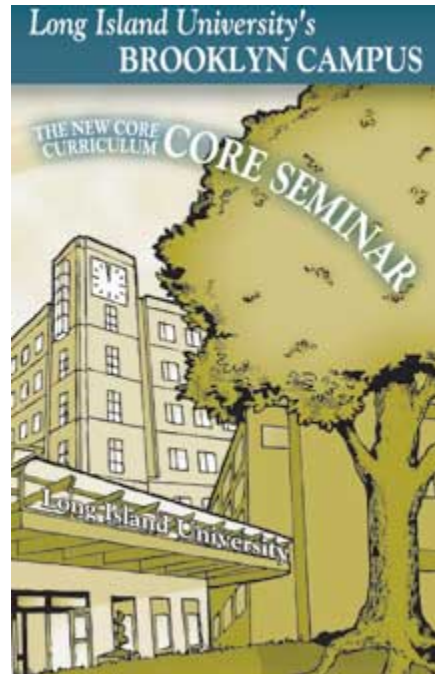


**NOTES FROM MIDSTREAM:
Toward a Sustainable Model of Integrated and Intentional Student Learning**

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Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus**



**20/20 Session:
Faculty Driven and University-Wide Change:
Change across the Curriculum**

**READY OR NOT: Global Challenges, College Learning, and America's Promise
Association of American Colleges and Universities
January 21-24, 2009
Seattle, Washington**

ABSTRACT

This session will present some of the surprises of one recent campus-wide effort in the core curriculum to integrate multiple sites and sources of student learning with traditional liberal arts goals and perspectives to prepare students for pre-professional and traditional arts and sciences majors. We will focus particularly on some secondary developments during implementation of this curricular design that hold the most promise for creating a sustainable model of integrated, intentional student-centered learning.

“Core Seminar: The Idea of the Human” was developed as a result of a campus-wide initiative to encourage interdisciplinary learning and improve student writing on the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. All students take it, ideally in their second or third semester in college. Students approach the theme of the “idea of the human” from three distinct perspectives: social and political discourse, scientific investigation, and imaginative inquiry. Importantly, the curriculum is organized around specific cognitive skills objectives (rather than some predetermined range of material to master), and the faculty come from all disciplinary fields on campus (from humanities to pre-professional).

The format of this course starts in a writing-intensive seminar, developed by faculty members from their individual disciplinary perspectives, featuring close examination of texts drawn from multiple lenses on the idea of the human. It progresses through field activities in New York City and cultivates information literacy through the development in consultation with teaching librarians and presentation of a research project. Uniquely, several times throughout the semester, faculty members share responsibility for staging “Joint Sessions” with other sections of the course, in which students and faculty alike confront their various disciplinary perspectives and ultimately achieve a cross-disciplinary conversation. Ideally, students come to appreciate that the same cognitive skills that help them in traditional classroom settings and tasks also enable them to engage in learning in off-campus sites and even to understand their interactions with their fellow students. For students, the intentional focus on specific cognitive skills, together with multiple sites and sources of learning, lays an essential foundation for seeing the development in their thinking across the core curriculum and into their major. For faculty, it enables everyone to take responsibility for the core curriculum and encourages a deeper understanding of student learning on campus.

The implementation of this course has framed in unexpected ways a series of conversations on campus that exhibit changing attitudes among students, faculty and administrators toward the relationship of core curriculum and specialized advanced study. We will report, with samples in handout form, on the evidence that reflects these developments. We note particularly changes in the way faculty are taking responsibility for both core and advanced learning and a new interest in helping to sustain student awareness of the continuous developments in their own thinking through a new focus on the role of writing on campus and the potential for e-Portfolios to track more than development of writing. These gains, however, are fragile, and we examine also specific challenges we see on the road to sustaining and building upon these developments.

Profile of the Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus

The Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University consists of 11 acres, located in the heart of downtown Brooklyn, just minutes from the Brooklyn Bridge and with excellent mass transit connections to all parts of the New York City metropolitan area. Our campus is also one of the most ethnically diverse campuses in the country, representing the incredible wealth of diversity in Brooklyn and New York City more generally.

Our campus is largely a commuter campus, with usually fewer than 600 undergraduate living on campus. Additionally, many faculty commute to campus from significant distances.

