Report to the CUC on the Interdisciplinary Minor in Poverty, Justice, and Human Capabilities Proposal

Subcommittee Members: Barbara Ostdiek (chair), Kerry Ward, Mary Ellen Lane, David Tenney, Sorin Lupascu

Barbara Ostdiek requested comments on the proposal from the CUC, the Faculty Senate, and the subcommittee. No comments (in additions to those noted in the January CUC meeting) were received from the CUC or the Faculty Senate. A summary of the subcommittee comments and questions was shared verbally and via e-mail with Dr. Diana Strassmann who responded and changed the proposal accordingly. The changes are noted below and in the track-changes version of the document.

Our comments (regular type) and the action or response of Dr. Strassmann (italic) are summarized below.

Note that the enrollment cap for PJC enrollment class was decreased from 40 to 30.

1a. The wording regarding the focus of the three required courses on providing “an analytic framework that underlines the importance of gender and sexuality in understanding poverty and human well-being” appears to be inconsistent with the discussion and descriptions of the required courses. It appears that only one of the courses in intended to substantively focus on gender.

While not currently reflected in the course descriptions, all of the core courses will have a substantive component that focuses on the importance of gender and sexuality in understanding poverty and human well-being. Note the core courses are taught by members of the PJC Steering Committee.

1b. If the minor is intended to heavily “overweight” the focus on gender, perhaps the title of the minor should be changed. If this emphasis is not really an “overweight” the discussion in the proposal should better reflect the extent (and rationale) for the focus or the care taken to be sure the importance of gender and sexuality is not ignored in core courses.

Dr. Strassmann revised the document to 1) support the need of a strong focus on gender in understanding these issues and 2) to provide greater emphasis on the importance of race and ethnicity in understanding these issues.

2. The proposal requires either POLI 338 or SOCI 470 as a capstone course and, additionally requires that the students write a capstone paper in the course on a “topic directly relevant to the themes and concerns of the PJC minor.” Prior approval from a minor advisor for the paper topic is specified. It was suggested that this requirement be stated more broadly (“project” rather than “paper”) to avoid problems with stated requirements.

Dr. Strassmann agreed that the more general “project” requirement was appropriate.

3. The issue was raised regarding whether this minor could easily be “picked up” in the process of getting the SWGS major.

Dr. Strassmann explained that this was not the case for the following reasons: 1) neither of the capstone courses is required for the major; 2) the race elective is not require for the major; and 3) the internship is not required for the major.
4.   The form and role of the “internship” needs to be defined further. If the internship falls before fulfilling a significant proportion of the minor, how can it fulfill its intended intellectual purpose? How will students “enhance the capabilities” of the organizations they work with and, consequently, how will the program “promote dialogue among all disciplines about who to address issues of poverty alleviation and human well-being with a sophisticated understanding of the challenges and sound strategies for moving forward.” Should students be required to take two core courses before doing the internship in order to fulfill its intellectual purpose?

   *Dr. Strassmann explained that the internship is NOT intended to be a research experience but rather an experience to provide perspective and context for the issues addressed in the minor. Therefore, she felt the placement before the capstone course was appropriate. She revised the proposal to more clearly convey this intent.*

5.   The suggestion was made that both SOCI 470 and POLI 338 should be required courses in the major.

   *Dr. Strassmann indicated that the PJC Steering Committee had considered this but chose to require only one for the following reasons: 1) requiring too many courses precludes electives tailored to student interest; and 2) having two options provides flexibility in case a course isn’t offered in a given year or one course doesn’t have sufficient capacity for all students in the minor. Dr. Strassmann feels that each course adequately addresses both the policy and research components required for the minor.*

6.   There is a request for the writing requirements of the internship and the intellectual purpose of the writing assignments to be more clearly defined.

   *Dr. Strassmann revised the proposal to clarify this aspect of the minor.*

7.   The proposal states that “minor participants will be expected to attend the lectures and meet with the speakers etc” – how will this be monitored and assessed as part of the minor requirements?

   *Dr. Strassmann revised the proposal to reflect that the students will be encouraged (rather than “expected” or “required”) to participate in programmatic offerings around the minor. She indicated that this is an element that will be reviewed over time and will be under the purview of the PJC Steering Committee.*

8.   HIST 268 “Bondage in the Modern World” under the Race and Ethnicity elective needs an asterisk as it may not be offered every year.

   *An asterisk was added to this course in the list of eligible electives, indicating that this may not be offered every year.*