
George Scarlett, Chair

Overview:

As in the past, the main work of the committee has been to evaluate courses from students, faculty, and the curriculum committee – to decide whether courses count toward distribution, culture, and world civilization requirements. This academic year, the committee processed all of the petitions it received. Last year, we reorganized ARB to follow a sub-committee structure, developing and implementing petition forms and insuring a uniform process for all three sub-committees, and increasing the functions of the Trunk website. That system has worked well this year and is recommended for future ARB committees.

The development of petition forms was also a product of the previous year (and the year before that). Petition forms are now found on the ARB Trunk website and available to everyone in one way or another (e.g., through Dowling). Also, petitions for courses now go through (need to be approved by) relevant department chairs or a department’s program representative – including petitions for ex-college courses. The new wrinkle this past year is that we brought ex-college courses into the new system by having a representative of the ex-college function, essentially, as the representative for individual ex-college courses and to follow the same procedures as are followed by any Tufts professor petitioning for a course to count toward a requirement. Also with respect to petitions, we have asked that for seniors, petitions arrive prior to their final, spring semester.

With regard to the Trunk website, Courtney Spieler has continued to develop the website so that each sub-committee’s activities are documented, so that forms are available to all, and so that archived material from previous years can be retrieved.

In May, we have one more meeting scheduled to help foster the transition to next year.

Chairs:

Joe DeBold has continued as the sub-committee chair for distribution requirements.

Laura Baffoni-Licata has continued as sub-committee chair for culture and language requirements,

Sam Kounaves has served as sub-committee chair for world civilization requirements.

George Scarlett has served as chair these past two years and will be replaced since it is the end of his term

Issues for Discussion

While the streamlined ARB continues to work well to make ARB more efficient, at the end of the year we realized we needed more time to discuss ongoing, conceptual, issues, we continued this year to wrestle with conceptual issues, particular around “culture” and “world civilization” – the various meanings.

The main conceptual issues seem to be the following:

1. Culture is the most obvious ongoing conceptual issue – in part because culture no longer has a clear, geographical criterion for defining but also because so many new culture petitions have to do with so-called “trans-boundary” courses on global issues such as health; without a clear
geographical criterion, we have in place a fifty-percent or more rule to decide whether a course has enough content about a culture to count toward the culture requirement – however, it is difficult, to say the least, to apply this rule with great certainty. Similarly, with trans-boundary” courses, it is difficult to determine just how much a course is introducing students to perspectives from other cultures vs. speaking about a global issue from one, American, perspective mainly. We need more discussion to develop better criteria or better ways to measure.

2. Another conceptual issues has to do with the overlap between petitions for culture and petitions for world civilization. The overlap seems to have grown now that students do not generally take “dedicated”, “World Civilization” courses – raising the question of whether we really need a separate world civilization requirement. We have no answer to this question, only the feeling that the question needs to be raised and discussed. In fact, several on the ARB committee feel that it is time to seriously consider doing away with the World Civilization requirement – and three from the committee expressed this view at a meeting headed by Dean Bauer.

**Concluding Remarks:**

This report could not be complete without mentioning the outstanding support given to the committee by Courtney Spieler. Courtney Spieler not only develops the Trunk site, she has provided all of the background work needed to keep the committee organized, on time, and with much needed supports.