

College of Letters and Science Curriculum Committee  
Report to L&S Faculty Senate  
Concerning Academic Years 2008-2009 (to date)

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**Curriculum Committee Members and Chair**

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Rob Asen (Communication Arts)	Kristopher Olds (Geography)
Greg Downey (School of Journalism & Mass Communication, School of Library & Information Studies), Chair	Pamela Potter (School of Music)
Liane Kosaki (Political Science)	Ned Sibert (Chemistry)
Naomi McGloin (East Asian Languages and Literature)	Jeremi Suri (History)
Michael Morgan (Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences)	Ken Sytsma (Botany)
	<i>Students:</i>
	Alicia Gedan
	Kimberly Mueller

*Ex Officio members:*

Elaine M. Klein (Assistant Dean, Academic Planning, Program Review & Assessment)  
Christopher F. Lee (Assistant Dean, L&S Student Academic Affairs)  
Molly McGlone (Assistant Director for Curriculum, L&S Honors Program)  
Michael J. Pflieger (Assistant Dean, L&S Student Academic Affairs)  
Tori Richardson (Assistant Dean, L&S Student Academic Affairs)  
Nancy Westphal-Johnson (Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education & Academic Administration)  
Tammy Weisensel (Assistant to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education & Academic Administration)

*Ad hoc Foreign Language Requirement Issues Working Group:*

Diana Frantzen (Spanish & Portuguese), Chair  
Dianna Murphy (UW-Madison Language Institute)  
Sally Magnan (UW-Madison Language Institute)  
As well as: Downey, Klein, Lee, McGloin, Pflieger, Richardson, Westphal-Johnson

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**Overview**

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The L&S Curriculum Committee advises the Dean on the curricular integrity of the undergraduate degree requirements, major requirements, and special programs. The committee also reviews proposals to add, change, or delete courses from the L&S subject listings prior to submitting these requests for final approval to the Divisional Executive Committees. As part of its work to maintain the integrity of the Liberal Arts curriculum, the committee considers requests to allow non-L&S courses to count toward L&S degree requirements by awarding them the designation of "Liberal Arts and Science" courses. The committee's work is described in greater detail online, at <http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3.htm>. Finally, at the Dean's request, the committee engages in research and discussion of critical issues in the College, for purposes of advising him, the faculty and L&S departments and programs, and the division of Student Academic Affairs, all of whom work together to provide L&S students educational experiences appropriate to the liberal arts and sciences.

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### **Proposals to Add, Change or Delete Courses**

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The L&S Curriculum Committee (LSCC) is responsible for college-level review of proposals to add, change, or delete courses listed within *Timetable* or *Catalog* subject listings managed by L&S departments and programs. Proposals are approved by the department faculty prior to submission to the LSCC. A technical review is conducted to evaluate whether proposals convey necessary technical information (for coding into the registrar's course database), and staff work with departments to resolve questions raised in this review. The committee chair reviews all proposals to determine if they are ready for committee consideration, and committee members review all proposals online prior to the meeting. When approved, proposals are forwarded to the Divisional Executive Committee. (See **Attachment A** for a diagram illustrating this process.) Since the committee's last report to the L&S Senate (April 14, 2008), the LSCC has approved proposals to create 30 new courses, change 111 existing courses, and delete 54 courses.

In Fall 2008, we learned that the campus-wide "Course Guide Project" has progressed to the point that the 2009-2011 *Undergraduate Catalog* will no longer contain lists of courses sponsored by each department, and the "online only" *Catalog* will instead link directly to the course guide. This offers several advantages, the most important of which is that course lists (and course attributes) will be updated more frequently than was ever possible with the print publication. One significant disadvantage, however, is that all courses in a listing – even those that have not been offered for ten years or more – will appear. To help departments make decisions about whether they should keep moribund courses on their lists, the Office of the Registrar created a file of "All Courses Available" that included a "last time taught" field. Assistant Dean Elaine Klein contacted departments and advised them to review their course offerings and delete courses that are no longer offered; in addition, the Divisional Executive Committee Office has worked with L&S to streamline the deletion process.

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### **Proposals to Change Requirements for Academic Programs**

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LSCC guidelines regarding changes to requirements the academic programs remain in effect (<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3ccpol.htm>). In Fall 2008, L&S departments and programs were asked to review catalog information in the publication of the 2009-2011 *Undergraduate Catalog*. Several programs sought changes to their academic programs; these appear in this report as **Attachment B**. The Committee and L&S Administrative staff continue to work with departments to articulate the connections between these curricular changes and their efforts to assess student learning in our academic programs, to more clearly link changes made to evidence, and to demonstrate more clearly that learning is improving.

