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Raymond Course Descriptions Spring 1973

Raymond College

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RAYMOND COLLEGE - - EDUCATION FOR CHANGE

I. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Raymond program could be described most simply as follows: To facilitate the student's capacity to respond to change:

To comprehend new ideas with a critical intellect neither enamored of novelty, nor afraid of change; to relate with understanding to cultural and social change during the student's lifetime--a lifetime which in normal circumstances will extend into the second quarter of the twenty-first century; to contribute effectively and positively to change within his or her own sphere of activity; to respond adaptively to changes which may be forced upon him or her by changing economic, social or personal circumstances; to permit changes within himself or herself, including changes in interests, values, or professional goals, and to respond productively to those changes.

The one certainty about each student's life is that it will involve change. What kind of undergraduate program is best suited to prepare our students for the changes they will face--changes of intellectual, personal, social, economic and technological dimensions? Should we emphasize psychology or biology, political science or economics? An understanding of any of these disciplines surely may be helpful. But can we know what form these disciplines will take in twenty-five years, or forty years? Will the distinctions we make today between psychology and biology, or political science and economics be relevant then? Perhaps the language of Information Theory or General Systems Theory will be more pertinent. Most likely, questions we can hardly imagine will be asked from a perspective we can hardly guess.

To educate for change, it is necessary to expose the student to a variety of alternative structures and conceptual frameworks, and above all to develop the skill to move adaptively and creatively from one framework or perspective to another. A fundamental characteristic of the Raymond ethos is the questioning of traditional academic boundaries and the exploration of alternative intellectual frameworks. This ethos finds its most direct expression through the interdisciplinary character of our courses and the interdisciplinary structure of our curriculum.

II. INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

The term "interdisciplinary" refers to courses of the following varieties:

(A) Bi-disciplinary (or multi-disciplinary) courses include material from two or more closely-related disciplines, such as philosophy and psychology, or mathematics and physics, or political science and economics. In such a course, it is possible to focus on any intellectual or practical question to which both disciplines are relevant.

(B) Problem-oriented courses focus directly on practical problems, whose solution requires the concepts and tools of many disciplines. Such courses differ from (A) insofar as the content and objectives of the course are defined by the problem.

(C) Courses may be organized around the emerging "alternative disciplines" such as humanistic psychology, socio-biology, psycho-history, and other similar fields. Such courses are interdisciplinary insofar as they cut across the boundaries of the established and conventional disciplines. One day, some of these alternative disciplines may come to be regarded as disciplines. This emphasizes the fundamental arbitrariness of the distinction between disciplinary and so-called interdisciplinary courses.

(D) Broadly interdisciplinary themes, such as Survival, Modernization, or Community may also serve as the focus for interdisciplinary work. Such courses differ from problem-oriented courses insofar as the theme is not necessarily approached from a pragmatic or problem-solving viewpoint.

(E) Area studies, including Asian Studies or Inter-American studies, constitute a valid species of interdisciplinary work. The American Studies concentration in the Raymond program is another example. More broadly, the whole Raymond program could be characterized as a program in Western Studies, or American-European Studies. In this sense, we are all engaged in area studies, the area being our immediate geographic, social and cultural environment, and its historical roots.

(F) Courses in Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies represent a distinctive type of interdisciplinary work. The courses Images of Women in Fiction, and Images of Jews in Fiction, are examples of Raymond's efforts in this field.

Of course, these categories are not, in any sense, precisely delimited or mutually exclusive. Each category blends into or overlaps with others, to some degree. These six types might usefully be regarded as the defining dimensions or characteristics of interdisciplinary studies at Raymond, as well as a rough system of classification.

Each course has the dual purpose of presenting certain ideas and information, and illustrating the philosophy and methodology of interdisciplinary studies. To achieve the second purpose, it is essential for students to understand the objectives of the course, the type of interdisciplinary study involved, and its relation to other courses and other approaches. Therefore, we have the obligation to be explicit, about these questions, in our course descriptions and in the conduct of the course itself. In particular, each course description should indicate the nature of interdisciplinary work involved according to the categories described above. Of course, a particular course may fall into two or more categories.

