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"AS Minutes 2011 04 13 Report on Proposed Curricular Changes2011-4-1" (2011). *Faculty Assembly Documents*. 196.

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Report on Proposed Curricular Changes (4/1/2011)

Closed matters as of April 1, 2011:

- Proposed course changes for English Film Minor (Change ART 102 from a required course to an elective; create a new ENG 2XX course, Introduction to Film Studies (end date: March 24, 2011)
 - Clarification in response to a question: the new course ENG 2XX will be a required course for the minor (one of three required courses). ART 102 will still count toward one of three elective courses in the minor.
 - One comment supporting the proposal as logical and clear.
 - One question regarding the numbering of the proposed ENG 2XX course: why is it at the 200-level if it is an introductory course?
 - The English Department reserves 100-level designation for freshmen courses in the common core and uses the 200-level designation for introductory courses in the major; the art department uses the 100-level designation for introductory courses in the major.
 - It was suggested the English Department consider expanding its Film & Lit course, making it one of the required courses for the film minor instead of creating the new course ENG 2XX (reducing the proliferation of courses on campus). With this change, the number of the Film & Lit course could be modified to the 200-level.
 - As a result of points raised in the protocol process, the English Department made the following changes to the film minor proposal:
 - ENG 341: Film and Literature will be changed to a 200-level course and will serve as the introductory course in the minor. It will substitute for ART102: Film, Art, and Society.
 - ART 102 will count as an elective.
 - No further comments were made. The nature of the comments did not call into question the basic tenets of this proposal, thus the changes were approved March 26, 2011.

Continuing matters:

- Proposed pilot changes to ENG 150 (core curriculum). Change common readings from 75% to two shared texts. Program to be piloted over the next two academic years. (End date: April 3, 2011)
 - Discussion began in March 2, 2011 Faculty Assembly meeting.
 - Three comments in full support of the proposal (from faculty members outside of the English Department)
 - Thank you!
 - For the sake of assessment, the sections should have similar goals as to how much more reading beyond the two core texts will be required.
 - One faculty member:

- stresses the importance that MORE than those two texts should be required, and that a non-Western text be included. Perhaps this could be enforced rather simply, when the dept. chair (or whoever's coordinating the portal) review the syllabi.
 - "Enforced" is strong language; we have reached agreement as a faculty on a minimum of five total readings. Our proposal for two common texts is being made so that we have the ability to add more texts of our choice, in line with the university mission and the course's goals and objectives. We all know, too, that there's no way you can keep freshmen focused for an entire semester on two texts. The department chair routinely reviews all syllabi and takes action as necessary for any course in the core, the core complements, and the major.
 - suggests that faculty be requested to offer any knowledge of great non-Western texts to the English Dept. chair, to create a list for those portal faculty who may not read non-Western texts extensively. Sometimes, there are faculty in other departments who, while not specialists in literature, read for pleasure--they could serve as a resource of great texts by non-Western authors.
 - We do this informally. We also have our own faculty members who teach courses in global literature or who include global texts, and we work with the library to keep abreast of global titles in the collection. If the portal faculty is interested in such information, we'd be happy to share what we have.
 - Another faculty member:
 - Would encourage the Department of English to consider how they will determine if the pilot was successful prior to running the pilot, whether it involves soliciting/measuring student opinion/behavior, instructor opinion/behavior, or both. Of course, legitimate comparisons to evaluations of the current approach should be made, but frankly, I can't imagine faculty reporting that using more texts of their own choosing produced a less satisfactory course. It's possible that some faculty will choose books that students find too easy or difficult for one reason or another and consequently, students will view the course less favorably than they would if they had taken the course with the current texts, but to the extent that instructors will be delivering the course with more enthusiasm given the opportunity to select more texts, I find this possibility unlikely.
 - In terms of assessment: We have course evaluations for ENG 150 on file going back several years and expect that the comments students put on the back of the evaluation sheet will give us some good baseline data. (Students routinely

report on works that engaged them--and those that didn't-- as well as the relationship between the readings and their learning.) The department also has a robust assessment plan for its courses, including one for ENG 150, and we have baseline information from last year's departmental assessment as well. These would provide excellent benchmarks for assessing success.

- Suggests producing a rationale for why a Shakespearean play and Greek Drama/Comedy will still be required. Is it because of the lessons to be learned from such exposure, to a reluctance to abandon the notion of having at least a few common texts because of some demonstrated benefit, to some other reason, or a combination of reasons? Producing a rationale for why two common texts is better than no (required) common texts would be useful to current as well as future instructors of this course, as well as other faculty and, of course, students.
 - It's really a combination of the above (except for the "reluctance"). We believe two common texts will anchor the course while still allowing instructors with a measure of discretion--and that these two we are suggesting provide a "foundation," if you will, for literary studies/literary thinking. We thought two would provide continuity but not lockstep sameness.
- Another faculty colleague suggests the following:
 - The proposal for an ENG 150 pilot specifies two common texts taught across all ENG 150 sections – most likely one Shakespeare and one Greek play. There is a serious dearth of non-Western content in the university curriculum. English literature majors, for example (if the catalog is correct), need take only a single course that appears to have non-Western content (ENG 345).
 - AN ASIDE: The Department requires only one World Lit course. However, in the last three years we have added considerably to our world offerings. We have increased the number of sections of Contemporary Global Literature that are offered each semester as core complements in literature and that many of our majors take as an elective. Our film minor includes some global literature in Film and Literature and an entire class on World Cinema. Earlier this year, the assembly approved our plan to add a course in Global Media.
 - The proposal needs to include a requirement that all ENG 150 sections include one substantial text (e.g., novel or short story collection) by a non-Western author. I do not think it wise for all sections to use the same non-Western text. Let each ENG 150 instructor choose what text to use.

