

**Department of Political Science  
Curriculum Committee  
Operating Procedures  
Updated November 3, 2021**

*Approved by Curriculum Committee on 17 April 2018.*

*Revised and approved by Curriculum Committee on October 11, 2016.*

*Revised and approved by Curriculum Committee on November 3, 2021*

**Part I: The Purpose of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee**

The Department of Political Science created its Undergraduate Curriculum Committee in Section IV.E.4 of the Department's By-Laws. It reads as follows:

- a. The Curriculum Committee shall be responsible for reviewing all curriculum proposals at the Department level, including proposals for new courses, proposals to terminate courses, proposals to teach special topics courses, and proposals for new or revised degree programs and requirements. The Curriculum Committee shall submit any recommendations to the Department Meeting that it deems appropriate for approval by the voting eligible members of the Department.
- b. The Curriculum Committee shall be composed of five tenured and tenure-track members of the Department.
- c. The Chair of the Curriculum Committee shall present all curriculum proposals approved by the Department to the University Curriculum Committee (UCC/Graduate Council) and shall be responsible for submitting and securing the required approvals at other levels of the University.

The other relevant section of the Department's By-Laws is Section IV.D. It reads as follows:

- a. All standing committees shall be officially charged by the Department Chair no later than September 30 of each academic year with a list of assigned tasks and responsibilities, a schedule for completing those tasks and responsibilities, notwithstanding that standing committees may initiate proposals or consider proposals from any member of the department.

**Part II: Intent of Undergraduate Curriculum Committee By-Laws**

The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee's By-Laws will not conflict with the Department's By-Laws. The Department's By-Laws will always take precedence over the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee's By-Laws. The intent of Undergraduate Curriculum Committee By-Laws is to:

- a. Achieve student academic success by ensuring an academically rigorous undergraduate degree plan and course listing
- b. Implement the goals of the Department's undergraduate degree plan (see Appendix I)

- c. Implement the appropriate guiding principles of the University
- d. Ensure timely implementation of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee's mandate (found in Section IV.E.4 of the Department's By-Laws) in each academic year

### **Part III: Due Date for Receiving Proposals**

Section IV.D and IV.E.4 of the Department's By-Laws charge the Curriculum Committee with reviewing proposals concerning adding new courses, terminating courses, teaching special topics courses, and changing or adding degree plan requirements. To achieve the goal stated in Part II.d of the Curriculum Committee Operating Procedures & Guidelines, the Curriculum Committee requires:

- a. Department faculty to submit proposals to the Curriculum Committee by the second Friday of January per each academic year at the latest. The Curriculum Committee will review and vote on a proposal and then correspond with the faculty submitting the proposal upon the arrival of each proposal. The Chair of the Curriculum Committee then is responsible for shepherding the proposal through the University Curriculum Committee's process.<sup>1</sup> Proposals such as special topics courses that do not require University or State approval can be processed more quickly.
- b. The Curriculum Committee will review only "emergency" proposals during the Spring semester. Emergency proposals are defined by student needs for that particular academic year and/or deadlines established by the administration for their undergraduate curriculum needs (e.g., materials for advising and recruiting).

### **Part IV: Materials Required to Review Undergraduate Special Topics Course Proposals**

To achieve the goals stated in Part II.a, Part II.b, and Part II.c, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee requires Department faculty to provide the following when submitting a proposal to teach a special topics course:

- a. **Syllabus:** A copy of the syllabus for the special topics course. The syllabus must contain a course description, the core reading selections, assignment and/or examination descriptions, and the point or percentage value of the total grade for those assignments and/or examinations.
- b. **Degree-Plan Goals Statement:** A written statement explaining how the special topics course implements the goals of the Department's undergraduate degree plan and, by extension, the selected guiding principles of UTRGV listed on the undergraduate degree plan (see Appendix I). Faculty are strongly encouraged to include information explaining how their special topics course provides greater breadth and/or depth to the themes in the Department's Gateway (POLS 2330, POLS 2340, POLS 2350) and legislatively mandated, core curriculum courses (POLS 2305, POLS 2306).