Of the students who took undergraduate degrees in the 2007-2008 academic year, roughly 31% were from the Conolly College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (which includes the Social Work program), but the majority were from schools offering pre-professional degrees (School of Pharmacy, 22%; School of Nursing, 17%, Business, 13%; Health Professions, 12%; and School of Education, 3%). The entire Core Curriculum, however, is based in the Conolly College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

Facts & Figures about the Brooklyn Campus, 2007-2008

Fall 2007 Student Enrollment

Undergraduate	4,144
Graduate	2,128
Continuing Education	1,170
Total	7,442

Student Gender

Male	30%
Female	70%

Undergraduate Population

Full-time	81%
Part-time	19%

Student Diversity

White	26%
Hispanic	13%
Black, Non-Hispanic	40%
Asian & Pacific Islander	21%

Faculty (including librarians)

Full-time	653
Part-time	1,114
Total	1,767

Source: <http://www.liu.edu/but01/factsfig/2007-08.pdf>

Rationale and Objectives for the New Core Curriculum

The core curriculum is the foundation for all undergraduate learning at the Brooklyn Campus and the five-year Doctor of Pharmacy; in addition, it serves primarily as means for a student's developing educational skills, a knowledge base, and perspectives on responsibilities to self and to others.

It is important to note that core curriculum embraces the spirit of our institution's mission:

No matter what their background or generation, students come to the Brooklyn Campus to build the educational and intellectual foundations for successful personal and public lives and careers. In addition, the Campus has designed programs to permit students to acquire essential reasoning skills and effective communication skills. In this way, the Campus serves as a conservator of knowledge, a source and promulgator of new knowledge, and a resource for the community it serves.

The new core is designed to satisfy the core curriculum goals, as stated in the *Middle States Self-Study*, 1993 and updated by the Core Curriculum Committee in 1998. These goals remain central to its implementation over the next several years:

1. Cognitive skills: *To help students strengthen their capacities for inquiry, abstract thinking, and critical analysis*

The aim is to enhance students' ability to:

- (a) understand, analyze, and interpret reading and other material critically
- (b) write organized, coherent discourse
- (c) speak organized, persuasive discourse
- (d) listen critically
- (e) research efficiently and knowledgeably
- (f) reason abstractly
- (g) interpret numerical data

2. Knowledge: *To help students acquire a general understanding of a body of knowledge in a variety of content areas and a foundation for further in-depth knowledge*

Students will be prepared to:

- (a) demonstrate knowledge and awareness of philosophical and ethical issues
- (b) demonstrate an understanding of literary genres and world literary schools
- (c) display an understanding of fundamental scientific and mathematical concepts and an awareness of the impact of technology on society and the environment
- (d) identify and understand general historical trends in world civilizations and demonstrate familiarity with social science concepts and ideas

3. Perspectives and Behavior: *To help students develop respect for both human commonalities and human diversity*

To take responsibility for their choices and for their roles in society, students will be trained to:

- (a) gain historical and diverse perspectives (for example, scientific, aesthetic, social, etc.)
- (b) develop their ability to reflect on ethical issues and to develop a sense of ethical behavior

The core attempts to integrate information literacy throughout the curriculum, thus insuring that graduates possess the ability to find, retrieve, evaluate, and use information effectively.

Distinctive Features of the Core Seminar Project

The explicit title of the course is “COS 50: The Idea of the Human,” but this idea is approached via seminar readings from a common reading anthology organized (as outlined below) around three distinctive perspectives of inquiry. Instructors are also encouraged to develop a sub-theme within the idea of the human to help to focus the inquiries they undertake with their students. (Examples are noted in the Invitation to Join the Core Seminar Program, included in this handout.) All sections, however, read one selection from each perspective to establish a common experience for all students. Additional readings are chosen by each instructor.

- **Social/Political Inquiry: Documents and Commentary**
(All sections read the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights)
- **Scientific Inquiry: Observation and Analysis**
(All sections read the Introduction to Stephen Jay Gould’s *The Mismeasure of Man*)
- **Imaginative Inquiry: Creativity and Interpretation**
(All sections read Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*)

Instructors are also encouraged to supplement the readings in the anthology with additional selections. Additionally, all students are asked to purchase Lester & Lester, *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*.

