



Morgan Orlando/Index

Senior Trevor Grizzell teaches the student-initiated course International Queer Cinema on Tuesday night.

Students create courses

BY ANGEL MCGEE
For the Index

A total of 18 student-initiated courses have been added to Truman's curriculum since spring 2009, allowing students the opportunity to experience a different teaching atmosphere, and for students to experience teaching.

Student-initiated courses have become more prevalent in the area of interdisciplinary courses, as well as some departmental major courses, with an average of three courses developing each semester.

Michael Kelrick, biology professor and director of interdisciplinary studies, said the courses are devised by the students, complete with a syllabus that outlines course objectives, grading criteria and required literature. Student instructors are required to have an overseeing professor, although the professor has no direct influence upon the course or with students' grades.

Junior Zak Palmer is the student instructor for the Sociology of Gender Variance course and applied twice before his course was accepted. He said his personal inquiries about the sociology of gender and the lack of literature taught by professors within this field led him to the idea of teaching a course.

"I felt like I didn't know more about sociology than my professors, or anything like that, or even more about sociology of gender, but that I had a niche that I did know a lot about," he said. "So I thought it would be nice to take advantage of it since [the sociology] department is such a small department."

The application process for beginning a student-initiated course requires multiple submissions, including a proposal request form, a personal statement essay, a formal rough draft of the syllabus and an outline of the course, that are reviewed by the director of interdisciplinary studies, the provost and the Undergraduate Council,

depending on the academic status of the course. The next steps include finding a faculty instructor who will be willing to act as the mentor for the student instructor, who is chosen by the student.

Palmer said the most difficult part is organizing the syllabus for the course.

Many student instructors use this opportunity to gain further experience in the field of teaching and interacting with students. Senior Trevor Grizzell, who taught Film as Dialogue: The Social Power of Cinema last fall, said his teaching experience has helped him prepare for graduate school.

"It gave me the ability to learn more about syllabus creation, curriculum stuff and just how to interact with the classroom and make students learn the best way they can," Grizzell said.

Elaine McDuff, associate professor of sociology, and the overseeing professor for Palmer's Sociology of Gender Variance, said her experience with students teaching students is a positive one and it can be more beneficial for students.

"It's good for students to have a variety of different kinds of learning opportunities," McDuff said. "The more different kinds of approaches to incorporate into a course, the more you're going to meet the needs of the kinds of learning styles of different students and also keep the students' interest."

Junior Lakeisha Joyce currently is enrolled in International/Transnational Queer Cinema, also taught by Grizzell, and said these types of courses allow students to be open with the instructor and make it easier for open discussion.

"I feel like it's more of an open conversation, like we can sit here and we can joke about things, but we can get back into what's the point and I think hearing from other students, I think that people are more free to talk about what they saw in the movie [and] what they didn't like," she said.

The average of three student-initiated courses developed each semester doesn't concern Kelrick.

"We are thinking that the pace is just right. ... The number is determined by both the recognition that we want to develop the culture deliberately and thoughtfully," he said. "We allocate a certain amount of money to these courses, and that represents a limit to the number we'll support."

Although student-initiated courses offer benefits for students of all levels, the transition from the student position to an instructor position can prove to be a difficult task for some, McDuff said.

"For most students doing this, this is going to be their first time in front of a class, in charge, responsible and playing a different role and stepping into that role as an undergraduate. It's going to be a challenge for anybody," McDuff said.

Palmer said although he enjoys interacting through teaching and discussion with the students, there are some things he would have considered beforehand, including his own status as a student.

"I wish that I knew how hard it was to guide students into writing a paper," Palmer said. "I wish that I was more organized. I'm not used to taking care of anyone or being responsible for anyone but myself, and teaching a class is like having 13 babies at once."

McDuff said student instructors also can learn something from their teaching experiences.

"This is something really beneficial for both the students leading the courses and what they're able to learn about themselves, about their field of interest, about what teaching really involves," she said. "A lot of the struggles they have in trying to make this work and how much they learn within the process of doing that. Everything I've seen has been very, very positive."

(Additional reporting by Jessica Scheetz.)

Earlier registration time goes into effect

BY CALLI PRICE
Staff Reporter

The 7 a.m. registration time implemented this semester solves some problems, but the earlier time is less convenient for other students.

Sophomore Nick Caloroso, a Truman baseball player, said the 7 a.m. registration time was a change for the better because the team's practice does not end until after 5 p.m.

"I think they should keep it early so students can get it done without spending a whole day in class worrying," Caloroso said. "Also, it gives them an opportunity to see their advisers during the day."

However, senior Katrina Godfrey said she disagrees with the change.

"I think that 7 a.m. is too early for the vast majority of Truman students who have to register for classes," Godfrey said. "They have to get up possibly hours earlier than they normally would just to register for classes next semester, especially freshmen or sophomores whose classes could potentially close if they waited half a day."

Marty Eisenberg, associate provost and economics professor, made the decision last semester to change registration time while acting as the registrar. He said one of the major reasons for the change included inconvenience for students having to register at 5 p.m.

"We realized that for a lot of students it was coming in the middle of athletic practices," Eisenberg said. "It was still coming in the middle of class, and I became aware that students felt the need to give other students their passwords because waiting until they got out of practice or class was a fairly major consequence for them not being able to get into classes."

The awareness of passwords being exchanged caused Eisenberg and other staff members to become worried about the safety of student information, early morning registration was the only reasonable solution to solving the security problem, and other major conflicts for the majority of Truman students, Eisenberg said.

Other benefits to the change in registration time is that Information Technology Service and Registrar staffing are more readily available to help with any issues students might have with registration, Eisenberg said.

"If a student has problems, it could be handled by ITS and the Registrar's office," Eisenberg said. "They're not waiting until the next day. If they need an override and they discover it then, they can resolve those issues fairly quickly on that day as opposed to waiting until the next day."

Other than a few grumbles about the time being early, Eisenberg said he has not had any complaints about problems occurring, and that and some students have even thanked the registrar's office.

Registration went smoothly technology-wise, said Kasey Graves, ITS operations supervisor.

"As far as load on the server, it's less," Graves said. "As far as complaints and issues, it's been less. It's been better than in the past."

Eisenberg said that although he is not positive the time change will continue for registration next semester, he thinks it will be kept this way. The final decision remains with the registrar.

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