

GEOC Meeting February 28, 2008

In Attendance: Katharina von Hammerstein, William Lott, Niloy Dutta, Janice Clark, Anke Finger, Jane Goldman, Marie Cantino, John Troyer, Xae Alicia Reyes, Murphy Sewall, Felicia Pratto, Arnie Dashefsky, Rosa Helena Chinchilla, Anabel Perez. Missing: Hedley Freake, Tom Roby, John Bennett, Dean Hanink, Dan Civco, Cora Lynn Deibler, Peter Gogarten, Mike Darre.

1. Minutes from the February 11, 2008 meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2008 meeting.

Motion carried with one abstention.

2. Announcements

- *AACU General Education Conference.* Lynne Goodstein, Hedley Freake, and Katharina von Hammerstein offered a workshop, "Faculty Ownership of General Education: Teaching What Excites You!" The workshop drew over 75 participants and was very well received. Also attending the conference from UConn were John Bennett, Manuela Wagner, and Eric Soulsby.
 - Topics that came up included assessment and the need for a General Education public relations campaign to involve faculty and students in conversations about what Gen Ed means. A campaign could include:
 - New or a refined brochure
 - Workshops of an hour/two in length
 - especially for faculty teaching Gen Ed courses they have inherited
- *W courses.* At our last meeting, the question of grading in W courses came up. Bill Lott noted that there is a rule that 50% of a W course grade represents the graded W components. This is true to CLAS, though does not apply to GEOC policy or practice.
- *Meeting with Department Heads* about W. The planned meeting between GEOC and department heads has been postponed until the Fall.
- *GEOC Membership.* With the ending of several member terms at the end of this academic year, new members will be needed to co-chair the following subcommittees: CA2 Social Sciences, CA3 Science and Technology, CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism, Information Literacy, and Assessment. The Senate Nominating Committee has been given a list of our membership needs.

3. Subcommittee Reports

Writing Competency

The Writing subcommittee recommends **approval** of the following course:

PSYC 3402W Child Development in Sociopolitical Context

At the request of the department, the W subcommittee recommends **dropping** the following course from the Gen Ed curriculum:

ENGL 223W Romantic and Victorian English Literature
(Drop to only take effect once ENGL 3117W and 3118W are approved)

Motion to approve the above courses. Motion carried.

The W subcommittee recommends **revision** of the following courses:

ANSC 277W Daily Herd Management
ENGL 3117W Romantic British Literature
(Syllabus included is not consistent with W courses. ENGL 3117W and 3118W will replace ENGL 223W)

(Syllabus included is not consistent with W courses. ENGL 3117W and 3118W will replace ENGL 223W)

Motion to approve the request to send the above courses back for revision. Motion carried.

Revision of papers in W courses. ENGL department C&CC chair, Hap Fairbanks has interpreted the GEOC W guidelines to mean that revision of students' writing does not have to be a result of faculty advising. The guidelines do not specify that the faculty must review the papers and give feedback to the student so s/he may be in a position to revise it. Jane Goldman expects that GEOC will receive a letter from the ENGL department about this matter.

Felicia Pratto notes that the Writing Center has guidelines for faculty instructors that specifically state that faculty are supposed to instruct in writing and give written feedback to students. This language, though, is not included in the Senate guidelines for Gen Ed and therefore has no official standing. Murphy Sewall recommends that we consider specifying written feedback from the faculty in our GEOC guidelines. Jane Goldman will work on rephrasing the language of the guidelines to specify faculty feedback.

Also included in the W report:

- Recommendation that Anabel Perez contact the proposers of the NRME 233W proposal asking about the status of their revision.
- Recommendation that the new CAR form ask proposers of W courses if their course will also be taught as a non-W. Anabel Perez will have an eye on this.
- Co-requisite 1-credit W courses. One W subcommittee member noted that the GEOC recommendation that departments make final decisions about this issue may come into conflict with individual instructors teaching the courses.
 - If department has a policy in place, said policy could include that "instructor consent" is required.
 - If a student comes back to retake only the 1-credit W course linked to another course, does this mean this student is now taking away a seat of another student in this W section (cap of 19)? This happens very rarely.

Revision of W Course Syllabi. The W subcommittee recommends that W course syllabi be reviewed for adherence to the W guidelines. Katharina von Hammerstein notes that this will be part of the Recertification process.

