

Cherry Hill Seminary

Faculty Handbook

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Prepared by Wendy Griffin, PhD
wgriffin@cherryhillseminary.org
Academic Dean

Table of Contents

General Information

Our History	1
Our Students	1
Faculty Governance	2
Standing Committees	2
Organizational Chart	2

Faculty Personnel Policies

Faculty Application Procedure	3
Faculty Performance Evaluation	4
Faculty Salaries	4
Grievance Procedure	4
Dismissal of Faculty	5

Faculty Assignments and Responsibilities

Academic Freedom	5
Scheduling of Work Assignments	5
Outside Employment	6

Teaching: Administrative Procedures

Curriculum Development	6
The Syllabus	6
Grading Policies	7
Your Semester Outline	9

Teaching: Classroom Issues

Prohibited Discrimination	9
Classroom Meetings and Attendance.....	10

Classroom Environment	10
Online Etiquette	10
Cheating and Plagiarism	10
Student Rights	11
Students with Disabilities	11
Problems with Students	11

Resources

CHS Handbook on Teaching	11
Moodle Tutorial	11
CHS Catalog	12
Fee Waivers	12

CHERRY HILL SEMINARY FACULTY HANDBOOK

January 1, 2014

General Information

This faculty handbook has been designed with you in mind. It was created in the belief that faculty, both experienced teachers and those who are fairly new to the profession, would appreciate a resource that would help them better navigate their way through an innovative, online institution of higher learning. Like our honored guardian ancestor Hypatia of Alexandria, you are teaching a challenging subject in challenging times. What we are doing together with our students in this joint venture is developing new voices and practices to enter the public arena. This is an exciting time for all of us.

Our History

Cherry Hill Seminary (CHS) evolved from the desire by members of Vermont's Church of the Sacred Earth to train Pagan clergy. From that initial impetus, Kirk White developed the plans for a program of distance training by mail called Cherry Hill Seminary in the early 1990s, with the assistance of Cat Chapin-Bishop and Laura Wildman-Hanlon. By 2000, classes had moved online and, on November 17, 2000, White submitted Articles of Incorporation to the Vermont Secretary of State. The seminary was granted 501(c)3 tax-exempt status by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service on March 15, 2007. White recruited nonprofit consultant and CHS student Holli Emore to serve as the chair of the first working board of directors, which began meeting in January 2008. The first directors were Gail Schiesser, Debbie Fields-Berry, Sue Curewitz Arthen, Todd Berntson, Cindy Carter, Kirk White, and Holli Emore.

In January 2008, the board asked Emore to become the seminary's first executive director, a part-time position in which she continues to serve. With the move of its business office, Cherry Hill Seminary became incorporated in the State of South Carolina. In December 2008, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education granted CHS a letter of exemption from state oversight, enabling the seminary to move forward with plans for master's degrees. The current master's program was announced in July 2009. In fall of 2010, **38** students were matriculated into either a master's or a certificate program, and many more take courses out of interest and for personal enrichment.

Our Students

The Students at Cherry Hill Seminary are a wonderfully mixed group. Some are professionals seeking to learn to serve the Pagan community through counseling, chaplaincy and ministry, others look to enhance skills they have previously developed, and still others come to enrich their own personal spiritual journeys. What they all have in common is a hunger for knowledge, training and the dynamics of the classroom educational experience. Depending on the particular class you are teaching, you may find all these students in your classroom.

We offer several ways to pursue learning through Cherry Hill. Our Master's degree classes are graduate-level study, demanding intellectual rigor and commitment on the part of the student. Applications to a master's degree program are competitive, requiring transcripts from a baccalaureate or the equivalent, and a rigorous admissions process. Pursuit of a certificate is less strenuous for the student in terms of credits required, although they take many of the same classes as the Master's students. Many of these students also have a bachelor's or graduate degree, and are working or have worked in the helping professions. Our Insights courses are open to all, including the general public. For more information on the requirements our students must meet for admission, please see the **CHS 2011 Catalog** on our website under *Students*.

