

## **Committee on Educational Policy (CEP)**

**April 29, 2016**

**In attendance: Faculty: David S. Hall, Chair; Alexander George; Klára Mórica; Sean Redding; Catherine Sanderson (by phone). Catherine Epstein, dean. Students: Rashid (Chico) Kosber '17. Recorder: Nancy Ratner, Associate Dean of Admission and Researcher for Academic Projects.**

David Hall, Chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), called to order the CEP meeting at 8:30 a.m. in the Kennick Room in Cooper House. The committee approved the minutes of the meetings of April 15<sup>th</sup> and April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Announcements**

David said he would make a statement at the next faculty meeting asking faculty to be mindful of possible conflicts, particularly with arts rehearsals and other evening events, when scheduling evening exams. Catherine E. said she is considering a proposal that would create a testing center in which students requiring extra time could take exams. She thought that might make it easier for faculty to schedule exams for students who require extra time. Catherine S. said that a testing center will not be helpful in cases in which the faculty member needs to be present to answer questions and it also will not help with faculty concerns about cheating

### **Architectural Studies**

David shared a proposal from the Advisory Committee of the Program in Architectural Studies that has recommended that the Architectural Studies program be brought under the administrative aegis of the Department of Art and the History of Art. This change is supported both the members of Architectural Studies and also the Department of Art and the History of Art. The committee acknowledged the proposed administrative change.

### **Faculty Handbook policy on due dates for final projects and papers**

David next asked the committee to examine the language in the Faculty Handbook, IV. F. 4., which governs due dates for final projects and papers. The committee decided at its previous meeting that these rules are not reflected in practice. In accordance with that conversation, David proposed some changes to the language. The committee then discussed whether his recommended changes would satisfy the original intent—to liberate the reading period so that it would be used for exam preparation—or whether it might extend beyond that original idea. The committee agreed that no new assignments should be made after 5:00 p.m. on the last day of classes. After some discussion, the committee also decided to require the completion of all regular course work by the last day of classes at 5:00 p.m., and to require the submission of all final course projects, papers, and examinations in a given semester by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the final examination period. The committee agreed that this would not apply to final artistic performances or exhibitions. Extensions to submit course work beyond the last day of classes or beyond the last day of the exam period will require the permission of the class dean. The new Faculty Handbook language would read as follows:

#### **IV.F. FINAL EXAMINATIONS END-OF-SEMESTER WORK**

1. At the end of the semester there will be scheduled a five day examination period (including Sunday). An instructor may choose to:
  - a. hold no final examination;
  - b. provide the student with a copy of the final examination before the beginning of the examination period, to be taken at any time during the examination period according to the procedure outlined by the instructor ("take-home examination");
  - c. provide in the envelope supplied, an examination of two or three hours in length which will be made available at a designated examination center, the selection of the particular time period being left to the discretion of the individual student (student self-scheduled examination");
  - d. hold an examination during a specific, scheduled session. Examinations to be given in this manner will be scheduled by the Registrar as to room and time (single-session examination).
2. Examinations in all courses must be completed by 5 p.m. on the last day of the examination period. Each student shall be responsible for completing his or her examinations and returning them in the manner prescribed within the designated time periods.
3. Members of the faculty will inform the Registrar, upon his request, of the manner in which they intend to conduct their final examinations. The Registrar will then designate examination centers for each course holding examinations under option 1 (c) and schedule those being held under option 1 (d). He or she will provide students and instructors with a list showing for each course the manner in which the examination is to be conducted, the date by which examinations must be completed, the days and times for examination sessions, and when pertinent, the examination center in which the examination will be conducted.
- 4. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED PERFORMANCES OR EXHIBITIONS, NO FINAL COURSE WORK MAY BE ASSIGNED OR DUE DURING THE READING PERIOD, WHICH EXTENDS BETWEEN 5:00 P.M. ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASSES THROUGH 9:00 A.M. OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE EXAMINATION PERIOD.**
- ~~4.~~ 5. Faculty members will submit their grades to the Registrar by the agreed date. (Any extensions are to follow the procedures designated by Faculty vote.)
- ~~5.~~ 6. Prior to each examination period the student members of the Committee on Educational Policy and of the Judicial Board will arrange to remind each student that examinations are covered by the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility and will explain the manner in which it applies to these examination procedures.
- ~~6.~~ 7. A student who is prevented by illness from completing a final examination within the examination period may be granted the privilege of a special examination by the Dean of Students, who will arrange the date of the examination with the teacher.
- ~~7.~~ 8. A student who without an excuse from the Dean of Students fails to take a final examination shall receive a grade of "F" on the examination.

