

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S.71-88

MEMORANDUM

To..... SENATE

From... R. C. BROWN

ACTING DEAN/GENERAL STUDIES

Subject..... NEW COURSE PROPOSAL - GENERAL
STUDIES 075 - S.71-88

Date... JULY 14, 1971

MOTION:

"That the new course proposal for General
Studies 075-2 as outlined in Paper S.71-88
be approved."

If approved, the following motion will be made:

"That Senate suspend its rules with regard
to the two semester time lag requirement
for the offering of new courses in order
that General Studies 075-2 may be first
offered in the Spring semester, 1972."

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MEMORANDUM

Mr. H. Evans	From R.C. Brown
Secretary of Senate	Acting Dean/General Studies
Subject New Course Proposal General Studies 075	Date July 14, 1971.

The new course proposal SCUS 71-6 was approved by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies and is submitted to Senate for its consideration.

If the course is approved by Senate, I would make the following motion:

"That Senate suspend its rules with regard to the two semester time lag requirement for the offering of new courses in order that G.S. 075-2 may be first offered in Spring Semester, 1972."

RCB/lbs

The primary function of a University is not, as is sometimes implied, the transmission of information from teacher to student. Rather it is, in a sense, to prepare each student to become his own theorist. To make his own judgments, rather than to accept, uncritically, those of others. Thus, while the transmission of information is essential to the purpose of a University, its primary goal is fulfilled only when students take this information, question it, elaborate upon it, reformulate it, reinterpret it, and, ultimately, add to it. Or, in a word, the principle function of a University is to make people think.

Of the greatest importance in this fundamental task of a University is the ability to weigh information objectively. To this end, we offer various courses under various names which deal with methods currently employed for the objective assessment and evaluation of information and data. For example, to name some, we have courses in History, Psychology, Biological Sciences, Physics, BSF, PSA in the application of "the scientific method" to the specific subject matter of these disciplines.

Unfortunately, it is not always seen that these same techniques for protecting ourselves against biased, preconceived and/or emotional conclusions within a specific academic discipline can also be employed to examine the many "facts" and "explanations" we encounter in everyday life. While a student in a particular discipline may see immediately that a certain conclusion is not necessarily valid because of an identifiable uncontrolled factor, the same person oft times accepts uncritically conclusions presented on the mall, in the mail and via the various "news media" despite the fact that, subjected to the same sort of scrutiny, it, too, is not necessarily true.

There are countless examples of actions taken, not only in the university, but throughout the world, which would have been revealed to be unnecessary if someone had taken the time to check the "facts" presented to justify these actions.

For whatever reasons, the evidence seems to be overwhelming that there is little transfer, in terms of application, of the research attitude taught in specific disciplines to problems and positions in everyday life. It is therefore proposed that the University offer a course specifically designed to demonstrate the applicability of these techniques to common everyday problems.

By doing so, several goals may be achieved. First, we would take a giant step toward making it explicit that our purpose is not simply the transmission of information, but is the development of thoughtful educated future citizens.

Secondly, over the course of years, we would produce a population of graduates, the majority of whom would be immune to being stampeded by emotional ill-considered arguments lacking empirical support. A good many of the problems and crises in this world--not to mention the violence--stems from the acceptance of unexamined slogans, cliches and shibboleths. If just a small percentage of University students can be made to look at all issues critically and thoughtfully, the University would perform a tremendous service to both its students and to future generations. Indeed, if other Universities followed suit, we would eventually virtually eliminate people who righteously respond to propaganda, rumors and misinformation.

Although there are, at present, no courses required of all students, it is hoped that Senate would consider this course as a requirement for all SFU degrees.

FACULTY OF ARTS

November, 1969

NEW COURSE PROPOSAL

1. CALENDAR INFORMATION

Department: General Studies Course Number: 075 Title: "Issues" and "Answers"

Sub-title or Description: Deals with appropriate methods for the examination of typical "issues," "positions," and "solutions" encountered in nonacademic settings. Surveys methods of examining the validity of such issues, emphasizing the distinction between between emotion and reason and between value judgment and fact.

Credit Hours: 2 Vector Description: 2-0-0

Pre-requisite(s): None

2. ENROLMENT AND SCHEDULING

Estimated Enrolment: 100-200

Semester Offered (e.g. yearly, every Spring; twice yearly, Fall and Spring):

Yearly, or as required.

When will course first be offered?

As soon as possible under Senate regulations.

3. JUSTIFICATION

A. What is the detailed description of the course including differentiation from lower level courses, from similar courses in the same department, and from courses in other departments in the University? This course concentrates on the use of the empirical approach on problems not typically associated with the "scientific method." Thus, there is virtually no overlap between the content of this course and the several courses offered in the University which cover research techniques and philosophy.

B. What is the range of topics that may be dealt with in the course? The range is virtually unlimited, and could be left somewhat open to accommodate student requests to focus upon a particular area or problem. Topics could include the examination of such statements as: "All people affected by a decision should participate in it," "The University is the tool of Capitalism," "Redheads are temperamental," "People who don't look you in the eye are liars," "Political change should originate in the University," "University programs should emphasize social relevance," etc.

- C. How does this course fit the goals of the department?

Not applicable

- D. How does this course affect degree requirements?

It is proposed that the course be acceptable toward all University degrees. While no course is presently required of all students, Senate might wish to consider this possibility for this course.

Otherwise, there is no effect upon degree requirements.

- E. What are the calendar changes necessary to reflect the addition of this course?

Addition of course number and description.

- F. What course, if any, is being dropped from the calendar if this course is approved?

none

- G. What is the nature of student demand for this course?

It is anticipated that student demand will be substantial.

- H. Other reasons for introducing the course.

There would seem to be a tremendous need for a course of this type in that, both in the University and in the community, there is little evidence that this type of guidance is being provided elsewhere. In addition, if it is possible to instill a research attitude in students, this approach would hopefully be transferred to the children of these students when they become parents. Also, some of these students will become teachers and thus have the opportunity of instilling a research approach in tomorrow's citizens via the schools.

4. BUDGETARY AND SPACE FACTORS

- A. Which faculty will be available to teach this course?

Several faculty have expressed willingness to teach such a course if Departmental release is possible.

Burstein

Harper

Reithoff

- B. What are the special space and/or equipment requirements for this course?

None

- C. Any other budgetary implications of mounting this course:

No

It would be possible to have "labs" during which specific problems, selected perhaps by students on an individual basis, were subjected to examination, but there does not seem to be, at the present time, any provision for funding TA's in General Studies.

Approval:

Curriculum Committee:

Dean of Faculty:

Robert C. Brown

Senate: