

2-22-1988

Revised Contemporary Issues Component Policies and Guidelines

The College at Brockport, College Senate

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TO: President John E. Van de Wetering
 FROM: The Faculty Senate Meeting on 2/22/88 (Date)
 RE: X I. Formal Resolution (Act of Determination)
 _____ II. Recommendation (Urging the fitness of)
 _____ III. Other (Notice, Request, Report, etc.)
 SUBJECT: Revised Contemporary Issues Component Policies and Guidelines

Signed Richard G. Hey Date Sent 2/24/88
 (For the Senate)

TO: The Faculty Senate
 FROM: President John E. Van de Wetering
 RE: I. Decision and Action Taken on Formal Resolution
 a. Accepted. Effective Date April 88
 b. Deferred for discussion with the Faculty Senate on _____
 c. Unacceptable for the reasons contained in the attached explanation
 II., III. a. Received and acknowledged
 b. Comment:

DISTRIBUTION: Vice Presidents: (see attached list)
 Others: _____
 Distribution Date: 2/29/88 Signed: [Signature]
 (President of the College)
 Date Received by the Senate: _____

REVISED

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES COMPONENT

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

I. Faculty Senate Mandate (Resolution #20, April 9, 1979, with amendment to item #3).

Contemporary Issues Component (3 credits)

1. Courses in this component shall focus explicitly on the major issues or problems of contemporary significance. Such courses shall provide the historical and theoretical background necessary for informed judgments. They shall work toward enhancing students' abilities to identify relevant elements of enduring human significance, to understand various and perhaps conflicting views on the subject and their different value premisses, and to formulate and articulate in a rational manner their own positions on controversial matters.
2. Courses in this component shall normally be taken in the Junior or Senior year and bear upper level credit. This will serve to extend the general education function into the final two years of the undergraduate experience.
3. Each course in this component shall be the final course of the Communications Skills sequence and as such be writing-intensive. Each course shall include essay exams or frequent, short writing exercises, or both, throughout the term to provide the student with ample opportunity to refine writing and critical reasoning skills. In addition each course shall require the student to complete a substantial writing project with the guidance of the course instructor.

II. Relation to the General Education Program

The Contemporary Issues Component is the last course of the Communications Skills sequence and should be the last course in the student's sequence of general education courses. Students enrolling for the contemporary issues course will normally have completed COM 111 and two breadth component courses within each of the following areas: Fine Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The Contemporary Issues Component will draw upon and refine the communications skills developed within COM 102, COM 111 and the courses of the General Education Breadth Component.

III. General Goals of Contemporary Issues Component Courses

A. Breadth

Contemporary Issues courses will provide a mechanism for integrating the perspectives developed during the preceding two years in the Breadth Component courses. These courses should relate, therefore, to the broader concerns of the liberally educated person rather than to the narrower concerns of a specific major or profession.

B. Development and Process

Contemporary Issues courses will stress the development of those intellectual processes and skills necessary to identify, evaluate, and use alternative perspectives on contemporary issues. As writing is an important means of developing and communicating the student's perspective, emphasis will be given to the refinement of the student's writing skills.

C. Transference

The skills and perspectives developed in the Contemporary Issues courses should be transferable to other courses and experiences. They should be transferable laterally in that the student should be able to relate them to other liberal arts courses, major program and life experiences. They should be transferable longitudinally in that the student should be able to apply them as a responsible individual and member of society.

IV. Characteristics of Contemporary Issues Component Courses

A. Contemporary Issues courses focus on major issues or problems that have contemporary and enduring significance.

B. Contemporary Issues are those that have helped to form the world in which we live, that are of concern in the present, and that will continue to be of concern during the foreseeable lifetime of the student.

C. These courses will deal explicitly with the diversity of the values underlying contemporary issues or problems that affect a significant segment of humanity.

D. Topics addressed in these courses should be controversial. Emphasis should be placed on the presentation and analysis of varying interpretations or judgments, on the values underlying them, and on the processes by which differing positions are or may be reached.

E. These courses shall have an integrative focus and work toward enhancing the students' abilities to identify issues of enduring human significance, to understand the various and perhaps conflicting views on the issue, to recognize the

impact of the values that underlie various views, to relate this learning to their own lives, and to transfer it to new situations.

F. Contemporary Issues courses should be issue-oriented rather than discipline-oriented; they should, as needed, provide the historical and theoretical background necessary for the development of informed judgments and choices rather than detailed technical knowledge.

G. Courses in this component shall be taught in such a way as to afford a maximum opportunity for student participation. Contemporary Issues courses will attempt to strengthen the students' abilities to formulate and articulate in a rational manner their own positions on controversial matters.

H. Each course in this component shall include essay exams or frequent, short writing exercises, or both, throughout the term to provide the student with ample opportunity to refine writing skills. The writing exercises selected for a particular course should be designed both to examine the student's comprehension of the course's content and to sample the ability of the student to formulate informed opinions on contemporary issues.

I. Each Contemporary Issues course shall require the student to complete an extensive writing project. The writing project may assume a variety of forms (e.g., a formal term paper, a coherent series of essays or critical reviews, a journal, a play, a scripted performance) provided that the project features instructor review of the writing process, revision of a draft by the student, and editing of a final draft by the student.

J. Courses in this component shall carry upper-level credit and should be taken in the junior or senior year after the student has completed other elements of the General Education Program. As the final course in the Communications Skills sequence, each course must have COM 111, or its equivalent, as a prerequisite. The course shall have no other prerequisite. In recognition of the need for interaction between student and instructor, these courses shall enroll a maximum of 25 students per section.

V. Procedures for Contemporary Issues Course Review

A. Form of the Course Proposal

The Committee does not seek elaborate or involved course proposals. The following proposal format could easily be limited to two pages:

1. A "Course Registration Form."
2. A brief course description indicating the subject matter involved and the specific objectives of the course.
3. An outline of course content.
4. An indication of the ways in which the course addresses the guidelines of this document.
 - a. What are the major and subordinate issues involved in this course?
 - b. What alternative perspectives are discussed?
 - c. How will student participation be encouraged?
 - d. How will the requirement of a substantial writing component be addressed within the course?

B. The General Education Coordinating Committee will review all proposals according to the terms of this document.

C. After a Contemporary Issues course has been approved by the General Education Coordinating Committee, the department offering the course shall review it at regular intervals to ensure that the course continues to comply with the guidelines of this document.

D. The General Education Coordinating Committee will review all Contemporary Issues courses every three years.