#### **IV.G. Completion of Work; Policy on Extensions**

~~In conformity with the practice established for the first semester of 1971-72, and as a general practice of this and subsequent semesters, the Faculty rules that all~~ **ALL REGULAR** course work in a given semester must be submitted by the last day of classes at 5:00 p.m.

Extensions beyond this time will be given only for extraordinary reasons, and only when the student has obtained the signatures of the instructor in the course and the Class Dean. Work not submitted by the date set in the extension will not be accepted for credit.

**ALL FINAL COURSE PROJECTS, PAPERS, AND EXAMINATIONS IN A GIVEN SEMESTER MUST BE SUBMITTED BY THE LAST DAY OF THE FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD AT 5:00 P.M.**

Only for medical reasons or those of grave personal emergency will extensions be granted beyond the second day after the examination period.

**Catalog policy on half courses**

The committee next turned to the language in the Catalog that governs the policy on half courses. The Catalog states that “Half courses are not normally included in the 32-course requirement for graduation.” David proposed removing that line and adding an additional paragraph at the end, detailing how half courses could be used, an edit that reflects the Registrar’s current practice. Catherine E. mentioned that the Curriculum Committee has been discussing this issue. Members of the CEP proposed that the rules on half courses should stipulate that no more than four half courses may be combined for credit towards graduation, and students would have to take 4 ½ courses prior to the semester in which the student takes 3 ½ courses. The committee approved this new language, and David said he will write a cover letter and send the following proposed language to the Committee of Six:

Each student is responsible for meeting all degree requirements and for ensuring that the Registrar’s Office has received all credentials.

The Bachelor of Arts degree is awarded to students who:

1. Complete 32 full semester courses and four years (eight semesters) of residence,\* except that a student who has dropped a course without penalty during the first year, or who has failed a course during the first or second year, shall be allowed to graduate, provided he or she has been four years in residence at the College and has satisfactorily completed 31 full courses.

Transfer students must complete 32 full semester courses or their equivalent, at least 16 of them at Amherst, and at least two years of residence at Amherst, except that a transfer student who has dropped a course without penalty during his or her first semester at Amherst shall be allowed to graduate with one less full course.

2. Complete the requirements for a major in a department or a group of departments, including a satisfactory performance in the comprehensive evaluation. Standard full courses are equal to four semester credits each. Half courses are equal to two semester credits. Our course system considers all standard full courses to have equal weight toward completing the degree requirements. Courses typically meet for at least three hours a week, with the expectation that additional time may be spent in lab, discussion, studio, film viewing, or preparatory work.