---

<sup>1</sup> Faculty should refer to the University Curriculum Committee's calendar when submitting proposals. In order for a course to be approved in time for the next academic year it must be considered by the UCC at its March meeting. Given about two weeks of committee review, it takes approximately a month to get college approval. The UCC requires the Dean level review and approval at least two weeks prior to their monthly meetings. A decision by Provost can be expected within a couple of months, which will enable the course to be taught in the next academic year.

- c. **Unique Content Statement:** A written statement explaining how the subject matter in the proposed special topics course is not adequately represented by any existing course and could not be incorporated into an existing course.
- \* The Curriculum Committee recommends that faculty utilize the undergraduate special topics courses to run a pilot course before they submit a proposal for adding a new course to the course inventory.
- \* The Curriculum Committee acknowledges that new tenure-track faculty may want to submit a new course proposal without first teaching it as a Special Topics course. Upon arrival in the department, new tenure-track faculty should discuss their need to add new courses to the official course inventory with the Department Chair. If first approved by the Chair, the new faculty member may submit a new course proposal to the Curriculum Committee and bypass the Special Topics requirement.
- \* A faculty member who will teach the special topic for the first time should require the approval of the updated syllabus two weeks before the beginning of that semester's registration.

#### **Part V: Materials Required to Review New Undergraduate Course Proposals**

To achieve the goals stated in Part II.a, Part II.b, and Part II.c, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee requires Department faculty to submit the following when submitting a proposal to add a new undergraduate course to the Department's curriculum:

- a. **New Undergraduate Course Proposal Form** (see Appendix II): This form asks for all the bureaucratic information necessary to add the course to the computer systems of the University, and it serves as a checklist for other required materials. Please include this form as the first page of the new undergraduate course proposal. This form asks if the new course has ever been offered as a special topics course. The Curriculum Committee strongly encourages all new course proposals to be taught first as a special topics course.
- b. **Unique Content Statement:** This written statement explains how the subject matter in the proposed new undergraduate course is not represented adequately by any existing course and could not be incorporated into an existing course. This written statement must also explain why the content of this new course could not be included in a re-tooling of an existing course. This statement requires faculty to review existing course descriptions (and are strongly encouraged to review posted syllabi of those courses) to explain how a re-tooling of existing courses is not a feasible option. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee strongly encourages faculty to examine the Department's undergraduate course listing for courses that share the subject matter of the proposal, have not been taught in years, and for courses that could benefit from a new course title and a re-write of the course description. In essence, the Curriculum Committee strongly encourages the re-tooling of existing undergraduate courses to include new content rather than simply adding courses. Proposals to re-tool a course require all the materials that a new course proposal requires, except for the explanation of why re-tooling is not an option. Proposals to re-tool a course also require a course termination proposal (see Part VI below).

- c. **Syllabus:** A copy of the syllabus for the new undergraduate course. The syllabus must contain: (1) A longer, more detailed course description than found on the new undergraduate course proposal form, (2) The core reading selections, (3) Assignment and/or examination descriptions, (4) The point or percentage value of the total grade for those assignments and/or examinations, and (5) A course-schedule outlining the pace of reading and order of the content for the semester.
- d. **Degree-Plan Goals Statement:** A written statement linking the specific content of the new undergraduate course to the specific goals of the Department's undergraduate degree plan and by extension, the selected guiding principles of UTRGV listed on the undergraduate degree plan (see Appendix I). For upper-division new course proposals, faculty must include a statement explaining how their proposal provides greater breadth and/or depth to the themes in the Department's Gateway (POLS 2330, POLS 2340, POLS 2350) and legislatively mandated, core curriculum courses (POLS 2305, POLS 2306, POLS 2385, POLS 2386).
- e. **Course Rotation Statement:** A written statement indicating how adding this course will change the 4-year course rotation. At a minimum, the statement should answer the following questions: How often do you plan to teach the course? Which courses in your rotation will be offered less often as a result of adding this new course? Who else in the Department can teach this course?
- f. The Curriculum Committee will use a higher standard of evaluation for new course proposals compared to special topics course proposals. This higher standard means that the committee will expect a greater level of specificity and evidence in the written statements for a new undergraduate course proposal than it does for special topics course proposals.