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### **Implementing Revisions to the L&S Baccalaureate Degree Requirements**

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The committee anticipated that it might need to address questions regarding implementation of changes to the L&S baccalaureate degree requirements, or BABS07. Once again, activity in this area centered on requests to allow courses offered outside L&S count as "Liberal Arts and Science" (LAS) credit for L&S students. (The Committee's *Criteria for Liberal Arts and Science Courses* appear as **Attachment C**.) The committee considered ten requests and approved eight. These newly approved courses can be found in the School of Business, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, the School of Human Ecology, and the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies.

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## Other Curricular Issues

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### *Directed Study – Follow up on 2007-2008 LSCC report*

In 2007-2008, the committee spent considerable time researching and discussing the role of Directed Study in the undergraduate curriculum; the report of the committee's work was included in the last report to the L&S Senate (L&S FacDoc 276). Acting on the Senate's recommendation to share the report more widely, the Committee recommended revisions to the chapter of the L&S Handbook that discusses Directed Study (<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterFive/chV-18.htm>). This revision conveys the following information:

- College-level procedures for faculty and students involved in directed study;
- The range of numbers available to departments/programs for directed study courses;
- Use of directed study for internship/service learning experiences;
- Departmental responsibility to determine who may teach directed study; and
- Responsibility for instructional activity in these courses.

A list of "best practices" is being developed and will be promoted to departments online, as resources permit redesign of the Committee's web-presence.

### *Undergraduate Catalog Text*

The LSCC discussed the "front matter" presented in the *Undergraduate Catalog*, the goal of which is to describe for students (and their parents) the purpose of a liberal arts degree. Taking a cue from the "Essential Learning Outcomes" articulated in the Association of American Colleges and Universities national project, "Liberal Education and America's Promise", the LSCC revised the L&S description to convey the broad goals of liberal education, emphasizing the range of study, appreciation for various disciplines discover, understand, and communicate about the world, and the stressing the powerful problem-solving skills developed through (or informed by) interdisciplinary studies. The committee also prepared brief statements summarizing the types of learning acquired in each area of "breadth" students are required to complete. The committee hopes that this revision (see **Attachment D**) will provide better guidance for parents, students, faculty, and advisors when considering the role of liberal education in the university, and the requirements by which that type of education is achieved in the College of Letters and Science at UW-Madison.

### *Foreign Language Requirement Issues Working Group*

A working group was convened to address specific questions related to the implementation of the foreign language requirement and retro-active credits awarded. All departments offering language instruction were surveyed to obtain information about courses that satisfy the levels of language of the L&S Foreign Language requirement, and about the number of retro-active credit awarded for completion of various courses. This information will be used to update DARS programming; it will also inform the group's discussions about policy recommendations that may arise in relation to this requirement.

### *Special Focus: Students Pursuing Multiple Undergraduate Majors*

On February 9, 2009, Dean Sandefur met with the committee to discuss the phenomenon of students in L&S who pursue completion of more than one undergraduate major, a practice that has increased from 24% of students to 34% in the past eight years. This trend may affect college advising and instructional resources, and may have implications for the curriculum, particularly in light of the goal that students

pursue breadth of study that is complemented by deep inquiry, as practiced in and demonstrated by completion of a major. The LSCC has sought (and is continuing to seek) information on this topic from a number of sources. The Office of Academic Planning and Analysis has provided data that show which majors are most frequently combined. To better understand why students seek to complete more than one major, the committee has met with the Dr. Leslie Kohlberg, Director of L&S Career Services. Her insights confirmed reports that students and employers may see the practice as lending some advantage when seeking employment; however, she observed that employers may value other types of learning experiences (e.g., internships or practica) more. The committee is also conducting two surveys. A survey of L&S departments and programs will help the committee understand whether they consider this phenomenon to enhance or detract from student learning, whether their resources can bear these “additional” majors, and if they would pursue other curricular innovations if they were to serve fewer majors. A survey of students will help the committee understand why they seek to complete more than one major. The committee has not yet made any recommendations on this topic; a follow-up report may be provided at the next L&S Senate meeting.

This report was approved by the L&S Curriculum Committee on \_\_\_\_\_, and is submitted by:

Greg Downey, Chair, L&S Curriculum Committee  
Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication, and of Library and Information Studies

Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean  
L&S Academic Planning, Program Review and Assessment

# L&S Course Proposal Process

Elaine Klein & Tammy Weisensel

Faculty member proposes course to department; course is approved per departmental process

Proposal sent to L&S Curriculum Committee

Revised proposal sent to Divisional Executive Committee Office

Additions, changes and deletions are forwarded to Registrar's Office for entry into *Timetable* and *Catalog* database.

