

Western Connecticut State University
General Education Committee
2008-2009

Members: Daryle Brown (PS), Ron Drozdenko (Ansell), Robin Flanagan (At-Large, Chair), Veronica Kenausis (Library, Webmaster), Patty O'Neill (First Year Coordinator), Chuck Rocca (A&S), Alba Skar(A&S), Linda Vaden-Goad (Dean), Kerry Walker (VPA), Alan Anderson (CUCAS rep), Matt Buchta (SGA rep)

Meeting Time: First Friday of the month at 9:00 am. September 5, 2008, October 3, 2008, November 14 (rescheduled), 2008, December 5, 2008, February 6, 2009, March 13 (an exception), 2009, April 3, 2009, May 1, 2009.

Meeting Place: Haas Library 2nd floor conference room

Agenda

Friday December 5, 2008

Recording: Rocca

- I. Minutes of May 2 meeting (Walker)
- II. Minutes of November 14 meeting (O'Neill)
- III. Input from community (15 minutes)
- IV. Old business
 - a) Update on FYE
 - b) Update on assessment of General Education curriculum
 - c) The Writing Requirement
- V. New business
 - a) New Geography courses and program (Standish)
- VI. Adjourn (by 10:30)

Very Brief Proposal concerning Writing Requirements at WCSU

The first writing requirement is already established, and in the hands of the writing department. Until we can get them to partner with us, I think we'll leave that one alone.

The second writing requirement is a proposed 200-level course for non-writing majors to take outside of the writing department (but not necessarily in their major). The prerequisite would be a W course. The new designation would be something like 2XXw2. This second writing requirement should NOT add any credit hours, but rather encourage those already teaching 200 level gen ed courses to include a writing component. To qualify, the course would need

- To be at the 200-level.
- Not be in the writing department.
- Have a W course as a prerequisite.
- Include writing assignments that total at least 3000 words.
- Include rewriting based on feedback.
- Include a real audience for some of the writing (beyond the professor's eyes only).
- Have a maximum class-size of 25 students.

From the General Education Task Force Final Report 2004:

Recommendation 3 Increase the Writing Intensive requirement

Rationale

Writing is a fundamental skill that students must master if they are to be successful at the university and beyond. In its mission statement, WestConn lists “strong skills in communication, problem solving, and critical thinking” among its top objectives. A survey of faculty confirms the importance of writing to the university community. WestConn faculty rank “written communication,” “critical thinking,” and “reading” as the most important skills students will need after graduation.

Recent national studies, including “The Neglected ‘R’” (College Board 2003), however, point to the fact that many first-year college students are not adequately prepared for college-level writing. This trend is evident at WestConn as well. In Fall 2004, for example, WestConn is offering 11 sections of ENG 098. Additionally, many college students have little or no experience incorporating outside research into their own writing.

At present, only one Writing Intensive (“W”) course is required to fulfill the General Education requirement at WestConn. National studies and data about our own students suggest that one course is not enough.

We propose to augment the current “W” course requirement with an “AW” (Advanced Writing Intensive) requirement. Under current guidelines, to earn a “W” designation, a course must: “1. involve research [appropriate to the assignment]; 2. involve the student in the writing process; 3. require at least one substantial piece of polished or ‘finished’ writing.” An “AW” course would follow these guidelines with the following additions:

- Must be completed within the first 70 credit hours, so that students can no longer wait until their last semester to fulfill the writing requirement
- Must include a research project of at least 2,500 words (not including Works Cited)
- Must incorporate the evaluation and use of nonfiction publications to support a sustained argument or study
- Must include instruction about how academic writing differs from other genres

Ideally, “AW” courses will be taught in the major, so that students will learn how to enter their particular discourse communities before they begin advanced coursework.

Objectives

The objectives for adding the “AW” requirement are as follows:

- To help students improve their ability to write effectively at the university and beyond
- To introduce students to academic writing as a genre
- To help students learn to evaluate and incorporate outside sources into their own arguments
- To teach students the conventions of their own discourse communities
- To help students improve their critical thinking and reading skills
- To stress the importance of writing as a means for conveying ideas and for learning about the self as it relates to the world

Implementation

Many departments already have courses on the books that could fulfill or could easily be adjusted to fulfill the “AW” requirement. The “AW” course, however, need not replace the capstone course already in place in many majors. Rather, an “AW” course could be viewed as preparation for the capstone course.

