

University Core Development Committee

February 23, 2000

Gasson 105, 2:30 p.m.

In attendance were Chair Richard Cobb-Stevens, Patrick Byrne, Judith Clair, Clare Dunsford, Nancy Fairchild, Rob Gross, Robert Kern, George Madaus, and Dennis Sardella.

Professor Alan Rogers was our guest, representing the History Department.

Business

Richard Cobb-Stevens announced that the Psychology Department would visit us at our next meeting on March 15.

Clare Dunsford handed out data on the distribution of various Core requirements, which she had requested from Louise Lonabocker. The committee will discuss the data at a subsequent meeting.

History Core

Questions were asked about the staffing and numbers of the core History courses: senior faculty and teaching assistants teach the large sections, and teaching fellows teach their own (small) courses. About fifteen to seventeen sections are offered per semester.

Around twenty percent of the sections in any semester are taught by teaching fellows and post-doc's.

Dennis Sardella expressed his concern that Prof. Braude's course description might discourage students' independent thinking.

Pat Byrne asked whether the department could encourage the inclusion of statements of the core philosophy on syllabi.

Robert Kern noted the uniformity of texts on the various syllabi, and Alan Rogers noted that some topics are mandated. Kern asked how students were advised about the content of particular sections since the titles are not informative; Rogers said that before the title became uniform—Modern History I and II—some students unwittingly took the same course twice. He said students are surprisingly well informed about the differences between sections. Clare Dunsford noted that it would be helpful to advisors to have more information about course content when guiding students in selecting their history core.

Judy Clair admired the global focus of the courses, asking how the department might let the university community know that the scope of the European history course has changed. Rogers admitted that they hadn't advertised this fact; he noted that course content did not seem to be as important to students as the reputation of the teacher in choosing a course. On the issue of the globalization of the course, Rob Gross remarked that some Honors Program students had complained to him that they didn't learn enough traditional European history in the History core.

Clare Dunsford asked how much writing is required in the History core courses, to which Rogers replied that the writing requirement is loose, though there is a general sense that it is important.

Dennis Sardella asked about the nature of the connection between senior faculty and T.F.'s. Rogers replied that teaching fellows were first teaching assistants, so they were supervised at that time, meeting with senior faculty once a week. In answer to George Madaus' question whether they are supervised once they are T.F.'s, Rogers replied that T.F.'s are observed twice a semester. Richard Cobb-Stevens noted that teaching evaluation forms can effectively distinguish between professors and teaching assistants.

Attention was then turned to the history courses being proposed for cultural diversity credit, and some suggestions were made for clarification as well as in one case a request for more information.

The meeting concluded with a short discussion to prepare for the Psychology Department's visit. One question that will be pursued is whether the Psychology in Education core courses duplicate the core courses in Psychology. George Madaus agreed to get the syllabi from the Psych. in Ed. courses.

Submitted by Clare Dunsford