

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

ACADEMIC SENATE

GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

GE-009-190

CPU 1540: Exploring Contemporary Topics (Area E New Course)

General Education Committee

Date: 11/07/2019

Executive Committee  
Received and Forwarded

Date: 04/29/2020

Academic Senate

Date: 05/06/2020  
First Reading

TITLE OF REFERRAL: CPU 1540: Exploring Contemporary Topics

BACKGROUND:

This is a new General Education course proposed for GE Sub-Area E.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

Office of Academic Programs, Olukemi Sawyerr, Senate Executive Committee, Chairs of Senate Committees: Academic Affairs, Academic Programs, Faculty Affairs

DISCUSSION:

This is a new GE course proposed for Area E. In its evaluation of the course, the GE Committee found that it meets the requirements of GE Area E SLOs. The GE Committee had a number of questions about the implementation of the course, which was out of its purview. But they warrant mention.

The issues for the committee were that since this is a CPU course is offered by the University, it does not have a home department or college to ensure oversight and quality. Since it does not have a home department, the faculty teaching the course are recruited from a variety of departments. The course will be taught by three faculty members from various departments, split into three sections. So is this a single WTU course for faculty, or would they all get 3 WTU teaching loads? This course was created by an individual outside a department, which leaves open the question of what would happen to the course if that person were to leave CPP or retire. Also, there are concerns about misunderstandings about lecturer entitlements, whether they will be gained in the CPU course, translated to the department, etc. If no entitlement is possible, what might be the incentive for a lecturer to frequently teach the course other than to add to their paycheck.

In consultation with Senate Standing Committees, one chair noted that a colleague of theirs taught the pilot course: "It was not a particularly rewarding experience for him, and there was little coordination with the other faculty. Interdisciplinary team teaching can be great, but it requires a few faculty who are enthusiastic about it and willing to champion it. When those conditions are in place, they can develop cross-listed courses. When those conditions aren't in place, these things will only happen because some faculty got dragged together by an administrator with a pet project, and the quality of instruction suffers. ... As far as units, well, team-teaching always has workload allocation issues, but those are solvable when people want to solve them. You get interested people, with interested department chairs, and they find ways to piece together an appropriate workload despite the fact that the team-taught course isn't counting as a full load. When people believe in the project they make it happen. When they don't, it's a headache imposed on the department. So, since buy-in is the best way to make collaborations work, I don't support the notion of generic courses that can be thrown

together on the fly. If an interdisciplinary topic doesn't have enough interested parties to create a cross-listed course that the departments will own, it won't be a project that anybody cares about enough to make it work well."

Another committee chair stated: "It can be awesome, but in order to be awesome, support, and engagement are necessary. We are about to have a serious budget shortfall, and it will be hard to maintain energy and engagement. WTUs are always worked out when we need them to be. For example, many departments have lab classes that total 1 or 2 units."

Finally, a committee chair stated: "The FAC concluded that according to current policy university courses DO NOT give lecturers entitlements. Further, the university negotiates WTU with the TT faculty member. One member had the experience that departments usually get the raw end of this deal... If the university wants to promote this type of interdisciplinary work, the university should address some of these issues."

In sum, there were a number of complications and logistical questions that arose beyond the purview of the GE committee and ask the Executive Committee and Academic Senate for comments and guidance.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The GE Committee approved CPU 1540: Exploring Contemporary Topics (Area E) in terms of meeting the GE Area E requirements. But the Committee also recommended that the issues stated in the discussion should be resolved before it should be offered as a GE class for students.