Department processes vary; however, all proposals to add, change, or delete courses must include the appropriate course proposal form. See: <http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/divcomm/courses/CourseProposals.htm>

Depending on form used and nature of course proposed, proposals may include:

- Syllabus
- For Comm A/B, QR A/B, or Ethnic Studies, information about progress of (or request for) review
- Support from Cross-listing departments
- Discussion from affected departments (if any) regarding overlapping course content, if relevant and substantial

If cross-listing department is in a college other than L&S, those colleges must also approve the course. L&S can work with parallel routing of these requests; however, some colleges prefer sequential approval. Conflicts will be resolved at the divisional committee level.

## Departments send:

3 Copies for Technical and Committee Review. *Please note:* these documents are reviewed as though they are "drafts", just in case they need revision prior to submission to college/campus committees.

## Please include:

Cover letter from chair (one letter per set of proposals)

## To:

L&S Curriculum Committee  
c/o Tammy Weisensel  
307 B South Hall

## By:

Ten days prior to Curriculum Committee meeting that falls before Divisional Committee Deadline

- L&S CC staff & chair work with dept to resolve technical questions.
- L&S CC votes when questions are resolved (may vote "pending resolution" of minor questions).
- Notice of approval and revised proposals are sent to Dept. and to Divisional Executive Committee Office.

## Departments send:

20 Copies of revised/final proposal

## To:

Divisional Executive Committee Office  
(134 Bascom Hall)

## By:

Three weeks before Divisional Executive Committee meeting

## L&S sends:

L&S CC Chair's notice of course approval to Divisional Executive Committee Office (e-mail and hard copy) *with* correspondence about revisions.

The Divisional Committee may have additional questions for department or for L&S Curriculum Committee.

Attachment A  
L&S Faculty Document 279  
20 April 2009

For more information about the L&S Curriculum Committee, see section I.3 of the **L&S Handbook**  
[www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook](http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook)

**Attachment B: Changes to Academic Programs**  
L&S Curriculum Committee Annual Report, April 20, 2009

- In **Afro-American Studies**, three areas of concentration were reorganized into two (Afro-American History and Society; and Black Women's Studies). This change was made in response to an ongoing assessment of student learning in the major, as well as to L&S administration's recommendation that programs focus on areas of strength rather than continuing to attempt to provide a comprehensive curriculum in the field.
- **Applied Math, Engineering, and Physics** corrected catalog language describing preparation for entry into the major, to improve communication with students.
- Upon recommendation of a committee convened to review the interdisciplinary major in **Biological Aspects of Conservation**, and based on observed differences in performance among students who may or may not have taken statistics, the program faculty added a requirement that all students take a statistics course in this program.
- The **Bacteriology** major was granted a technical approval to align total credits required with changes incurred through credit changes in the required courses.
- **East Asian Languages and Literature** adjusted the lists of courses students may use to meet requirements for the undergraduate major. These changes provide better advising pathways for students, since the program is more easily achieved and calls upon courses that are more regularly offered.
- Provisional approval was granted to changes in the English Language and Linguistics track of the **English** major; these changes consolidate two emphases and allow students more flexibility in selecting courses for the program. (Full approval will be granted after further discussion with the department.)
- Changes to the undergraduate majors in **Geography** and **Cartography/Global Information Systems (GIS)** were approved. These changes reduce the concentrations in the Geography major to three (Physical Geography; People, Environment, Interaction; and Human Geography) and adjust the list of courses that satisfy requirements for the Cartography/GIS major, removing courses that are no longer taught, and adding courses that are.
- Technical changes were approved for the Biblical Studies Track of the undergraduate major in **Hebrew and Semitic Studies**. These changes were needed to clarify language requirements and to remove an inconsistency in the lists of courses that meet requirements.
- The **International Studies** major was substantially streamlined, eliminating unnecessary requirements (e.g., an attempt to "force" breadth of study which occurred naturally via other requirements) and reducing confusion caused by having too many categories of courses from which students were forced to select. In addition, changes to courses and the identification of an appropriate "introductory" course will allow sequencing that allows students to progress through increasingly challenging stages of the program.
- The **Jewish Studies** major reorganized the areas of study within the major (and adjusted the list of courses that meet requirements); the changes will provide students with access to a wider range of topics within this area.

