

MINUTES
General Education Committee
April 8, 2019
3:15-4:45pm
VL 216

Members present: Paul Delaney (Chair and Professor of English), Michelle Hardley (Secretary and Registrar), Heather Keaney (Professor of History), Jana Mayfield Mullen (Information Literacy Librarian), Tatiana Nazarenko (Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness),

Others Present: Theresa Covich (Coordinator for Library Academic Initiatives)

Absent: Rachel Winslow (Director, Westmont Downtown)

I. Prayer – Michelle Hardley

II. The minutes from March 25th were approved.

III. ENG-117 – Shakespeare – Add to Common Inquiries: Working Artistically

The committee discussed the course proposal. Paul answered questions regarding the prerequisites and the changes he has made to the course. Most students taking this course will be interested in the topic versus looking for the GE credit.

Jana moved to approve the added GE credit when Paul Delaney teaches the course only. It was seconded by Heather Keaney. Any other professors wanting to have the Working Artistically GE credit for their course would need to be individually approved by the GE committee.

The course was approved. This change will be effective fall 2019.

IV. Assessing Reading Imaginative Literature in 2019-2020

The committee discussed how to begin assessing the Reading Imaginative Literature (RIL) GE area next year. All four departments that have approved courses in this area are offering classes in the fall 2019 semester. This area has not been previously assessed.

After a quick look at the student learning outcomes they may be overly ambitious and difficult to assess. The RIL faculty could update the language, but the assessment next year ideally would be based on the current language. Revisions can be made based on the findings of the assessment. The Thinking Globally group used both a survey and a writing assessment. There was a writing assignment in several different classes and the written responses were coded. A first step for the RIL faculty could be to look at the language to see if faculty are still covering the certification criteria in their courses and determine whether the faculty want to revisit and revise the language before completing the initial assessment.

As one of the certification criteria pointed to empathetic responses, Paul suggested an assignment that he gives which may yield some evidence. Paul will run this idea by other faculty teaching in the area to see if a writing prompt like this would work for their classes. If Paul can check in with them now the faculty may be able to incorporate this kind of prompt into their fall syllabus.

V. Best Practices: GE Courses

A faculty member received a Faculty Development Grant to improve their courses and teaching and approached the GE Committee to ask if there were faculty members who model best practices. The committee recommended Holly Beers and Caryn Reeder as good models. The faculty member may also want to consider revamping the class, adding in other testing methods (besides just multiple choice) and other methods of assessment besides tests (e.g. papers and quizzes).

Jana is willing to meet with the faculty member to guide him on the types of questions he should be asking as he works on implementing his Faculty Development Grant.

VI. Round Table Proposal

The committee continued discussing the proposal.

What is the main outcome of the proposal at this point? The smaller class size model does not seem feasible due the money restrictions and we would be hiring adjuncts as replacement faculty for regular course offerings. It seems more feasible to use the cohort collaboration model pairing two courses and creating opportunities for collaboration between the linked faculty. HIS-010 and two ENG-002 sections could be a good combination and it would be up to the faculty to determine how much they wanted to collaborate. Ideally the students would be together in the first class, then have lunch, then the second class. Their conversations would be more collaborative just by nature of the structure of the course.

Would we want to consider two pilots? One with paired courses and one with a few smaller class sizes? Then we can gather data to see which works better? The concern is that smaller class sizes are more effective, we already know that, but they still are not reasonable as they cost more money and we would have to hire adjuncts to cover the regular course offerings. Do we want to spend the money on adjuncts or on professional training to better teach the kinds of students we are admitting?

Theresa Covich joined the committee to discuss the possible writing assignments within the program. She doesn't feel students need to build up confidence in their writing as a goal. They need help summarizing what they are reading without inserting their own self into the summary. They need to learn to rely on the text alone in their summary. Faculty maybe want to consider scaffolding writing assignments, and giving lower stakes in the grade distribution for the earlier stages versus creating low stakes writing in and of itself.

Do we want to propose both options to Senate? For combined model, do we want to think about strategic combinations of classes based on themes? Fall or spring or both

semesters? It would likely be good to start with a pilot project and explore possible pairings on thematic elements.

This item will continue to be discussed next year.

VII. Support for GE Courses

Theresa also summarized the work that she has been doing developing tutoring support for the GE classes. Old Testament and New Testament have had the most success with weekly group tutoring sessions. Students simply drop in with materials and the tutors are tracking with the faculty member and their syllabi. Tutors have over 4 hours of training and meet weekly for lunch to talk about best practices for tutoring, collaborative learning and problem solving with tutoring groups.

In fall 2019 her goal is to offer support for all Common Context courses. The job is currently up on Handshake and she has developed a clearer workflow for hiring. Faculty recommendations work best for finding possible tutors, and she is currently meeting with new faculty to expand the program.

In the future she wants to pursue a peer tutoring certificate program for our students so they can go through training to be certified peer tutors. Other schools have developed a 1-2 credit course as part of their training.

Faculty can help increase attendance by incentivizing the peer tutoring sessions. They may even consider requiring attendance for students who score poorly on their exams. If the peer tutor is hired early enough they can also include information on the peer tutor and the tutoring sessions within their syllabi.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Hardley