Mark: Discussed the University Library Committee Meeting
University Librarian gave a presentation
It's becoming impossible to libraries to collet everything, so there is an increasing focus on the strengths of different collections.

Lauren and Saad: Discussion of the upcoming presentation of the Graduate grading issue for undergraduate language courses.
Minor edits to proposal suggested.
Proposal will be brought before the General Assembly next week.

Will: Discussion of Graduate Teaching Committee Survey
Minor edits suggested.

**GSA Language Courses Memo**

Policy Proposed: Standardize grading for graduate students to H/HP/P/F, including language courses which are currently unsynchronized.

- Issue I: Why was the language course grading scheme changed? This causes problems on our transcripts; potential employers don’t understand why an undergraduate grade appears in the midst of graduate school marks. Although language might not be a student’s focus within his/her respective program, because the A-F scheme is most discernible it is this grade that will garner the most attention from prospective employers. One student quoted a potential employer saying "You say Yale GSAS doesn’t give conventional grades, or have class rank, so how do you explain this B+ you got in Spanish?"
- Issue II: Lack of consultation. No one knew this was happening until it abruptly changed--this include the GSAS Registrar as well as language instructors. Lack of dissemination about information regarding the policy change.
- Issue III: The current A-F grading scale forces students to divert attention away from their main focus within their program, potentially to the debt of coursework related to their primary area of study. Will give the language classes undue weight, despite languages not being the primary focus of our programs here at Yale (e.g. International Relations, European & Russian Studies). This creates unnecessary stress for graduate students in the international and area studies programs, particularly given the requirement to take four classes per semester while most PhD programs require only three. One recent graduate says “I spent more time, mental energy, and stress worrying about satisfying the foreign language requirement than I did about all other courses I took in the two years I was there combined.”
- Issue IV: Lack of consistency. Indonesian has a 510/512 code on it, and so does Vietnamese.
- Issue V: Credit. Undergraduates get extra credit for doing a language class in
recognition of the greater workload of these classes compared to other Yale College courses (i.e. rather than the standard four credit class, language classes carry an additional fifth credit). Furthermore, when undergraduates take graduate classes, they remain on the undergraduate grading school; thus, when graduates take undergraduate classes, it makes sense for graduates to remain on the H/HP/P/F grading scale.

Addendum of Testimonials Attached

Student and Staff Testimonials Regarding the Change in Grading Scale for Graduate Students Enrolled in Undergraduate Language Classes:

I will be affected by my language course being graded on an "A-F" scale, rather than H/HP/P. Due to the lack of uniformity on my transcript I fear that undue weight will be placed on my language course.
--First Year Master's Student, Jackson Institute

I am affected by my language course being graded on an "A-F" scale. I'm currently enrolled in Chinese L5 (advanced). I've taken 3 courses of Chinese until now and it has been by far my most demanding course, semester after semester. We are tested every day (midterms count for as little as 5% because of this, for example) and I feel the A-F scale gives this course a disproportionate weight on my transcript, as it is perhaps the only grade discernible to future employers. I don't want to stop taking these lessons as I feel they will greatly benefit me in the future, but I would very much rather it was graded on a H/HP/P scale, as the rest of the courses I've taken.
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The listing of language courses as undergraduate rather than graduate is an issue that has been causing problems for past and present students on the International Relations (also known as Global Affairs) MA program. I am concerned that language classes, which for me are a compulsory requirement of the program, reduce the strength of my transcript and confuse potential employers. As the undergraduate courses are graded A-F, this might be the only grade that people outside of Yale can interpret, yet for me the language course does not form the primary focus of my studies here... I worry that as I go onto the job market, my chances will be hampered by confusing and possibly misleading transcripts.
I took an L5 level German language course in Spring 2013 and enjoyed it a lot. I got an A, but… I would have preferred for my language grade to show up in the same form as all my other grad credit courses on my transcript, so that it would be more intelligible to employers. I would not, however, be in favor of any reform which introduced scope for extra work requirements for graduates wishing to be graded using the H/HP/P system (grad credit for language courses). My impression from last year was that I would not have had the surplus capacity to do extra work, and my other research papers would have suffered from additional language assignments. I also gather from others that the existing workload of language courses is quite enough and can be a major burden on time!