- The Department already requires an international text. (We have used Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*, for example, and Fugard's *Master Harold and the Boys*.) And we remain committed to including international/global works. That was clear from the original faculty vote on the Common Core; has been part of our deliberations as a department from the beginning; and has remained part of the course's goals and objectives from the start. As I said at the faculty meeting: An international piece of literature will still be part of ENG 150. Allowing instructors to have their choice of an international (or non-Western) work will improve the course, and we continue discussions at the department level about additional possible works to incorporate from around the globe. I agree completely with the faculty member's comment about letting each instructor choose the text to use to satisfy this goal. That is what we are working toward
 - In fact, it would be beneficial to specify common categories (e.g., Shakespeare, poetry, Greek tragedy, non-Western fiction) rather than common texts. Each instructor could be free to select what particular works to teach for each category, as long as they were at a university level of difficulty. In other words, a single short story would not fulfill the non-Western category, nor would a single sonnet fulfill the Shakespeare category. Categories filled according to an instructor's choice would lead to particular "flavors" of ENG 150 more in line with a particular instructor's choice/expertise/interest, yet the overall structure of the course would remain the same across sections with an emphasis on writing as process.
 - Yes--this is exactly what we are saying. One issue, though: Once you start multiplying categories, as suggested above, you're going to take time away from writing. Unless they are Pell scholars, students are coming to us with rudimentary writing skills. The semester is only so long. The "rigor" for this course will come from balancing the number of texts we're committed to and the time devoted to writing.
 - There should be some language in the ENG 150 proposal that two common texts, or a certain number of common categories, is necessary but not sufficient –language that states that a substantial amount of material will be taught in addition to what is common across sections.
 - We anticipate instructors choosing a number of texts comparable to the number now (5-7).
- Another member in full support of the proposal pointed out that:
 - The English Department does not need permission from anybody to change the number of the common readings because there is no

requirement that ENG 150 must have five required readings. The requirement is about the proportions that are in the Core description authorized by the Assembly in 2002: 75% and 25% "of readings" (which the proposal mentions in a footnote). *What the English Department is really asking for is permission to experiment with the amount of time – class sessions – devoted to common readings.*

- The English Department would help itself and other instructors in the Common Core if the results of the pilot could somehow be calibrated as class time during the semester. The number of common readings is useless information (especially if we do not know the number of readings that individual instructors will select). Useful information would be the Department's insights about the proportion of class time devoted to common texts and to the instructor's choice.
- According to the Assembly's Protocol, the Assembly "may not amend any proposed academic change submitted by a department, program, council, commission, or committee that does not report to it or its Executive Committee. The Assembly may, however, offer suggestions or comments concerning a proposal but only in separate motions that are not part of a motion on the proposed change." So, the Assembly may not change anything a department submits.
 - Clarification question: If 75% of your readings are in common, doesn't that by its very nature mean that each instructor will spend approximately 75% of the class time on these texts? What else could it mean? Perhaps I'm being a bit too literal or unimaginative here, but to me, it just goes without saying: 75% of one equals, in good faith, 75% of the other.
 - One problem is what the Portal course calls "a reading." Oedipus Rex is a reading. Psalm 23 is a reading. In all, there are about 25 common readings in the Portal. Some readings might be considered the main course and others a garnish. After you have some experience with the pilot, it would be very helpful to hear your insights about the approximate number of classes that seems to be good for the common texts and for the instructor's choice.
- A final faculty comment in support of the proposal cited three main areas of assessment of the pilot's success based on the original proposal:
 - To provide students with "a stronger, more rigorous experience"
 - To cut down on instances of plagiarism
 - To provide students with a "better, more exciting, more unique first-year experience"

But questioned the means of assessment of these areas from a data driven perspective. The comment points out that assessing the second point is

fairly easy if data has been kept on instances of plagiarism have been kept to date, however assessing the first and third points may prove almost impossible as the means to get at the essential questions posed by these measures may not be adequate (surveying students and faculty members, grades, etc.), especially if no previous data exists for the purpose of comparison.

- The English department recognizes that assessment is a key issue, as the NEASC team pointed out and has been working on this as a faculty for the last year or more. However, the English Department may be approaching this issue a little bit differently than suggested in the comments above. First, the overall approach is to define success as an increase in student engagement—and they will be measuring engagement via the quality, complexity, and thoughtfulness of the work they look at the end of the school year. Also, given that none of the learning goals, objectives, or requirements for ENG 150 will change, the Department anticipates that it will be able to make effective use of its existing assessments for ENG 150 (both the direct measure for the core curriculum objective on writing and the indirect measure on personal growth that are currently used) plus the existing qualitative questions on the back of the teacher evaluations. That will provide two years of data as a baseline plus the two years of comparative data from the pilot. The Department has been happy with the direction provided by the existing 150 assessments; the comparative data should answer the questions raised.
- A vote on the proposal as revised in light of comments received will be taken at the April 13, 2011 Faculty Assembly meeting.