

Stony Brook

MEMORANDUM

To NTR Faculty
From Patrick J. Hill, Chairman
Subject NTR Core Course
Date December 9, 1981

1st Feb 24 EC b'day Scopes
2 Mar 10 Work
3 24 Ethnicity &
4 Apr 21 law
5 May 5 Madness
Changing
Human Identit

Following last week's meeting, I made the following notes concerning our deliberations on the NTR Core Course.

A. Concerning Content:

(1) Neville proposed that a single theme, namely, human identification, be adapted as an organizing focus for the five meetings of the Spring 1982 Core Course. This sub-theme of the "Human Nature" question, it was proposed, should be explored not primarily by means of material from federated courses, but rather through five topics chosen for their importance and illustrative character. The theme of human identification is to be understood less in terms of self-reflexive consciousness than in terms of how each person comes to define his/her own human identity. The Core Course will presumably be "Opening Avenues" or highlighting dimensions in terms of which our human identity might be defined. (Yes, more clarity is needed to explain this theme to the students).

(2) In terms of the topics to be explored in the Core Course. While no votes were taken or final decisions made, the following topics seemed to be acceptable and interesting:

- (a) The Scopes II Trial (which opened yesterday).
- (b) Alienation.
- (c) Madness
- (d) Time
- (e) Sexuality
- (f) Law and Ethnicity (by means of the video tape on the Nazi march in Illinois.
- (g) Gender.

individual/community

B. Style

(1) There seemed to be general agreement that the "Kitchen of the INtellect" would be best modeled if we cultivate a somewhat spontaneous and loosely structured style. There seems no necessity for every faculty member to be involved in the presentation at each Core Course meeting. What we need to do is to identify three or four people who will be enthusiastic about working on roughly three of the five selected topics. (In some cases, as in the proposed "Scopes II Trial" - directed by Cecil deCarlson - we will need full participation.)

For each session, one person should be in charge of the presentation, organize whatever preparation of the presenters is required, and in consultation with the larger group, select the appropriate reading material and assignment for the meeting.

(2) Not discussed at great length, but seemingly acceptable as a general format is the following:

Opening panel or presentation of roughly one hour's length, followed by discussion groups led by two members of the federated faculty, followed by a plenary session, which should include an attempt to clarify issues and the relation of the evening's deliberations to the theme of human nature.

C. Student Assignments

(1) There seemed to be total agreement that the students should prepare something before each meeting. What they will be asked to prepare will vary with each meeting, but the sense of our deliberations seemed to be that the preparation was not a paper, but rather something short which would focus the student's thinking on the issues to be confronted for a particular session. Previous experience with Core Courses in other FLC programs, suggests that these preparatory assignments should be discussed by all the faculty before they are offered to the students - there is a real tendency to ask overly structured disciplinary questions which confine the student's thinking.

(2) We had the least agreement, I believe, on the question of the follow-up which would be required of the students. Some persons, I believe, thought that intelligent participation in the discussions was itself follow-up enough. Rose Zimbardo is opposed to requiring anything that looks or smells like a traditional classroom paper. We will have to talk about this more.

D. The major issues about the Core Course requiring further discussion are:

- (1) Final selection of topics and personnel for each topic.
- (2) Manner of feedback to students.
- (3) Criteria for grading.
- (4) Responsibility for the actual assignment of grades.
- (5) Rehearsals or no rehearsals ?
- (6) Further clarification of the role modeling to which we should aspire.