Faculty Governance

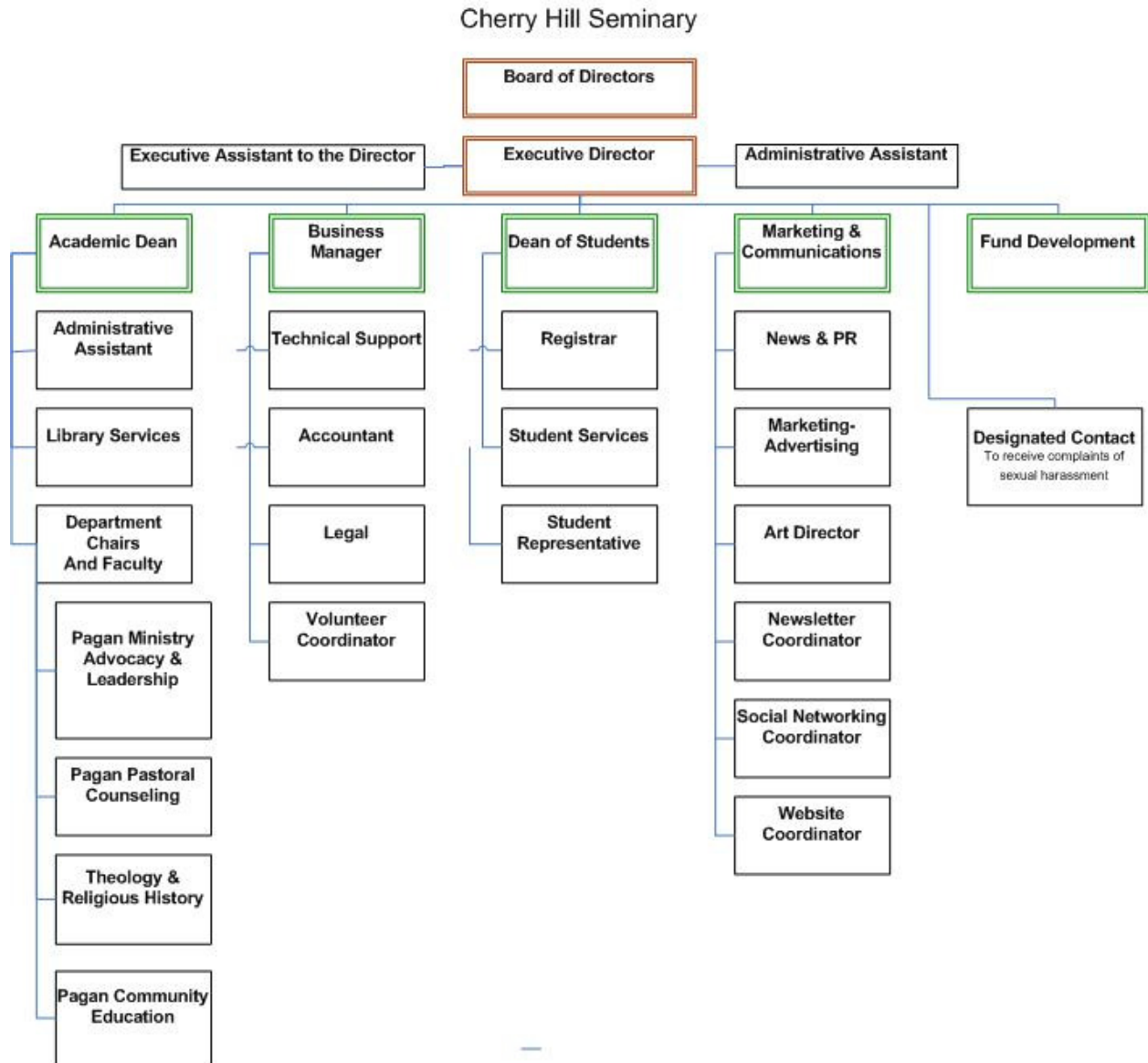
Community was an integral part of the way Cherry Hill Seminary developed. Community continues to play an important role in the form of faculty governance. Faculty members are part of the consultative process for many kinds of decision-making. Collegial governance allows the academic community (students, staff, administrators, and faculty) to work together to find the best answers to the issues we face.

