that the college find ways to continue the conversation about what it is we expect our students to graduate knowing about this perspective and how it is we can provide sufficient courses to meet that expectation.

4. Transcript Review: The committee continues to work with Institutional Research on the transcript project as charged in the original vote of the faculty. That project is to review the transcripts of at least 25% of each graduating class from 2005 (the last class graduating under the old requirements) through 2009 (four years of the new requirements) for the purpose of “evaluation of the extent to which students are meeting the educational goals specified in this proposal, namely breadth across all divisions of the college, depth in a major, exposure to the critical perspectives of diverse cultures and critiques, the West in time, and scientific inquiry. The General Education Oversight Committee will also evaluate whether students are able to complete the critical perspectives and foreign language requirements in their first two years and whether study abroad or completion of thematic minors are affected by the new requirements. In short, the General Education Oversight Committee will evaluate the extent to which the new all-college requirements, in contrast to the previous ones, allow “more space in the middle” and whether there is flexibility in fulfilling the general education requirements.” Data collection is now complete including the 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 classes. Preliminary analysis is underway and we hope to receive reports from IR on how students have fared in ten selected majors across the college this summer. A final report should be brought to the faculty next year.

5. Critical Perspectives Courses Renewal: The faculty charged GEOC to review all courses designated for Critical Perspectives every three years. This will take place next fall (Fall 2010). At the last review, the faculty voted to have GEOC prepare a single list of all the courses currently approved for each of the perspectives. GEOC sends each person teaching one or more of these courses a list of the courses that person teaches; sends department and program chairs lists of courses that appear to come from their departments; and asks faculty to confirm that the courses they teach still include the material and meet the standards to qualify as Critical Perspectives courses (GEOC may request syllabi from faculty in cases that aren’t readily apparent to the committee). GEOC will then bring a report to the faculty listing all courses that currently meet the perspectives and any courses that are to be dropped.

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