

## Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

**To:** The UVM Faculty Senate

**From:** Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair

**Date:** January 3, 2019

**Re:** Approval of proposal for a new Minor in Reporting and Documentary Storytelling submitted by the College of Arts and Sciences

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At its meeting on January 3, 2019, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

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The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal for a new Minor in Reporting and Documentary Storytelling submitted by the College of Arts and Sciences, Center for Research on Vermont. The proposed minor will be directed by Greg Bottoms, Professor of English, Deb Ellis, Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies, and Richard Watts, Director of the Center for Research on Vermont. If approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees, the program will be offered beginning fall 2019.

### ***Program Description and Rationale***

Students in the proposed Reporting and Documentary Storytelling (RDS) minor will study the practice and theory of communicating stories in journalism and nonfiction writing, documentary video, and digital media formats. They will also develop vital skills in media literacy, critical thinking, ethical awareness, creativity, and problem-solving through embedded high-impact experiential learning environments. The proposed minor is based on the belief that students wanting to go into journalism should have a well-rounded education that allows for the merging of their specific disciplinary or interdisciplinary knowledge with the study and practice in journalism. The proposers indicate that students enrolled in the minor will:

- become adept researchers, clear and sophisticated writers, and achieve a high level of competence in nonfiction production
- be able to recognize and evaluate formal means through which nonfiction writing and media production produce meaning, and apply this knowledge in the creation of nonfiction storytelling
- demonstrate effective processes for drafting, revision, and editing toward achieving professional quality work for public audiences
- be able to implement critical thinking skills in subject/topic identification, research, and production
- be able to work as both writers/producers and project editors

The proposers indicated that the RDS minor is modeled after some of the most successful documentary studies certificates and minors at other universities around the country. The curriculum draws upon existing courses and the expertise of CAS faculty in the areas of documentary filmmaking, art, digital-specific composition, and narrative nonfiction writing. The intent of the minor is to organize, promote, and deepen course offerings related to reporting and documentary for the benefit of students, faculty, and the wider community. Students will learn to identify, research, and write stories and see those stories in context. The

coursework will also help students develop their research skills and writing ability, and learn effective processes for drafting, revision, and editing toward achieving professional quality work.

### ***Justification and Evidence for Demand***

The proposed RDS minor is designed for students interested in pursuing careers or graduate study in journalism, nonfiction writing, editing and publishing, video, and digital media, but its learning outcomes apply to a broad range of careers and professional efforts. Given that the Center for Research on Vermont has established itself as a source of reporting and documentary storytelling about Vermont, it offers a firm foundation for both academic and experiential learning associated with the minor. The staff support, affiliated faculty of the Center, and relationships existing between the Center and other Vermont institutions also afford a platform by which to connect students to opportunities around the state and in conjunction with Vermont's journalistic needs.

The proposers anticipate that student interest in the minor will be strong and foster new or increased enrollment in existing writing, film, and other courses. There has been expressed interest from current and prospective students in journalism and nonfiction storytelling, and there are a number of students involved in journalism and reporting related student activities for whom the minor may be of interest. It is expected that the minor will attract somewhere between 25 and 40 students per year, for a total of 100 to 150 in the minor.

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

The proposed RDS minor will be available to all UVM undergraduates. Students must achieve a 2.0 average in the minor to have it count towards graduation requirements.

### ***Curriculum***

Successful completion of the proposed minor requires a total of 18 credits, including three core credits in writing, three core credits in media history and or theory, and nine credits of elected coursework at the advanced practice level in journalism and nonfiction writing, documentary video, or digital composing and multi-media work. A three-credit internship is also required as a capstone course. Within Vermont, strong partnerships with top media outlets in the state (e.g. Vermont Public Television, Seven Days, Burlington Free Press, WCAX) ensure a robust array of internships available in and near campus. Students interested in pursuing internships outside of Vermont will be supported by the CAS internship staff and the Career Center. CAS students can also explore internships through new partnerships with The Washington Center in DC and The Semester in the City program in Boston, both of which are full semester programs which place students in full time internships.

