

MEMO

TO: All COAS faculty

FROM: COAS Foreign Culture Committee; Chair, Ellen Wagner (Philosophy)

RE: Revised Foreign Culture course submission guidelines and criteria

The Foreign Culture Committee met in 2001 to revise course guidelines and criteria for the College's Foreign Culture courses. Below are the results; please print and save a copy for your records.

Faculty who currently teach Foreign Culture courses are strongly encouraged to review their syllabi and to make any revisions that will bring courses into line with these new guidelines (e.g., a course as it stands may be too narrowly focused). Any faculty who would like foreign culture status for a new course are encouraged to submit the course syllabus and accompanying materials to Ellen Wagner in the Philosophy Department. I may be reached at 620-3737 or ewagner@unf.edu

SUBMISSION OF FOREIGN CULTURE SYLLABI REVISED CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES JANUARY, 2001

FOREIGN CULTURE COURSE CRITERIA

1. The term "foreign culture" as applied to courses carrying this designation shall be understood to mean: the culture of any non-U.S. countries, regions, nations or peoples.
2. The course should view culture holistically*, from an interdisciplinary perspective. Culture(s) consists of behaviors, rules, worldviews, and rituals that people learn as members of a given society or group.* In this view culture includes patterns of economic and political organization (that extend well beyond the study of the market economy and nation/states), kinship and social organization, the formation of social identities (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, and class), local systems of knowledge, and the arts. Of course, many if not most foreign culture courses will focus on a cultural theme or set of themes; still, one overall goal of such courses will be to understand that theme within a context, which includes the rest of the culture. One important component of a foreign culture class must be the inclusion of works by representatives (scholars, novelists, artists, etc.) of the target culture(s).
3. The concept of culture developed in the course must be inclusive: culture is not seen as generated exclusively by an elite class within the society. All humans express and produce culture(s), and share and/or negotiate their culture(s) with others. A course focusing on literature, for example, might include not only the canonical fiction and nonfiction of

the society under investigation, but also oral (folk) literature: myths, proverbs, riddles, songs, etc.

4. The course should give students the opportunity to compare the target culture with their own culture. The best evidence for this will be the presentation, in readings or lectures, of an analytic perspective on culture which facilitates cross-cultural comparison.

5. The course should be limited to a culture or range of cultures and to a time period which allow students to develop a strong sense of appreciation for the target culture. If more than one (sub)culture is involved, there must be a unifying theme or theoretical orientation which sets these cultures, as a group, apart from other cultures.

6. The course should foster an appreciation for other cultures. It should lead students to examine their assumptions and, possibly, to overcome stereotypes of Others. Accordingly, students should learn to understand and analyze the target culture by the standards of that culture. This does not mean that they must uncritically accept any and all human behaviors and beliefs; it does mean that students must gain an appreciation of how the different parts of a given culture fit together in context, before they assess it.

7. The professor should demonstrate expertise in the target culture(s). This may include, scholarship in related fields and previous teaching experience. Ordinarily the professor should be familiar with the language of the target culture.

*Note: Holistic perspective: a fundamental principle of social sciences positing that things must be viewed in the broadest possible context in order to understand their interconnection and interdependence.

*Note: "Culture encompasses the everyday and the esoteric, the mundane and the elevated, the ridiculous and the sublime. Neither high or low, culture is all-pervasive" from Rosaldo, Renato. 1993. *Culture and Truth: the Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press, 26.

GUIDELINES TO APPLY FOR FOREIGN CULTURE STATUS

A. The Foreign Culture instructor should include in his/her syllabus the following 4 objectives:

1. Foster appreciation for the target culture (s)
2. Develop a holistic understanding of the target culture (s)
3. Appreciate the complexity within the target culture (s)
4. Challenge common assumptions about the target culture (s)

B. In addition to a detailed syllabus, the instructor should submit a cover letter where he/she **(1)** specifies how the class fits the Foreign Culture criteria and **(2)** lists his/her professional qualifications (in particular related scholarship; previous teaching experience; language competence).

C. We encourage prospective Foreign Culture instructors to attend our meetings. Instructors will be asked to present their classes and highlight how they meet the Foreign Culture criteria. A short discussion may issue. Ultimately, instructors will be asked to leave the room for the committee to deliberate. Occasionally, instructors may be asked to revise and resubmit their syllabi.

D. Ballots are secret and majority rules.