Arts and Humanities

The CA1 subcommittee recommends **approval** of the following courses:

AMST 170 [1700]	Honors Core: American Landscape
LAND 275 [2210]	The Common Landscape of the USA: Rights, Responsibilities, and Values
NRME 130 [1235]	Environmental Conservation
PHIL 220 [XXXX]	Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights

Motion approve the CA1 report as written. Motion carried.

Diversity and Multiculturalism

The CA4 subcommittee **does not** recommend approval of the following courses:

PHIL 220	Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights
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Niloy Dutta, member of the 2007 Provost's Competition Review Panel, noted that the POLS 3208/W proposal for the 2007 grant competition focused on several regions of the world and groups in those regions. Arnie Dashefsky stated that there are certainly sections of the course that touch on underrepresented groups and perspectives, but the balance of the course does not reflect the criteria of the diversity and multiculturalism content area. Anke Finger noted that the course is mainly focused on the geopolitical macroeconomic perspective, not on multicultural perspectives.

The PHIL 220 course proposal depicts human rights in a more philosophical abstraction rather than focusing on the more social, multicultural aspects. As such, the subcommittee does not recommend the course be given CA4 status.

The discussion veered into a larger conversation about how CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism should be defined. Katharina von Hammerstein asked that this conversation be postponed to a later date.

Several GEOC members requested that when courses are rejected, the subcommittee reports include more information about why the course did not meet the stated criteria for that content area or competency.

The CA4 subcommittee will meet again March 6, 2008 to discuss the assessment draft. They will more fully articulate the rationale for not recommending approval of the above courses.

Motion to approve the CA4 report. Motion carried.

4. 2008 Provost's Competition

Reviewer criteria distributed to GEOC. Deadline for submission of proposals is Friday, February 29, 2008. We have so far received 6 proposals.

5. Interdisciplinary Courses.

Margaret Lamb, Director of the Individualized and Interdisciplinary Studies Program, was present for this discussion.

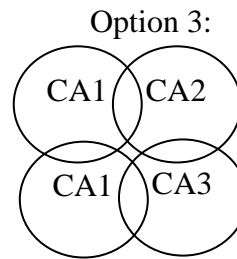
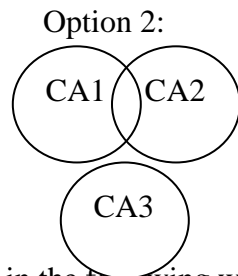
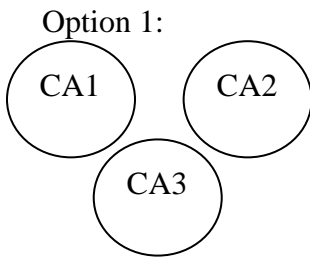
Katharina von Hammerstein circulated notes on the previous GEOC discussions about interdisciplinarity and made suggestions to structure the discussion. She has identified two kinds of interdisciplinary courses that GEOC could review:

- Those within one content area. They don't create a problem.
- Those across two CA- specifically between CA1, CA2, CA3. Note: Permitting Gen Ed courses to fulfill criteria of more than one CA would represent a departure from current GEOC guidelines which allow students neither "double-dipping" (except w/ CA4) nor choice between two CAs of CA 1, 2, 3.
 - GEOC needs a policy for how to deal with proposers of these second groups of proposals.

Possible solutions:

- Option 1: No change to current Gen Ed guidelines, keep CA's as separate "silos."
- Option 2: Allow some bridging across content areas 1 and 2 – bridging with science and technology (CA3) courses would be excluded.
- Option 3: Allow bridging between all three content areas – 1+2 or 2+3 or 1+3 – and allow students to decide if they want a particular course to count for one or the other CA.

Katharina von Hammerstein has developed a visual guide to explain the possibilities. This is reproduced below:



Students could be affected in the following ways:

- Option 1: No change.
- Option 2: Student can take **ONE** interdisciplinary course among their Gen Ed courses.
- Option 3: Student can take **no more than one** interdisciplinary course per content area (2 courses per content area are usually required to meet the credit requirements for Gen Ed).

Margaret Lamb discussed how and why might interdisciplinary courses fit into the Gen Ed curriculum. She noted that at UConn:

- Interdisciplinary courses allow students to make connections across disciplines and to become more articulate and more confident learners.
- Interdisciplinary courses allow faculty to model their own ways of making connections across disciplines.
- Making connections reinforces the goals UConn has articulated for Gen Ed:
 - become articulate,
 - acquire intellectual breadth and versatility,
 - acquire critical judgment,
 - acquire moral sensitivity,
 - acquire awareness of their era and society,
 - acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience,
 - acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.