#### Required Courses

<b>Core Writing – one of the courses below (3 credits)</b>	
ENGS 050	Art of the Essay
ENGS 051	Topics in Composition

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Media/History/Theory – one of the courses below (3 credits)</b>	
ANTH 202	Anthropology of Media
ENVS 204	Media, Ethics, Politics
FTS 009	History of Television
FTS 010	Contemporary Cinema
PLOS 123/ VS 123	The Vermont Political System
PLOS 137	Politics and Media
REL 298	Religion and Media
SOC 043	Survey of Mass Communication
SOC 148	Sociology of News
SOC 243	Mass Media in Modern Society
<b>Advanced-Level Courses – nine credits from the courses below</b>	
ENGS 107	Topics in Composition and Rhetoric
ENGS 108	Advanced Composition Workshop
ENGS 114	Topics in Writing
ENGS 117	Advanced Creative Nonfiction
FTS 144	Screenwriting I
FST 145	Screenwriting II
ARTS 148	Motion Picture Presentation
FTS 133	Documentary and Avant-Garde Cinema
FTS 141	Film and Video Production I
FTS 145	Film Theory and Practice
ENVS 170	Environmental Arts Practice
ARTS 137	Photography
ARTS 138	Color Photography
ARTS 148	Motion Picture Production
<b>Internship in Journalism/Media/Documentary – one of the options below</b>	
VS 191	Internship
FTS 190/192	Internship

*\*Topics include Contemporary Documentary and History of Documentary*

All courses in the curriculum already exist; no new courses were developed for the proposed minor. No more than one course may overlap between a student's major and minor. Students pursuing a major in English with a concentration in writing, a Writing minor, or a major in Public Communications should be especially mindful of this restriction.

### **Advising**

The three co-directors will serve as academic advisors to students in the minor. The Director of the Center for Research in Vermont will oversee the internship placements.

### **Impact on Current Programs and Anticipated Enrollment**

Proposers of the minor stated that they are confident that the minor is distinctive and particular to the strengths of the College of Arts and Sciences with no direct curricular overlap to other programs or minors on campus. The Public Communications major concentration in Media + Journalism within Community Development and Applied Economics (CDAE) offers the closest curricular emphasis with the RDS minor. The RDS minor is

distinct from this concentration in both its form and delivery. Its focus is on long and short-form nonfiction work across media with an emphasis on the creator of the work, interpretative skills development, and artistic craft. Additionally, it employs a more “studio” or “workshop” model of instruction in the practice of journalism and media works. The most closely related minor is the Minor in Public Communications, which does include some courses related to journalism. However, the wider emphasis of this minor is on marketing, advertising, and communication broadly, and it does not include any of the core writing, film, photography, or critical media courses offered in the new RDS minor. Therefore, the proposers believe that the proposed RDS minor will serve students with a different set of interests. As indicated above, the proposers estimate cohorts of ~25 to 40 students.

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

No additional personnel or resources are needed for the minor. The three co-directors will share responsibility for advising and the Center for Research on Vermont will provide staff support. No new courses are necessary.

### ***Assessment Plan***

The minor will be included in the regular Academic Program Review process following the standard expectations for analysis of metrics and on-site evaluation by experts from established programs around the country. The schedule for that review will be timed to coincide with reviews of Film and Television Studies and/or English, since two of the faculty directors belong to those departments. Annually, selected writing by RDS students enrolled in ENG 050/051 will be evaluated as will brief essays students write as part of their internship. Additionally, sample projects developed in the advanced-level courses will be assessed. Every three years, the students completing the proposed minor will be surveyed to see how minor outcomes and experiences have been used professionally or in further academic study.

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

This proposed minor was reviewed and approved by the CAS Curriculum Committee and faculty. Letters of support were provided by the Dean of CAS, Professor Sanders who directs the Environmental Program, and Professor Shephard, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Education and Social Services.

Since August 2016, CAS has been in discussion with CDAE regarding ways to make journalism and media courses on campus more visible and to coalesce those courses into more coordinated and focused curricular offering. Although the initial aim was a minor that included both CAS and CDAE courses, this particular goal was not able to be realized at this time despite extensive discussions that began in September of this year. It should be noted that memos of opposition were submitted by the CDAE, which were considered in reviewing the proposal. While there is some overlap with Public Communications in CDAE, the proposers of the RDS minor provide a sound rationale and clearly distinct program of study that capitalizes on strengths in the College of Arts and Sciences. It is hoped, however, that future discussions and the possibility of dual curricular innovations between CAS and CDAE be considered, as this could bring even greater visibility to journalism and documentary and better serve students by offering a greater breadth and depth of courses.

**Summary**

The proposed Minor in Reporting and Documentary Storytelling utilizes existing courses and faculty expertise to offer a unique educational opportunity for UVM undergraduates to study the practice and theory of telling socially and culturally engaged stories in journalism and nonfiction writing, documentary video, and digital media formats. Projects embedded in the courses and the required internship allow students to gain hands-on experience and apply the skills they develop to professional use in journalism and media projects. There has been expressed interest from current and prospective students in journalism and nonfiction storytelling, and there are a number of students involved in journalism and reporting related student activities for whom the minor may be of interest.