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With regard to the 'A-F' scale for language classes, I feel that for those who are unfamiliar with the Yale Graduate [School] would not clearly understand why there are two different systems (A-F and H/HP/P) on the transcript. While this can be explained in the transcript, I have doubts that potential employers/schools would take the time to read through the explanation. Also, since most employers/schools are unfamiliar with the H/HP/P system but are familiar with the A-F scale, they may be inclined to give more weight to the scale they are most familiar with, thereby reducing the weight of the other classes vis-a-vis language classes. I also think that the A-F scale more clearly distinguishes performance in the class (A/A- and B+/B/B-), whereas the H/HP scale does not make those distinctions. Thus, putting the two together in one transcript may not be an accurate reflection of the student's performance. For example, since an A- would translate to an "H", an equal effort in two classes each with different systems would earn different grades. An "A-effort" would show up as an "A-", the 2nd best grade, whereas under the H/HP, it would show up as an "H," which is the highest grade possible.

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...I strongly support the change back to the H/HP/P grading system for graduate students in language courses. I would definitely like to express my general frustration with the undergraduate grading scale, which not only makes our transcripts baffling but forces us to spend an inordinate amount of time on language courses which are usually not our primary area of focus.

The one question I do have (which maybe you can't answer at this point) is whether a change back to H/HP/P grading would have a retroactive effect on grades earned in language courses last year. It seems a change in grading scales from one year to the next would make our academic transcripts even more confusing rather than less, so if this (very welcome) bureaucratic reversion occurs I would hope it could somehow be applied to grades from last year as well.

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...I was totally struggling with [my foreign language last year]. I didn’t want to have a B on my transcript so...every time I had less than 90 for an exam, I got more nervous and stressed. And the problem is that language exams are so often that this stressful feeling towards [my language] has become a part of my study here at Yale. I almost lost interests in the language at all. I started to memorize the vocabulary just for the sake of the test. At last, I got a B+, which looks very strange and confusing on the transcript."

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Graduate registrars were notified last spring that the Grad Credit Request forms were no longer required for language courses. (I assume that’s because the language courses were already intense so the forms always said “n/a” under “extra work required” and they were automatically approved, so somebody decided they were superfluous.) However, nobody told the language instructors! So at grading time the instructors were scolding our students for “not doing what you were supposed to do so now I can’t submit your graduate grade...” I emailed all our contacts in the European language departments, and asked that they notify their instructors but there was much confusion.

The instructors asked for advice about equivalent grades between grad & u.g. grade modes – i.e. “I would have given you an HP so is that a B? B+? A-? Grad School Policies specifically state that no such cross-definitions or equivalents exist (SEE BELOW) and nobody from the Grad School would answer that question. We could only tell the instructors it was up to their subjective discretion.

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The Grad School Registrar also said they are not able to edit the pop-up message that appears when our students register for language courses. When a grad student selects a course with a number less than 500, a warning pops up saying they’ve selected an undergraduate course and will not get credit unless they FILL OUT THAT FORM. Nobody would edit that note to exclude the language courses. Students had to take our word for it that the note did not apply to language courses. This is sloppy and unacceptable."

--Program Registrar

The change in policy is completely unacceptable. Like the instructors, students were never notified of the change in the grading mode from H/HP/P to A-F, which I believe is simply unethical on the part of the Graduate School. Furthermore, this change was made in the middle of the Fall 2012 semester, which coupled with the administrative mismanagement of the issue, is really just sloppy. At a basic level, students have a right to know by what standards they are being assessed, plain and simple. There is an attitude among
administrators that grades in language courses “don’t matter”—particularly at the beginning level—because the type of work done in these courses is of a more “base” variety—dealing with rote memorization and vocabulary. This attitude is not only misguided, but it assumes to tell students what grades they should and should not care about. How a student chooses to prioritize his/her time is a matter for themselves and, to some extent, their advisor to decide. Student encounters with University administrators regarding this issue have ranged from cagey to outright hostile. (One student reports being yelled at and having felt personally insulted by a dean who questioned the student’s character during a meeting the student arranged to seek an explanation of the sudden policy change.)

