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Cultural Studies Student Organizing Committee

Letter of Intent

The Cultural Studies Student Organizing Committee (SOC) will be an organization committed to the goal of nurturing a lively academic and political community. In addition to overseeing student concerns in the Cultural Studies program, the major work of the SOC will be to provide a framework for organizing extra-curricular events. These events will include invited speakers, panel discussions, and presentations that will be open to the GMU students, faculty, and staff, as well as to the public in general. Owing to the commitments of Cultural Studies as a field of study, these events will be focused on interdisciplinary inquiry into the mechanisms of culture and the politics of cultural studies. Through these events, the central goal of the SOC is to establish a sense of community among the graduate students in the Cultural Studies department, the graduate students in other departments, and the general intellectual community here at George Mason. Events organized by SOC have as their goal the formation of connections between Cultural Studies students and other groups on campus. These events will facilitate intellectual dialogue between students and faculty from various departments and disciplines. They will therefore facilitate cross-disciplinary intellectual dialogues and debates. These events will also serve to establish connections between students in the Cultural Studies program and students in other graduate programs at GMU. As public events, they will provide an opportunity to make connections with students and faculty from other universities, especially those universities in the Consortium program. The SOC recognizes and values the breadth of intellectual inquiry and political opinion at GMU. By building stronger connections among a number of groups, we hope to set up a system in which students, faculty, staff, and the larger public community are able to communicate and nourish their intellectual pursuits and political commitments.

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Cultural Studies Student Organizing Committee

Constitution

Article One: Name of Organization

1. The name of this organization is the Cultural Studies Student Organization Committee, hereafter denoted by the acronym "SOC" or "S.O.C."

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Article Two: Purpose of the Organization

1. To discuss and act upon student concerns in the Cultural Studies program and act as ombudsman for students in the program.
2. To elect student representatives to the Committee of the Whole and all standing committees at the beginning of the Fall semester for one-year appointments.
3. To elect student representatives to the Admissions Committee at the beginning of the Fall semester for two-year alternating appointments. This student must be finished with 30 credit hours including core requirements.
4. To elect a student representative that will assist the Faculty member in charge of planning the Cultural Studies Colloquium in accordance with the Cultural Studies bylaws.
5. To plan and carry out student-organized activities, such as new student orientations, a student mentoring program, student oriented campus activities, and student reading groups.
6. To propose, debate, and vote upon issues concerning Cultural Studies programming and policies. Decisions will be based upon a simple majority of those present at the time of voting. Student representatives shall then make recommendations to the appropriate committees. If appropriate, results of votes taken by the Cultural Studies Student Organization Committee shall be made public to the larger Cultural Studies community.
7. To elect a student committee to plan and direct an annual Cultural Studies student conference.

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Article Three: Membership

1. For the purposes of this Article, the term "student" is defined as admitted (degree seeking) to the Cultural Studies Program; in all instances, "student" shall be construed strictly in accordance with (a) the official policies and procedures governing student status at George Mason University and (b) all applicable provisions of the George Mason University Catalog. "Local" refers to students doing their work in the general vicinity of GMU; "off-site" refers to students doing their work in areas far enough from GMU as to restrict their attendance at committee functions.
2. The Cultural Studies Student Organization Committee (SOC) shall consist of all members of the Cultural Studies student body.
3. As the program is dispersed and many members are not actively involved in Committee business, their power in the formal committee business is limited by- and only by-the extent to which they exercise those powers.
4. Likewise, as the program is dispersed, members who are local should make every effort to include off-site members in committee business and off-site members should work with local members to actively consider ways that they can all participate.

5. Neither admittance to the Cultural Studies program nor membership in the Cultural Studies SOC will be restricted on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, sex, or age.

