

October 2, 2008

To: St. Olaf Faculty
From: Curriculum Committee
Re: Proposed New Courses

At the October Faculty Meeting the Curriculum Committee will move that the faculty approve the following ten new courses.

Asian Studies 127: Japanese Comics and War

Catalog Description:

This course consists of two parallel sets of activities. First, students study the history of war in Japanese culture, with a focus on the Asian Pacific War (World War II, Pacific Theater). Second, as they study the war, students also “become” the people involved in the war, through a series of role playing exercises in which they develop their own characters from the 1945 Hiroshima and reconstruct the city of Hiroshima as it was then.

Rationale:

For Asian Studies majors and concentrators, this course offers an introductory, interdisciplinary study of a specific topic: the presentation of Japanese experiences of the war through comics (manga). Level I options for our majors are limited, especially for non-language courses. This course offers one way to begin the major. For Japan Studies concentrators, this course adds to the limited number of courses specifically about Japan. For General Education students, this course offers an in-depth examination of an experience of a culture outside the United States.
GE: MCG

Biology 275: Biology of Reproduction

Catalog Description:

The ability to reproduce is one of the key features of a living organism. Studying the biology of reproduction requires a synthesis of information and concepts from a wide range of fields within biology. This course addresses reproduction at the genetic, organismal, and population levels. Laboratory work adds a valuable investigative component to the course, and social/psychological issues are addressed throughout. Prerequisites: Biology 125 and 126, or permission of instructor.

Rationale:

The course “Biology of Reproduction” will be an additional 200-level offering in the biology major. As it is proposed for Spring 2009 (first time offered), it will fulfill one of the two elective courses required for the biology major. Reproduction encompasses material central to biology because the ability to reproduce is a key feature of living organisms. In addition, reproduction is a theme that can be studied from the vantage point of a range of biological disciplines. For example, the course will explore genetic mechanisms, life history strategies, and behavioral

traits, to name a few. The context for the course will be an evolutionary framework, with particular emphasis on reproduction-associated characteristics as adaptations.

The course format will be mixed, with some lecture/discussion of new material, student-focused discussion of primary literature, and laboratory investigation. The reproduction theme also allows for some interdisciplinary approaches; the topic of mate choice in humans will involve some psychology, and the section on different “levels” of sex (genetic, anatomical, gender) will involve some broader social science research and perspectives. No additional FTE required to staff this course.

Chinese 351: Chinese Language and Society through the Media

Catalog Description:

This advanced Chinese language course aims to develop students’ language proficiency and introduce students to various aspects of contemporary Chinese social life and culture. Course materials include films with excerpts of written scripts, newspapers, television, and essays related to the unit topics. Classroom activities include lectures, language drills, discussions, debates, presentations, and performances. Prerequisite: Chinese 252 or permission of instructor.

Rationale:

This course allows students to study the Chinese language for a seventh semester, after completing the current courses in Advanced Chinese (Chinese 251-252) or have returned from the Term in China. This group will include majors and non-majors in Chinese. The course develops students’ proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking Chinese. It is appropriate for any student wishing to improve Chinese language proficiency and especially for students majoring in Asian Studies or concentrating in China Studies. It adds a course on China to the limited offerings available for students doing a China Studies concentration.

For the next three years this new course will be in addition to courses currently taught in Chinese, Japanese, and Asian Studies. No courses will be eliminated or taught less often.

For the next three years the teaching of this course (and another level III Chinese course to be proposed later) will be funded by the new Freeman Foundation grant for Enhancing Asian Studies. After three years, the college will need to reconsider staffing issues in Chinese and the department may need to rethink teaching assignments.

Classics 122: Ghosts, Funerals, and Ferryman: Death among the Ancient Greeks

Catalog Description:

Students receive grounding in Greek religion and in the variety of approaches used to study the classical world. Armed with evidence from art, archaeology, poetry, drama, history, curse tablets and religious rites, they explore the Greek view of mortality: What's a good death? What happens to the soul afterward? Can spirits intervene for the living? Where can you get a decent meal in Hades, and just how much is the ferryman charging these days?

Rationale:

“Ghosts, Funerals, and Ferrymen” uses the questions about death in the ancient Greek worldview as a thematic focus for an introduction to the methods and subject matter of Classics. Students will learn to combine information from different sources (archaeological remains and art; contemporary lawsuits, histories, and philosophical dialogues; epic, lyric, and dramatic literature) and discover the richness of classical studies beyond texts alone. We hope that students who take the course may be inspired to continue with more study of the ancient world. With that in mind, when two texts deal with similar ideas about death, the syllabus prefers those that students are least likely to reread in other classics courses. Students who do not go on in classics will nonetheless come away from the class with a basic grounding in the chronology of events in ancient Greece, the major authors and artistic movements, and the essentials of Greek religion. They will be furnished with valuable comparative material for their studies of other cultural traditions. GE: HWC

Education 245: Teaching and Learning English Grammar

Catalog Description:

Research clearly shows that labeling isolated sentence components with grammatical terms, drilling workbook exercises, and diagramming sentences are ineffective classroom practices. What can teachers do to help their students gain mastery of standard written English? In this half-credit course, students explore both the theory and practice of contextual grammar instruction. They also hone their own grammatical knowledge, applying their new knowledge of both content and pedagogy through in-class micro-teachings. Offered in the second half of Spring Semester.

Rationale:

This elective course will benefit a wide range of students from across campus, such as all prospective English and English as a Second Language teachers, students seeking a grammar refresher, considering teaching English abroad for a few years or thinking about pursuing teacher licensure after graduation from St. Olaf. Offering a half-credit elective course in English grammar and the teaching of grammar and language would improve our English education program and would also strengthen its alignment with the Minnesota Board of Teaching standards for teachers of communication arts and literature. Currently, little time is devoted to the teaching of grammar or language issues (one or two days), even though the state requires that “the teacher must understand and apply the phonological, grammatical, and semantic functions of language” (MN BOT standard 1.A.2). In the documentation for the state of the Education Department, the department has indicated that this standard is met in ENG 274, the linguistics course required for all prospective English (and ELL) teachers; however, in the work of the department, done last year while preparing for the reaccreditation of its programs, it was discovered that grammar is not adequately addressed in ENG 274. Since the standard required by the state is not met, there is a risk of losing the department’s ability to certify English teachers if language study is not augmented. No additional FTE required to staff this course.

English 206: African Literature

Catalog Description:

Students explore African literature as it has evolved from oral traditions like folktales and epics into fiction, poetry, and drama in written form. Topics studied might include literature of particular geographical areas, such as East Africa, a genre such as poetry, or the influence of western literature on that of Africa. Authors studied may include Chinua Achebe, J. M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Arthur Nortje, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Alex La Guma.

Rationale:

Africa, the cradle of humanity, is where storytelling started, as oral tradition. Over time, oral traditions evolved and diversified, incorporating such forms as songs, folktales and epics. With the advent of literacy, African storytelling incorporated fiction, poetry, and drama in written form. This course addresses the main genres of fiction, drama, and poetry. In any given semester, the course may dwell on a country, region, or genre. As such it will enhance students' ability to analyze and appreciate literature, and introduce them to African ways of living and coping with the challenges and opportunities of the African context and the context of the global village. The course contributes to the English Department's goal to enhance offerings in the category of cross-cultural or multicultural literature. GE: ALS-L, MCG

Norwegian 244: The Sámi: Traditions in Transition

Catalog Description:

This interdisciplinary course explores the Sámi, an indigenous people living mainly in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Students first place the Sámi in a historical-cultural context by examining the Sámi's social and economic systems, religion, customs, and values. The major portion of the course examines the Sámi primarily from within: the Sámi will present themselves through their literature, film, music, and art.

Rationale:

Norwegian and Russian Area Studies majors and the Nordic Studies concentration are all relatively small, and this course offers students in all three programs one additional course to choose from to complete their major or concentration. This course examines a unique culture, very different from the one they are studying in the majority of their coursework, and is not currently offered in any on or off campus program. No additional FTE required to staff this course. GEs: ORC (HBS and MCS-G/MCG pending approval)

Religion 252: Issues in Science and Religion

Catalog Description:

This course explores the historical relation of religion and science, including issues like those raised by Copernicus, Darwin, and post-classical physics. Students compare the nature and grounds of religious and scientific claims, religious issues arising out of new technologies, new

cosmologies, and the new biology, theology's responses to modern science, and the role of religion in the relation of science and society.

Rationale:

Revived after a fourteen year hiatus, "Issues in Science and Religion" will be an option for the BTS-T General Education requirement. It satisfies the GE requirement with materials that will appeal to science majors and others who may pursue careers in health care and research. It will complement other courses in the "religious ideas" area of the religion major. The course capitalizes on areas of excellence in the curriculum, and reflects the college's interest in placing the study of religion and science in dialogue. GE: BTS-T

Religion 264: Theology and Sexuality

Catalog Description:

This course addresses theological understandings of love, desire, embodiment, and relationship in the context of human sexuality. Students study classic theological treatments of sexuality, with attention to the tension between positive and negative appraisals of sex; and they study contemporary theological discussions about subjects that have given rise to controversy, such as marriage, gender, family, or commodification. Prerequisite: Completion of BTS-B requirement.

Rationale:

"Theology and Sexuality" introduces students to the history and practice of theological reflection through attention to a series of interrelated discussions that have become prominent in the academy and in the wider life of church and society. Existing courses offer opportunities to explore separate elements of the proposed subject matter. For example, Religion 296 "Love, Justice and Social Relations" affords opportunities to study Christian judgments about family, marriage, and gender; and Religion 209 "Introduction to Feminist Theology" affords opportunities to study sexuality and gender in light of feminist theory. But there exists no venue for a wider range of attention to theology and sexuality. At various times, sections of the proposed course may treat subjects like sexuality and the goodness of creation, sexuality and fall or sin, sexuality and incarnation, sexuality and love (both human and divine). It may address ancient or current controversies in Christian communities, such as controversies over the desirability of celibacy, or about the faithful bonds of people of the same sex/gender, or about the diversity of sexual identities. It may address how the reflection gained in these controversies can provide important insights into persistent theological questions about God, God's incarnation in Christ, salvation, and community. And it may address how theological content provides a salutary critical standpoint from which to judge prevailing secular ideologies and deformations of embodied love and desire. No additional FTE required to staff this course. GE: BTS-T

Religion 272: Religious Pluralism in Asia and America

Catalog Description:

This course focuses on how, whether, and with what consequences religious believers can embrace religious pluralism. The countries and religions of Asia – Buddhism, primarily – provide a comparison with the United States – and Christianity, in particular. Students use their

encounters with Asian cultures and their assigned readings to examine how successful various countries have been in dealing with religious pluralism. They also refine their own thoughts about the relation of religions to each other and compare the potential for the co-existence of religions in America.

Rationale:

This course will be taught for Term in Asia, Fall and Interim 2009-10. While suitable for any local classroom it is intended to supplement and enrich the experiential and academic courses that are also part of Term in Asia. Instructor: Bruce Benson.

Events and analysis of the past decade have made clear a need for increased understanding between people of different religions. The notion of a previous generation that religion would fade as a force among the world's people seems to have been either very premature or false. Whether increased understanding moves "beyond tolerance", as one current author (Gustav Niebuhr) puts it, or merely strengthens the prospects for tolerance, such understanding has moved from being a generous idea to a matter of urgent importance. This raises a question that Christianity in the West has not had to face as urgently as the Church in, say, India; but now must be addressed here too: Is it possible (doctrinally, psychologically, spiritually) to be both a religious practitioner and a religious pluralist? Information is necessary, but it is not always sufficient. This course gives students an academic encounter with inter-religious dialogue in a setting that increases readiness for understanding. When students find themselves surrounded by cultures and religions not their own they are more able to engage issues of religious pluralism both in the abstract/theoretical and with the concreteness that enhances understanding.