Margaret Lamb circulated notes that provide information about interdisciplinarity at other universities. Most relevant is University of North Carolina, which focuses on Gen Ed and interdisciplinary connections. UNC:

- used a Gen Ed model like UConn (with content areas and competencies) and added an overlay that looks at connections to begin building the integrative element. This model changes the conversation about Gen Ed, without losing the integrity of the defined content areas.

Two key points:

- integrity of content areas and competencies, vs.
- helping and encouraging students to make connections across different areas of their learning.

A discussion of this issue ensued:

- William Lott noted that our current Gen Ed system is a “check off” system. Overlaying topics allow for something more substantial and meaningful. (UNC)
- The issue of ratios determining how content is divided between two CAs and of how it can be determined if criteria of two different CAs are met was raised. Katharina recommended that we put off the conversation about the specific mechanics and details of such a change until after making the basic decision about making changes in the Content Area Operating Principles or not.
- Felicia Pratto pointed out that it does not make sense to think of a particular Gen Ed course as interdisciplinary, if it is half/half of two content areas. She voiced concern over the idea that the positive spin on interdisciplinarity courses is a fad and stated that only by bumping into the limits of a

discipline can one appreciate interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinary courses may negate the importance of disciplines and she thinks it would be a shame, if students graduated without appreciation for the established disciplines and what they mean.

- Margaret Lamb notes that the kind of interdisciplinarity that is being proposed is a complement to traditional disciplines, not an alternative.
- Murphy Sewall stated the idea of “the whole as bigger than the sum of its parts.” Courses need not be half/half, but create a sort of synergy that is more than the individual parts. If interdisciplinary courses are going to be worthwhile, the courses need to be split more along the lines of 70/70, rather than 50/50.
- Arnie Dashefsky noted that the role for interdisciplinarity in Gen Ed has not yet been resolved. There are strong voices for maintaining the integrity of the content areas, and strong voices for the establishment of bridges across disciplines.
 - If the “bridge” idea is approved, should a student be able to double dip (get credit in two areas)?
 - Katharina von Hammerstein suggested that double-dipping between CA1, 2, 3 should not be permitted since it would too much decrease the number of Gen Ed courses a student takes.
- One serious disadvantage of interdisciplinary courses is that students only get a portion of what a pure content area course would get.
- Jane Goldman pointed out that there are two conversations taking place at once:
 - What do we want for students?
 - What do we want to recommend to faculty proposing interdisciplinary Gen Ed courses?
- Niloy Dutta raised the issue of focus and claims that only once you gain substance, can interdisciplinarity be explored. He pointed out that of those economies rising to the top, those that succeeded were focused. He supports the Gen Ed system as is- with interdisciplinary courses given a particular ratio and allowed to give credit for only one CA. With interdisciplinary courses, there should be a recognition that something is going to be lost from traditional courses.
 - Anke Finger countered Niloy Dutta’s argument. She stated that the idea of interdisciplinarity as easy and less focused is incorrect and argued that interdisciplinarity is actually harder and more problem-oriented than staying within traditional disciplines. She further noted that the conversation about interdisciplinarity is not new.
- Murphy Sewall argued that one of the things that has made the US as successful as it is, is that interdisciplinarity generates multiple perspectives. If an interdisciplinary course is to make sense, it has to ask a big question that cannot be dealt with within one discipline; the course should create learning outcomes that are bigger than the sum of their (disciplinary) parts. If the question is, if a particular interdisciplinary course can be counted for a particular content area, both CA committees must have approved the course as fulfilling enough of each CA to qualify for that CA.
- If the concern is the dilution of the “silos” (CA), a compromise may be to permit students only one “wildcard” course so they have at least one opportunity to experience one model of interdisciplinarity across two content areas. They might then apply that model to their major fields of study. This is Option 2 in the above possibilities of how Gen Ed can affect students.
- Murphy Sewall argued in favor of Option 3: allowing students the option of selecting one interdisciplinary course per content area, but not double-dip.

Motion to approve of the concept that interdisciplinary courses may be approved as Gen Ed courses across two content areas (1, 2, 3). Motion carried with one abstention.

Respectfully submitted,
Anabel Perez
GEOC Administrator