As a follow-up to yesterday’s discussion at Grad Council about the proposed certificate on genocide and human rights, these are the emails I received from various faculty members. It’s my understanding that this proposal has been sent back to the Curriculum Committee and will be reexamined at the next committee meeting in December.

“This proposed program is NOT about genocide and human rights; it’s really hard to discern any clear focus to it at all. Key disciplines that have important things to say about these issues are completely missing -- history, political science, anthropology, geography, sociology. There has been a proliferation of dubious graduate certificates; in fact there has been encouragement to create them. One of the key problems has been that existing quality grad programs don’t always want to participate because they select students carefully, and don’t want (or need) to open their grad classes to all kinds of other students. The result is that these programs come through featuring a mish-mash of classes that are general enough to be open to anyone. This certificate is a classic example. I think it’s time the Grad Council started looking more comprehensively at proposals like this. Do they really do what they say they’re doing? Are they academically strong and defensible as focused programs? My suggestion would be that Edward Kissi should be encouraged to teach his own class as a grad special topics, but the attempt to create a certificate is completely premature.”

“Personally I think it is a major deficiency to offer a certificate in human rights but not have a single course on ‘human rights’ offered. In my opinion, the courses listed for this certificate do not support the theme of genocide and human rights. Even in the abstract, the definition of genocide is incorrect as it is the intention to kill in part or whole a group… the key phrase is “intent” which is a critical legal point and has thus far prohibited an actual conviction of genocide in Europe. Which is the second point… there are no offerings in international humanitarian or human rights laws. I think that the comparative programs listed are not the critical programs, as Harvard, Yale and Berkeley are not represented. The program at Harvard law school is outstanding and covers the legal aspect, as well as policy, education, NGO, etc. The targeted audience is FL high school teachers not the international community. However, in my opinion it should be of equal value at the international level or it makes USF look like amateurs. Also, programs such as Harvard are offering online courses (for free) and webinars. This is the trend to allow for international participation. If we were setting up programming on this issue, I would try to tie into this community and add to what is going on already.”

“The issue of mental health doesn’t appear to be addressed in any clear curricular way, nor does there seem to be any clear “methods” course to instruct students how to analyze, assess, evaluate, or simply document these events.”

“Many of the courses in this graduate certificate are cross-listed with undergraduate courses. This seems curious for a graduate certificate. Also, several of the courses listed haven’t been taught at this university in many years, and I doubt they are actually available. Finally, the primary course on genocide to be taught
by Dr. Kissi appears to have never been offered before (and it is unclear who exactly will be offering it in the future). It would be advisable to ask Dr. Kissi to teach this course once or twice to gauge interest, etc., before making it a permanent offering. And given the title and subject of the course, it would also be advisable to check to see if other departments, such as sociology, GIA, or anthropology, are not already offering this course (maybe under a different title).”

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