

MINUTES
Liberal Arts Core Committee
10 November 2006
SIAC Meeting Room, Maucker Union

Present: Maria Basom, Ken Baughman, Jerry Caswell, Ron O'Meara, Jean Neibauer,
Jerry Smith, Lori VanHooreweghe

Visitor: Jay Lees

I. Call to Order: Baughman called the meeting to order at about 8:30 a.m.

II. Capstone Proposal: "Sacred Space"

Dr. Jay Lees, Professor of History, summarized—and responded to questions about—his proposal for a Capstone Experience course that would focus on the “sacred space” (a concept explored by Mircea Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane*) of varied religious sites, Christian and pre-Christian, in central Italy--focusing on the area around the city of Perugia in Umbria--during a two-week Summer 2007 study tour. The proposal is modeled on a similar course that Professor Lee has taught in Poland, and he observed during discussion that a similar course might focus on spaces that invest—and are invested by—a people with a national identity.

The course considers the “anthropological/theological” concept of “sacred space” by on-site observation of religious spaces with special attention to the distinctive architectural features of religious structures and the design of other spaces such as graveyards and gardens as well as the symbolism of sculpture and paintings present at the visited sites. It also examines the historical and cultural context within which the visited sites were constructed, and where possible, the religious rituals that were (perhaps still are) performed in these sacred spaces. In that these sites vary considerably from each other, students will have a wide range of different experiences as they observe and respond to the numerous places that they visit.

Students who wish to enroll for the summer study tour are asked to enroll also for a 1-hour preparatory course in the Spring Semester during which they read and discuss Eliade's book and other required texts on a reading list currently being developed, and then prepare a class report on a topic related to the sites to be visited in the summer focusing, for example, on the symbolism of the sculpture, painting, or architecture that will be observed. These would be substantial presentations, perhaps up to one-half hour in length. During the tour, students would write on a daily basis about each site they visit. Committee members suggested that students also write a final summary piece that would provide opportunity for reflecting and integrating the many distinct experiences of their tour, and Lees was receptive to this suggestion.

After discussion with Professor Lees and his departure, Smith moved, O'Meara seconded, to approve “Sacred Space” for Capstone Experience credit. Smith observed that intensive summer study abroad courses such as this one provide desirable international experience for students who might well not be able to devote a full semester to study abroad. And noting that Lees had mentioned promotion of this course to Honors students, Smith urged promoting such courses among other students as well.

Discussion included committee consensus that approval of this course was with our understanding that requirements for earning credit would include a final, summary or integrative report or paper and that the required reading list is being made more substantial. Further discussion included consideration of the hours of credit designated for the proposed course. A friendly amendment was accepted specifying that the motion was to approve Capstone credit as follows: 1 hour of credit for the Spring Semester preparatory course (960:186) and 2 hours of credit for the two-week study tour in Italy. The motion as amended passed without dissent.

III. Approval of Minutes for meeting of 3 November 2006: Smith moved, O’Meara seconded, approval of the Minutes for 3 November 2006. With one small correction noted, the motion passed without dissent.

IV. Capstone Report Feedback

Smith noted an additional advantage of the Capstone requirement: because it is the one course required for all B.A. students, it can facilitate Student Outcomes Assessment for the LAC and, more generally, for undergraduate programs. Baughman suggested that inclusion of SOA activities in Capstone courses could be required for their being approved to continue as Capstone courses. Neibauer observed that there could be opportunity here to compare attainment of desired outcomes by transfer students with AA degrees and 4-year UNI students. Noting an ACT report that Iowa students in general are not well-prepared for college-level work, Neibauer added that the university is not well-equipped to provide needed “remedial” instruction. There is warrant to consider more rigorous admissions requirements and to encourage high school students to take more rigorous courses.

Basom suggested that another advantage of the new Capstone model follows from its including Summer study abroad courses: this could be the only opportunity for some students to gain international experience within their BA programs given major requirements and other constraints.

With respect to the 58 sections of new alternative Capstone courses offered during the pilot period, Baughman observed that some 60% were taught by faculty from Social and Behavioral Sciences, about 30% by faculty from Humanities and Fine Arts, and just 5% by faculty from Natural Sciences (who also, of course, teach the “traditional” Capstone course, “Environment, Technology, and Society”). This might be considered within the forthcoming review of the Liberal Arts Core where balance in LAC requirements and offerings among academic disciplines or areas of knowledge could be examined. VanHooreweghe suggested that the Report include as an advantage of the new Capstone model that it provides opportunity for a larger number of faculty from more varied disciplines to teach in the Liberal Arts Core, and this could expand faculty investment in and support for the LAC.

V. Adjournment: Smith moved, O’Meara seconded, to adjourn. Motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Next Meeting: Friday, 17 November (to include discussion with the Review Committee for LAC 2B, Non-Western Cultures)

Respectfully submitted,
Ken Baughman