#### **Part VI: Materials Required to Review Undergraduate Course Termination Proposals**

To achieve the goals stated in Part II.a, Part II.b, and Part II.c, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee strongly encourages faculty to examine the Department's undergraduate course listing for courses that could benefit from a new title and a re-write of the course description to help implement the goals of the undergraduate degree plan (see Appendix I). This process requires a new undergraduate course proposal (see Part V and Appendix II) and a course termination proposal. A course termination proposal must include the following:

- a. **Course Termination Statement:** A written statement explaining how terminating the undergraduate course will enhance and help implement the goals of the undergraduate degree plan. The faculty must also state if this course termination proposal is part of a course re-tooling proposal, which would require the appropriate materials listed in Part V.

#### **Part VII: Materials Required to Review Proposals New or Revised Undergraduate Degree Plan Requirements**

To achieve the goals stated in Part II.a, Part II.b, and Part II.c, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee requires Department faculty to submit the following when submitting a proposal to create new or revise old undergraduate degree plan requirements:

- a. **Degree-Plan Goals Statement:** A written statement explaining the changes and a statement linking the new or revised undergraduate degree plan requirements to the goals of the Department's undergraduate degree plan (see Appendix I).
- b. **Graduation Rate Statement:** A written statement forecasting the effect of the proposed change on the 4-year graduation rate.
- c. **Enrollment Statement:** A written statement forecasting the effect of the proposed change on the enrollment in the Department's undergraduate courses.
- d. **Majors Statement:** A written statement forecasting the effect of the proposed change on the number of undergraduate students majoring in political science at the university.

### **Part VIII: Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Responses to Proposals**

All proposals will receive a written response from the Chair of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. This written response will include, at a minimum:

- a. The decision of the full Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
- b. The rationale of the full Undergraduate Curriculum Committee's decision

## **Appendix I: Goals of the Department's Undergraduate Degree Plan**

Appendix I is reproduced verbatim from the first page of the Department's undergraduate degree plan. It contains the goals of the degree plan and the content the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee will use to assess proposals.

The Department of Political Science designed its Bachelor of Arts degree plan to promote the development of a more interdisciplinary curriculum that remains firmly anchored in the core concepts of evolving political science. Our degree plan reflects the conceptual, methodological, and focus area changes in the discipline. It facilitates the development of interdisciplinary courses anchored in the concepts and methods of political science while simultaneously crossing disciplinary boundaries to incorporate topics, concepts, and methods utilized in cognate disciplines in the social sciences (e.g., sociology and economics) and non-cognate disciplines other than the social sciences (e.g., management, biology, public health, Mexican American Studies, women and gender studies). We expect our students to integrate their political-science experience with other university and college programs (e.g., taking advantage of and contributing to programs in the School of Interdisciplinary Programs and Community Engagement).

We designed our degree plan to support the guiding principles of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). With the entire UTRGV community, we will:

1. Promote access to postsecondary education to a diverse student body to become one of the largest and most successful Hispanic-serving institutions in the United States.
2. Employ the highest quality faculty members and staff who pursue global excellence in teaching, research, healthcare, and service.
3. Promote arts and humanities programs to produce state, national, and world leaders who are bi-cultural, bi-lingual, and bi-literate.
4. Pursue applied and translational research to address critical local, state, national, and global needs.
5. Provide a leadership role in fostering economic and community partnerships to help solve local, state, national, and global problems.

## Appendix II: New Undergraduate (Graduate) Course Proposal Form

Course Number: (discuss with the Department Chair or Curriculum Chair before submission)

Long Course Title:

Short Title:

First Term to be Offered:

When will the course typically be offered?

Repeatable? Yes/No

Prerequisites: (Most undergraduate courses have the POLS 2305 as a prerequisite)

Maximum Credit: 3

Maximum Enrollment: 35

Course Description (as it will appear in Catalog):

--

### Checklist:

- Taught as Special Topics (Yes/No, Semester, Year):
- Syllabus Included (Yes/No):
- Unique Content Statement Included (Yes/No):
- Degree-Plan Goals Statement Included (Yes/No):
- Course Rotation Statement Included (Yes/No):