At present, all transfer students must take a “W” course at Western, and it seems reasonable to require that they take an “AW” course as well. Should a department choose not to develop an “AW” course for its majors, an “AW” course in the broader discipline (humanities, business, or social sciences, for example) could be developed to fulfill the requirement. As with “W” courses, the enrollment for an “AW” course should be capped at 22. Ideally, the enrollment would be capped at 18–20 students to provide the optimum opportunity for student–faculty interaction.

Assessment

The “AW” course could be assessed a variety of ways, including the following:

- Student portfolios
- Entrance and exit exams that require the use of secondary sources

- A review of course syllabi, sample assignments, and student essays

“AW” courses should be reviewed regularly by departments and by a permanent Gen Ed Committee to ensure that they are meeting the basic requirements.

Conclusion

Many of our first-year students are not adequately prepared for college-level writing. Adding a second writing course would signal how highly we value writing at the university. Moreover, this requirement would help to ensure that all juniors have been introduced to academic writing and to the research process. In effect, students would be ready to do the kinds of writing their professors expect in 300- and 400-level courses. They would also be better prepared to communicate effectively beyond the university.

BTtoP Campus Highlight

California State University–Chico “The Town Hall: Research, Reading, Writing and Engaged Citizenship”

Jennifer O’Brien, Project Coordinator, Bringing Theory to Practice Project

It is Friday evening at 5:00 in late November, and more than 500 college freshmen are gathered in a single auditorium at California State University, Chico (Chico). What’s wrong with this picture? It’s been five hours since the weekend began for most of these students. Shouldn’t they be out celebrating? But these students weren’t ready for the weekend yet. They were preparing to participate in the final academic event of their semester, Chico’s Town Hall Meeting.

This meeting, known simply as the Town Hall, is the culminating experience for first-year students enrolled in English 130, a course entitled Writing for the Public Sphere. English 130 is part of the Academic Writing Program (AWP) at Chico that serves 2,500 students each year, and partnering with the First-Year Experience Program, the Town Hall has grown to approximately 600 participants, including students, faculty, administrators, community members, and partners, and experts in the fields of research on which the students choose to focus. The Town Hall is open to all members of the Chico community and to the public.

Jill Swiencicki, the AWP Coordinator, explains the motivation behind the Town Hall. “The idea [for the Town Hall] came from teaching students and seeing over and over again that we asked them to do research and they had this preconceived, prepackaged notion of what a research essay was...it seemed so disconnected from their lives and it seemed so disconnected from the world they live in. So the idea came from trying to give them a real

audience and a real purpose for the work that they do.”

Students fill multiple roles as participants of the Town Hall, using their research and writing experiences in different ways. Some present to other students in small break-out sessions across campus before coming back to lead roundtable discussions in the Town Hall auditorium. Others speak to the Chico community in an outdoor exhibit—coined “the free speech area”—open

a serious focus on Chico’s campus and in its curriculum. He attends each of the Town Halls to engage with the students in the discussion of their research. With the attention of the president, and the participation of policy makers, experts, and other community members, students can contextualize their research and explore its implications for future action on the issues they are so impassioned about. At this meeting, students help create an experience that validates their academic



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to Chico’s campus the day of the Town Hall. Others act as indirect participants, serving as informed and productive members of the conversations that unfold at the Town Hall reception with community members and experts.

The Town Hall participants and organizers are thankful for the vision and encouragement of Chico President Dr. Paul Zingg, who has made civic engagement

efforts in a way that is connected to real-world challenges, and exposes them to the impact of their own civic engagement.

