



Dear Curriculum Committee,

In this packet you will find three requests. The first is a course change of our current 597 course that we would like to change to a generic placeholder (Issues in the Contemporary World) in order to create a decimalized version for capstone courses. We seek to change the number of our current 597 course, The Disability Experience in the Contemporary World, to 597.01. We are also creating a new course, 597.02, entitled "American Regional Cultures in Transition."

New course objectives and rationale: English 597.02, American Regional Cultures in Transition

1. Course Objectives: The proposed new decimalization addresses issues of the contemporary world from a vernacular perspective, that of local actors experiencing intensive social change. Students will look at how the seemingly oldest elements of regional culture—festivals, folksongs, even fairy tales—incorporate both historical and current experiences of labor, migration, military service, and environmental change. They will see three situations in which a vital vernacular culture has arisen not from stability and homogeneity, but from an agitated history and the encounter between diverse backgrounds. They will also learn how to compare across cultures, and to recognize how preconceptions about traditional culture shape national policy in regions both celebrated and stigmatized for their cultural distinctiveness.

2. Course Rationale: The course provides a capstone experience that draws upon a variety of student interests. The initial version of the course will focus on three American regions: Appalachia, Louisiana, and the Texas border country. Many students are drawn to the music of these three regions—bluegrass, country, jazz, zydeco, conjunto, corrido, and more. Some have been to Louisiana and Texas as tourists, and a large number of OSU students have personal ties to the Appalachian region. In addition, students are conscious of the news from these regions: the proposed border fence between the US and Mexico, Hurricane Katrina and the reconstruction effort, mountaintop-removal mining. In future iterations of the course it would be possible to substitute other regions, including Ohio. (We would not expect this to happen until the course is well-established, as a comparable body of scholarship is not currently available for Ohio.)

The course can be offered once or twice a year within current staffing possibilities. The course takes advantage not only of the strength of the folklore faculty in English, but of the presence of the Center for Folklore Studies and of the American Folklore Society on the OSU campus. Visiting speakers and OSU grad students conducting research in these regions are constantly available. For example, in 2008-09, at least four of the authors on the syllabus and possibly five will be passing through Columbus: Nick Spitzer, Tulane and host of NPR's "American Routes"; Olga Najera-Ramírez, UC-Santa Cruz; Carl Lindahl, University of Houston; Mary Hufford, University of Pennsylvania; and Robert Cantwell, UNC-Chapel Hill. Grad students currently affiliated to the CFS and working on these regions include Nicole Nieto, Women's Studies; Will Tucker, Sculpture; Ann Ferrell, English; and Lise Byars, Anthropology; there are undoubtedly others. Students can thus expect to encounter multiple voices and the most current research available.

3. Faculty: Dorothy Noyes, Ray Cashman; other faculty as the course establishes a base.

4. GEC Statement: How this course meets the general principles of the GEC Model Curriculum and the specific goals of the category(ies) for which it is being proposed: (5) Capstone: Issues of the Contemporary World

English 597.02 is based within the English Department, but draws upon the multiple disciplines of folklore, literary criticism, musicology, and history in order to create an integrated model for understanding the experience of labor, migration, and environmental change in three American regions (see syllabus). As an "Issues of the Contemporary World" capstone, the course seeks to give students the tools for understanding globalization through the context of various American regions which are experiencing these changes in a direct way, and which have produced cultural responses that can be compared. Through a combination of both lecture and discussion (oral presentations are a central component of the course) students will have the opportunity to exchange ideas and to learn from each other as well as from the instructor.

There will be strong research and writing components. The syllabus stipulates a 10-page research paper as well as an oral presentation based on student research. Three take-home exams will also give students the opportunity for more writing as the exams are essay-based.

As a capstone course, our expectation is that it will draw a broad swath of students from several disciplines giving all course participants the opportunity to share insights and methodologies from a variety of disciplines, backgrounds, and perspectives.

Prerequisites: limited to participants having achieved junior or senior standing. 597.02 will be limited to a maximum of 40 students.

5. Assessment Plan: The director of undergraduate studies will consult with the course instructor in order to assess the end-of-the-course discursive evaluations in which direct and indirect questions will elicit the level of student awareness of the central issues of the course, as well as to ascertain the level of student satisfaction that course objectives have been met. It is our policy in the English department to collect not only SEIs, but also discursive evaluations for every course taught. These are regularly assessed by course instructors, course directors, and the director of undergraduate studies. This will be the case with 597.02.

Thank you for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any further questions you may have (martinez.202@osu.edu, 688-4475)

Sincerely,

Manuel Luis Martinez
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Department of English