



Agenda Items

1. Sophomore Seminars
2. Credit/D/F Reform
3. LGBT Task Force
4. Distributional Requirement Reform
5. Professor Meals
6. Petition for Associate Membership
7. Announcements

Attendance

BK	Diksha Brahmhatt	x	Joseph English	x
BK	Ethan Young	x	Madeline Bauer	x
BR	Mollie Johnson	x	Amour Alexandre	E
BR	Shannon Flores	x	Daniel Tovbin	x
CC	Michael Yuan	x	Sammy Bensinger	x
CC	Luis Patiño	x	Josh Hochman	x
DC	Joseph Cornett	x	Megan Ruan	x
DC	Daniel Hamidi	U	Joel Bervell	x
ES	Sydney Wade	x	Maya Sweedler	x
ES	Joseph Tomchak	x	Phan Nguyen	x
JE	Benjamin Held	x	Alex Cruz	x
MC	Kevin Sullivan	x		
MC	Carter Henschien	U		
PC	Lauren Sapienza	E		
PC	Sofia Braunstein	x		
SY	Christopher Bowman	x		
SY	Avery Thompson	x		
SM	Katherine Oh	U		
SM	Peter Huang	x		
TD	Joshua McGilvray	x		
TC	Devyn Rigsby	x		
TC	Shah Kahn	x		

Minutes

Please note that the minutes reflect the conversation held during the Council of Representatives meeting, but may not contain every comment and are not intended to reflect exact quotations. Comments in italics are notes to give context to the minutes. The layout of the minutes is the Presentation of the Issue, Presentation of the Discussion, and Recording of the Vote. Unless otherwise noted, the Presentation of the Issue is done by the person whose name is next to the heading for that issue. Comments by representatives or other attendees are preceded by their name (e.g. Jane: comment).

Sophomore Seminars

Presentation by Christopher Bowman, SY '18:

- Seminar access for sophomores is a long-standing project
 - Came up in 2003 report on Yale College Education (one of six recommendations; Freshman Seminar program arose from this report)
 - Also described in 2010 Teaching, Learning, and Advising report on Advising
 - Not many changes for sophomores came of these reports
- Right now, seminars are professor buy-ins
 - Only current class is Anthropological Approach to Capitalism by Douglas Rogers
 - Has rave reviews; sophomores are more comfortable with peers and can take advantage of smaller class sizes
- Peer institutions
 - Brown – sophomore seminar began in 2011; have a theme of diversity and justice that carries through their curriculums; there are 17 of these classes
 - Stanford – introductory seminars; mix freshmen and sophomores; have 257 of these types of classes
- Current solutions
 - Readily available seminars
 - Examples: language classes and English 114
 - Small classes that offer many variations
 - Focused on one particular skill; many don't give access to ladder faculty and are taught by grad students or post-docs
 - Not considered good alternative for those reasons
 - Departmental seminars
 - Example: history department
 - History offered 38 fall seminars; priority is given to juniors and seniors in the major, but sophomores and students from other majors can apply
 - Basically, sophomores are last choice
 - Classes with openings aren't necessarily the most desirable classes, and openings tend to come at end of shopping period when students choose to take other classes
- Benefits of seminar accessibility for sophomores
 - Gives sophomores access to liberal arts education Yale offers
 - Helps them decide majors
 - Provides access to ladder faculty
 - Creates comfort in the classroom

- Combats the ‘sophomore slump’
- Recommendations: create a seminar program uniquely tailored to sophomores
 - Give juniors and seniors the opportunities to take under-enrolled seminars
 - Designate someone in the YCDO oversee the program (centralizes it and ensures longevity)
 - Provide financial resources to instructors who want to offer sophomore seminars; allow them to develop curriculum
 - Require departments and programs to undertake a regular review of the accessibility of their undergraduate offerings for each class year

Questions:

- Ethan: Why is preference given to juniors and seniors for filling under-enrolled seminars?
 - Academic rigor; these seminars will be more intermediate courses
 - Freshman seminar program is tailored to introduction to college; wants to preserve it for freshmen
 - Juniors and seniors have opportunities, once more, to take these small classes (even though they already have opportunities to take classes within their majors)
- Kevin: are these going to be new classes or lectures converted to seminars?
 - Christopher hasn’t made recommendation; wants to have a discussion about it
- Joseph: are you concerned this is taking away resources from juniors and seniors, particularly those in their majors?
 - Explains why juniors and seniors have opportunities to fill these spots
 - The seminar program within majors is strong already, which is why sophomores need this playing field to be leveled
- Mollie: would the sophomore seminars be similar to freshmen seminars in that they’re tailored to freshmen, or are they just seminars reserved for sophomores?
 - Professor Rogers tailors it in some regard to sophomores, in terms of reading, but not to the same extent that freshmen seminars are
- Phan: suggests Christopher check with YCDO about plans to expand faculty and capitalize on momentum of that and the two new colleges; maybe fold this suggestion into plans for new colleges and accompanying resources?
- Maddie: history department is thinking of piloting something like this
- Joshua: reiterated that we need to consider the importance of seminars for juniors and seniors, who are working on theses. Maybe this can be taken to JCC?
- Kate: can grad students teach these seminars?
 - Good idea
- Sophia: maybe we can capitalize on current campus climate and implement something like Brown’s themed sophomore seminar program.

VOTE TO SUPPORT SOPHOMORE SEMINAR RECOMMENDATIONS: PASSED 15 – 3 (4 absent)

Distributional Requirement Reform

Presentation by Peter Huang, SM ‘18

- Context found on [Yale’s website](#)
- Writing requirement guidelines are found on Yale’s website
- Other schools

- Brown has open curriculum
- Other schools have more specific groups of classes, and those classes are geared towards all students (not just humanities or science majors)
- Question: are there enough classes that, given the broad distributional requirements, you can find interesting classes regardless of your major?
 - Are there enough science classes for non-science majors?
 - 55.61% say strongly agree or agree, and 28.0% say they disagree or strongly agree (from Fall Survey)
 - Conditioned on non-STEM
 - Are there enough humanities classes for non-humanities majors?
 - 65.51% say strongly agree or agree, and 24.82% say they disagree or strongly agree (from Fall Survey)
 - Conditioned on STEM
 - Students say they were unclear why writing classes were designated as such
- Recommendations
 - Increase the number of interdisciplinary courses
 - Example: history of science classes for STEM majors; science of conservation (includes policy, maybe)
 - Publish writing credit designation process
 - Formalize appeals process for credit designation
 - Provide at least one credit designation for every undergraduate course
 - Include writing credit question in online course evaluations for courses with writing

Questions

- Megan: seems like a given every course should have a credit designation, so why don't they?
 - Joseph: residential college seminars don't. Usually, it's because it's interdisciplinary: it's not enough of a humanities or social science credit, for example, that it doesn't get either credit. Classes that are considered not 'academic' enough (ie aren't reading enough academic papers) to get designations don't get the credit designation. There's some grey area in interdisciplinary courses, and there are reasons for non-designated classes.
 - Joe: It's still a Yale course; professors should assign the extra work to make the classes reach that Yale standard.
 - Peter: we should ask professors to push it out of that gray area.
- Sammy: there could be communication problems. There's a lot of pressure on DUSes to take courses to course designation committee.
- Kate: is there any way to track transcripts and fulfilled distribution requirements online?
 - Yes, Yale Degree Audit is new

VOTE TO SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS (ALL BUT REQUIRING CREDIT DESIGNATION FOR EVERY COURSE): PASSED 14 – 3 (1 abstention; 4 absent)