- The creation of a new track in “Asian Humanities” within the undergraduate major in **Languages and Cultures of Asia** was approved in Fall 2008; the new track will allow students who may not wish to pursue advance language studies to complete an interdisciplinary program focused on the history and culture of Asia.
- The number of courses required to complete the certificate program in **Medieval Studies** was reduced from eight to five (24 credits to 15). The program structure has been simplified (reduced from four categories of courses to two). The change lowers the number of credits required to a level appropriate to a certificate program, and creates a more easily completed program than will still complement the majors with which the certificate is usually combined.
- Changes to the requirements for the **Psychology** major were approved; the catalog statement will now include the acceptable the various means by which students satisfy the Introductory Psychology and Biology requirements. This change aligns communication about requirements with practice, so students may choose courses appropriately.

## **Criteria for Liberal Arts and Science Courses**

*Approved by L&S Curriculum Committee December 5, 2005*

Courses requested for Liberal Arts and Science (LAS) credit should encourage students in one or more of the three “habits of the mind” of liberal arts education, as specified by the College of Letters and Science. These include:

1. Skilled written and verbal communication, excelling in formulating and expressing a point of view, reflecting and questioning current knowledge through reading, research and consideration of the views of others.

This criterion includes:

- a. fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication
  - b. ability to understand and use prose, analyze documents
  - c. ability to use quantitative information to understand, develop and respond to arguments
  - d. critical and reflective quantitative, reading, and communication skills
  - e. reasoned, well-organized, and sustained discussions of important issues or questions, including the ability to explain and evaluate different or opposing perspectives evenhandedly and dispassionately
2. The ability to draw flexibly upon and apply the modes of thought of the major areas of knowledge.

This criterion includes:

- a. understanding and application of the fundamental theory, methods of inquiry, and patterns of reasoning that characterize fields of knowledge within the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences, including the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning
- b. recognizing and evaluating new information, integrating that information into existing frameworks of knowledge, and adapting those frameworks as necessary or appropriate, using standards of intellectual rigor or precision appropriate to different subject areas
- c. posing meaningful questions that advance knowledge and understanding
- d. analyzing arguments, evaluating the evidence supporting them, and framing reasonable and persuasive counter-arguments; similarly, constructing arguments, supporting them with relevant evidence, and anticipating likely counter-arguments
- e. connecting theory and application through analysis of research or conducting research
- f. making connections among diverse subject areas and modes of thinking
- g. applying the major areas of knowledge to the solution of individual and community problems



3. Knowledge of our basic cultural heritage as a multifaceted and often contested history.

This criterion includes:

- a. the ability to place key decisions and developments in broader social, cultural, and historical context
- b. self-critical appreciation of cultural and personal values.

Proposed courses, including those designed to convey technical skills or specialized pre-professional training, must have extensive coverage of these aspects of the liberal arts and sciences. Although no single course will cover all of these aspects, the Curriculum Committee will look for evidence that liberal arts aspects are woven throughout a course. Course design must clearly encourage and emphasize analytical, conceptual, and creative thinking. Liberal arts learning should be heavily represented in the course objectives, list of topics covered, requirements, and assessment. The syllabus must indicate in detail how and where the liberal arts aspects of the course are integrated into the course and specify how the assessment of students incorporates the liberal arts features of the course.

**Attachment D:**

CATALOG TEXT - approved by L&S CC February 9, 2009.

**College of Letters and Science**

**Undergraduate Study in Letters and Science**

The College of Letters and Science (L&S) provides a broad and deep array of learning opportunities for undergraduate students. Situated at the heart of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, our courses not only provide students with basic tools for learning, but also help students acquire a thorough understanding of the many ways in which artists, scholars, scientists, and professionals create, understand, interpret, investigate, and communicate about the diverse and complex world around us. Whether in the classroom or in the laboratory, on the Web or in the workplace, our educational mission is to help students to actively develop their own sense of how they might best understand the world.

Understanding the world, communicating that understanding to others, and taking action based on what one knows, takes many forms. What we call the “liberal arts and sciences” includes a wide range of academic pursuits: creative production and performance in the printed and visual arts; the analysis of global history, foreign languages and world literatures; scientific inquiry into the physical and natural world; qualitative and quantitative investigation into political, economic, and social processes; and many, many more. No matter what the field, L&S classes and instructors emphasize critical thinking, analytical investigation, and effective communication. The learning experiences that L&S offers are invaluable for students in both their professional careers and their productive lives within the community — helping students develop flexible and transferable skills, both for “making a living” and “making a life.”

**The Wisconsin Experience: Essential Learning in Letters and Science**

The three elements of learning described below — tools, breadth, and depth — work together to create a broad and rich education in the liberal arts and sciences, and promote attainment of core areas of essential learning: knowledge of human cultures and the natural and physical world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning. These and countless other experiences comprise the Letters and Science approach to helping students obtain a distinctive “Wisconsin Experience.” (For more on the Wisconsin Experience, see <http://www.learning.wisc.edu/>.)

