

MOTION

CEPP moves to expand the types of courses offered in the Culture-Centered Inquiry requirement by replacing the existing two categories of courses (“Non-Western” and “Cultural Diversity”) with one new category: “Interrogating Difference.” This new category (DF) will include all courses currently in the two existing categories (NW and CD) through the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, after which all “Interrogating Difference” courses will need to meet the new criteria. The Culture-Centered Inquiry Requirement will continue to include one course in Foreign Languages and Literatures.

Rationale

Since 2008, the Curriculum Committee has sought clarification regarding cultural diversity courses; specifically, these courses currently require incorporation of a non-western element, hence disallowing certain courses that appear to be otherwise appropriate. In addition, both a report from the Director of Intercultural Studies in 2009 and the 2010 NSSE survey highlighted continued growth in terms of some measures of diversity, but also pointed to areas of concern, specifically a significant decrease from the 2007 survey as to whether students perceived that the curriculum sufficiently “Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments.” In response to these issues, CEPP decided to revisit the requirement entirely and sought the advice of the faculty through various venues, including Academic Staff, focused roundtables, and an open faculty forum. After considering carefully the comments and concerns of our colleagues, CEPP has determined that the requirement should be revised.

Revision accomplishes several goals. First, it allows for a productive expansion of courses that fulfill the requirement, including many that are already being taught. Second, it offers clear guidelines for the development of future courses and the reconsideration of current courses so as to further refine and enhance the requirement overall. CEPP believes that this revision of the requirement responds more emphatically to our Goals for Student Learning and Development (e.g., “Understand social and cultural diversity in national and global contexts,” “Interact effectively and collaboratively with individuals and across social identities,” and “Interrogate one’s own values in relation to those of others, across social and cultural differences”) and to Goal II of the Strategic Plan (“Intercultural and Global Understanding”).

Finally, the revised requirement will reflect current scholarship and pedagogy regarding difference. This recent work seeks not only to note difference, but also to examine the relationships among various categories of social identity as they relate to cultural power and status. The revision of the requirement will enable an increased emphasis on these dynamics and will help students reflect on their own social and cultural positions.

Criteria

To acquire the perspective available through the study of unfamiliar cultural systems, each student must, prior to graduation, successfully complete one course in Foreign Languages and Literatures plus one course designated by the Curriculum Committee as satisfying the Interrogating Difference (DF) requirement.

In completing a DF course students will interrogate how the values of one or more groups may be situated in relation to those of other groups, across social and cultural differences, in national or international

contexts, and from contemporary or historical perspectives. Courses that meet the requirement address any of these social identity variables: class, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation.

A DF course should address one or more of the following:

1. Students will not only examine one or more of the basic categories of social difference (see above) but also scrutinize how identities within those categories may lie along a continuum of cultural power and status.
2. Students will investigate the relationships among social identity, cultural capital, and economic mobility among individuals, social groups and institutions.
3. By considering the dynamics of centers and margins (i.e., the distinctive perspectives and experiences of dominant and minority groups), students will explore frameworks and social structures/systems that allow for oppression as well as those that attempt to bridge differences in pursuit of inclusivity.

Implementation

CEPP recommends a phased implementation of the revised criteria. Courses currently included in the existing Non-Western (NW) and Cultural Diversity (CD) categories of the Culture-Centered Inquiry requirement will continue to fulfill the requirement through the 2013-2014 academic year. Faculty teaching existing NW and CD courses will have until December 15th, 2013, to submit their courses (as-is or revised) to the Curriculum Committee for consideration under the new criteria.

Faculty may submit any course for inclusion in the Interrogating Difference (DF) category under the new criteria with the customary deadlines for the Curriculum Committee (September 15th, 2012, for Spring 2013; December 15th, 2012, for Fall 2013). CEPP recommends that faculty begin to prepare such proposals at the first opportunity. CEPP will consult with CC and the DOF/VPAA during the 2012/3 academic year on the progress of this implementation.

After December 15th, 2013, any course intended to fulfill the DF requirement must meet the revised criteria articulated above. CEPP recommends that all proposals for DF courses include an explicit statement addressing how the course meets any of the criteria for student learning articulated above.

Timeline

Fall 2008	Curriculum Committee asks for clarification regarding Cultural Diversity courses within the Culture-Centered Inquiry all-College requirement.
May 2009	The Director of Intercultural Studies (Winston Grady-Willis) shares a "Survey and Analysis of Cultural Diversity Courses at Skidmore College," recommending a revision of the Cultural Diversity requirement.
Spring 2011	CEPP and Curriculum Committee form a subcommittee to draft a revision to the Cultural Diversity portion of the Culture-Centered Inquiry requirement.
Spring 2011	CEPP and FEC co-host a faculty forum on the proposed revision.
June 2011	CEPP shares a revised draft with department chairs and program directors.
August 2011	CEPP shares a revised draft with Academic Staff.
Fall 2011	CEPP consults with the chairs and directors of departments and programs most likely to be affected by an increase in the number of requirements. CEPP hosts a faculty forum on the second draft. CEPP consults with all chairs and directors regarding strategies to fulfill the spirit of the requirement.

- Spring 2012 CEPP forms a new subcommittee to compose a new draft to respond to the faculty's concerns.
- Feb. 2012 CEPP shares this motion, rationale, criteria and implementation scheme at the faculty meeting.
- Mar. 2012 CEPP will host a faculty forum on this proposal.