SOIS Undergraduate Program Committee

Minutes for April 21, 2017 Meeting, 10:00-12:30 in NWQB 2450

Approved May 5, 2017

Members: Rakesh Babu (RB), Shana Ponelis (SP) – via Go To Meeting, Thomas Haigh (TH), Casey Harjes (CH),

Absent: Brian Williams (BW), Laretta Henderson (LH)

Guests: Lyndsay Smanz (LH), Maria Haigh (MH), Betsy Schoeller (BS)

Meeting called to order 9:59.

1. Approve Agenda (TH, RB: 4,0,0)

2. Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting (CH, RB: 4.0,0)

3. (Old Business)

   a. Having discussed 310 in depth with RB during our last meeting we will briefly solicit input and experiences from BS. Her version was circulated for the previous meeting, but for your convenience is again pasted below.

   (Began discussion 11:03 – BS not yet present).

   RB: Like his version of the course, the BS syllabus does not include a design exercise. So this would also have to be added to her sections. Two out of the three textbooks listed are the same.

   (BS arrived 10:09).

   BS: Also believes that her syllabus is largely consistent. The three part project runs through a usability study from beginning to end. Other than that no particular issues or challenges with the course.

   TH: Explained the committee’s feeling that design should be added to the course.

   BS: Thinks that would be difficult, as the course centers on usability.

   SP: Says that from capstone perspective, crucial for students to be exposed to design.

   BS: Thinks maybe to design a new course.

   (Some discussion of whether 340 should be where design is covered. TH and SP point out that only one week is available for design in their versions of 340).

   BS: No time for design in 310 either, because covering all facets of usability takes a lot of time.
SP: Surely integrating design with evaluation would be valuable, as the point of evaluation is to inform design.

TH: If only time to do one of design and evaluation, isn’t design more important and relevant to the degree as a whole?

RB: Believes that design and evaluation can be integrated by adding extra stages within the general framework of the current course.

BS: If evaluating a current website, the problem is that students don’t have access to its source code, etc.

SP: So perhaps the students could design websites, then critique and improve each other’s designs.

RB: Could just mock up the structure of an improved version of the website, not produce a fully functional one.

BS: Doubts the ability of 310 students to do this. Hard for them to ramp up to this at that stage in the program.

SP: But even harder for them to try to ramp up to do it later in the program. Wants guidance on what would need to be covered for 340 and later courses.

4. (New Business)
   a. We will continue our review of the core IST courses with 230: Knowledge Organization. BS is the most frequent instructor for this course. She has provided me with the syllabus below. Richard Smiraglia, the faculty coordinator for this class, is unable to join us but has provided TH verbally with ideas and perspectives to share with the committee.

BS: Primarily theoretical. Incorporates KO concepts, makes concrete by focusing on experiential learning in the projects. Similar concepts to MLIS.

TH: Any specific aspects that are built on later in the program? The question of relevance of this material for IT focused students comes up sometimes.

BS: Organization of knowledge is important. Specifically, have to understand how information is organized to use/design databases, websites, etc. more effectively. Perhaps 230 should incorporate more design principles – organization and design of information.

TH: Catalog description says the course is about information retrieval. Accurate?

BS: No. The course is about information organization, not retrieval.
TH: Objectives (3+4 of 5) focus on “documents.”

BS: “Documents” is used loosely, includes websites and database.

TH: So maybe “documents” isn’t the right term to speak to IST students?

BS: True. Also the objectives need to be updated to better reflect content.

RB: Organization is important for IS systems both in front end and back end.

TH: Maybe examples in syllabus could be more IST related. For example, syllabus uses LOC vs Dewey Decimal as examples.

BS: While this is retained on syllabus, isn’t actually done in course. But yes, could focus more on examples in the mainstream of IST interest. Learning outcomes are outdated.

TH: Good to update them, as we will need over coming years to define for the degree as a whole.

TH: Some other things on the syllabus seem in need of updating, like coverage of CD-ROMS.

BS: Actual course content has evolved more than syllabus. Coverage of CD-ROMs is very brief in practice.

TH: Would be good to cover XML. Also, maybe the assignments in the earlier half of the syllabus could be introduced in the context of web or database examples.

BS: Good idea.

SP: In general, a stronger connection between design elements of knowledge organization in 230 and UI/human factors in 310 could lay a strong foundation for the upper level courses.

CH: From a student perspective, students take courses over multiple years and tend to forget most material. So if something is needed for the capstone, better to cover immediately before it.

SP: The degree is cumulative.

CH: Students don’t remember material from earlier courses.

TH: Prereqs for 230?

BS: None, and shouldn’t have. But, 230 SHOULD be a pre-req or co-req for 310 so that 310 can build on the organization of information to inform the design components.

RB: Agrees, thinks co-req is sufficient. Also continues to favor 110 as a pre req for 310.

CH: Wants to keep flexibility, would like to avoid pre-reqs.
TH: Also a benefit for the course as a whole: if instructors can be confident that specific material has been covered in lower level courses and that students have taken those courses they can avoid duplicating material.

b. Next, we will discuss 210: Information Resources for Research. The most frequent instructor for this course is Lyndsay Smanz (LS). She will be joining us around 11:10 and provided the attached syllabus. Maria Haigh (MH) is the faculty coordinator for this course and will be joining us for this part of the meeting. That will complete our review of the core courses.

