

Hebrew/Jewish Studies 2700

Steele, Rachel <steele.682@osu.edu>

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To: Carmichael, Phoebe <carmichael.96@osu.edu>; Sellman, Johanna <sellman.13@osu.edu>
Cc: Fletcher, Richard <fletcher.161@osu.edu>; Vankeerbergen, Bernadette <vankeerbergen.1@osu.edu>; Steele, Rachel <steele.682@osu.edu>; Hilty, Michael <hilty.70@osu.edu>; Neff, Jennifer <neff.363@osu.edu>

Good evening,

On Friday, May 10th, the Race, Ethnicity and Gender Diversity Subcommittee of the ASC Curriculum Committee reviewed a course proposal for Hebrew/Jewish Studies 2700 to be included in the GEN Foundation: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Diversity category.

The Subcommittee unanimously approved the request with four contingencies, and one comment:

a) **Comment:** The Subcommittee has read and discussed the department's extensive response and carefully considered your arguments. They are always open to working with departments and instructors/course creators on existing courses that might need modifications to fit the Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Diversity GEN category. However, they ask that the department, when communicating with the Subcommittee, refrain from jumping to unnecessary and inaccurate conclusions (such as stating that the "committee did not read the accompanying form"). The Subcommittee assures the department that all submissions are read carefully in their entirety and discussed by the whole subcommittee. The Subcommittee disagrees with the idea that they were reviewing the course as a theological course, and they ask that the department refrain from implying that other courses in the category are somehow involved in "indoctrination".

- While the Subcommittee does believe that there could be a place for this course in the REGD category, they also understand the challenges that are inherent in designing and/or re-designing a course like Hebrew/Jewish Studies 2700. For example, they acknowledge that this course serves several curricular purposes already (general education in other categories, major/minor content, etc.). As such, they recognize the requests below may compel changes that shift the course's curricular roles or pedagogical priorities and ultimately result in the department re-evaluating the pursuit of REGD approval for this course.
- As a way forward, the Subcommittee would like to recommend that the department look to the successful passage of the course [Hebrew/Jewish Studies 3704 "Women in the Bible and Beyond"](#) after a conversation with the Subcommittee chair and the course instructor, which addressed some of the issues surrounding historically-focused courses and how to engage the REGD requirements.
- The Subcommittee has voted to approve Hebrew/Jewish Studies 2700 to be included in the Race, Ethnicity and Gender Diversity GEN Foundations category, with the following contingencies:

b) **Contingency:** The Subcommittee asks that the department provide further information in both the syllabus and the GEN Submission Form about the ways in which students will attain the necessary skills to provide a critical interpretation and analysis of the texts as they pertain to REGD concepts and what materials/texts they will use to gain those skills, thus enabling them to complete the assignments successfully. While the Subcommittee had previously mentioned secondary sources and secondary scholarship as a *possible* way of demonstrating this (as it is by far the most common way that units accomplish this for courses in this category), they did and do recognize that this is not the *only* way. To that end, they put forth the following potential solutions, as these have been successfully employed by other units/instructors who depend less on secondary scholarship:

- i) Provide, in both the syllabus and the GEN submission form, additional information about the required text (SBL Study Bible), what sort of extra-biblical writings it entails, and how it approaches the study of race, ethnicity, and gender diversity in the cultures of the Hebrew Bible. In the syllabus, this information should be focused on helping the students to understand how these writings will inform the readings of the primary sources.
- ii) Amend the course schedule (syllabus pgs. 4-5) to include some signposting for students to guide their course preparation for the class sessions and demonstrate the course's focus on REGD topics. Often,

the Subcommittee sees such signposting take the form of topical questions or goal statements such as “What is photography’s relationship to journalism, and what issues of race, class, and gender are constructed in this relationship?” or “Goal of the week: Students learn about how the system of education in the United States (and India) devalues ways of speaking. Students learn that language is a critical part of ethnicity and policing language is an extension of policing people.”

- c) **Contingency:** Beyond the two sections of Project 1, the Subcommittee asks the department to provide more information about how and when students will be grounded in the intersectional study of race, ethnicity and gender. From the current course schedule and accompanying documents, the Subcommittee is unable to discern how students will gain a necessary vocabulary and understanding of basic concepts that will help them articulate and discuss these principles as they analyze the texts, reflect on their own lived experiences, and consider how the texts have influenced the modern world. The Subcommittee wishes to emphasize that they are *not* asking that the department apply a modern lens to an ancient culture, but rather requesting that the course help students to understand how these concepts were understood in the ancient Mediterranean world, and how that culture’s norms and mores relate to the modern world.
- d) **Contingency:** The Subcommittee requests that the department amend the course description in curriculum.osu.edu (under “General Information”) to include mention of the intersectional study of race, ethnicity, and gender. While the course description has been changed from “*Reading and analysis of selected chapters from the Hebrew scriptures and post-biblical Hebrew writings representative of major historical, cultural, and literary trends.*” to “*An introduction to the content of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT) from a scholarly and historical perspective. Students will read, discuss, and critique large sections of the HB/OT. Students will learn about the social complexity and cultural intersectionality in the ancient societies in which the writers of the HB/OT lived and about which they imagined.*”, the new description should explicitly name the course topic’s interaction with race, ethnicity and gender.
- e) **Contingency:** The Subcommittee thanks the department for replacing the previous Religious Accommodations statement found on pg. 13-14 of the syllabus. However, the link at the bottom of the statement (“Policy: Religious Holidays, Holy Days, and Observances”) must be included to fully comply with the law. An easy-to-copy/paste version of the statement and links can be found on the [ASC Curriculum and Assessment Services website](#).
- f) Note: Should the department have questions about the content of these contingencies, please reach out to the Subcommittee Chair, Richard Fletcher.161.

As a reminder, **contingencies** (in bold above) must be addressed and resubmitted via curriculum.osu.edu before this course can move forward in the approval process to OAA. I will return Hebrew/Jewish Studies 2700 to the department queue via curriculum.osu.edu in order to address the Subcommittee’s requests.

Should you have any questions about the feedback of the Subcommittee, please feel free to contact Richard Fletcher (faculty Chair of the REGD Subcommittee; cc’d on this e-mail), or me.

Best,
Rachel



Rachel Steele, MA

(Pronouns: she/her/hers / Honorific: Ms.)

Program Manager, Office of Curriculum and Assessment

College of Arts and Sciences

306 Dulles Hall 230 Annie and John Glenn Ave. Columbus, OH 43210

(614) 292-7226

Co-chair, College of Arts and Sciences Staff Advisory Council

Member, University Conduct Board

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