Moreover, the amount of time the appearance of letter grades forces student to spend upon language classes takes significant time away from our coursework. Personally, my language training has been my single most stressful experience at Yale. Although I’ve earned Hs in all of my graduate coursework, I can honestly say I have spent more time and mental energy on my undergraduate level language training. It is sad to think that something that should be enriching and enlivening has been the source of the most distress for me during my time at the University. A further discrepancy I’ve always noted, but have failed to receive any explanation for is that, those graduate students enrolled in five day a week language courses (L1-L4) receive only 1 unit of graduate school credit (the standard unit given to all graduate school courses, that is those possessing graduate school numbers as well as those cross listed for both undergrad and grad credit). This policy persists despite the fact that undergraduates (whose grading scale is currently being used to asses us) receive five credits for these same courses (as opposed to the usual four) in recognition of the larger work load of a course that meets five days a week, often with significant homework every night and each weekend. If the University insists on grading us in the same manner as undergraduates, it should at least be prepared to offer graduate students the same amount of credit.

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Graduate Teaching Committee Survey

1. Your department: __________________________________________

   Your division:  Humanities  Social Science  Science

2. How are teaching positions currently allocated in your department (does your department have a constant number of TF positions available each year or does this vary year to year and what is the deciding factor of this variance)?

   2a. If your department has crosslisted courses, how are TF positions allocated for these courses (evenly between the two departments, first come/first served, etc)?

3. Does the curriculum in your department allow for ample TF positions/opportunities?

   3a. Or do you have to TF classes in other departments?
4. What are the requirements for teaching in your department?

5. Are there different requirements for students in their teaching years in your department and how does this play out in cross-listed courses?

5a. Do your other obligations (classes, research, etc.) differ during your teaching years or remain the same during your graduate career?

6. What are the current levels of TF positions that are available to you in your department?

6a. Is the listing of courses that are available to TF transparent in your department?

7. Do you believe that TF levels correspond with the required workload in your department?

8. Does the TF system provide fair compensation for the different levels and corresponding workloads of classes (i.e. do you get paid more for teaching a higher TF level course)?

9. If you are familiar with the TF system at another school do you believe there are components of that school’s TF system that we could co-opt for our own system? If so, what school and which components do you think we should attempt to incorporate at Yale?

10. How are students in your department assigned to courses both within and/or beyond your department (e.g. they sign up, random, lottery, magic)?

10a. Do you believe this process is transparent in your department?

11. Does your department have a small undergraduate cohort (or none at all)?
11a. If so, do you feel that your department adequately provides TF positions for you?

11b. If yes, how does your department do this (i.e. provide opportunities for TF positions in other similar departments, TF positions for graduate classes, etc.)?

11c. If no, what do you think your department could do to provide you with sufficient TF opportunities?

12. On the other end of the spectrum: If you are in a department with a large undergraduate cohort are (A) mechanisms in place to provide TFs for classes that do not have the number of graduate students (within your department) necessary to teach the courses provided? Or are (B) students within your department obligated to teach above and beyond the teaching requirement?

12a. If A, then how does your department provide extra graduate students to teach these classes?

12b. If B, what do you think can be done to prevent graduate students in your department from being stretched above and beyond the limits?

13. Do students within your department have the opportunity to teach specialized courses such as writing intensive, theory, or lab courses?

14. Do you believe that professors in your department know how to properly utilize TFs in their courses? Do you have personal experience being underutilized in a course in which you were a TF?

15. Do you feel prepared to teach courses in your department?

15a. Does your department provide you with specific pedagogical training above and beyond what is provided by the graduate school?
16. Does your department provide you with the opportunity to design your own course?

16a. If so, is the process for the allocation of such courses transparent in your department?

16b. If your department does not provide you with such an opportunity, do you think that it should?