

OFFICE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

MEMORANDUM

March 15, 1974

TO: Litt/Lang Faculty

FR: James Hollis

Dear Colleagues:

I have been driven to the conclusion that we have "peaked" in terms of staff slots for the foreseeable future. The few ARHU slots over the next two years will provide little if any Litt/Lang openings apart from Moreno. Further, we must recognize that no one outside our program will necessarily weep because course X is not offered. The sounds of silence, the silence of absent courses and desultory commitments, are most audible at S.S.C., but only if one has ears to hear. We have maintained a program this year. So it goes. We have also maintained a program not notably besieged by clamoring students. We have "made do" without Phil, patched over for Fred in the Spring, and say we will do so for Gerry next year. Additionally, a number of us such as Royce and I are loaned out to other programs. While all of these leaves are legitimate, we nonetheless look "fat" in the parlance of more than we think. Therefore,

whatever we do in the future must be colored by these imposed limits to our "manifest destiny." We must, this is to say, operate, leanly, the best programs we can within the resources available.)And I do not believe that we should offer any program by virtue of our professional dilution or psychic exhaustion). We can do what we can do---and no more. Therefore, what we can do must be carefully planned. To this end I offer one of several suggestions forthcoming for your consideration.

I recommend that we consider revamping category A in our general requirements. As nice as separate generic courses may be--Studies in Poetry, et al.---we cannot afford them. I suggest two courses for that category.

- A. Introduction to Literature
- B. Introduction to Literary Criticism

Seriatim:

- A. Introduction to Literature

I suggest that we offer one or more such sections, depending on the traffic, each semester for both non-majors and for majors who are told in the program guide and by the preceptor that we will be alluding in advanced courses to the materials and concepts therein. Such a course would be an introduction to the nature of literature and the generic modes of its expression. Those familiar with Trilling's The Experience of Literature know that excellent texts for the dual purposes exist.

B. Introduction to Literary Criticism

Perhaps as a sophomore offering once a year, this course would assist the student in learning that there are a number of useful approaches to literature e.g. the new critical, sociological, structural, et al. This would be a course in "how" to read, and pluses and minuses of any approach, which would be of great use to majors and other. It is my experience both here & elsewhere that few S.S. students are ready for the Literary Criticism I taught last fall---Aristotle to Northrup Frye. Such a course could be offered on tutorial basis and as the occasional offering of Senior Seminar.

Nothing I write in this memo is pleasant to me, but, unlike Pangloss, I do not live in the best of all possible worlds. I suggest that we trim the offerings in category A and that we all, in our season, teach those courses. By rough count I have taught some 31 such courses since 1965. I have been bored by a steady fare, but some of my best moments in teaching also came in those ^{intro.}~~virtue~~ courses. In either case I inevitably proselytized for the literature program.

This is the spring of our discontent. I don't think our choice is ^{so much} between starvation and myocardial infarction as it is whether we make hard though intelligent choices.

C
Candide
Candidate