PROPOSALS FOR NEW COURSES AND FOR CHANGES IN EXISTING COURSES

Proposals for new courses and for changes to existing courses (p. 2) in Yale College are submitted in CourseLeaf CIM.

PROPOSALS FOR NEW COURSES

Proposals for new Yale College courses are reviewed by the Course of Study Committee; previously taught courses returning to the curriculum after an absence of more than seven years are treated as new courses.

The CIM form may be completed and submitted for DUS approval by an instructor, a department registrar, or any other person with a Yale NetID and password. As DUS, you are responsible for verifying that the details of the course are accurately described on the form, for completing some questions at the end of the form, and for submitting the proposal to the Course of Study Committee for review. After it is submitted, the proposal is included on the agenda of a subsequent meeting of the committee. Proposals must be submitted one week prior to a CSC meeting for inclusion on that meeting’s agenda.

Course proposals must be submitted in time for the Yale College Faculty to vote on them. (The Yale College Faculty meets on the first Thursday of each month during term-time, except in September and January.) In the fall term the last meeting of the Course of Study Committee before the December faculty meeting is usually the Thursday before Thanksgiving. Therefore, forms for courses being proposed for the spring term must be submitted to the committee by early November. New courses being proposed for the following academic year should be submitted by mid-April, at least two weeks before the committee’s last meeting of the year in early May. New courses submitted after mid-April will arrive too late for inclusion in the initial online publication of the YCPS and in systems such as OCI and YBB. Such courses will be added to the online systems in mid-July.

Most helpful to the Course of Study Committee in understanding the nature of a proposed course are:

- The title and a brief description of the course suitable for publication in the YCPS
- An expanded description of the subject matter and purposes of the course, including the level of the course and examples of the bibliography, and any other material that might explain the nature of the course
- The NetID or name of the proposed instructor. Anyone teaching in Yale College for the first time is asked to attach to the CIM form a curriculum vitae and a provisional syllabus for the proposed course. All instructors, however, are encouraged to submit a provisional syllabus for the proposed course.
- A specific indication of the nature and amount of work required of the student (see below for guidelines). This is important in the committee’s consideration of all courses, but it is especially so in its consideration of courses to be taught by new, part-time, or visiting faculty members.
- The meeting time pattern. Specific days and times are not required on the CIM form. As you plan new courses, you might find it especially helpful to share with colleagues the information about lecture and seminar course formats and the standard time patterns for class meetings.

Each course proposal must also provide a breakdown of the component values of course assignments in determining the term grade. The Course of Study Committee uses the following rules and guidelines in reviewing new course proposals:

- Instructors must provide students with feedback on their academic progress by around midterm.
- Instructors may assign no more than 20–25 pages total in graded writing assignments.
- Class participation— that is, the engagement and interaction of students during class time, not including formal oral presentations or any written work— may count for no more than 20% of the term grade, except when the instructor explicitly defines the evaluative basis for the participation grade and agrees to provide before midterm graded feedback to each student about his or her performance in this area of the course.
- The committee expects every course to conclude with a final examination, term essay, or similar demonstration of proficiency in the course material.
- In consensus with the judgment of the directors of undergraduate studies, as sought in spring 2014, the Course of Study Committee will henceforth use as a guideline that no final examination should count for more than 50% of the student’s term grade, unless compelling reasons to deviate from this cap are provided by the instructor and accepted by the committee.
- The committee expects that instructors will require all course assignments, other than term papers and term projects, to be submitted at the latest by the last day of reading period. Term papers and term projects are to be submitted at the latest by the last day of the final examination period.

For more information on course work rules and guidelines, see Midterm Feedback in Courses, Final Examinations, and Course Requirements in the Instructors’ Handbook.

The CIM form includes a question regarding academic integrity, designed to ensure that instructors are prepared to address issues of cheating, plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, and the like within the context of the proposed course. Information about teaching
these matters is available on the Writing Center Website. Instructors should include the statement on academic integrity submitted on the CIM form on the course syllabus. In addition, the CSC strongly encourages all instructors to include on every syllabus a link to the Writing Center’s recommendations for understanding and avoiding plagiarism.

The key to the success of the committee’s work is the care and clarity with which directors of undergraduate studies propose new courses. Obviously the members of the committee cannot be experts in all fields of instruction; they must place great trust in the thoroughness and diligence of the DUS, whose approval is taken as representing the considered judgment of the department or program. Therefore, in the event that the DUS is the instructor of the proposed course, the chair of the department or program should submit the CIM form (and, conversely, the DUS should submit the form if the chair is the instructor). The committee’s responsibility is to ask such questions as: “Is this an appropriate subject of instruction for credit in Yale College?”; “Does the work required represent roughly one-thirty-sixth of what a student ought to do to earn a bachelor’s degree?”; and “Are the title and description sufficiently clear to give a student, particularly one from outside the major, a reasonably good sense of what the course is about?” Sometimes the secretary or the chair of the committee will return a course proposal to you asking for a clarification or a revision. In such a case, you are asked to exercise patience and toleration in the face of what might sometimes appear to be the committee’s lack of knowledge.

CHANGES IN EXISTING COURSES

An existing course that undergoes a significant change must be reviewed by the Course of Study Committee. All other course changes are reviewed by the University Registrar’s Office before they are published in online course information systems. Both types of proposals are made using the same CIM form.

The Course of Study Committee must approve an existing course if:

- The course format changes. For example, a course that was originally approved by the CSC with a lecture format (with a standard lecture time pattern and required work appropriate for a lecture course) that is changing to a seminar course (with limited enrollment, a standard seminar meeting time, and a different pattern of work expected of the students) must be resubmitted to the committee. Conversely, a seminar becoming a lecture course must also be resubmitted.
- A department requests the addition of a graduate or professional school number to an undergraduate course. All courses requesting joint undergraduate/graduate status must answer two questions on the CIM form that explain why a dual level would be appropriate.

COURSE TITLES AND COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

The Course of Study Committee and the editors of the YCPS also have within their charge the editing of course titles and course descriptions to conform to a consistent standard.

The title of a course should be both descriptive and succinct. Course titles need to make evident the focus or method of the course, whether to students searching online databases for keywords, to colleagues in other departments serving as advisers, or to graduate admission committees, fellowship commissions, or potential employers seeking to establish the nature of the student’s program of study. Titles with two parts joined by a colon are strongly discouraged. Instructors sometimes propose titles with an ornamental or metaphorical initial phrase followed by a colon and an explanatory second half; the Course of Study Committee generally discards the first half of such a title before it approves the course. Titles longer than thirty characters, including spaces, must be abbreviated to fit in online course information displays and on transcripts. A sample of appropriately descriptive titles of thirty or fewer characters includes the following: The Art of Chu China; Ethics and the Media; French New Wave Cinema; General Ecology; History of Japan to 1868; Human Evolution; Local Flora; Royal Maya Cities; Shakespeare’s Political Plays; Stars and Their Evolution; and Theoretical Fluid Dynamics.

Course descriptions should be relatively short. Ideally, the course description should run from three to five lines in the YCPS. Course descriptions should focus on what will be taught in the course rather than on observations or general statements about a field or discipline. Descriptions are routinely edited for brevity and cogency. In keeping with YCPS style, questions are rephrased into statements, future tense is changed to present tense, and jargon is removed. For more information see course descriptions.