Unlike some established disciplines, whose objectives and methodology may be apparent, the purposes or philosophical assumptions behind interdisciplinary studies will ordinarily not be obvious. Consequently, we have a special obligation in an unconventional and innovative program to be clear among ourselves, with our students, and with our colleagues, about what we are trying to do and how we are trying to do it.

Both the natural sciences and the social sciences are concerned with systems (order) and with their processes. These themes will lend coherence to the area Society and Environment. Other examples could be given.

Our experience convinces us that this tripartite division (Humanistic Studies; Society and Environment; Science and Culture) is realistic and viable. This conclusion is based, in part, on the observation that such fundamental issues as order, process or value most often involve the interaction of two areas, such as the humanities and the social sciences, and that the solution of important social problems most often depends on the combined resources of two fields (e.g., the natural sciences and the social sciences).

III. THE CORE

The interdisciplinary approach is reflected by the structure of the curriculum as well as in the content of individual courses. The design of the core implicitly assumes a tripartite division of knowledge into Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities. However, the core of the Raymond program is explicitly organized around the three interfaces defined by these three areas.

Humanistic Studies incorporates the humanities and the social sciences, and their relationships. Society and Environment addresses itself to the natural sciences and the social sciences; and Science and Culture focuses on the natural sciences and the humanities.

Underlying this framework we see a concern with three fundamental issues: Order, Process, and Value. Each area of the core addresses itself to each of these themes, from a different viewpoint.

Science and Culture, for example, will be concerned with process--the creative process in arts and science; with order--the patterns of order reflected by the sciences and the humanities; and with values--for example, the value questions raised by the progress of science and technology.

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IV. ENTRY COURSES

It cannot be expected that high school students will immediately understand the objectives of interdisciplinary studies or the rationale for our program. Entry courses will address themselves to many of these questions, much as this document addresses itself to them, socializing the student to our attitudes and values and laying the foundation for work in the core.

Each Entry Course should address itself to the nature of "disciplines" and the types and purposes of interdisciplinary study.

Each Entry Course is associated with one area of the Core. The course should address itself specifically to the philosophical or methodological problems associated with interdisciplinary study in that area, including the disciplines involved, the nature of their interactions or relationships; the experience of Raymond College or others in working on the interface between these disciplines; the recognized interdisciplinary literature in the particular areas involved; particular learning skills which may be required for study in the area; and an overview of the core courses to be offered in the area.

While the Entry Courses prepare students for study in the Core, the Entry Courses at the same time will help shape the Core and contribute to our understanding of it. Especially in the early years of the program, the experience of faculty in teaching Entry Courses will serve as an opportunity to sharpen our own understanding of the three divisions of the core, the problems or opportunities peculiar to each, and the skills or background we must develop to work effectively in each area. In this sense, the Entry Courses and the Core are mutually complementary.

The six types of interdisciplinary studies described above may be used to classify or describe concentrations as well as courses, in an approximate way. Under Literature, Self and Society, for example, the specialization "The European Experience" is an example of Area Studies (E); the specialization "The Meaning of Modern" could be regarded as a broadly-interdisciplinary theme (D). Under Philosophy, Society and Policy, the specialization "Philosophy and the Social Sciences" is a multi-disciplinary concentration (C); the specialization "Theory, Policy and Action" belongs to the category of Problem-Oriented Studies (B). The concentration History of Ideas blends multi-disciplinary

V. CONCENTRATIONS

Each concentration represents a coherent pattern of courses incorporating the perspectives of several disciplines. The concentrations do not correspond to the three areas of the core, but are seen to rest on the core as a whole.

Each concentration typically includes disciplinary-oriented courses, especially from the College of the Pacific, as well as interdisciplinary courses of several types. Raymond courses designed specifically as core courses will ordinarily have a more sharply defined focus; the objectives of the course are determined by the objectives of the concentration. Raymond Core Courses, or courses from other colleges (including disciplinary courses) are selected for the concentration because they naturally contribute to the objectives laid out for that concentration. Because all courses are specifically designed or selected for the concentration, it is expected there will be a considerable interaction and complementarity between them. The interdisciplinary connections should become explicit and significant, giving the concentration a meaningful coherence of style and purpose.

