

**Committee on Educational Policy  
November 20, 2019**

**In attendance: Faculty: Tekla Harms; Edward Melillo, chair; Christian Rogowski; Krupa Shandilya; Adam Sitze. Provost/Dean of the Faculty: Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*. Students: Gabriel Echarte '22; Sterling Kee '23; Julia Ralph '21. Recorder: Nancy Ratner, Director of Academic Projects.**

Edward Melillo, chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. in Clark House 100. The committee approved the minutes of November 6 and 13, 2019.

**Course proposal**

The committee approved one new course.

**Clarifying policies**

The committee again turned its attention to clarifying policies surrounding the FGO and course requirements. Adam proposed adding subheadings, and after some discussion, Tekla and Adam agreed to continue to simplify and clarify the language in those two sections prior to the next meeting.

**Writing-intensive instruction**

Continuing her discussion of writing-intensive instruction, begun at an earlier meeting, Catherine explained that she is concerned about the availability of writing-intensive courses. During the spring semester, only one intensive writing course will be offered, despite the committee having allocated three FTEs with the understanding that each department would staff one writing-intensive course per year.

Catherine noted that the Amherst faculty had previously expressed strong feelings that such a course should be taught by Amherst faculty members. To encourage greater participation, Jyl Gentzler offered a seminar last spring for faculty interested in teaching such a course, but just one of the participants has committed to an intensive-writing course this spring. A single course is clearly not adequate to cover the 35 students referred by their first-year seminar instructors. (A second course will be taught in the Spanish language.)

Edward asked whether these courses must be designed explicitly as writing-intensive courses. He said he has regularly taught a first-year seminar in which he focuses quite intensively on the mechanics of good writing. He would consider teaching the course as a writing-intensive course. Catherine said these courses are fundamentally different from other courses. She said she would like to have a group of faculty who are willing to teach these on a regular basis. Tekla pointed out that anyone teaching these courses would need first to clarify the role of the course within the major, since these courses generally cover very little content, at least in the model promoted by Jyl in the past. The committee thought it important to invite Jyl to a meeting to clarify the program expectations. Edward said, once he understands the expectations, he would then speak to the three departments that have committed to offering the courses and discuss the specific pedagogy that is required.

Referring to a letter from Lawrence Douglas, proposing that first-year seminar faculty be required to assess the writing of their students and submit referrals, Catherine also noted that only about half the faculty teaching first-year seminars have referred students this year. Tekla pointed out that advisors are not routinely informed when a student is recommended. This was another recommendation from Lawrence. Catherine said she would ask Austin Sarat, who is currently overseeing the intensive-writing

program, to make sure that advisors are being made aware of their students' referrals. She subsequently reported that he does copy the advisor when he writes to the student about the recommendation.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.