Standing Committees

Individual membership in standing committees often depends on who is available when the work needs to be done. Unfortunately, when faculty only teach on average one or two classes a year, their time commitments and availability are often limited. However, the following standing committees should always include faculty: Accreditation, Admissions, Grade Appeals, Grievances, Hiring.

Organizational Chart

Like any other educational institution, Cherry Hill Seminary is structured to permit its various aspects to function optimally. Although hierarchies are not integral to all Pagan traditions, they can be used to facilitate communication and refine and delineate areas of responsibility. Cherry Hill's structure is hierarchical. In practice, few important decisions are made by one individual without wider consultation.



Several of these positions are filled by volunteers. Vacant positions can be discerned on the CHS website on the *Faculty and Staff* page. If you are interested in volunteering for one of these positions, please contact the individual who has responsibility for the vacant position that interests you.

Faculty Personnel Policies

Faculty Application Procedure

All persons seeking to teach at Cherry Hill Seminary must complete the online application, which can be found on the *Faculty* page of the CHS website. The completed application will be reviewed by the Academic Dean and passed on to the appropriate Department Chair, who will then call and chair a Hiring Committee. Each member of the committee will review the candidate's submitted material. If the committee's response to the materials is positive, the Chair will contact the candidate, conduct an interview and report back to the

committee with a recommendation regarding hiring. Members of the committee will then vote on the recommendation and forward the result to the Academic Dean, who will then make the final recommendation regarding the candidate.

Faculty Performance Evaluation

Students do an anonymous evaluation of the course in which they are enrolled at the end of the semester. These are summarized and go to the Academic Dean, the appropriate Department Chair, and back to the individual instructor. Copies are placed in the faculty member's permanent file. In addition, the Department Chair and the Deans may sit in on a class at any time. In some cases, a written assessment of the class visitation will be provided to the instructor and placed in the permanent file. When done, these assessments are intended to be an aid to the faculty, pointing out what was done well and providing teaching tips if appropriate.

In addition, faculty are required to do a self-evaluation for each class taught at the end of the semester. These evaluations are used to strengthen our course offerings and the flow of communication between faculty and staff at CHS. The evaluations must be received before a check for the semester's teaching can be sent.

Faculty Salaries

Faculty members are paid a lump sum after grades have been turned in for the semester. The amount depends upon the number of paid students who were enrolled in the class. Currently, Cherry Hill Seminary pays the following:

Insights courses: \$35.00 per enrolled, paid student

Master's degree courses - \$50.00 per unit hour, per enrolled, paid student.

Note: Most Master's classes are 3 units.

Pagan Community Education for Life-long Learning courses - \$32.50 per unit hour, per enrolled, paid student

When a faculty member serves as the Chair of a Junior (1 credit) or Master's (3 credits) Project, he or she will receive the equivalent salary for one student. Other faculty committee members, who do significantly less work, are deeply appreciated but not financially compensated at this time.

Grievance Procedure

Cherry Hill Seminary recognizes that from time to time conflicts arise in any organization. People sometimes find it becomes necessary to clear up miscommunication, to speak truth to power, to recognize injustice and seek redress, to negotiate boundaries and settle disputes. As a matter of policy, the members of the Cherry Hill Seminary community, whether students, faculty, staff, administrators or governors, are encouraged to begin by speaking directly to the person involved. The conversation is best begun in an informal way, naming what is true for the complainant without labeling or judging the other person. Preferably, this will be done by face-to-face or voice-to-voice communication, or perhaps by email, but it should begin with a conversation limited to those directly involved.

