Cover Sheet: Request 15011

LAW 5755 – Introduction to Lawyering

Info

Process	Course|Modify|Ugrad/Pro
Status	Pending at PV - University Curriculum Committee (UCC)
Submitter	Krista Vaught kfields@law.ufl.edu
Created	5/15/2020 1:53:07 PM
Updated	3/2/2021 3:12:09 PM
Description of request	In the Spring of 2017, our faculty approved a proposal submitted by the Introduction to Lawyering ("ITL") faculty, then comprised of Mary Jane Angelo, Jonathan Cohen, Alyson Flournoy, Joan Johnsen, and Jason Nance, to change the grading standards for ITL from letter grades to S+/S/U/I grading on a provisional, two-year basis. ITL has since been taught twice (Fall of 2017 and Fall of 2018) using S+/S/U/I grading, and the experience has been positive. The current ITL faculty, comprised of Mary Jane Angelo, Jonathan Cohen, Joan Johnsen, Jason Nance, and Stacey Steinberg, now requests permanent approval of S+/S/U/I grading for ITL. Our faculty have approved this change.

Actions

Step	Status	Group	User	Comment	Updated
Department	Approved	LAW - Juris Doctor 24010000	Rachel Inman		5/15/2020
No document changes					
College	Approved	LAW - College of Law	Rachel Inman		5/15/2020
No document changes					
University Curriculum Committee	Commented	PV - University Curriculum Committee (UCC)	Lee Morrison	Added to the UCC September agenda.	9/11/2020
No document changes					
University Curriculum Committee	Conditionally Approved	PV - University Curriculum Committee (UCC)	Casey Griffith	Please respond to review comments (see email).	9/15/2020
No document changes					
College	Approved	LAW - College of Law	Paul Rollins		3/2/2021
No document changes					
University Curriculum Committee	Pending	PV - University Curriculum Committee (UCC)			3/2/2021
No document changes					
Statewide Course Numbering System					
No document changes					
Office of the Registrar					
No document changes					
Student Academic Support System					
No document changes					
Catalog					

Step	Status	Group	User	Comment	Updated
No document changes					
College Notified					
No document changes					

Course|Modify for request 15011

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Submitter: Krista Vaught kfields@law.ufl.edu
Created: 5/15/2020 1:44:38 PM
Form version: 1

Responses

Current Prefix
Enter the current three letter code (e.g., POS, ATR, ENC).

> Response:
> LAW

Course Level
Select the current one digit code preceding the course number that indicates the course level at which the course is taught (e.g., 1=freshman, 2=sophomore, etc.).

> Response:
> 5

Number
Enter the current three digit code indicating the specific content of the course based on the SCNS taxonomy and course equivalency profiles.

> Response:
> 755

Lab Code
Enter the current lab code. This code indicates whether the course is lecture only (None), lab only (L), or a combined lecture and lab (C).

> Response:
> None

Course Title
*Enter the current title of the course as it appears in the Academic Catalog.There is a 100 character limit for course titles. *

> Response:
> Introduction to Lawyering

Effective Term

Select the requested term that the course change(s) will first be implemented. Selecting "Earliest" will allow the change to be effective in the earliest term after SCNS approval. If a specific term and year are selected, this should reflect the department's expectations. Courses cannot be changed retroactively, and therefore the actual effective term cannot be prior to SCNS approval, which must be obtained prior to the first day of classes for the effective term. SCNS approval typically requires at least 6 weeks after approval of the course change at UF.

Response:
Fall

Effective Year

Select the requested year that the course change will first be implemented. See preceding item for further information.

Response:
2020

Requested Action

Indicate whether the change is for termination of the course or any other change. If the latter is selected, all of the following items must be completed for any requested change.

Response:
Other (selecting this option opens additional form fields below)

Change Course Prefix?

Response:
No

Change Course Level?

Note that a change in course level requires submission of a course syllabus.

Response:
No

Change Course Number?

Response:
No

Change Lab Code?

Note that a change in lab code requires submission of a course syllabus.

Response:
No

Change Course Title?

