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## Curriculum minutes 04/03/2014

Curriculum Committee

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**  
**2013-14 MEETING #8 Minutes**  
**April 3, 2014, 10:00 a.m., MFR**

*Members Present:* Bart Finzel (chair), Joe Alia, Donna Chollett, Mark Collier, Carol Cook, Pilar Eble, Pieranna Garavaso, Hector Garcia, Sara Haugen, Zach Johnson, Leslie Meek, Peh Ng, Jeri Squier, and Emily Sunderman

*Members Absent:* Clare Dingley, Eric Gandrud, and Gwen Rudney

*Visitors:* Dan Demetriou, Vicki Graham, and Nancy Helsper

***In these minutes: Philosophy Program Review Report, Course Change in the Humanities, Creative Writing Minor proposal, and Creative Writing Sub-plan for the English Major proposal***

**Announcements**

Dean Finzel announced that there is one remaining committee meeting scheduled in two weeks. If divisions have any course changes prepared for clean-up they should submit them in time for the April 17 meeting.

**Philosophy Program Review Report**

Finzel introduced Professor Dan Demetriou and explained that he had asked him to talk to the committee about the philosophy program and explain what is unique about the program, how it relates to the rest of the curriculum, and the goals of the program for the next few years.

Demetriou provided a handout, most of which is included in the following comments. He began by sharing a definition of academic philosophy in context. Philosophers investigate descriptive and evaluative reality at its most fundamental level. For example, they don't debate what the evidence is for this-or-that historical theory, but evidence is, period. They don't ask what caused the big bang, but what the nature of causation is. They don't theorize about the rules of good nutrition or writing, but the inviolable limits of good action in general.

Philosophy has three main topics of inquiry: metaphysics (the fundamental study of what exists), epistemology (the fundamental study of evidence and knowledge), and value theory (the fundamental study of goodness and right action). There are many philosophy-of-x's (philosophy of science, philosophy of law, etc.), and these essentially delve into the metaphysical, epistemological, and evaluative questions raised by x. For instance, the philosophy of psychology inquires into what is meant by "mental health, i.e, what sort of metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical assumptions go into calling something a "mental disease."

About a century ago, academic philosophy fractured into "continental" and "analytic branches. The analytic tradition began by focusing on language and meaning, but its methodology is now used for all philosophical targets of investigation. This method involves clarity of expression, explicit statement of principles and premises, logical rigor, and technical sophistication. Analytical philosophy dominates the English speaking world today, and is steadily replacing the continental tradition in Europe and the rest of the Americas.

Philosophers are deeply involved in interdisciplinary research and engage in fruitful dialogue with hard scientists, social scientists, and other humanists about topics that span disciplines. Perhaps because of this, unlike most humanities disciplines in the U.S., the number of students majoring in Philosophy and pursuing PhDs in Philosophy is steadily increasing. Many Philosophy majors pursue professional or graduate degrees, and Philosophy BAs on average have or share the highest LSAT and GRE scores. If we consider those who don't seek further education after their bachelors degrees, the mid-career earnings of philosophy BAs is higher than that of terminal BAs in biology, history, nursing, business, English, psychology,

or anthropology (to name a few). This is because Philosophy graduates on average double their starting salary by mid-career, which is something only they and mathematics majors do.

The above trends can be observed at UMM. Our graduates tend to find respectable employment or high placement in law or graduate schools. For instance, of the six graduates last year, one is a teacher at a reservation school, three are attending law school (one with a 90% scholarship), one works at his brother's music production company, and one is pursuing work in either video game programming or law.

A significant number of philosophy majors double-major in disciplines across campus. Recent examples include history, sociology, political science, psychology, English, physics, and biology.

The interdisciplinary nature of student interests reflects those of the faculty. Since 2009, the department has had at least 22 articles or book chapters published or accepted for publication, along with two books under contract. In that same period, we presented dozens of papers at universities in the U.S., Canada, Hungary, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, and Australia. Much of our research engages with psychology, sociology, anthropology, mathematics, and biology.

Philosophy is a cornerstone discipline for any true liberal arts university. The number of tenure lines for philosophy hasn't changed since UMM's founding, despite a fifty percent increase in the number of students. Nonetheless, the philosophy discipline has done its best to accommodate the growing and changing needs of UMM students looking for a liberal and rigorous education. We offer courses in Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Ethics, and Introduction to Logic that are nearly always over capacity. Most of the 2xxx- and 3xxx-level courses (for instance Philosophy of Law, International and Biomedical Ethics, and Philosophy of Science) are mostly populated by non-majors. Courses such as Environmental Ethics, Professional Ethics, Scottish Ethics, Scottish Enlightenment, Ethics of Love and Sex, and Analytic Feminism provide content for disciplines as diverse as GWSS, history, environmental studies, management, and sport management.

The Program Review Committee acknowledged the research and teaching service strengths of the philosophy discipline. The three areas of concern were:

1. The narrowness of the philosophy curriculum in general
2. UMM's need for more philosophy offerings in fields of increasing interest (e.g., cognitive science, environmental ethics, medical ethics, in particular)
3. The low number of philosophy majors (about 4-6 graduates/year)

With regard to (1), one suggestion was to offer the PHIL general education credit for suitable courses taught by other faculty. Philosophy is working with English to cross-list the course *In Search of Nietzsche* and with German Studies to cross-list the course *Medieval Thought*, as philosophy electives.