If this first step of speaking directly is not successful in reaching resolution, or if the situation requires third-party intervention, the second step is to speak to the next person

up on the organizational ladder. For example, if a faculty member and a student have a problem that cannot be resolved, the next step would be to speak with the Department Chair. If a third step is needed, the appropriate Dean should be contacted.

A resolution to a grievance must be initiated during the semester in which it occurs. Those individuals involved are expected to keep accurate and timely notes of all relevant conversations. These notes are to be shared with CHS Senior Administrators and/or staff as appropriate if resolution is not achieved at the first step. Advocates can be appointed to assist and represent the parties to a dispute if needed. The Deans and Executive Director will act in concert and may impose a settlement if resolution cannot be worked out among the parties most immediately involved. Any appeal of such an administrative decision will require a review by a committee composed of faculty and board members as appropriate.

Dismissal of Faculty

Cherry Hill Seminary acknowledges that there may be rare circumstances under which a faculty member is dismissed. These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. use of personal information obtained during tenure at CHS for solicitations, fund-raising, advertising, promotion, or any type of commercial activity without written permission from the Seminary.
2. misrepresenting oneself, one's education, one's experience, or one's connection with Cherry Hill Seminary
3. misrepresenting the quality or quantity of one's studies
4. plagiarism or academic dishonesty
5. conviction of illegal activity that is contrary to the mission of Cherry Hill Seminary

Faculty Assignments and Responsibilities

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is central to the heart of any institution of higher learning. The community of faculty, students, administrator, staff and board members at Cherry Hill Seminary are expected to be committed to and supported in the pursuit of knowledge and the expression of ideas. This includes the freedom to examine all pertinent data, to question assumptions, to be guided by the evidence of scholarly research and to teach and study the substance of a given field as crucial to the integrity of an educational institution.

Academic freedom does not mean that faculty have the right to teach a class that does not meet the catalog description or the department's objectives for the class, to insist that students agree with all the faculty member's ideas, or to require assignments that put students into danger or that cannot be completed by disabled students.

Scheduling of Work Assignments

The instructional assignments of individual faculty members will be decided by the appropriate administrator after consultation with the Department Chair and will be consistent with Department and student needs. Departments vary in the way in which they build schedules and determine individual teaching assignments, but all give faculty

members some opportunity to express a preference for particular courses or times, although these preferences cannot always be accommodated.

Outside Employment

At this point in our history, CHS is unable to provide faculty with full time work. We are very aware that means that most of our faculty will need to have employment outside of CHS. Faculty are encouraged to develop strong time management skills in order to handle dual employment and responsibilities. See the **CHS Teaching Manual** for hints on time management. Employment outside of CHS should not conflict with satisfactory and timely performance of all duties on the part of Seminary faculty.

Teaching: Administrative Procedures

Curriculum Development

At CHS, we rely on our faculty to create exciting and valuable courses. Although administrators may identify areas where we need new offerings, our faculty members are at the heart of curriculum development. If there is a topic you would like to teach, check first with the Chair of your Department to see if it is currently being covered or how it might fit in with our existing programs. With her or his agreement, fill out the proposal form linked to the *Faculty* page of the CHS website. The date these proposals are due can be found on the CHS calendar, also linked to the *Faculty* page.

When proposing a new course or requesting to teach one currently in our catalog, CHS gives you the authority to decide both the minimum number of paying students and the maximum number of students (including audits and non-paying) you are willing to work with in the class. We permit occasional audits, however it is your decision as to whether or not to accept them in your class. Students who are auditing pay regular fees. As explained at the end of this document, CHS faculty and staff may take classes for free. You may limit how many of these non-paying students are in your class, but not exclude them entirely.

Cancelling a Class

Sometimes the enrollment in a class is so low that it is doubtful that the class will be able to pay for itself. In this case, the Executive Director of the Seminary will make a decision regarding whether or not to cancel the class. The Executive Director is the only individual with authority to cancel a class.

