

TO: Beth Dobkin, Provost

**FROM: Steve Cortright, Chair
Academic Senate**

DATE: March 7, 2011

**RE: Senate Action S-10/11-17CA
Approval of Permanent .25 Activity Course
The English Department Book Club**

At the March 3, 2011 meeting of the Academic Senate, the attached proposal for an English Department Activity Course was approved on the Senate's consent agenda. The issue was forwarded to the Senate from the Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee (UEPC) where it was approved unanimously. This action was assigned Senate Action # S-10/11-17CA.

Attachment

cc: Brother Ronald Gallagher, President
Dean Steve Woolpert

Annotation by the UEPC chair, Feb. 23, 2011: This proposal was unanimously approved by the UEPC in the meeting on Feb. 21. AM

Proposal for English Department Activity Course

School of Liberal Arts, Department of English English 27: “The English Department Book Club”

Course proposal: (1)

The English Department proposes to add to its official offerings a **.25 credit activity course**, organized as an informal book club. Class time will equal one hour a week, arranged as the instructor deems best – perhaps one hour a week, perhaps two hours every other week. It will be taught by English Department faculty members. The work of the course will consist of reading texts chosen by the instructor and students and discussing them as a group, with additional requirements such as film viewing or theater attendance, as appropriate to the course theme.

Justification for the course: (2)

We hope by offering this course to expose our students to texts we cannot include in our regular course offerings, to encourage an interest in contemporary literature, and to nurture a practice of independent reading and discussion. These objectives accord fully with the College’s Liberal Arts mission: We will be asking students to “look twice” at books they may already be reading for pleasure, to “ask why” of their favorite texts and writers. In participating in discussions, students will gain practice in “express[ing] themselves precisely and eloquently.”

Student population: (3)

We expect this course to be most attractive to English majors, but it will be open to any interested student – it might prove popular with students who are love reading fiction, but do not have room in their schedules for a full-credit literature course.

Relationship to present College curriculum: (4)

This course will provide a forum for discussion of texts that cannot be included in English Department full-credit courses. It should have no impact on current offerings in the English Department or any other department in the College.

Costs/Library resources: (5/6)

There are no implementation costs associated with this course. We do not believe that a library review is necessary, as the instructor and students will be supplying their own copies of the texts.

Grading and course credit: (7)

The instructor will assign grades of credit/no credit based on student attendance and participation in discussions. As it is a .25 credit activity course, no other outside work will be required.

Prerequisites: (8) None.

Course description for catalog: (9)

27: English Department Book Club (.25) Students meet with an instructor and fellow students one hour a week to discuss books informally. Possible course themes: adaptation, fantasy fiction, autobiography, travel books, best-sellers. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

Course content: (10)

We are offering the course twice on an experimental basis in 2010-2011.

Fall 2010, Marilyn Abildskov led discussions on adaptations: films based on novels and stories, and fiction inspired by films. Requirements included reading fiction and viewing films.

Reading and viewing list for “Adaptation”:

- *In Cold Blood* (literary reportage) by Truman Capote & the film, *Capote*
- *Possession* (novel) by A.S. Byatt & the film, *Possession*
- *Fight Club* (novel) by Chuck Palahniuk & the film *Fight Club*
- “Love in the Marketplace” (short story) by Yiyun Li & the film, *Casablanca*
- *Princess of Nebraska* (film)
- “Auggie Wren’s Christmas Story” (short story) by Paul Auster
- *Smoke* (film)

Spring 2011, Sandra Grayson will lead discussions on fantasy fiction. Readings will begin with Ursula LeGuin’s *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and may include such works as one novel from Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*, and a vampire novel that will challenge readers intellectually, such as Elizabeth Kostova’s *The Historian*.

Review of experimental offering: (11). The English Department is very satisfied with the course design. In Fall 2010, however, because of scheduling delays, the course enrolled only four students. Those four students accorded it rave reviews. The book club course for Spring 2011 currently has six students enrolled. We expect this number to climb as we advertise the course through January. What we’ve learned from offering the course experimentally is that we need to schedule carefully and advertise.