

# Stony Brook

## MEMORANDUM

To Burt Bradley, Paulette Chase, Joni Grieff, Marvin Levine,  
Janice McLane  
From Patrick J. Hill, Chairman, FLC  
Subject Various and Sundry  
Date March 8, 1982

You can see from the attached memorandum - particularly Item No. 7 - that I remain concerned about the intellectual/pedagogical coherence of the NTR program. I have to make several decisions this week about a repeat version of the "Human Nature" program - whether there will be one and how to replace the unavailable BIO 102 and EGL 374 - and will likely be acting on the basis of the intuitions expressed in the memo. Since you are all so much closer to the NTR program than I am, I would appreciate your advice. Might I request that we meet this week at the normal time of the Faculty Seminar.

A conversation I had last week with Marvin Levine and with several students suggested that it might be useful for us to meet anyway, just to provide an opportunity for joint reflection on how things are going. Marvin seems a bit more patient than I, but it might be helpful anyway for us to assess where we stand. My principal concerns are the following:

1. As expressed in the memo, a feeling that students are using the vagueness of the "Human Nature" theme to do whatever they wish. I have heard several of them (in my Alternative Higher Education Seminar) say just that to other students. A creative and integrative mind, to be sure, could relate anything to human nature. Am I missing something to suppose that it is not regularly happening?
2. The relationship of the Program Seminars to the material of the federated courses. As in the Core Course, we should be directing the students attention again and again back to the federated courses and to their central perspectives/questions. If we or they cannot relate a proposed theme to the material/perspective of the federated courses, that then is an inappropriate theme for the program seminar. The themes chosen should be such as to generate discussions in which students are drawing upon the expertise gained in the federated courses and in their majors.

Yes, we do want to allow the students to develop their own interests. But we should do everything possible to relate those interests to the material of the federated courses. Otherwise, we are turning the Program Seminar into just another lecture course.

3. Relatedly, the amount of time left for discussion in the Program Seminars concerns me. Are the students being told to confine presentations to (say) one hour?

4. In the recently completed "Hunger, Health and Poverty" program I became concerned that the Program Seminar was functioning as an entity unto itself rather than as a means of making the students more and more comfortable with the intellectual and personal resources represented by the federated faculty. That happened in HHP because it was a "low budget FLC program" in which we had no claims to the time of the faculty. I fear - I hope incorrectly - that it is happening again in NTR. And I am supposing that it is happening because of the human nature theme is too vague and/or the federated courses too inappropriate to generate the kind of interaction between students and federated faculty at which we are aiming. Other factors more in our control may be operative as well.

One previous FLC program, namely, "Cities, Utopias and Environments" suffered from too vague or undefined a problematic. The interaction in that program between students and federated faculty tended to be infrequent and often unsupportive. If my analysis is correct, we need to marshal our resources and reshape the NTR program so that students will have a clearer sense of what it is we are addressing.

5. Just today I submitted to the Curriculum Committee new course proposals for the Program Seminars of our upcoming programs on "Environmental Studies". I am beginning to wonder about the accuracy of my descriptions as to Program Seminar activity. I am enclosing here a copy of the soon-to-be-published description of Program Seminar functions and of ML/MF roles. If you have time, please review this in the near future along with Susan Bordo's "Four Ways to Run a Program Seminar" and let us use this means to assess how we are doing.

Please make every effort to attend the meeting on Wednesday. If you are unable to do so, I would appreciate your feedback on this memo as soon as possible.

PJH:ee