Beyond Food, Festivals, and Fun:
Engaging Oppression, Inequality and Hierarchy in General Education

Ripon College
Ursinus College
Goucher College
Hamilton College
GOALS

- Engage power, oppression, hierarchy
- Situate students within these relationships
- Engage 100% of students
- Incorporate clearly and coherently into curriculum
- Demonstrate institutional priority
- Incorporate across disciplines

STRUCTURE

- Design new required course in core curriculum
- Shared content and themes in common syllabus for required course
- Embed significant experiences across several requirements in GE
- Require each department to create a course in major meeting goals
Ripon College Catalyst Curriculum

Ed Wingenbach, Interim President and Dean of Faculty
Jean Blaise Samou, Assistant Professor of French & Director of Global Studies
Catalyst Curriculum

- Five course core curriculum required of all students
- Employs liberal arts to develop transferable skills
- Each seminar includes required elements and ILO’s; faculty design seminars to meet those goals
- Culminates in a semester-long team project in the junior year, in which students must propose solutions to complex, real-world problems
CATALYST 110
Writing

CATALYST 120
Quantitative Reasoning

CATALYST 210
Intercultural Competence

CATALYST 220
Interdisciplinary Integration

CATALYST 300
Applied Innovation Seminar

http://www.ripon.edu/catalyst/
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Catalyst Curriculum Adoption

- Faculty decided to replace previous distribution-based curriculum
- Wanted to move quickly and be creative
- Agreed to meet as a full faculty every week during fall 2015
- Adopted curriculum framework in December 2015, implemented fall 2016
Catalyst 210 Adoption

- Faculty determined “intercultural competence” is a core liberal arts skill
- Debated meaning and redefined culture as “an historical and social context within which identity if shaped and social relations expressed”
- agreed that intercultural competence must involve more than exposure or study of the other
- Adopted a course that focuses on how inequality, power, and oppression shape cultural identity
- Required an experiential component to ensure active engagement with the objectives
CTL 210 Course Description

Sophomore level: Students Develop

- Awareness of their own culture(s), worldview(s) & values
- Make critical comparisons between cultures
- Understand
  - How one’s worldview is shaped by culture
  - Relationship between culture, power, oppression, dominance & inequality,
- Recognize plurality of values & develop empathy for other cultures & worldviews
Implementation Challenges

- Strong support for, but no experience in teaching identity, inequality, power & oppression
- Instructors from diverse disciplines
- Concerns over student resistance to intercultural competence (historically White institution)
- Discomfort over ability to lead productive discussions about issues of diversity ("hot button" topic)
Implementation Approach

- Multi-day development seminar (year prior to implementation)
- Intercultural Competence Coordinator
- Syllabus development workshops & assistance
- 2 Pre-semester retreats each year
- Regular faculty meetings during each semester
- Assessments and course revisions
- Peer learning community & Individual faculty support
Extra-/Co-/curricular Support

- Faculty struggled with Experiential Learning Requirement
- Intercultural Competence Coordinator worked with Multicultural Affairs
- Developed mandatory external opportunities:
  - Extra-/Co-/curricular activities
  - Leadership & Experiential Engagement Retreat
    - Half-day long, all CTL 210 Students, instructors
Ursinus College’s Common Intellectual Experience

Mark Schneider, VPAA & Dean of College
“What Will I Do?”

Ursinus College’s Ethically Based Approach to Inclusion and Equity Within the Curriculum and Beyond

Mark Schneider, VPAA & Dean of College
Background: Common Intellectual Experience

• A two-semester, required first-year seminar
• Taught by faculty from all disciplines
• Not a “Great Books” approach, but a common syllabus develops a “local canon” for faculty and students
• Materials are revised on a regular basis, with up to 25% changing every two years, led in highly a participatory process, with final approval by all CIE connected faculty
• Recent years have included *The New Jim Crow*, *Between the World and Me*, works by a wide range of authors: Frederick Douglass, Alison Bechdel…
• Extensive training of faculty for challenging classroom discussion—pre-semester workshop led by faculty with relevant professional expertise
New Developments: Revised Core Curriculum

• Over the past few years, faculty have moved the character of CIE into a new general education program

• Repeated reflection over four years on four “open” questions:
  – What should matter to me?
  – How should we live together?
  – How can we understand the world?
  – What will I do?