Writing Intensive

COS 50 is designated as the second of three “Writing Intensive” courses required of all students for graduation, between English 16: English Composition and a course designated by the major. In COS 50, however, students engage in writing as a part of the process of inquiry. Importantly, all students must complete an essay that incorporates library research. To support this project, all sections meet for at least two 75 minute instructional sessions with teaching reference librarians in library computer labs.

Structural Features of the Course

In addition to the course theme and focus on writing, COS 50 is distinctive for several features of the course that aim to stage a dynamic experience of inquiry suitable to integrating multiple sites and sources of learning.

- **Seminar Format**. Sections are capped at 22 students, which is significantly lower than other Core Curriculum courses on campus. This permits students to engage in seminar discussions and carefully structured small group activities.
- **Cohort Structure and Joint Sessions**. We always strive to schedule our sections in “cohorts” of two to four sections at any given time slot. Then, at least twice over the semester, the sections in each cohort meet together for some activity or learning experience staged by the instructors of the cohort. Students experience the challenges of communicating with and listening carefully to their peers investigating the same or

similar ideas, but who arrive often at very different insights.

Instructors are also encouraged to embrace the same or complementary sub-themes within the idea of the human.

- Field Explorations. All sections of COS 50 also engage in at least one exploration of a site within the New York City metropolitan area that is relevant to the theme of the course. Examples of sites of such explorations include the American Museum of Natural History, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, various other small museums in the metropolitan area, music concerts, “ethnic enclave” neighborhoods, sites of public memorial art, and much more.

As an outgrowth of this feature of the course, we have organized a series of “Cultural Alliances” with institutions in the metropolitan area, including the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, the New York Transit Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art.

- Formal Library Instruction. All sections meet for at least two 75 minute instructional sessions with teaching reference librarians in library computer labs. We coordinate the times of these sessions with the Library, encouraging the timing of these sessions to coincide with students’ work on their research papers. We also encourage appropriate collaboration between instructors and librarians to integrate the library instruction into the process of inquiry designed by each instructor.
- Oral Presentation of Research. All students present their research at the end of the semester to their fellow students.

Instructors for COS 50

Every semester, the Core Seminar Program actively seeks new faculty members to join the program with a broad invitation publicized across the campus. Since Fall 2003, 75 instructors have taught in the program, of whom 20 are adjunct instructors. These instructors have come from every school on campus. Roughly two-thirds of these instructors are still affiliated with our campus.

Faculty Professional Development

The Core Seminar Program engages in multiple avenues of professional development for faculty.

- Prep Seminars for New Instructors. Before receiving a teaching assignment, new instructors must complete a series of prep seminars introducing them to the required readings and unique pedagogical features of the course.

- Day-long Workshop for the Upcoming Semester. At the end of each semester, all faculty with teaching assignments for the upcoming semester gather for a day-long workshop in which we discuss various aspects of the course (e.g., learning objectives, construction of assignments or syllabi) and spend significant time with the other instructors in their cohort planning course themes, joint activity and schedules for the upcoming semester.
- Optional Events. We also organize various optional workshops or faculty development event at points throughout the semester. Recent topics have included assessment of field activities, designing and assessing short writing assignments, and open houses and explorations of exhibits at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

For more information, including preliminary assessment report and the COS Newsletter, please visit us on the web at:

http://www.brooklyn.liu.edu/depts/core_seminar.html

Please also feel free to email the presenters.

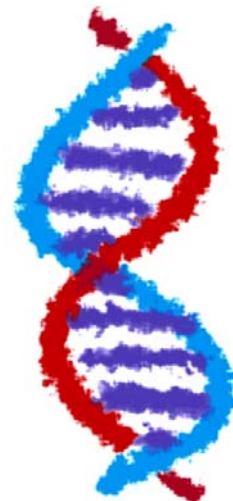
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INVITATION TO JOIN THE CORE SEMINAR 50 TEACHING FACULTY

The Core Seminar Program will hold **informational sessions on Monday February 2 and Tuesday February 3 in LLC 515 from 2:00 to 3:00** for anyone would like to join our team of instructors. This is an excellent opportunity for faculty to join one of the most innovative general education programs on our campus and to share their intellectual curiosity with our students! All Brooklyn Campus Faculty are cordially invited to attend.

