

# UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING

November 20, 2003

**Members present:** Deborah Baumgold, Karen Sprague, Ron Severson, Gordon Sayre, Mark Thoma, Jim Imamura, Paul Engelking, Tyler Neely, Steve Pologe, Laura Vandenburgh, Herb Chereck, Deborah Exton, Martha Pitts, Harry Wonham, Colleen Bell, Sue Yockelson, Hilary Gerdes

**Members absent:** Julie Newton, John Postlethwait, John Lysaker

## Course Numbering Survey

Herb Chereck surveyed the course-numbering systems of AAU schools and distributed a document to the council with his findings. Ten registrars responded citing varying course numbering systems. The University of Washington numbering system seems to correspond most closely to the UO's system:

### Washington

Lower-division undergraduate numbers (100-level and 200-level) are appropriate for survey and orientation courses which provide a general introduction to a field of study and are offered to non-majors. These courses should not require extensive prerequisites aside from preceding courses in the same sequence. Courses at the 100-level should be suitable for college freshmen, while 200-level courses are directed toward sophomores although open to qualified freshmen.

Upper-division undergraduate numbers (300-level and 400-level) are appropriate for courses requiring substantial college-level preparation, specified in terms of prerequisites, credits in a specific area, total college credits, class standing, or permission of the department. Screening for these prerequisites, if desired, is facilitated by the use of departmental entry codes. Courses at the 300-level should be suitable for juniors and seniors and are not ordinarily appropriate for well-prepared graduate students, while courses at the 400-level are directed toward seniors and graduate students although open to qualified juniors.

The council discussed the course numbering system at the UO and made the following points:

1. There are some sequential disciplines such as Economics, Music or Chemistry, in which:
  - 100-level courses are very broad and are not prerequisites for other courses. Any student could take these courses.

- 200-level courses are foundational, broad overview courses and are prerequisites for the 300-level courses. Students should have had prior introduction to the discipline in high school.
  - Most 300-level courses are the gateway to theory courses. Students should have had prior coursework at the college level.
  - Some 300-level courses are intended for non-majors.
  - 400-level courses are theoretical and/or specialized, and are not accessible without prerequisite coursework.
2. There are some non-sequential disciplines such as Political Science.
    - Students can take a 300-level political science course without taking a 100-200-level prerequisite course.
  3. The subject matter of some courses does not change with course level, but the way students are expected to work with the material does. A higher-level student is expected to bring analysis, synthesis and evaluation to the material, whereas a lower level student is expected simply to master the material as presented.
  4. A 300-level course requires more skill and preparation from students than lower-division courses.

The council discussed the difference between courses at the 300-level that are group-satisfying or not. The following items were identified as characteristics of a 300-level group-satisfying course:

1. Students need some background experience at the college or university level.
2. The course should not rely exclusively on textbooks but should include other (typically primary) sources.
3. The course should immerse the student in the tools and perspectives of the discipline.
4. The course should require a somewhat sophisticated level of analysis.
5. The course should encourage critical thinking.
6. The course should show how knowledge is produced in the field.
7. The course should leave the student with an appreciation of the larger discipline within which the subject of the course fits.

8. The course should require engagement with primary literature in the field.

Deborah Baumgold will finalize a list of 300-level group-satisfying characteristics for the next meeting. The council will meet again on December 4, 2003, at 10:00 in the Johnson Hall conference room.