

**MEMO**

**To:** The UVM Faculty Senate  
**From:** Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair  
**Date:** May 4, 2017  
**Re:** Approval of a proposal for a new Minor in Law and Society submitted by the College of Arts and Sciences

---

At its meeting on May 4, 2017, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the action recommended in the following memo.

---

The Curricular Affairs Committee unanimously approved a proposal for a new Minor in Law and Society submitted by the Department of Sociology in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). If approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees, the program will be offered beginning spring 2018.

***Program Description and Rationale***

The newly proposed interdisciplinary Minor in Law and Society involves faculty in seven CAS departments and programs as well as faculty in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) and the Grossman School of Business. The minor will be directed by two faculty members in Sociology and one in Political Science, and will be administered through the Department Sociology.

As outlined by the proposers, the minor has three primary objectives:

- 1) to promote student understanding of the contemporary and historical relationship between American society's social norms and values and its efforts to: a) define and ensure the rights and responsibilities of its members, and b) control its members informally and especially formally through legal institutions including all aspects of the criminal justice system;
- 2) to grasp the role of the American legal institutions both in shaping these norms and values and reflecting them as well as in legitimating and constraining the use of coercion and force in maintaining and creating social order;
- 3) to begin to understand the complex social, political, economic, and historical contexts within which the life chances of diverse groups within American society are enhanced or diminished as a result of their interactions with legal institutions including various institutions of informal and formal social control.

The proposers emphasize that the minor is not designed to prepare students for careers in law, public service, criminal justice, or law enforcement. While it may be useful to students that wish to pursue careers in these areas, the main goal of the program is to prepare a broader spectrum of students for a better understanding of "the operation of law as a social institution." Given the host of current issues we face in the US today, the proposers believe that it is important to provide students with a deeper understanding of the law and legal institutions so that they will be better informed citizens and leaders

in whatever paths they choose. The proposed interdisciplinary minor offers an opportunity for all undergraduate students to deepen and broaden their knowledge of the logic and operation of various components of legal institutions.

### ***Relationship to Existing Programs***

Currently, there are no UVM programs that have similar goals or curricular content, although the Sociology Department itself now offers a concentration in Crime and Criminal Justice within the Sociology major. In comparing the proposed minor to programs regionally and nationally, the proposers distinguish it from both those that focus on criminal justice as an applied specialty as well as those (typically at larger institutions) that draw more broadly in generalist courses in behavioral sciences. The program at UVM would more closely resemble those offered by liberal arts colleges nationally, which are typically centered in political science or sociology departments and focus on legal institutions rather than law enforcement or behavioral science. Examples of similar programs cited in the proposal are the College of Charleston, the universities of Oregon and Delaware, American University, and George Mason University.

None of the criminal justice programs at a number of Vermont colleges would overlap with the minor's proposed content, and credits from these programs would not count toward the minor. The proposers believe that the minor could potentially increase enrollment in the 2+3 program offered by UVM and Vermont Law School.

### ***Evidence of Demand, Anticipated Enrollment, and Impact on Current Programs***

The proposers cite the fact that many of courses included in the minor are "routinely filled to capacity" as evidence of demand, and note that there are plans to offer these courses more frequently in the future. Additionally, the proposers believe that enrollment for the proposed courses for the minor will be widely distributed across the two-dozen courses, thus avoiding over-enrollment problems. As a final note, Dr. Miller reported that sociology has been given permission to recruit a tenure year faculty in this area, although that recruitment will not be immediate.

The new minor is expected to draw students primarily from within the College of Arts and Sciences. Specifically, it will serve as a way for students to combine the series of constitutional law courses in Political Science with a series of criminal justice courses in Sociology. It is anticipated that most student entering the curriculum will approach through those channels.

The proposers acknowledge that students from CALS and the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources may be interested in the minor. The number of students that enroll in the proposed minor from units outside CAS, however, is expected to be small, and thus the proposers to not anticipate that inauguration of the minor would have a significant impact on other units.

### ***Curriculum***

The curriculum for the newly proposed Minor in Law and Society draws from existing courses, predominantly offered by the departments of Sociology and Political Science. However, the minor's

curriculum is further enhanced by offerings from other departments and colleges. Completion of the new minor would require 18 credit hours from among the courses listed in the table below, including SOC 014 or POLS 021 and at least one course at the 200-level.