As with core courses, the concentration has a dual role: To expose the student to a body of information, ideas, skills and perspectives; and to illustrate the philosophy and methodology of interdisciplinary studies, on a broader scale. Here again, we have the obligation to be explicit about the objectives of the concentration, the interdisciplinary quality of the concentration as a whole, and the pedagogical or methodological principles involved. We also should provide mechanisms by which the student can evaluate his or her own understanding of these principles, and by which we can evaluate our own success in presenting them.

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studies (A) with broadly-interdisciplinary themes (D). The Philosophy and Methodology of Science includes strictly discipline-oriented work (e. g. mathematics), multi-disciplinary work (e. g. philosophy of science) and problem-oriented work. American Studies, of course, is an example of Area Studies (E).

There is a strong holistic emphasis in the curriculum at every level. The interdisciplinary quality of core courses is intended to articulate relationships between one field and another, between one course and another. The core is designed to weave these relationships as much as possible into a single body of understanding. Each concentration has an objective and a rationale intended to give that part of the program its own unity within the larger framework.

The Senior Workshop is designed to draw together the work from the concentration as well as the other aspects of each student's program. On this account, we consider the success of the Senior Workshop central to the success of our program. And for the same reason, the Senior Workshop will be crucial in our process of self-evaluation. The quality of work produced in the Senior Workshop will be a good indicator of whether we have achieved our objectives.

The emphasis on coherence or unity in the curriculum is only one facet of a broader concept we call integrative education. On account of the holistic quality of the curriculum, the program could be called intellectually integrative. The program is also intended to achieve a kind of functional integration, which refers to the blending of theory and practice characteristic of many courses, and facilitated by internships, which will be increasingly stressed. Raymond has always placed a great stress on facilitating the growth of the whole person, including the intellectual, affective and other dimensions. On this account, we emphasize the student-advisor relationship. More generally, the small size of the college, the pedagogical styles of the faculty, and other intangible aspects of the Raymond ethos promote openness and growth between all members of the community. In this sense, the program is personally integrative.

The tone of the Raymond program, in its broadest aspects, responds to recognized developments in society and culture. In art, in literature, in the sciences, in almost every facet of society, the past decade is characterized by a softening of once-rigid boundaries, and exploration of new structures and new frameworks, an increasing emphasis on dynamic, holistic approaches or attitudes. In the design of the curriculum and the selection of courses, we are attempting to relate responsibly to those specific developments which we regard as valid and potentially significant.

VI. INTEGRATIVE EDUCATION

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VII. RATIONALE, IMPLICATIONS

Needless to say, our objectives as well as our particular methods involve some risks. There is the risk of over-reacting to purely faddish trends. There is the risk as well as the challenge of working with materials for which there is no established literature, or with literature that has not been tested as a basis for undergraduate work. There is the risk to each faculty member of being drawn too far from his or her field of expertise--too far for his or her effectiveness as a teacher, or growth as a scholar. Very simply, we believe these risks are worth taking. Every challenge entails a risk; every cost promises a benefit. Working in a fluid, experimental way with new literature lends intellectual excitement to the process of teaching and learning. When successful, we are in a position to make a special contribution to the University by addressing ourselves to issues which may be overlooked elsewhere because they don't correspond directly to established institutional boundaries.

The identification, adaptation, or development of suitable learning materials becomes, in itself, a responsibility and a kind of scholarly activity. In this sense, teaching and research blend into each other at Raymond--another dimension of the integrative approach.

