TO ACCOMPANY PROPOSAL FOR ADDITION OF COURSE TO AN EXISTING CLUSTER

Name of proposing faculty member: Rob Gould, D. Black
Title of proposed course: Participating in Democracy
From which department(s): Philosophy, Urban Studies, Government
For which cluster: Leadership Cluster
Name of cluster coordinator: Dilafraz Williams

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COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION BY

DEPARTMENT CHAIR(S): Robert Gould, Philosophy
                     DATE: 11/30/00
                     Conflict Resolution DATE:

CLUSTER COORDINATOR: Dilafraz Williams DATE: 12/2/00
CHAIR, CLUSTER COORDINATORS: DATE: 12/14/00
CHAIR, UNST COMMITTEE: DATE: 12/16/00

Copies of completed document are to be filed with appropriate cluster coordinator(s) as well as sent to appropriate department chair(s), UNST Scheduling, and Chair, Cluster Coordinators.

University Studies: November 2000
Class Proposal:
Participating in Democracy

A. Course Description

The course will examine what it means to participate in democracy and how that relates to the citizens definition of civic capacity. The course will also assist each student in developing a personal definition of civic capacity and to show the important role of education in the development of civic mindedness. The course will utilize the extensive library of multi-media resources from Facing History to: 1) Question what civic capacity is; 2) look at the student’s definition of “Universe of Obligation” and is this the same as civic capacity...is it the same community. 3) Discuss the identity theory, the concept of “We versus They” and the “In group/out group” 4) look at examples in history of what happens when civic capacity is lacking, for example, the film “Democrat and Dictator”; 5) utilize the television series, “America Rocks”, and the book, “Bowling Alone: the Collapse and revival of American Community”, to examine the myths of America; 6) examine the concept of “obedience” and its interplay with Democracy; and 7) discuss the definition and basis for community service and its importance in civic capacity.

Finally, the course will examine the basic assumption of the course itself, that civic capacity can be taught. Is civic capacity developed at home, or taught in school; and what is the role of education in democracy.
B. Course Development

The course is based on an existing, nationally recognized course developed by education experts at Facing History and Ourselves. The proposed course is a combination of two courses: 1) Facing History and Ourselves, which has been taught at the Undergraduate and Graduate at PSU for three years; and, 2) a new course called Participating in Democracy, which was developed to teach the importance of education in cultivating civic capacity. The revisions will be accomplished with the assistance of professionals at the main office of Facing History. The management of Facing History has offered to support our efforts in developing and teaching this course with free access to their video library, and unlimited free course texts.

C. General Education Goals

This course will fulfill the general education goals of the Universities Studies program in the following ways:

Inquiry and Critical Thinking

The proposed course is designed to assist the students in thinking critically about our current democratic process, and examine their own participation in this process. The course involves theories from philosophy, urban studies, education, and many other majors in an attempt to look at the issues and integrate information from several diverse fields of study.

Communication Skills

The course will improve communication skill through the use of discussion groups and a final project to be presented to the classes of our community partner. Additionally, the course utilizes the worldwide web and incremental exercises in the text to create a dialog between students pertaining to civic capacity.

Human Experience and Diversity

The students will gain awareness for the diversity of our society and the world community by the readings, the student activities in the primary text, guest lecturers, and by listening to the other student presentations. This course is designed to inquire into the multi-cultural dimensions of the human experience and
how these dimensions have been observed in history. By gaining an understanding of themselves, an appreciation for others in this diverse society the students will be assisted in adapting to the challenges of life and in developing a more “human” society. The course will provide an integrated educational experience that will allow the student to understand the importance of participating in society and developing an individual civic capacity.

**Ethical Responsibility**

As the student develops this individual definition of civic capacity they will face ethical decisions, which will increase their *ethical responsibility*. By examining the “myths of America” the students will come face-to-face with the ethical decisions of being an American in a Democratic society.

The final project will also be utilized to *evaluate* what each student has learned from the course, and delve into the opinions and biases that create what students believe as required in the FIPSE Grant. By requiring the student to put into words what each student understands, we can also evaluate how well we have explained the topics and what should be changed in the course for the future.

**D. Course Outline**

(This course outline is subject to revision based on the final development of the course and involvement of the community partner.) (Assumes approximately an 11 week term)

**Week 1**  
Democracy is becoming rather than being. It can easily be lost, but never fully won. Its essence is eternal struggle.” William Hastie  
Discuss “Universe of Obligation”
Discuss the definition of civic capacity or civic mindedness
Use videos, and group participation projects

**Week 2**
“All the people like us are we, and everyone else is they” Rudyard Kipling
Discuss the “In” group, conformity and identity, the identity theory and the theory of “Enmification”. Examine “citizen participation”

**Week 3 & 4**
Create groups, based on mentor classes, and begin thinking of final projects.  
Examine examples in history of what happens when civic capacity is lacking, using videos and other resources.

**Week 5 & 6**
Examine examples in history of happens when civic capacity is mobilized. Again using videos and available resources.