The Town Hall is one of the activities supported by Chico’s Demonstration Site grant award from the BTtoP Project for 2007–2009. For more information and to view the video created about the Town Hall Meeting, see www.csuchico.edu/engl/awp/townhall/about. ■

New Course Proposal/Spring 2009

Department of Social Sciences

Course Title: The Geography of Environment and Development

Course Number: GEO 2XX (to be offered once a year)

Course Credits: 3 semester credit hours

Instructor: A Standish

Prerequisites: Principles of World Geography (GEO 100)

Course Description: The Geography of Environment and Development will provide students with an insight into how different people utilize and conserve their natural environments. Students will consider the meaning and importance of both development and environmental management/conservation. They will explore different models of environmental management and development as they have been applied in the West, South America, Africa, the former USSR, Southern Asia and the East. This will include consideration of the role of different economic and political systems in land management and development strategies, as well as the role of science and technology. The course will also examine recent changes to the theory and practice of conservation and development including sustainable development and the growing importance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Rationale: The Geography of Environment and Development is a necessary course for the development of a minor in geography. This would be one of three required courses for the minor (Principles of World Geography and Introduction to Geographical Information Skills being the other two). This new course will be the only one of these three specifically dedicated to the study of people's interaction with their natural environment and how this varies from region to region and culture to culture. Hence, this course will provide the minor with sufficient balance to address the importance of the physical environment to humanity, while the introductory GIS class covers skills of mapping, data handling and data analysis.

Course Objectives:

1. To give students insight into the nature of conservation and development.
2. To enable students to recognize regional and cultural differences in the practices and stages of development and environmental management.
3. For students to understand how political and economic systems influence conservation and development.

4. For students to recognize how of science and technology can impact conservation and development practices.
5. For students to understand contemporary ideas and theories of conservation and development.
6. For students to research an example of conservation and/or development in action, evaluate the success of the project or locality and present their findings in both written and oral formats.

Assessment:

This will be through a combination of a written paper, class presentation, and written examinations.

Course Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course students will have knowledge of different theories of development and conservation. They will also be able to describe different models of development as practiced in different countries and be able to discuss the benefits and problems of each.

Course Outline

- I. Conservation Thought and Models: Europe/USA
- II. Development Thought and Models: Western Industrialization, Communist States, Green Revolution
- III. Resource Use and Conservation: Renewable/non-Renewable Resources, Agriculture, Technological Innovation and Resource Use
- IV. The Merging of Conservation and Development
- V. Competing Notions of Conservation and Development: Newly Industrialized Countries, Ecotourism, Sustainable Development

Impact on Staffing

Teaching this new class may mean that I teach one less section of Principles of World Geography, of which there are fewer sections offered in the spring. This class would need to be picked up by an adjunct faculty, but this would not adversely impact my general education load. However, there are fewer sections offered in the spring and in any case it is my job to offer students a background in geographical education, which means more than one introductory class. We also have fewer student teachers to supervise, which is another part of my position, now that the history department is taking responsibility for their own students.

Impact on Resources

The library will need to acquire a few key texts in the environment and development field to bring its collection up to date.

New Course Proposal/Spring 2009

Department of Social Sciences

Course Title: Introduction to Geographical Information Systems

Course Number: GEO 2XX (to be offered once a year)

Course Credits: 3 semester credit hours

Instructor: A Standish

Prerequisites: GEO 100 Principles of World Geography; Basic computer skills (word processing, Excel and the Internet).

Course Description: This course will introduce students to the subject of GIS, which concerns the storage, analysis and representation of spatial data. The class will be taught using a combination of lectures and hands-on tutorials. Hence, students will need to possess basic computer skills including word processing, Excel and the Internet. The lectures will provide students with the concepts and theories that inform GIS capabilities and applications. The tutorials will guide students through the techniques of GIS software. This combined approach will teach students how to master ArcGIS software such that they can access and manipulate data which can be used to construct maps of various forms. The course will also introduce students to spatial analytical tools which can be used to interrogate databases. The final part of the course will involve students working on their own GIS projects.

Rationale: GIS enables students and faculty alike to manage and map data. This is a fast growing field, with high demand for young people trained in GIS skills to work in both the academic and business worlds, including marketing, surveying, census and environmental work. Within the university, there is presently strong demand for GIS within the biology department, where students and faculty need to map species distribution. Sociology faculty have also expressed a desire to map social phenomena and events. Further, there is potential for collaborative work outside the university with Candlewood Lake Authority and local mapping projects. Students skilled in this area will be able to contribute to mapping projects both within and outside the university.