LGBT Task Force

Presentation by Adam Michalowski, BK '19

- Information Sources
 - YCC Fall Survey

- Open meeting
- Peer institution research
- Listening sessions with various queer groups
- Conversations with students, faculty, and administrators
- Survey Findings Overview
 - Housing
 - Queer and trans (QT) students were more likely to be uncomfortable in a single-gender housing situation; much more likely to have considered gender-neutral housing (GNH) freshman year
 - Many students would have considered (36%) or chosen (15%) GNH if it were an option freshman year
 - Only 43% of all students think existing GNH policies are efficient; this number varies widely by residential college
 - Identity competence
 - 39% of all students, 30% of QT students, and 10% of trans students think faculty have a basic knowledge of LGBTQ student issues
 - Only 35% of LGBTQ students believed college administrators (master and dean) had a basic knowledge of issues; again, varied widely between colleges
 - Resources
 - 74% of all students and 85% of QT students thought Office of LGBTQ Resources should be funded like the cultural centers
 - 99% of straight/cis students and 92% of QT students never or rarely visit the Office
 - Over 75% of self-identified QT students have never been to the Office
 - Only 44% of QT people approve of the Office's current location in Swing
- Recommendations
 - Housing
 - Offer GNH to all freshmen
 - Offer gender-neutral rooming for all classes (eliminates difficulties with forming gender-neutral suites)
 - Ensure implementation of GNH policies (if the above suggestion doesn't go through)
 - Ensure new university bias committee is equipped to handle LGBTQ issues, including issues surrounding housing
 - Identity
 - Offer option for LGBTQ identification on admissions documents
 - Make preferred name a one-click option in SIS; offer related services to trans spectrum students through university offices
 - Implement system to assist trans students with communications with professors regarding identity, name changes, and/or transition
 - Make it possible to list pronouns on Yale Facebook and other relevant university databases
 - Resources
 - Create an exploratory committee to evaluate options and begin plans for a new LGBTQ Center

- Increase funding and university support for the LGBTQ resource center to a level comparable to that of the cultural centers
- Systemize emergency funding throughout the University
 - Money source for students who come out and are cut off from families
 - Other schools, including Dartmouth, Penn, and more, have dedicated funds to support students for a semester before reevaluating financial aid
- Ensure that any training provided to Yale employees and students includes LGBTQ sensitivity training

Questions

- Diksha: Knows Berkeley, whose sophomore suits are exclusively doubles and often struggle with suite arrangements, struggles with GNH. Concern is that numbers, particularly for freshmen, won't work. How does this work within the residential college system?
 - Adam: Brown only has 30 to 40 freshmen who work on a case-by-case basis with dean of residential life to set up gender-neutral rooming
 - Logistics are in the works; masters and deans have indicated support
- Devyn: can freshmen indicate level of comfort with rooming with LGBTQ students?
 - Adam: doesn't want to validate homophobia
 - Maddie: maybe we can ask students if they're comfortable living in GNH, then deans will reach out to students who are placed in that situation and confirm that every student is happy with the arrangement
- Diksha: has the task force reached out to Schwarzmann? Maybe the LGBTQ center can be housed there
 - Adam: That's ideal. But right now, the Center's policy is to serve all students and not designate space for a specific student group.
- Christopher: Pointed out that, with Swing going to the Law School soon, the Office will need to move anyways

Credit/D/Fail Reform

Presentation by Ben Held, JE '17

- Issues
 - Inconsistent policies across majors
 - Shopping period is too short to decide which classes to take Credit/D/Fail
- Peer institutions
 - Pretty much every other Ivy League school offers a longer period in which students can convert Credit/D courses
 - Ranges from 3 to 5 weeks, in general
 - All schools also allow switches from Credit/D to grade and vice versa
- Recommendations
 - Option 1: Double the decision time for Cr/D/Fail signup
 - Allow courses to switch during first four weeks of the term
 - Brings the policy more in line with current policies at peer institutions
 - Option 2: Standardize number of Cr/D classes within majors
 - Almost 2/3 of students prefer 1-2 Cr/D classes per major

- Will allow more exploration within majors
 - Option 3: further proposals
 - Ask every department conduct a review of its Cr/D policy and develop a rationale for its current policy or develop reform
 - Pending the results, the YCC makes recommendations for permitting at least one course within a major to be designated Cr/D (maybe an introductory course, an advanced seminar, or any course outside the student's sub-area of specialty)
- Explanation for status quo
 - Prevent slacking off in majors
 - It should be used for exploration, not for protecting GPAs
 - Majors deem all of their courses essential in preparing students for a future in the respective field
 - Early classes are curved with scales, so Cr/D classes in introductory econ where all classes are A's or B's, for example, is an automatic pass