The Syllabus

The best way to communicate your expectations to students is through the course syllabus. It provides them with essential information, explains the types of assignments and the basis for evaluating student performance, and gives other relevant information. This is critical with CHS students. As adults, they tend to have full lives and multiple responsibilities outside of the seminary. They need to know in advance what kind of commitment they are making when they enroll in a class and exactly what will be expected of them. Think of the syllabus as a contract between you and the students authorized by the educational institution, and only make very minor and necessary changes during the semester.

All syllabi for Masters and Certificate classes are expected to include the following elements in the following order:

- 1) Description of the class
- 2) Purpose or goal of the class
(the specific point in taking this class rather than another)
- 3) Learning objectives for the class
- 4) Class expectations
 - Reading –between 40-60 pages a week.
 - Work load – between 8-12 hours a week per class
 - Writing – approximately 6000-9000 words. This may be accomplished with a term paper, two shorter papers, journaling, reports, etc. or any combination of these. There must be a substantial writing component
 - Class Behavior – online guidelines, discussions, Moodle check-ins and number of postings, etc.
- 5) Grading and Assignments
 - There must be a minimum of 4 assessments of student performance, which may include papers, discussions, exams, oral presentations, fieldwork, etc.
 - The percentage of the final grade must be indicated for each assessment. The final exam, project or other form of assessment must not be worth more than 1/3 of the semester's grade.
- 6) Required Readings
- 7) Suggested optional readings (if any)
 - These could be placed in weekly topics instead
- 8) Week by week topics and assignments

In addition, there must be a statement referring the student to the catalogue or CHS web for issues of policy, such as plagiarism, make-ups, etc.

All syllabi, including those for Insights classes, need to be written for a pan-Pagan student body and avoid making assumptions about the practices or beliefs of individual students' traditions when framing assignments.

Instructors will submit their syllabi to the Department Chair for feedback on the first of the month before the month when the class begins (for example, if the class begins September 6th, the syllabus is due August 1st.) Check the CHS calendar on the website for the relevant dates.

Grading Policies

It is important that students have an ongoing understanding of their performance in class. Therefore, by the time approximately 1/3 of the course has been completed, students should have performed a minimum of one demonstration of competence and have had that graded and returned to them. This may be an examination, a paper, a report, or any other assigned activity that is evaluated.

Instructors are expected to keep a record of students' scores on each of the demonstrations of competence on which the final grade is based. Students have a right to be informed

promptly of their scores and to review each of their demonstrations of competence with their instructors. This means assignments must be returned in a timely manner, at least within 2 weeks of being submitted.

Grades at Cherry Hill Seminary are standardized letter grades. For detailed information on this, please look under **Grading and Evaluation** in the **2011 Cherry Hill Seminary Catalog**.

Grades for individual demonstrations of competence are posted on Moodle. If necessary, instructors may send out these individual grades, *however – in no case may a grade be posted or sent so that anyone but the individual student who earned the grade may see it*. The only exception to this rule would be for Senior Administrators, as appropriate.

Final grades must be based on a minimum of four demonstrations of competence by the student. In no case shall the grade on the final examination of competence (exam, paper, project, etc.) count for more than one-third of the course grade.

In some unusual cases, a student may request an “Incomplete” instead of a grade, because the intention is to finish the work left undone. The decision to grant the request is up to the individual instructor. However, this should not be considered unless the student has completed at least 60% of the course successfully. In this case, the instructor must fill out an Incomplete form that can be found on the Cherry Hill Seminary website under *Faculty*. This form must be submitted at the same time as the final grades. There is a place on the form to write the grade the student will receive if the incomplete is not made up. The final grade in such cases is up to the instructor.

For Example: If a student has completed 60% of the semester’s coursework and received a combination of A and A- on everything done, that would still be 60% of the final grade (the equivalent of a Not Acceptable). However, if the student has done 90% of the semester’s work and received a combination of A and A- on everything, the final grade based on work completed would probably be in the B range, although the instructor might consider an A-. For questions regarding the value of specific grades, please refer to the **2011 Cherry Hill Seminary Catalog** under grading.