TH: How does 210 fit in the IST degree program as a whole.

LS: The course is focused on information literacy: finding information and evaluating information. Fitting the general problem of making sure that students make good choices when researching, whether for school or work.

Mix of students – some just arrived, others about to graduate. So finding assignments that fit both is challenging, likes to make connection to work clear.

TH: So some students take at the end?

LS: Only 330.

TH: That is no longer a core course, so if 210 is in core it should be a prereq for something else to make students get these skills early on.

CH: This is the only course where get writing experience, so should take early. Does the course satisfy the OWC part b requirement?

LS: It is listed as satisfying this, but actually doesn’t yet.

MH: But it does satisfy the humanities requirement. There was a plan to have it satisfy the OWC, but it turned out that a course can’t satisfy both and that the humanities requirement was more useful to satisfy. Also there was a question about whether it included enough in depth writing assignments.

CH: Many students take the business writing course to satisfy the OWC. Would be nice to satisfy this in SOIS. Could

TH: We probably should stop saying that it satisfies OWC b then.

MH: Even to satisfy the humanities requirement we may need to change some language and toughen up the assignments. So may need some redesign.

CH: As the ethics course satisfied the humanities requirement, maybe it would be more useful to satisfy OWC b.
LS: Need a lot of pages of writing to satisfy OWC b. Also has to be a low enrollment course of 25 students or less. She has 24 or 36 currently – depending on the classroom.

TH: We lose money on those 1XX and 2XX onsite sections unless they are a lot bigger than 25, if paying faculty or TAS to teach.

TH: Who made the call that humanities requirement was more important to satisfy than OWC b?

MH: The previous interim administration – specifically Alex D.

MH: The version of the course she developed for OWC b has more technical writing assignments. Also, she would like the course to focus more on tools for information validation. Currently only one week.

LS: The validation and evaluation of sources, real vs. fake is a theme that runs through much of the course.

CH: Students currently take 210 and an English or Business writing course for OWC b which tend to duplicate.

TH: Maybe the other way of dealing with this is to accept that the OWC b general writing material is covered elsewhere and have our course be more about information literacy than writing.

LS: Does not see herself as teaching writing.

CH: Students want to take fewer credits. So do want this to be a writing class, as it’s required anyway and avoid duplicating credits on writing. Then could take a different elective, which might generate money from profitable 3XX or 4XX courses.

TH: But just because the course has writing in, doesn’t mean it’s a writing course. Maybe we can just tell students at the beginning that it is not “THE” writing course and they should take a writing course first. Stress what is different.

LS: Agrees that it is not primarily a writing course, even though it does have a significant amount of writing. There did used to be an infographic assignment, but that was dropped for the OWC as it doesn’t count as writing.

TH: Does this course need to be in the core? If the problem is that students who don’t care about information literacy have to take it, then complain that they need a writing course as well.

CH: Yes, because it has useful things in, like searching and Boolean operators. But should be early in the program. Also it has research methods, which is useful to have,

TH: So current three elements: research methods, information literacy, and writing.
LS: Those things all fit together – sees them as part of information literacy.

TH: Are those things that all college students need to know, rather than things that specifically target the needs of IST students? Does anything in the course specifically target IST needs?

LS: Agrees. These are important skills that IST students need, but they aren’t specific in any way.

TH: Would most people take it anyway, if it was an elective? As it satisfies the humanities requirement and we don’t have many electives.

CH: Thinks a lot of people are taking 120 ethics, which also satisfies the humanities requirement.

TH: But people take 120 even though 210 will satisfy the requirement anyway. So many are already taking an elective despite having the humanities requirement covered by 210.

CH: If it satisfied OWC B then more would take it. Students wouldn’t take a course with writing in voluntarily.

TH: Agrees. Would also have to change the SOIS electives requirement (current 5 upper division electives) to remove the “upper division” so that 210 (and 120) could count to satisfy those.

[Some informal discussion of putting 350 into the core, which we will return to in the next meeting].

MH: Has just left the room to consult with Chad Z. He will investigate the question of OWC B versus humanities for 210 prior to the next meeting.

CH: On university site, 210 shows currently as satisfying OWC B.

LS: It currently doesn’t actually do that. Chad told her that was an error. She discussed this with Chad, regarding the cap on section size it would imply.

TH: So if this was an elective that satisfied OWC B then it would still get very strong enrollment, and we could open space in the core.

MH: But the course went to the university APCC as was approved. It’s just that SOIS admin decided afterwards that it would rather list it for humanities.

TH: So it is NOT an error. If the APCC approved it and the UWM catalog lists it then it’s satisfying the requirement – regardless of whether the SOIS admin realizes that or not.

LS: Looking at the university list there are courses that satisfy OWC B and humanities. Many in the English department.
TH: So if 210 really satisfies OWC B, can we change it to an elective to make room for 350 or another programming course in the core?

LS: Yes. Students would still take it as an elective.

CH: Many students take 120 and as 210 satisfies the humanities requirement anyway, perhaps 120 could satisfy the social science or cultural diversity requirement to avoid duplication.

Meeting adjourned, 10:26.