Questions

- Shannon: would the deadline for Cr/D complicate registration?
 - Ben: unclear, but we know that there's a ton of switches to letter-grades really last minute, so there's already an issue
 - Though record-keeping wouldn't initially be streamlined, it puts a lighter burden on the registrar later on
- Joshua: concerned that Cr/D in the major panders to students who are just trying to protect GPAs (broad problem with Yale in general); majors should be taken to allow students to explore
 - There's no way to ensure Cr/D aren't used to pad GPAs
 - This is why we want departments to explain why they don't allow Cr/D; students should know the reasons up front
- Joshua: mentioned MIT's policy of no grades. What if only Cr/D can be used freshmen year?
 - People did not like that
 - Joe: Cr/D is founded on the idea of encouraging explorations by removing the deterrent of grades
- Josh: each major is different. Maybe each major designates one Cr/D in an area? Each department is so varied that it might work – it allows students to more fully explore their majors
- Phan: Joshua's concern is the most prevalent among DUSes; YCDO recommended last year is to approach it bottom-up, not top-down and work things out within the major along (there's no standard, so it needs to be individualized); data on number and grades received in Cr/D courses might be useful to bring to DUS to argue that students still work for the grade
- Andrew: maybe explore the Cr/D option for distributional requirements?
 - Ben: considered, but didn't want to be too aggressive
 - These recommendations are to get the foot in the door; reviews can lead to further policy changes
- Joseph: can we also extend the deadline to convert from Cr/D to grade? Midterm feedback isn't always that helpful, and sometimes it comes too late for students to switch

- Ben: can definitely consider that

VOTE ON OPTION 1: PASSED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT

**VOTE ON PROPOSAL TO CONDUCT REVIEWS OF CR/D POLICIES IN MAJORS:
PASSED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

VOTE ON PROPOSAL TO MOVE CONVERSION DEADLINE:

- **OPTION 1: Leave as is (2 votes)**
- **OPTION 2: Move to 10th week (2 votes)**
- **OPTION 3: Move to first day of finals period (9 votes) — PASSED**
- **OPTION 4: Move to after you see your grade (6 votes)**

Professor Meals

Presentation by Jackson Willis, BK '19

- Benefit of students and faculty sharing meals is well-documented; we're one of the only schools in Ivy League that doesn't have an established program
- Some programs are in-house; other schools subsidize off-campus meals
- Grad school has program (called FEAST – cute acronym)
- Recommendations
 - Create a professor-student meal program that fits Yale's unique aspects,
 - Establish informational, informal meals where professors can talk about their subjects or courses
 - Intended for professors with new or infrequently offered seminars in less mainstream subjects, however that's defined
 - Preferably lunches held in residential college dining halls, maybe in rooms off to the side
 - Jackson reaches out to professors to set them up
 - YCC offers computerized sign-ups; tenured faculty are already on the meal plan so these meals are of no costs
 - Maybe set up meals around particular *themes*, rather than for specific classes
 - Example: Power
 - Invite professor teaching Nietzsche and another teaching Chinese philosophy
- Advantages
 - Increase interest in less shopped classes
 - Get students and faculty in contact with one another
 - Reduce stress of shopping period
 - Faculty feedback for this project was very positive

Questions

- Rayan: doesn't see an issue with adopting another school's program, because they work. Shopping period might be difficult, because getting into classes is subjective and these lunches could foster competitiveness.
 - These meals would occur before the semester during which the class is offered, like at the end of fall but before reading period
- Joshua: Can you do one for departments? For example, have a meal that allows students to distinguish between Anthropology and Sociology, or Literature and English
- Mollie: Can we incentivize it by bringing in outside mentors? Get masters to host it and bring in outside food, so it becomes more of a mingling event

- Maddie: but we don't want to restrict it to students in one college

MOTION FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT: PASSED

Announcements

Yale Lifetime Achievement Award Update – COMING IN EMAIL. VOTE IN THE NEXT 24 HOURS.

Additionally, check email over break for a feedback form and project survey