3. Attain a general average of 6 in the courses completed at Amherst and a grade of at least C in every course completed at another institution for transfer credit to Amherst.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

All students except Independent Scholars are required to elect four full courses each semester and may elect an additional half course. The election of a half course in addition to the normal program is at the discretion of the student and without special permission. A student may not elect more than one half course in any semester except by consent of his or her class dean and the departments concerned. In such cases the student’s program will be three full courses and

two half courses. ~~Half courses are not normally included in the 32-course requirement for graduation.~~

**A STUDENT MAY COMBINE TWO HALF COURSES TO BE COUNTED AS EQUIVALENT TO A FULL COURSE IF (1) THE STUDENT COMPLETES 4.5 COURSES IN ONE SEMESTER AND 3.5 IN A SUBSEQUENT SEMESTER, AND THE TWO HALVES MATCH IN A MANNER DESIGNATED BY THE OFFERING DEPARTMENT, AND WITH PERMISSION OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR; OR (2) THE HALVES MUST MATCH WITHIN THE SAME SEMESTER IN A MANNER DESIGNATED BY THE OFFERING DEPARTMENT, AND WITH PERMISSION OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR AND THE CLASS DEAN.**

**NO MORE THAN 4 HALF COURSES MAY BE SO COMBINED FOR CREDIT TOWARDS GRADUATION.**

### **Committee policy on course enrollment caps**

David next asked the committee to turn to its policy on course enrollment caps. Catherine S. said that in some departments the mean enrollment is significantly higher than 18 students per course, with no option to teach anything below the mean at any level. She wondered what the purpose of this requirement was. Alex too wondered why this rule was applied to individual courses rather than applying it at the department level.

David said the purpose is one of access to the open curriculum, as noted in the committee's course proposal solicitation letter: "To enroll all Amherst College students in four classes each term, each course at Amherst must, on average, accommodate approximately 18 students. Courses that enroll fewer than 18 students must be counter-balanced by courses that enroll more than 18 students. The CEP urges all faculty members to be mindful of this number when determining the appropriate class size for their courses. In an effort to ensure that students retain access to the open curriculum, the CEP asks departments to think carefully about balancing their course enrollments and urges faculty members to consider slightly higher caps whenever pedagogically possible. The committee will give greater scrutiny to courses limited to 18 or fewer students, especially courses that do not involve significant attention to writing or that are not limited due to equipment or room requirements."

Sean noted that the committee has permitted lower caps on enrollments but simply requires a justification for the lower number. Klára added that the committee looks at the department enrollments when it receives an FTE request and when it undergoes an external review. Not all departments have high enrollments, however. Most committee members noted the difficulty of examining course caps at the department level, given the turnover in courses each year, and David cautioned against examining this issue via averages across a department, given the ways that this approach might distort course offerings. He said this is really about allowing as many students access to courses as possible. He pointed out that a department offering two courses capped at 60 students and one course capped at 5 students would, if fully enrolled, easily exceed the average of 18. Nevertheless, it would be inappropriate for the CEP to accept a cap of 5 with no justification beyond that the average minimum enrollment was being met when considering the department as a whole. He further observed that there are many pressures applied in the direction of smaller enrollment limits, and few – such as those gently applied by the CEP

through its course approval process – that push in the opposite direction. Chico observed that most seminar courses are capped at 15 students. Klára noted that departments oversee some of these issues. Sean said she did not want to intrude on a department when it comes to deciding what mix of small, medium, and large enrollment courses the department may offer in any given semester. Catherine E. said she thought the average class size number was mentioned in the expectation that faculty would balance their courses. Sean added that this number also helps to establish certain norms and asks faculty to think about how their requirements fit into the larger system. David noted that most courses do not enroll up to their caps, but typically end up a little below. Alex thought the committee might wish to ask faculty to justify their caps in a different way. It could ask why an instructor thinks it would be preferable to be teaching in that particular way, for example. The committee decided to continue the discussion at its next meeting.

### **Registration anomaly reporting**

David said he has had a number of complaints about the anomaly reports after registration. Students believe that if the system allows them to register, even without the advisor's approval, they can do so. He suggested putting this on a future agenda.

### **Transcripts**

David said the committee needs to discuss one more iteration of the transcript policy that would allow a faculty member to see the student's previous coursework, without seeing the grades. He will place this on the agenda for the next week.

### **Campus facilities and planning**

Jim Brassord will visit the committee to discuss the campus plan.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.