**Foundations: Tools for Learning**

For all UW undergraduates, these learning experiences begin with students satisfying the university's General Education Requirements — usually by taking courses taught within the College of Letters & Science. These common foundations cover key topics which are necessary for any undergraduate major and any prospective career: oral and written communication; mathematical and logical reasoning; and the diversity of cultures within global society. In addition to these university-wide requirements, all L&S students must attain knowledge of a foreign language, in work that combines training in both communication and culture, so students may better understand and participate in the global community of the twenty-first century. Together, these “tools for learning” may be acquired through many different courses taught by

many different Departments. The key is that they are never taught in isolation, but always considered together with broad exposure to various “ways of knowing” from the arts and humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. (For more on the General Education Requirements, see [www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/](http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/); for more on the L&S requirements, see ... )

### **Breadth: Ways of Knowing**

At the heart of any degree in the liberal arts and sciences is an active understanding of the variety and breadth of the many scholarly approaches to knowing the world. Every student in the College of Letters and Science experiences significant exposure to three principal fields of knowledge: the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. These broad fields of knowledge aren’t the same as the areas of depth that we call “Majors.” In fact, any particular Major — or even a particular course within a Major — might well involve more than one of these fields of knowledge. (For example, imagine a seminar on “people and the environment” that combines historical background, research on social patterns of energy use, and scientific understandings of climate.) Working together, each of these three fields of knowledge represents a particular “way of knowing” about the world around us.

Courses in the **arts and humanities** attempt to know the world through the production and analysis of artistic, literary, and scholarly work. Some courses examine the fine and performing arts, or literature, presenting students with opportunities to interpret and think critically about these creative expressions of the human condition. Other courses help students to understand and compare religious and philosophical conceptions of humankind. Still other courses take on historical subjects, focusing on moments of change and periods of continuity for the peoples and regions of the world. These courses all encourage students to analyze the range of creative and cultural artifacts, expressions, and ideas of human existence – history, literature, art, culture, folklore – and to use that information to better understand humanity and to cultivate civic and social responsibility.

Courses in the **social sciences** demonstrate ways of knowing the world through the systematic study of human society, interactions, and institutions. The social sciences explore these issues from a wide range of perspectives and research techniques, both quantitative and qualitative. Through these courses students learn how to formulate research questions and determine what techniques are best used to answer those questions — for example, exploring ideas and developing theories, conducting surveys and building models, or observing and participating in social life itself. Developing such analytical skills assists students as they approach complex problems and seek to solve them in both the workplace and the community.

Courses in the **natural sciences** involve knowing the world through scientific inquiry — assembling objective information that can be used to explain observed natural phenomena in a way that is thorough and verifiable. The natural sciences are often divided into the Physical Sciences (dealing with matter and energy, or the study of the earth, atmosphere, and oceans) and the Biological Sciences (dealing with life and living systems, like plants, animals, and environments). These courses often contain laboratory components that allow students to gain firsthand experience in scientific research methods. By completing this requirement, science and non-science majors alike will gain an appreciation for science as a way of systematically looking

at the natural world, understanding how this process can be used to inform decision-making in a wide range of political, economic, and social contexts.

Together, these broad “ways of knowing” give students a complementary set of tools for seeing, imagining, and asking questions about the world — tools that enhance creative problem solving no matter what the field. And, because twenty-first century knowledge is not neatly compartmentalized, it’s worth noting that these areas of study intersect and overlap; courses in some areas draw upon strategies used in the others. Experiences in “breadth” courses can be life-changing: we frequently hear that a course taken to fulfill a breadth requirement introduced someone to a subject that became a new Major, a new way of looking at a current Major, or a lifelong interest.

### **Depth: Practice and Understanding (Major)**

The process of declaring and completing a Major — often, but not always, attached to a particular university Department — provides students with an opportunity to concentrate on an in-depth investigation of at least one subject or issue, putting their tools for learning and ways of knowing to focused use. This intensive understanding of one topic helps students to appreciate the potential depth of the others. A students' work in the Major reflects a continuing progression of skills, knowledge, and values, where advanced learning opportunities in upper-level coursework grow from and expand upon earlier experiences, helping students build additional depth in writing, speaking, information literacy, and critical thinking skills from the perspective of a particular discipline. In senior capstone or independent research projects, students are frequently asked to synthesize what they’ve learned and apply it in a variety of new situations. By the conclusion of their studies, students in the Major are better able to understand themselves and their society, to develop their intellectual powers outside of a University setting, and to make productive contributions to the world around them. (For a list of Departments and Majors in L&S, see <link>. )