

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

PROPOSAL FROM THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE TO MODIFY THE CRITERIA FOR THE GLOBAL CULTURES FLAG

Professor Alan Friedman (English) submitted the following proposal on behalf of the Educational Policy Committee recommending changes to the criteria for the Global Cultures flag. The proposal was on the will be Faculty Council agenda on April 12, 2010, but due to a lack of quorum the meeting was adjourned before the proposal could be addressed. It is now being submitted as no protest legislation.¹

The secretary has classified this proposal as *general* legislation. If five or less protests are filed with the Office of the General Faculty by the date specified below, the legislation will be held to have been approved by the Faculty Council. If five objections are filed within the prescribed period, the legislation will be presented to the Faculty Council at its next meeting. Objections, with reasons, must be signed by a member of the Faculty Council.

To be counted, a protest must be received in the Office of the General Faculty by April 26, 2010.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The Faculty Council and General Faculty

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Approved by Educational Policy Committee on March 26, 2010.

Summary

The faculty committee that oversees the Global Cultures flag requirement has recommended the following modification to the language of the Global Cultures flag criteria. On February 22, 2010, the Undergraduate Studies Advisory Committee voted to approve this change. Because the current language mandates that one third of the course's graded content must be based on content dealing with the cultures and perspectives of a single "community, country, or coherent regional grouping of countries," the flag committee has had to reject proposals to flag some courses that the committee believes meet the spirit of the Global Cultures flag. The proposed modification of the criteria would address this problem.

Current Language:

To satisfy the Global Cultures flag, at least one-third of the course grade must be based on content dealing with the cultures and perspectives of a non-U.S. community, country, or coherent regional grouping of countries, past or present.

Proposed New Language:

To satisfy the Global Cultures flag, at least one-third of the course grade must be based on content dealing with in-depth examination of the broader cultural context and perspectives of one or more non-U.S. communities, countries, or coherent regional groupings of countries, past or present.

¹ Legislation updated on April 15, 2010.

Justification

The goal for the Global Cultures flag requirement, as the flag committee understands it, is to give students the opportunity to participate in an in-depth examination of the cultures and perspectives of a non-U.S. community. As such, sustained focus on a particular community, country, or coherent grouping of countries is required.

However, as the committee has reviewed proposals to flag individual courses over the past year, they have discovered that the specific language of the Global Cultures criteria has required them to reject some proposals they found to be in line with the goals of the flag requirement. Some of the questions with which the committee has struggled include:

- Can a course that compares several different global cultures through the lens of a particular thematic focus be flagged? There have been some cases where the course focuses on four main cultural contexts, such that even though there is sustained attention to each context, no one “country, community, or coherent regional grouping of countries” is the basis of a third of the grade. (See, for example, the proposal for R S 310: Introduction to the Study of Religion, attached.)
- How do we handle a course whose graded assignments compare multiple cultural contexts? These courses often give students an in-depth understanding of several cultures that is enriched by the comparative approach, but it can be difficult to determine that a third of the grade comes from one “country, community, or coherent regional grouping of countries.”
- How do diasporic cultures figure into this definition of cultural groups? In many cases, there may be more cultural continuity among groups that share similar origins, but are regionally dispersed due to migrations, than there is cultural continuity within the same geographic region. Yet it can be difficult at times to approve flags for these courses given the language of the flag criteria.
- How do we define what a “coherent regional grouping of countries” is for the purposes of this flag? Europe and Asia might be considered coherent regions, but each includes a wide variety of cultural groups and perspectives. Because the language of the flag criteria is so limiting, however, the committee has tended to interpret regional coherence fairly broadly, in order to be able to approve courses that are in line with the goals of the Global Cultures flag. It would be more in line with the goals of the flag to focus on whether students gain an in-depth understanding of a particular cultural group, rather than focusing on whether a third of the grade comes from a particular regional context.

The proposed modification of the flag criteria would allow the committee more flexibility in navigating these questions, while at the same time conveying more clearly to the university community what the flag committee is looking for in flag proposals. The committee’s goal is to approve the Global Cultures flag for as many courses as meet the spirit of this requirement, and this change would facilitate the committee’s ability to achieve this goal.

Proposal submitted by:

Larry Abraham, Associate Dean, School of Undergraduate Studies, February 26, 2010