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Article Four: Officers

1. Two co-chairs shall be elected to the SOC.
2. The terms for co-chairs shall be two years, staggered and renewable for no more than one term thereafter.
3. Co-chairs shall call and preside over meetings of the Cultural Studies SOC and act as official representatives of the Cultural Studies student body in negotiations with the Director, the Executive Committee, and other administrative entities.
4. A Treasurer shall be elected for a one year term, renewable for as long as they retain local student status.
5. A Secretary shall be elected for a one year term, renewable for as long as they retain local student status.
6. The Secretary is in charge of keeping meeting minutes and distributing to the Student Listserve.
7. A Graduate Student Liaison shall be elected for a one year term, renewable for as long as they retain local student status.
8. The Graduate Student Liaison shall serve as liaison to the Graduate and Professional Student Association's Fairfax Campus Assembly for the entire school year.
9. If a majority of the student body, by a vote taken at a special meeting, finds an officer unable to fulfill their responsibilities, that officer can be relieved of their duties.

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Article Five: Elections

1. As the two co-chairs have staggered terms, each spring (March/April) one co-chair will be elected to the SOC.
2. During the spring election, the positions of Treasurer and Secretary will also be elected.
3. Co chair, Treasurer and Secretary nominees shall be nominated by the student body over the csstudents listserv
4. Each year, each potential nominee/student shall be nominated by two other students in the Cultural Studies program. Nominees are then made effective by accepting the nomination. After nominees are made official, they are able to present their qualifications over the csstudents listserv.
5. The official nominees shall then be elected by their fellow students e-mailing their votes to two designated, independent student vote counters before a designated cut-off date. These two vote counters will then corroborate the results with one another and announce the new co-chair.

6. The Graduate Student Liaison shall be elected at the first SOC meeting of the school year.

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Article Six: Advisor

1. The primary advisor shall be a member of the faculty or staff at George Mason University. The advisor may offer guidance and support for the organization, but may not have a vote.
2. The advisor shall be selected by the founding members and the term of the advisor shall be reviewed annually by the SOC. If the majority of SOC members find the advisor to be ineffective or counterproductive in their duties, a new advisor may be nominated and elected in a process similar to electing student co-chairs.

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Article Seven: Meetings

1. The Cultural Studies SOC shall meet at least twice every semester, but as close to monthly as is possible.
2. The Co-chairs preside over the meetings, but any member may present new business.
3. Discussions may also begin or carry over on the csstudents list.
4. There is no attendance policy, but if a vote is taken at a meeting and a course of action is decided, then that vote must be effectual. That is, in order to exercise student voice and vote, one must make every effort to attend meetings.
5. Votes shall be made effectual by a simple majority.
6. Special meetings can be called by either co-chair at the request of any student member.
7. Typically, we make our own rules of order.

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Article Eight: Finance

1. There will be no dues required for membership
2. If money is acquired for an event, there shall be a student committee elected to oversee that event at a special meeting; one of the officers elected to this committee shall be a treasurer who shall oversee the budgeting of the event.

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Article Nine: Amendments

1. Amendments to the constitution, as they are needed, can be suggested in the same fashion that nominees are. Once the suggestion is seconded, there should be a vigorous discussion over the csstudents listserve and if students show an interest or agree with the need for the amendment, the process should be officialized by a vote at the next regular meeting.
2. Once made official, a committee of at least two students should be placed in charge of drafting the amendment.
3. Once prepared, the amendment draft should then be posted to the SOC website and comments should be made by the rest of the SOC members. If the amendment proves especially contentious and the discussions cannot be resolved, a special meeting should be held to discuss the draft.
4. When the draft becomes agreeable to the greater part of the SOC members, it should be put to a vote at a special meeting. If 3/4 of the members voting at that meeting or through absentee ballots are to vote in support of that measure, the constitution will be amended.
5. The office of Student Activities must review all amendments in the same manner as a completely new constitution.

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Article Ten: Ratification

1. The draft of the constitution shall be drafted, discussed and voted upon in the same manner as amendments above.
2. This constitution shall become effective upon approval by a 3/4 vote of the voting members, the Assistant Director of Student Governance.

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Article Eleven: Subcommittees

1. Since the main function of the SOC is to oversee student concerns in the Cultural Studies program, it may at times be necessary to empower subcommittees committed to certain areas. The mandate for these committees shall be decided upon in a case by case basis but they should generally correspond to the most pressing need areas and their powers should be limited to informing the larger Student Operations Committee of/on pressing concerns that demand our attention and monitoring the progress of program issues.