Response:
No

Change Transcript Title?

Response:
No

Change Credit Hours?
Note that a change in credit hours requires submission of a course syllabus.

Response:
No

Change Variable Credit?
Note that a change in variable credit status requires submission of a course syllabus.

Response:
No

Change S/U Only?

Response:
Yes

S/U Only Status

Response:
Change to S/U Only

Change Contact Type?

Response:
No

Change Rotating Topic Designation?

Response:
No

Change Repeatable Credit?
Note that a change in repeatable credit status requires submission of a course syllabus.

Response:
No

Change Course Description?
Note that a change in course description requires submission of a course syllabus.

Response:
No

Change Prerequisites?

Response:
No

Change Co-requisites?

Response:
No

Rationale
Please explain the rationale for the requested change.

Response:
   In the Spring of 2017, our faculty approved a proposal submitted by the Introduction to Lawyering ("ITL") faculty, then comprised of Mary Jane Angelo, Jonathan Cohen, Alyson

Flournoy, Joan Johnsen, and Jason Nance, to change the grading standards for ITL from letter grades to S+/S/U/I grading on a provisional, two-year basis. ITL has since been taught twice (Fall of 2017 and Fall of 2018) using S+/S/U/I grading, and the experience has been positive. The current ITL faculty, comprised of Mary Jane Angelo, Jonathan Cohen, Joan Johnsen, Jason Nance, and Stacey Steinberg, now requests permanent approval of S+/S/U/I grading for ITL. Our College of Law faculty have approved this proposal.

First, S+/S/U/I grading has significantly ameliorated the pedagogical "disconnect" described below between the educational aims of the course and the final exam. We as instructors prefer this, and we believe that our students do, for student complaints related to that disconnect have greatly decreased. Second, over the past two years, we have increased the level of experiential learning in ITL, which was one of the reasons for our preferring S+/S/U/I grading. Some of this experiential learning is based on student cooperation, which S+/S/U/I grading may facilitate. Third, there are multiple required elements in the course ensuring student accountability. In addition to passing the final exam, which the vast majority of but not all ITL students have passed over the last two years, students are required to take four online quizzes and submit six written documents (viz., Personal Legal Narrative, Negotiation Reflection Paper, Court Observation Exercise, Statement of Career Development, Resume, and Cover Letter.) These quizzes and written documents ensure a significant measure of student accountability. Fourth, in our opinion, S+/S/U/I grading has been educationally beneficial overall, with greater absorption of fundamental introductory concepts made possible through increased experiential learning rather that students focusing on memorizing definitional minutia. There is some small statistical support for increased student learning found in the end-of-semester, student evaluations. Exact comparison of student learning under the different grading structures is difficult, for while the new grading structure has facilitated greater use on our part of experiential learning, there have been other changes to our classes over the past two years as well. For example, class sizes are now approximately 20% smaller with slight more than 40 students per section as compared with 50 students per section two years ago, and the composition of the instructors has also changed slightly. Still, we note that the course mean from student evaluations across all ITL sections for "amount learned" has risen slightly under the S+/S/U/I grading structure. In the Fall of 2016, when letter grading was last used, the course mean on student evaluations for "amount learned" was 3.31. In the Fall of 2017 of it was 3.44, and in the Fall of 2018 it was 3.47.

Pedagogy

Based on our observations, course evaluations, and discussions with students, we have become increasingly concerned about the disconnect between what we teach and emphasize in our ITL classes and how we assess our students. A significant part of the ITL course is experiential. We cover topics and skills such as interviewing, counseling, negotiation, listening, and problem solving. While we assign readings that discuss the theories associated with these skills, we spend a significant amount of class time engaged in role plays and other experiential exercises to practice and apply these skills. As the course has developed, we are bringing in more experiential exercises that simply do not permit comparison between students. For instance, we assign them to write a personal narrative about an experience they had with the law in order to get them to think about the law from a client's perspective. We have them attend court and write about their thoughts and experiences. Although we could grade these exercises based on fluency of the writing and grammar, that isn't the only point of the exercises. Additionally, we devote several classes to matters of career development, such as clarifying career goals, writing resumes and cover letters, and interviewing for jobs, areas in which making nuanced comparisons between students makes little sense. Many students have expressed discontent with the disconnect between the skills we are emphasizing in the classroom, and the skills for which we are able to test and thus to assign a grade. Many of these skills cannot be evaluated in a comparative model which is an underlying premise of our letter grade system.