Regarding (2), retaining Professor Loo in environmental studies, who is a philosopher and excellent researcher and teacher, would help address the growing need for ethics courses in high-growth areas of student interest. Obviously, the ideal solution would be to increase the number of philosophy faculty to proportions more in line with our mission and UMM's competitors.

Regarding (3), philosophy is restructuring the individualized two-credit Senior Thesis, which proved to be a barrier to graduation. The Senior Thesis is being replaced with a mandatory "Advanced Seminar in x" 4xxx-level course, which will be taught by faculty on a rotating basis and feature shared content, individual student research, and a public presentation component.

Finzel stated that in four years a representative from the philosophy discipline will be invited to come back to the committee to speak to the progress that has been made toward the goals mentioned in this report. He asked Professor Demetriou what he expected will be evident at that time. Collier responded that philosophy will report back on how the new advanced seminar is working, and he assumed it will be better. Finzel asked if the new seminar will be ready for the new catalog cycle. Collier replied that it would be ready, and new electives will be added to the major as well. It is hard to see what else can change without additional faculty offerings.

Finzel thanked Professor Demetriou for his report and stated that philosophy is a very strong program.

## **Course Change**

### **Division of the Humanities**

AMIN 2801–Anishinaabe Song and Dance: An Exploration of Song and Dance, Traditions and Practices (HIST; 4 cr) *New*

Finzel explained that this course appeared in the packet of Humanities courses a couple of weeks ago, and was approved with a HIST Gen Ed designator. There were some objections from history faculty when they saw it in the recent Campus Assembly materials. It was pulled from the agenda so that it could come back to the Curriculum Committee for discussion and a new vote on changing HIST to a more appropriate Gen Ed designator, HDIV. The instructor has no objection to the change,

MOTION (Chollett/Ng) to approve the proposed course change in the Division of the Humanities was unanimously approved (11-0-0).

## **Creative Writing Minor and Creative Writing Sub-plan for the English Major**

Finzel stated that program changes will be brought to Campus Assembly with the catalog cycle for the 2015-17 catalog. That is also true for the recently approved LAAS minor. Squier noted that it was already done for 2014-15. Finzel emphasized that it is his intent that any program changes that are on the Curriculum Committee's agenda this spring are to be effective for the next catalog cycle.

Finzel noted that when Professor Graham had spoken with the committee before, he had voiced then, and still has some concern about the small number of courses in the minor. He asked how many graduates in English would have met the requirement for the minor—most or some. Graham responded that there is a core of students who take every writing course they can. There are a lot who take three-to-four creative writing classes. That number of classes doesn't always add up to working toward the major. Only one 2xxx-level writing course will count toward the major. The point of having a designated minor is to pull students into the possibility and hoping it will make us competitive with other schools that have a creative writing program. A total of 20 credits are required for the English minor, so the creative writing minor is in line with that. Three classes are in creative writing, one is a Literary Studies course so we are sure students have a good basis in reading other people's work when they do their own writing. Garavaso asked if there were sub-plans other than Creative Writing. Graham responded that there are no other sub-plans in English.

Squier noted that Dingley had some concerns but couldn't be at the meeting. The minor was fine, but she was confused with the sub-plan. Squier said she could address her concerns by rearranging things and maintaining the integrity of the program. She will discuss it with Dingley and run it by Graham to approve.

Johnson asked if Engl 2121 has the service learning component. Graham answered that the sections of the course are taught by three different faculty members. Argie Manolis is the only instructor who teaches it with

the service learning component. Johnson noted that the difference might be the reason some of the students choose to take it online. Chollett asked if most of the students taking the course online are not English majors. Finzel noted that most of the students are regularly enrolled on campus and every year three to four students who are taking it could not meet in the classroom environment. There are no plans to offer it online every year. Some of the students are English majors who couldn't get into the classroom course their freshman year. We don't have enough space for every student who needs or wants it to take it in the classroom.

Graham stated that a paragraph was included in the Program Sub-plan that states "We strongly recommend that students take Engl 2121 in the flesh." That needs to be taken out. That was the philosophy of the English faculty when it was created, but "in the flesh" was not intended to be included in the catalog. Squier replied that it is important for students to know that because otherwise they will take it online. Graham stated that students with a Creative Writing minor or sub-plan should take the course in the classroom. Online students will be those who want to take Creative Writing simply for the Gen Ed. She noted that she would not want to have those taking it for the Gen Ed to always take it online and the students with the minors or track to be in the classroom. That mix of both types of students is really important. It was decided that the sentence should say "We strongly recommend students take Engl 2121 in the classroom." Squier will make the change. She suggested that the creative writing track be pulled and brought back with the suggested changes at the next meeting.

MOTION (Garavaso/Ng to approve the Creative Writing Minor proposal was approved by unanimous vote (11-0-0).

Submitted by Darla Peterson