

MINUTES
General Education Committee
November 4, 2020
2:00-3:30 p.m.
Zoom

Members present: Steve Contakes (Professor of Chemistry and Committee Chair), Michelle Hardley (Registrar), Steve Hodson (Professor of Music), Jana Mayfield Mullen (Director of the Westmont Library), Tatiana Nazarenko (Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness), Rachel Winslow (Professor of History)

Absent:

I. Prayer – Steve Contakes

II. Approve the Minutes of October 21

The meeting minutes were approved with one minor correction.

III. TA-145 – Writing for Performance – Add to Common Inquiries: Reading Imaginative Literature and Common Skills: Writing/Speech Intensive

The committee discussed the course proposal. There were some concerns noted on the lack of writing instruction in the syllabus and no clear assignments where feedback would be given by the professor and revisions required prior to assigning the final grade.

The course was approved for Reading Imaginative Literature GE credit. Steve C. will send feedback to the department on our Writing/Speech Intensive questions. A revised copy of the syllabus can be submitted to Steve C., Tatiana or Michelle for review and approval if all of the concerns are addressed.

IV. ETN-010 – Introduction to Ethnic Studies – Add to Common Inquiries: Understanding Society

The committee discussed the course proposal and how it covers the needed certification criteria.

The course was approved effective spring 2021.

V. Status of the Discussion on Justice, Reconciliation and Diversity in Senate

Steve C. gave an overview of the Senate's response to the proposal. Overall Senate reacted favorably and had good questions on the development and rationale for the proposed changes. There were some Senators who wondered why we did not address these issues in different ways (e.g. modifying GE areas other than the ones chosen), but there were no major objections to the proposal.

There was a question on consistency of the GE category name in the document, and in what order the words should be listed.

There was also a comment that the way this category is formed has a heavy focus on social constructionism and the premise that things that are socially constructed should be dismantled. In Senate the question was raised as to how this looks in the wider context of our statement on diversity.

Mark will be meeting with Steve and Tatiana to discuss Senate's feedback and the next steps forward with this proposal.

VI. 2018-2019 CUPA Assessment Results

Jana gave an overview of the 2018-2019 CUPA assessment results.

The Religious Studies Department determined that by the time students graduate they have the big picture biblical and theological concepts, and this was their most important outcome. The lower division RS courses are achieving their goals.

Having students achieve a high degree of biblical literacy is increasingly difficult, as current students seem to be less biblically literate when they arrive to Westmont than they used to be. Faculty find that they are not able to teach as much content as they are continually working to bring up the students who are new to studying the scriptures alongside those who have more background studying the Bible.

Initially there was a concern within the department that the Old Testament, New Testament and Christian Doctrine courses were not sequenced, as faculty would spend time repeating concepts covered in other classes. This repetition meant that they were not able to cover their own course material in greater depth. Jana helped them to understand that the repetition could actually be a good thing, as students would cover the material multiple times and from multiple voices, which may help with overall knowledge retention.

Steve C. will write a memo to the RS department chair noting that Jana shared the report with the GE Committee, that we appreciate their data driven approach to the assessment. The memo will also note that we would like to be informed as they continue to discuss improving the effectiveness of these courses.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Hardley