

**Minutes**  
**Comparative Societies Faculty Retreat**  
**Friday 9/18/09, 9-4**

Location: Hilton Garden Inn  
3100 S. Dirksen, Springfield, IL

**Present:**

Jenn Manthei  
Lynn Fisher  
Peter Shapinsky  
Lan Dong  
Veronica Espina  
Elizabeth Kosmetatou

David Bertaina  
Hinda Seif  
Ali Nizmuddin  
Adriana Crocker  
Karen Moranski  
Heather Dell

1. Brief introduction

The participants introduced themselves and gave a brief overview of the Comparative Societies courses they are teaching.

2. Comparative Societies (CS) Category: Discussion of the draft of the Revised Course Category Language

The category was discussed and it was decided to make the criteria more usable and exciting to teach by simplifying the language while defining the philosophy and goals of what the category is really about.

The point #5 of the Draft Revised Criteria in the Core Capabilities is written as:

“Students should learn to recognize and respond to cultural biases and understand how ethnocentrism and cultural construction of ‘other’ develop and change. In so doing, students should then be able to understand ethical and moral questions from perspectives beyond that of their own worldview.”

The revised point #5 would be:

“Students should begin to develop the tools & skills to recognize different worldviews as well as the consequences of ethnocentrism, bias, prejudice, and xenophobia. In doing so, students should begin to understand how such constructions of “other” develop and change over time.

3. Discussion of Relationship between CS and Freshman Skills Building: Note-taking, reading comprehension, etc.

A list of skills was made as to what freshman should be gaining while taking these courses.

Skills acquired through repetition

Writing -what amount of writing?

-complete thoughts and sentences

-grammar/syntax

Reading comprehension

Geography

Oral Communication/working with others: 1. Group work 2. Oral presentations

Note taking

-class notes

- reading notes

Exam-taking

Study habits

Time management

Behavior - respect

Participation and preparedness

-dealing with sensitive issues

-power dynamics in reading and class

Integrating concepts and examples

Evidence for arguments

Academic integrity

Paraphrasing

Integration - Interdisciplinary

4. What key information can we share to make teaching CS courses more doable? Sharing a few teaching highlights: effective techniques or assignments, type of content that works, skill building, and/or stuff that hasn't worked (yet! or not!)

Problem: Worried that teachers won't teach UNI 101.

Solution:

CS faculty development is crucial. We could present syllabus development workshops as incentives.

- Syllabus and active design workshop and interdisciplinary.
- One freshman seminar and one comparative societies course can be taken simultaneously.
- Instead of CS teachers having to build techniques, the freshman seminar would handle that instead.

Break for lunch 12:38, resumed 1:23 pm returning to topic #4.

There was some consensus to create alternative models of CS courses. During the ongoing conversation, Karen said she will take to Tim Barnett and Clarice Ford the topic of freshman seminar and how many CS courses would be needed to combine them at a freshman level. UNI 101 needs to be brought into the academic fold. Some want to get rid of the ECCE elective, which the General Education Council can talk about. There are challenging teaching requirements in this category to teach skill development and Comparative Societies content at the same time.

5. Collecting key assignments to track student learning: Assessment

Karen explained what is going on nationally with regard to assessment. AAC&U has begun to develop learning outcomes for liberal education. What is good is that they match our baccalaureate outcomes word for word and we did it first. They give us tools that are nationally standardized to develop criteria for measuring student learning.

We want to take Comparative Societies as a trial balloon for using the values rubric for matching CS. We would like to send a survey to find out what assignments they use and to give us assessment data on how we can focus our courses to develop our students. We would want to tailor the rubric to 100 level courses.

Asking faculty what assignments they have and get random samples by stripping identifying identification. If we can do that this year we could add a second rubric next year. Maybe pay a group of faculty for an afternoon to assess these assignments. We may include Gen Ed Council and set up a Blackboard site for CS.

6. Brainstorming: What would be some effective ways to teach students how our CS courses fit into and build foundations?
- a. A cohesive, coherent ECCE curriculum of U.S. Communities, Global Awareness, Engagement Experience

- b. Continued interdisciplinarity
- c. Diaspora
- d. Migration

Based on CS revisions, there is a definitive globalization. Instructors were asked how their CS course fits into other disciplines.

7. Summing up: Shared visions, useful ideas, issues that still need solving...

Being advocates for General Education and the Comparative Societies teachers, what do you want Heather & Karen to ask for and what do we really need?

- a. Keeping the class size manageable might attract faculty to Gen Ed. It was discussed as to which classes and problems with large cap sizes.
  - Summarized no one should be asked to raise cap over 25
  - Personnel policy stated that class size should be capped in relation to pedagogy
  - Due to writing intensive, class should be smaller
  - The safety of the class is in danger due to freshman acting like high school students
  - The sensitivity of the topic of race and gender issues need smaller discussion groups
- b. Problem with the cap of 30 characters in the course title. The titles are sometimes misspelled in the catalog. Banner does not allow more characters in the title so we cannot control this. The title must be identical in Banner as it is on the syllabus.
- c. Would like more workshops
- d. When someone is developing a new CS curriculum, faculty funds need to be available for compensation. Also a budget for resources would be handy and to have books available in the library when we need to buy them so they don't get sent out on inter-library loan. Need to be able to reserve them.
- e. NIA one semester where we can work on all criteria for global awareness, CS, U.S. Communities. Cross train or provide travel money for CS to go to UIUC or conferences.

- f. Enrichment lectures from master speakers on Comparative Societies.  
Write Fulbright proposal.
  
- 8. Workshop evaluations, redesigning this retreat, future wishes  
  
Participants were handed an evaluation sheet to turn in.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Ply