• Expanded distributions: Global, Diversity, and Obligation requirements

• Use of faculty developed general education framework facilitates acceptance
“Diversity” Courses

Courses that meet the "D" requirement should explicitly engage the question “How should we live together?” with reference to themes of diversity, difference, and social and political equality and inequality. Students should analyze the operation of privilege, merited and unmerited, that reflects the unequal distribution of power in the world, and they should reflect critically on the causes and effects of political and social equality and inequality in the light of racial, ethnic, class, gender, sexuality, disability status, religious and/or other differences. Students taking these courses should develop the habit of giving serious consideration to viewpoints very different from their own, even -- or especially -- when these may be troubling or unsettling.
Unusual Features

• Obligations: at least one course that focuses on issues of societal responsibilities
• Senior General Education Capstone course, with focus on using Ursinus experiences, typically in the context of group work, to address individual question of “What Will I Do?”
• Four-year reflections, retained electronically, reinforced by key core courses, first-year advising cohorts, and Career Office
“Obligations” Courses

Courses that meet the “O” requirement should explicitly engage the question “How should we live together?” with special consideration of our obligations to others. By obligation, we could mean an obligation by individuals, governments and/or other groups to other individuals, governments, other groups, the environment, larger moral principles, and so on. Courses meeting this requirement emphasize the study of ideas and claims—either in the present, the past, or in the abstract—about what individuals or group entities should do in relation to some other(s).
Continuing Challenges…

Curricular Development

• Most of our development now is at intermediate and advanced level
• We need to provide flexibility for faculty
• At the same time, we need to provide clear structure to help faculty get launched
• Heavy emphasis on interdisciplinarity demands aggressive “matchmaking”
Continuing Challenges…

Faculty Development

• Training for “difficult topics” in CIE is robust, but shared syllabus helps here
• Even so, awkward classroom situations will, and do, happen
• How do we extend this training in an effective way to intermediate and upper level classes, where there is little uniformity?
• Balance between required and voluntary training—former likely to raise resistance and limit effectiveness, but a need to reach everyone
Impact of the Four “Open” Questions:
A theme for the whole college

- Theme for external speakers
- Used for professional development retreats (faculty, staff, RA’s…)
- Stimulated a campus values process, with emphasis on actionable values statements
- Used in student judicial processes
- Framework for faculty development
- Foundation for regular faculty/staff/student informal conversations about inclusion and equity
Goucher Commons

Janet Shope, Professor of Sociology, Director of Academic Assessment, Former Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs
Race, Power, and Perspective

Janet Shope, Professor of Sociology, Director of Academic Assessment, Former Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs
Institutional Context

• First “diversity requirement” implemented in 2011
• Impetus for adoption
• Objective of “Understanding diverse perspectives”
• One-and-done approach
Race, Power, and Perspective

• Reasons for changing requirement
• Race, Power, and Perspective: Importance of naming
• Four-year experience
Conceptualization and Structure

• Objectives
  • Student learning outcomes
    • SLO 1: Perspective and Identity
    • SLO 2: Power and Context
    • SLO 3: Empathy and Engagement
    • SLO 4: Integration and Imagination

• Four year plan
  • First year- First year reading and experience
  • Second year- 200 level course
  • Third Year- Study abroad
  • Senior Year- Senior integrative experience
Challenges

• Structures for Implementation
  • Director of Goucher Commons
  • Committee structures

• Integration across four years
  • E-portfolio
Hamilton College

Margaret Gentry, Special Advisor to the President for Experiential Learning and William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Women's and Gender Studies
Social, Structural and Institutional Hierarchies
Background

- Designed from bottom-up by ad hoc faculty group
- Two years of building and getting buy-in
- Decisions made in context of open curriculum
SSIH

- Explore structural and institutional hierarchies based on social categories (e.g., race, class, gender, nation, sexuality, age, etc.)
- Fulfilled within requirement for major in department/program
- Mostly met with courses: 60% with no or minor revisions to existing courses; 40% with new courses or significant revision
- Additional modes of meeting requirement
Strengths and Challenges

• Sends message that these issues are relevant to all fields of study
• Avoids relying on faculty “experts”
• In student area of interest (major) so integrated—not a one-off course
• Can’t guarantee same approach, content, or timing of delivery across departments
• A few departments have no faculty expertise or capacity
Implementation

• Oversight of Committee on Academic Policy on department/program’s approach to fulfilling goal
• Funding to allow departments to bring in experts, have retreats, purchase books, etc.
• Building in assessment of entire program
• New faculty hiring
Discussion
GOALS

- Engage power, oppression, hierarchy
- Situate students within these relationships
- Engage 100% of students
- Incorporate clearly and coherently into curriculum
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