An Incomplete must be made up with one semester of being granted. In an extraordinary case, such as military transfer to a war zone or death of a spouse or child, the instructor may grant an extension of one additional semester. If an Incomplete is not made-up within the time allotted, the grade will automatically become the grade listed on the incomplete form by the instructor.

Final grades are not posted on Moodle but on ThinkWave within two weeks of the close of the semester. Each faculty member is given a ThinkWave id upon hiring. Students may access ThinkWave, but are only given access to their own grades.

Grades posted on ThinkWave are considered to be official and final grades. If the faculty member has made a mistake in calculating or recording the student’s grade before posting it, resulting in an incorrect grade on Think Wave, this may be corrected. In this case, the instructor must send an email to the Executive Director explaining the error and fill out an

official Change of Grade form providing the correct grade for the student. This form can be located under Faculty Materials. Both the form and the email to the Executive Director must be completed before the grade is officially changed. Any correction must be made within one semester of the original filing.

Grade changes may not be based on additional work completed after the original grade was filed except when the original grade was "Incomplete."

Your Semester Outline

Assuming your course proposal has been accepted, you have been hired to teach at CHS, and you have your email address and Moodle access, here are the things you will need to do:

- 1) Make sure your course has an interesting (exciting) title and description for the CHS website and newsletter. It is best if this were done when you submitted the proposal, but check with your Chair about this as soon as the course is accepted.
- 2) Submit a draft syllabus of your class to your Chair on the first of the month in which the semester begins. Check the *Calendar* for dates.
- 3) Begin to set up your Moodle classroom 1 month **before** the semester begins. Consider setting up just the first 3 weeks until you see that the class has enough students to run.
- 4) Teach your class
- 5) Send in your grades and any incomplete forms by email to the Executive Director **within two weeks** of the end of the semester
- 6) Complete your self-evaluation and send it to the Executive Director as soon as you send your grades.

Seems simple, doesn't it?

Teaching: Classroom Issues

Prohibited Discrimination

Cherry Hill Seminary prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, age, marital status, national origin, mental or physical disability, political belief or affiliation, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or any other class of individuals protected from discrimination under state or federal law in any aspect of the access to, admission to, or treatment of students in its programs and activities, or in employment and application for employment. Furthermore, Seminary policy includes prohibitions of harassment of students and employees, i.e., racial harassment, sexual harassment, and retaliation for filing complaints of discrimination. As faculty, you have an ethical and legal responsibility to interact with students in a manner free from all forms of unlawful discrimination.

If you have concerns or issues involving sexual harassment, contact Dr. Valerie Cole. For any other form of discrimination, contact the Dean of Students.

Classroom Meetings and Attendance

All classes must be held during the time listed in the Schedule of Classes, on Moodle and on

the course syllabus. If you need to cancel a class meeting, obtain prior authorization from your Department Chair, if at all possible. Plan an alternate activity for your students so they do not lose out on valuable class time.

Students are expected to attend class regularly, and only miss for valid reasons, such as illness, accident, etc. CHS does not require you to keep records of class attendance. However, if your syllabus says any portion of the course grade will be based on attendance, you must keep written records to use as a basis of the grade assigned.

As we become more international in scope, some of our classes do not have regularly scheduled meeting times. This is almost always because the time differences are too great or the internet connection not completely reliable for the instructor. In this case, it is absolutely imperative that students receive lectures, assignment feedback, and other information on a regular and timely basis by email or within Moodle to accommodate the requirement of hours per class. The Department Chair must be consulted before a class is assigned no live meeting times.

Classroom Environment

Our students bring to their education widely differing backgrounds, skills, and learning styles. It is advantageous to try a variety of teaching strategies that will give you the best chance to reach every student in your class. See the **CHS Teaching Manual** for suggestions.