To ensure breadth in the minor's curriculum, students would not be allowed to take more than nine hours in any one department to meet the requirement, and only six hours in the student's major field could be counted toward the minor. Although most courses are 100- or 200-level, by completing either SOC 014 or POLS 021, students will meet the pre-requisite requirements for the SOC and POLS courses. Students interested in other courses will be required to fulfill a particular department's prerequisites to take those courses. Depending upon the student's major, there are multiple ways to complete the minor without being forced to take more than the university's limit of three courses of prerequisites (sample curricula were provided in the proposal).

| <b>REQUIRED (one of the two below; 3 credits)</b>                          |  |
|--|--|
| SOC 014<br>or POLS 021   | Deviance and Social Control<br>American Political System |
| <b>ELECTIVES (15 additional credit hours; at least 3 at the 200-level)</b> |  |
| POLS 021   | American Political System                                |
| POLS 121   | Law and Politics   |
| POLS 122   | Constitutional Law: Civil Liberties                      |
| POLS 129:D1  | Constitutional Law: Civil Rights in the US               |
| POLS 138   | Constitutional Law: Government Powers                    |
| POLS 220   | Topics in Law  |
| POLS 222   | Constitutional Law II                                    |
| POLS 235   | Gender and Law   |
| POLS 238   | Law and Public Policy                                    |
| SOC 014  | Deviance and Social Control                              |
| SOC 114  | Sociology of Punishment                                  |
| SOC 115  | Crime  |
| SOC 118  | Race, Crime, and Criminal Justice                        |
| SOC 214  | Delinquency  |
| SOC 216  | Criminal Justice   |
| SOC 217  | Corrections  |
| SOC 258  | Sociology of Law   |
| BSAD 117   | Business Law I   |
| BSAD 118   | Business Law II  |
| CDAE 129   | Communication Law  |
| CDAE 157   | Consumer Law and Policy                                  |
| EC 135   | Law and Economics  |
| HIST 147   | Ancient Law  |
| HIST 153   | Topics in Diplomatic History                             |
| PHIL 142   | Philosophy and Law                                       |
| GSWS 258   | Gender and Law (POLS 235)                                |

In addition to the listed courses, relevant special topics courses (x95, x96) may be counted toward the minor. The host department, Sociology, has also made a recent effort to increase undergraduate

opportunities for internships, research, and service learning, and launched a Vermont Prison Education program that gives undergraduates the opportunity to learn alongside inmates in South Burlington's women's prison. Although these internships are not specifically listed among the courses that would fulfill the new minor's requirements, credit would be given for appropriate experiences if placement and supervision can be found. No new opportunities for doing faculty-supervised research are being offered, however, it is expected that program faculty will be willing to supervise independent study projects or honors theses for credit.

### ***Advising***

Sociology professor Eleanor Miller will be the student advisor for the first year. Thereafter, additional advising may be provided by Professors Fox and Ewald, program co-directors, if enrollment warrants it.

### ***Admission Requirements and Process***

With the exception of Political Science minors, the program would be available to all UVM undergraduates with a minimum GPA of 2.0.

### ***Assessment Plan***

The program directors plan to assess curriculum and enrollment after three years to identify weaknesses and opportunities. At the end of three years the proposers feel that enough students will have enrolled in the minor to be able to assess students' ability to navigate the various curricular routes, and to determine whether or not students feel that they are receiving adequate exposure to a range of disciplinary approaches to legal institutions as well as some depth of understanding. This evaluation will be conducted via a qualitative questionnaire, the results of which may lead to curricular and/or advising adjustments as necessary. The program will also be reviewed as part of the ongoing Academic Program Review process.

### ***Staffing Plan, Resource Requirements, and Budget***

No new courses are planned. The minor will draw upon existing courses, and therefore, no additional resources are necessary to support the minor.

### ***Evidence of Support***

The proposal was approved by the CAS Curriculum Committee and faculty. It was endorsed by Dean Falls of the College of Arts and Sciences and Dale Jaffe, chair of the Sociology Department. Letters of support were also submitted by the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Dean of the Grossman School of Business.

### ***Summary***

The newly proposed minor in Law and Society draws upon existing course work to construct a curriculum in an area that is both timely and of interest to students. Expanding the understanding of

law and legal institutions among undergraduates may prove useful to those pursuing careers in legal, public service, and other professions. Although it primarily draws upon Sociology and Political Science courses, inclusion of courses from other departments and colleges provides breadth to the curriculum. With over two-dozen courses, as well as relevant special topics courses and internship opportunities, the curriculum also gives students the opportunity to tailor the major to their interests.