Administration

One of the challenges we face teaching ITL is how to evaluate and differentiate our students to satisfy our nuanced grading standards. We currently have 8 or 9 categories of grades (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, etc). Drawing such nuanced distinctions on the basis of the substance of one's resume is really quite an impossible task and the students clearly recognize it. Although there are some the skills classes that do make such nuanced distinctions on the basis of experiential skills, those classes tend to have far fewer students and the faculty are adept at

teaching and evaluating the substance of the skills being learned. Because ITL is a much larger class (50 students) and the students are doing many different types of exercises and skills, the faculty might only have a chance to evaluate one negotiation exercise, for instance, before moving on to another topic, rather than being able to focus the entire semester on the development of the relevant skill. We believe that a basic pass/fail structure is more appropriate when the course is introducing students to a wide variety of skills and experiences, while the S+ option may provide an additional incentive for students to take the exercises seriously and work hard.

Equity

There are at least two equity reasons for implementing this basic grade change. First is that the current grading system inevitably focuses on testable skills and not on many of the other substantive goals and skills the class teaches. To date (and to accommodate the grading policy) we have given an end of course exam consisting of multiple choice questions and one or two essay questions. Thus, our assessment often focuses on testing vocabulary, reading comprehension, and, to some degree, how to apply the concepts and theories associated with these skills on paper. What our current assessment does not do is evaluate students' ability to apply the skills they learn experientially, which is a primary focus of our course. Our students notice this disconnect and question it (for good reason). Further, in order to differentiate students, we often devise questions that focus on the details of the readings, which also can be dissatisfying to our students. Next year, we plan to dedicate even more class time to experiential learning activities. As we continue to push this course in the direction of experiential learning, we believe that the disconnect between what we teach and how we assess will grow even wider, and students may become even more dissatisfied with how we assess them.

Second, it is very difficult to distinguish between, for example, a student who had a meaningful experience visiting a court room and seeing a trial, but who couldn't perhaps adequately express the value of the experience, and a student who slept through the court room experience but deftly and impressively articulated a moving and eye-opening experience. These are simply non-comparable experiences. In another example, a student who lost a parent or loved one to violence is likely to have a very different experience from one whose only contact with the law was a speeding ticket. Because these are non-comparable experiences, it is inequitable to evaluate and grade the students on a comparative standard that focuses only on writing skills or grammar.

Mechanics

Accordingly, after extensive discussion, we are seeking provisional approval to modify the grading structure of the ITL classes for two years. We have verified with Rachel Inman that the S+/S/U/I grading structure is possible. According to Rachel,
The College of Law is the only college that has the "honors" designation attached to the S grade. The only options in the S/U grading scheme are S+, S, U and I. A grade of U indicates a grade of C- or below on the letter graded scale and is considered failing, requiring the answering of the participation grades when grades are submitted (never participated, stopped participating, completed and academically failed).

To receive an S grade, we would expect students to successfully complete all class assignments (e.g., a personal legal narrative, a court observation paper, a reflection paper on an experiential exercise, a statement of career development, a CV and cover letter); miss no more than six one-hour classes; take a number of quizzes throughout the semester on the readings; participate in class discussions and experiential exercises in good faith; and achieve a satisfactory score on an end of semester exam. We would award S+ grades to students who achieve distinction in these areas.

Consistent with the grading distribution for other 1L classes, the number of S+ and S grades that each professor awards would be proportional across all ITL sections. While we have not yet determined the number of S+ grades we would award, our inclination thus far is to award between 5% and 15% of the students in each class an S+ grade, which would be consistent with the number of "A" grades that we could award under the normal 1L grading curve.