We recognize and respect that students and faculty sometimes use magickal names or nicknames. We ask that in classrooms and in correspondence with faculty and administration, all participants identify themselves by their given names, with any nicknames or magickal names appended with a hyphen or in parentheses. Some students may see Moodle as a way to construct a social community or a surrogate magickal family. Usually a gentle reminder that CHS is a formal institution of higher learning and that, while classmates will certainly get to know things about each other, personal email is better than Moodle for sustained personal comments.

Online Etiquette

Electronic communication has both advantages and drawbacks. One advantage of email and the Moodle classroom is that everything is written down and can be saved forever. One disadvantage is that everything is written down and can be saved forever. Written text can easily be misunderstood when there are no subtle facial expressions, voice tone or any kind of immediate visual feedback. Humor and sarcasm is frequently misinterpreted. The use of emoticons may help avoid these misunderstandings. Although new ones appear almost every day, a fairly comprehensive list may be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emoticons. Consider sharing this with your students. In addition, avoid using all capitals. That is considered shouting.

Cheating and Plagiarism

As with faculty, plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in students. Cherry Hill Seminary's zero-tolerance policy in this regards includes sanctions for violation of the policy that include a rehabilitative, reparative and punitive aspect depending on the nature and severity of the violation, the nature and severity of the harm caused, and the

interest in encouraging and promoting quality and reliable scholarship. Specific sanctions may include expulsion from Cherry Hill Seminary, probationary regulation of conditionally continued enrollment and/or reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Student Rights

Academic freedom gives students rights as well as faculty. Students, particularly in the United States, tend to be very familiar with and assertive about these rights. It is important to follow the guidelines for assignments and grading in order to avoid problems in this regard. In general, it is helpful to remember that students have the right to examine all sides of an issue, to question assumptions, and to come to conclusions based on the evidence, *even if those conclusions are different from the faculty member's*.

Students with Disabilities

Occasionally there are students who request a modification of class rules or procedures because of individual circumstances. Federal Law and CHS commitment to accessibility require reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to inform you of this need as soon as possible. It is useful to remind students of this responsibility in your syllabus or your opening discussion with the class.

Students with disabilities have the right to such accommodations as are necessary for them to receive benefit from the course equal to that for students who are not disabled.

Modifications must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Modifications that substantially alter the *essential nature* of class are not required. There are some, *but very few*, situations where no reasonable accommodation is possible. Where there is a question, the faculty member must consult with the Dean of Students.

Problems with Students

Hopefully, you will not have problems with students that cannot be resolved quickly, easily and in a manner in which all parties feel respected and heard. Occasionally, however, this is not the case. Should that occur, contact the Chair of your Department immediately. Not only can a third, uninvolved party often suggest something helpful, but your Chair is probably more familiar with CHS policy and history that might apply.

Resources

Handbook on Teaching

We have just completed an excellent **Teaching Manual** for CHS faculty, thanks to Dr. Christine Hoff Kraemer. It not only provides considerable insight into online education and clever ways to enhance the Moodle experience, it also presents both guidelines and requirements for teaching at CHS. As members of our faculty, you are responsible for being familiar and comfortable with this document. It can be found under *Faculty* on the CHS website.

Moodle Tutorial

There is a practice Moodle tutorial linked to the *Faculty* page on the CHS website. When you have been assigned to teach a class, a Moodle classroom will be set up for you. Use the **Teaching Manual** to augment what you've learned in the tutorial. Once your class is set up, it will be available to you for any editing next time you teach the class for us.

CHS Catalog

The Catalog is also on line, linked to the *Student* page. You need to be familiar with this document. You can also see all the classes, and where yours fits in, what student expectations are, and other very useful information that you won't find elsewhere .

Fee Waivers

Intrigued about the connection between physics and magick? Want to sit in on a fellow scholar's signature class? Or delve into the joys of sacred gardening? Sign up and be a student for a change. One perk of teaching for CHS is that you may take one class per semester at no charge if you have proposed a course that was offered in the previous three years (or at the discretion of the director). Questions or to register for a free course, email the office at CHS@cherryhillseminary.org.