Course Objectives:

Students will master the following:

- Understand the origins and purposes of GIS
- How to use current GIS software (ArcGIS 9.1) to construct and manipulate digital maps
- Understand the theory behind different GIS technologies and how technologies can overlap to produce spatial data

- How to access data sources, how to import data and combine data sets
- How to query data and statistically analyze it
- How to plan and execute an independent GIS project
- About the applications and social implication of GIS

Assessment: This will be conducted through a combination of computer lab exercises, assignments/projects and examination.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of the course students will have knowledge of the capabilities, functions and applications of GIS. They will have mastered skills in the construction of data management systems, data manipulation, and data presentation in the form of digital maps.

Course Outline

- I. Introduction to GIS and Roots in Cartography
- II. Getting the Map into the Computer
- III. Database Management
- IV. Exploring ArcMap and ArcCatalogue
- V. Symbolizing and Classifying Features and Rasters
- VI. Querying Data
- VII. Joining and Relating Tables
- VIII. Selecting Features by Location
- IX. Analyzing and Projecting Data
- X. Building a Geodatabase
- XI. Editing
- XII. Geocoding
- XIII. Collecting data points using GPS
- XIV. Making Maps
- XV. Making Models

Impact on Staffing:

As this is a course I was hired to teach there is no impact on other courses.

Impact on Resources

Presently the course is being offered in the social sciences computer lab (WH325b), but a proposal has been tabled to expand this space into the next room, building a larger multi-purpose computer classroom. This would be a much improved teaching space and would expand the potential number of students taking the class from 15 to 24. It is hoped that this new space will be ready by spring 2010.

Proposal to Add a Minor in Geography to Social Sciences

Faculty Advisor: A Standish

Minor in Geography

Eighteen semester hours are required.

The purpose of this minor is to enable students to develop a background in geographic skills and knowledge. Courses would introduce them to both the physical and human sides of the human-environment dualism, allowing them to gain an appreciation of the interaction between the two. Courses would also require that student identify and explain spatial patterns at local, national and global scales, analyzing causal factors using maps and other methods of data presentation.

On completion of the minor students will have begun to appreciate some of the fundamental concepts of geography including: location, place, region and the inter-relationships between different localities. They will have gained knowledge of world regions, different countries, cultures and cities, spatial interactions including trade, environmental management systems, the natural environment and other geographical themes. Students will also have been introduced to geographical skills of spatial analysis including: data handling, making comparisons between localities, how to read a map, collecting, organizing and presenting geographical information as maps, graphs, etc., and drawing inferences and conclusions from this data. Finally, students will consider some of the moral questions encountered in geographical study, such as the nature of different cultures, how development is best achieved and the importance of environmental management and conservation.

There are three required courses (below) taught at increasingly levels of difficulty. Students must then make up the remaining 9 credit hours by selecting from the electives below. Students are encouraged to gain specialized knowledge in one world region or country.

A minor in geography contributes significantly to any degree in politics, economics, social studies, anthropology, history and business.

Required courses:

GEO 100 Principles of World Geography

GEO 2XX Geographical Information Systems (offered every spring)

GEO 2XX The Geography of Environment and Development (new course to be offered every spring)

Electives: (at least two of which must be at the 200 level or above)

GEO 290 Geopolitics in the Twenty-First Century

GEO 250 USA and Canada: A Regional Study

GEO 252 Latin America: A Regional Study

GEO 253 Russia and Euro-Asia: A Regional Study

ENV/GEO 150 Urban Environment as an Ecological Problem

ES 103 Planet Earth

AAS/GEO 251 Africa: A Regional Study

HIS/AAS 219 African-American History and Culture (contemporary)

NWC 103 Chinese Culture

NWC 104 Japanese Culture

NWC 105 Cultures of India

NWC 107 Middle Eastern Culture

NWC/AAS109 Equatorial African Cultures

NWC 110 Vietnamese Culture

NWC 112 Korean Culture

NWC/AAS 113 Southern African Cultures

NWC 115 Latin American and Caribbean Civilizations

Other electives with significant geographical components will be considered at the discretion of the faculty advisor.

Italics = new course being developed by A Standish

Possible future field trip may provide an additional course option.