It is the function of a discipline to present a framework for asking particular kinds of questions, and the tools for answering them. Someone working on the boundary between disciplines, or in an alternative framework not yet fully developed, is faced with fundamentally different kinds of issues. Less often can one ask, "What's the answer?" More often one must ask, "What's the question?" Or, "How can I ask a question here?" An implicit but very important objective of the Raymond program is to teach students to ask "What's the question?" rather than "What's the answer?" We want to engage students in the fundamental process of looking at the frameworks or perspectives in terms of which questions may be asked, and to learn to work within alternative frameworks, (i. e., to move flexibly from one framework to another), to ask questions about the suitability or relevance or particular perspectives, and to make choices in this regard.

This process is unquestionably more challenging for student and teacher alike. The weaker or less imaginative student will feel more

comfortable and will work more productively in a fixed framework. The fundamental kinds of questions the Raymond program addresses itself to are difficult questions, At the same time, these very questions are emerging as central to the educational process.

Although Raymond has been consistent in its commitment to integrative, interdisciplinary education, we have experimented with a variety of structures, or absence of structure, to achieve this end. The original program had a "core" of 25 required courses. With this structure, it was possible to achieve a high degree of integration, but at the cost of flexibility and freedom of choice for the student. Our present program optimizes freedom of choice, but has not effectively achieved the coherence which is our objective. The proposed curriculum represents a middle ground between these extremes.

The core is designed to achieve many of the same purposes as the old Raymond core, with greater flexibility and freedom of choice for the student. The particular framework of the core was selected with the interests, skills and experiences of the Raymond faculty in mind, as well as a broad, philosophical viewpoint. As it happens, the great majority of the present Raymond faculty has been teaching "on the interface" between social sciences and humanities, or social sciences and natural sciences, or (in a few cases) natural sciences and humanities. On the basis of experience, Humanistic Studies is presently our strongest area. In our planning, our allocation of faculty development leaves, and in the selection of new faculty, we must give particular attention to developing and strengthening Science and Culture, and Society and Environment.

The concentrations are designed on a similar basis, also taking careful account of the available resources of the larger University. Literature, Self and Society, and Philosophy, Science and Policy (especially, "Philosophy and the Social Sciences") are based very largely on courses which have been taught regularly in Raymond or which faculty have been developing irrespective of the new program. History of Ideas, the Philosophy and Methodology of Science, and American Studies combine a small number of established Raymond courses with a larger variety of courses outside the college under the umbrella of a common theme or objective.

In the concentrations, as in the core, we hope to achieve the integration and coherence without depriving students of the flexibility and freedom of choice which they need and which is in fact essential to our educational objectives. The opportunity to make choices

VIII. THE RAYMOND TRADITION

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within or between flexible structures allows students to develop their interests and formulate their objectives in the context of interdisciplinary studies. In special cases, and with prior approval of the faculty, students may be allowed to design their own individualized concentration. The design of such a program is potentially an extraordinarily valuable learning experience.

As a part of an organism, the various components of the program must be coordinated and integrated in order to function effectively. In the design of an interdisciplinary program, each major disciplinary perspective should be represented. This is essential not only for the representation of the perspective in the available courses, but in the design of the program design and evaluation. In the design of students, in the coordination and integration of the program and Senior Workshops, and in the interaction among faculty and scholars. The absence of an interdisciplinary design, whether it be economics, psychology or biology, creates a barrier which threatens the success of the program because it threatens its integrity.

We see our present situation, in regard to the design, as well as faculty support, as a starting point for a continuing process of growth and change.

IX. STAFFING

The holistic emphasis which characterizes Raymond in all levels of the curriculum has obvious implications for staffing decisions. Like the parts of an organism, the various components of the curriculum are more or less essential to the functioning of the whole. For an integrative, interdisciplinary program to function as it should, each major disciplinary perspective should be represented on the faculty. This is essential not only for the representation of that perspective in the available courses, but in the continuing process of program design and evaluation, in the counseling of students, in the coordination and integration of concentrations and Senior Workshops, and in the interaction among faculty as teachers and scholars. The absence of any fundamental discipline, whether it be economics, psychology or biology, creates a fissure which threatens the success of the program because it threatens its integrity.

We see our present situation, in regard to curriculum as well as faculty support, as a starting point for a continuing process of growth and change.