Core Seminar 50: The Idea of the Human is the most recent addition to the undergraduate core requirements. Designed for students in their upper freshman, lower sophomore year, the seminar incorporates several distinctive pedagogical features intended to introduce students to college-level inquiry. Students explore a cross-disciplinary range of readings on the theme of the human, including scientific inquiry, social and political commentary, and imaginative inquiry. These perspectives are further cultivated by cross-disciplinary discussions in joint sessions with other sections and structured team-based explorations of the metropolitan area. Finally, utilizing the resources of the Brooklyn Campus library, students also undertake to investigate a specific topic with the goal of producing a substantial seminar paper.



Faculty in the program are also encouraged to tailor their sections to their own unique interests. Each section accordingly embraces a specific sub-theme of the instructor's choosing within the ideas of the human and the human condition. In previous semesters, topics have included Monsters; Food, Appetite & Desire; Utopias & Dystopias; War & Conflict; Image & Media; Classification; Identity or Identification; Myth vs. Reality; Animal vs. Human; and Work & Play.

Since "the Human" is a broadly unifying concept, faculty from all disciplines are invited to become instructors. Core Seminar faculty work in interdisciplinary cohorts and regularly report learning as much from each other as they do from their students. Former participants have come from Biology, Nursing, Psychology, Social Work, Anthropology, Media Arts, Philosophy, Art, Music, Foreign Languages, Business, English, Education, and Pharmacy.

Faculty will have a chance to attend one of two preliminary **informational sessions: either Monday February 2 in or Tuesday February 3 from 2:00-3:00 in LLC 515**. This is an important meeting, since it will introduce and determine the schedule for the Spring Faculty Seminar Series.

****Before teaching, all faculty must take part in the Faculty Seminar Series, which culminates in a day-long workshop for all those with class assignments in Fall 2009****

The one-hour orientation seminar will be followed by five (5) sessions for the Fall Faculty Seminar Series, meeting 2:00-3:30pm, on Mondays or Tuesdays depending upon demand and critical mass. The Final Full-day Workshop will fall on Wednesday, May 6 from 9:30am-4:30pm. These discussions usually prove to be exceptionally interesting.

Alan Grose, who teaches in the Core Seminar Program and the Department of Philosophy, is the Administrative Coordinator of this project and can be reached at Extension 4379 for more information.

Please RSVP to x4379, or alan.grose@brooklyn.liu.edu if you intend to be with us on either of these dates. Refreshments will be served. Alan and I look forward to meeting with you!

Bernice Braid, Director
Core Seminar

Long-term Professional Benefits

Note: The following statements were drawn from responses to a general faculty survey conducted in May 2007.

Question: What have you been able to bring back to the teaching in your discipline from your experiences in COS 50?

Breadth of knowledge. Knowing what my students went through earlier in their college careers. Knowing what sorts of skills they bring to college, and how hard they work to improve writing and research. A more process-oriented approach to teaching and learning.

I learned a lot about how to teach writing and research. Also how to help students develop library skills.

I read some of the same texts in both COS and lit courses.

Inordinate patience, new assignment ideas, fruitful ways to teach writing, working with groups, different academic perspectives on the media.

I apply literature more readily to life experience and other discipline: I create more bridges and analogies. Oddly, I also think I listen better.

A continued application of interdisciplinary thought and engaging with Students. This is the world we live in. They should see the world as it is. BIG!

Flexibility, patience, reinforcement of organizational skills.

It has been helpful to teach and be involved in the training process for COS 50—and I find the multidisciplinary approach involving many aspects of being a human are involved in a teaching-learning situation in whatever the specific discipline. Each discipline is a specialized field with specific curricula and learning objectives. The COS 50 experience of interacting with faculty from other disciplines and students from other disciplines is important in terms of understanding humanity and the world we live in and how our particular interests and vocations fit into the whole.

Being open to using various methodologies, as well as the overall fresh air of doing something different—brings more excitement back into the class—room.

I find the course stimulating. To be always learning—to come upon new history, ideas, etc.—with my students is important to me.

A greater appreciation of the importance of writing as a mechanism for developing the analytical and fundamental intellectual skills of my science students. The ability to craft a clear, concise, and logically consistent paper, be it a two-page response paper or much longer Final Research Paper, is a hallmark of a student's intellectual progress and overall likelihood of success in school. I have incorporated more writing assignments in all of my disciplinary courses. I also think that teaching Core Seminar has made me more attentive to issues of clarity when composing examinations and/or field assignments, much to the benefit of my students!

A more student-centered orientation; an emphasis on group work and projects; an emphasis on process.