

November 19, 2007

To: Paul Engelking, Chair UO Committee on Courses
From: Ron Severson, Chair Undergraduate Council
Cc: Linda Brady, Senior Vice President and Provost
Re: Multicultural Course Review

The Undergraduate Council is completing its review of the courses that count toward the UO Multicultural Requirement, and we would like your help with the essential next step. The Council began this review in Winter 2007 as part of its regular review of all parts of the General Education curriculum, as required by the University Senate (US99/00-2). Although all courses that are part of this curriculum have undergone special, university-wide review by either the ICGER Committee or the Committee on Courses when first approved, the possibility of drift away from initial design and intent is considerable. Such evolution is unavoidable and often beneficial. Course content changes as new faculty join us and, in response to competing needs, departments re-direct courses to different purposes. The typical result is not loss of course quality, but sometimes may reduce the extent to which a course can achieve the specific General Education goals for which it was designed. Thus, because General Education courses play such a central role in the liberal education we prize, there is merit in periodically reviewing them in the form in which they are offered.

Review of the Multicultural courses was further prompted by student concerns. The Council has been aware that students are frequently baffled as to the basis on which some courses count toward the Multicultural requirement whereas others, which seem to them comparable, do not. This uncertainty generates petitions for exceptions from individual students, and more significantly, undermines the significance and value of the requirement.

The current General Education review cycle was initiated in Fall 2002 with a review of Group-satisfying courses, and the procedure that had been developed for those courses was used again for the Multicultural course review. A description of the procedure is attached, but in brief, the review was based on the comparison of a current syllabus with the criteria for courses in each of the 3 Multicultural categories (American Cultures, International Cultures, and Identity, Pluralism and Tolerance). Courses that appeared initially not to meet those criteria were reviewed and discussed a second time by the full Council. In some cases, that discussion suggested that moving a course from one category to another would allow it to meet the criteria more effectively. The attached document reports the details, which in summary are:

Courses meeting the criteria for their current Multicultural categories =	153
Courses that should be offered in a different Multicultural category =	14
Courses for which insufficient information was available =	19
<u>Courses not meeting the criteria for any of the Multicultural categories =</u>	<u>14</u>
Total courses reviewed =	200

I am writing to you, as Chair of the Committee that grants initial approval of Multicultural courses, on behalf of the Council. We would like you to re-consider the 14 courses that appear to us, in their current form, not to meet the criteria for such courses. These are excellent courses in their own right, and we strongly support their continued inclusion in the University curriculum. We recommend, however, that they no longer count toward the Multicultural requirement. We would be happy to discuss our recommendation with you in more detail, and we hope to have a decision from you in time to convey a joint recommendation, from the Committee on Courses and the Undergraduate Council, to Deans and Departments and to the University Senate for action this academic year.

Meanwhile, the Council will complete its Multicultural review by suggesting category changes to the relevant faculty and departments and soliciting missing information for 33 courses. The Council will also formulate some guidelines for clarifying the Multicultural requirement and making it more meaningful to students. These will include a response to your question as to whether Multicultural courses should be offered at the 400-level. We will forward our general recommendations to you so that they can be improved through critical review by the Committee on Courses.

ATTACHMENTS (2)

1. Review Procedure, including Criteria for the Multicultural Courses
2. Results of Multicultural course review (spreadsheet)