

TO: Beth Dobkin, Provost

FROM: Tomas Gomez-Arias, Chair
Academic Senate

DATE: September 30, 2011

RE: Senate Action S-11/12-3
Seminar Model Vote

At the September 29, 2011 meeting of the Academic Senate, the following Resolution was approved. This action was assigned Senate Action # S-11/12-3.

Of Models 3 and 1b, Model 3 best addresses the interest of future Saint Mary's College undergraduates. The Senate, therefore, adopts Model 3.

Attachment (Model 3)

cc: Brother Ronald Gallagher, President
Richard Carp, Vice Provost
Charles Hamaker, Director

Model 3: A Developmental Model for Seminar (1-2-1)

Rationale for this model:

1. Building of student strategies/tools in critical thinking, critical reading, shared inquiry, etc.
2. Developmental structuring of the four seminars, including a capstone experience in the fourth
3. Maintenance of the Western conversation as the most important source of texts
4. Including a larger proportion of intercultural/global texts

Summary: The primary intent of this model for seminar is to preserve the heart of the Western conversation while at the same time addressing the very real concerns for the development of student learning and the inclusion of more intercultural and global voices. The Western Tradition (from the Greeks to 1900) is preserved in the second and third seminars, using the transfer-list as a model. The development of student learning is addressed in the first seminar (focused on critical thinking, reading, and shared inquiry, with texts that facilitate these strategies) and the fourth seminar (which includes a capstone experience). The non-chronological structure of the first and fourth seminars also enables the inclusion of a much broader range of global and intercultural voices. How is it developmental? The first seminar intentionally educates students in a set of strategies that students will be expected to demonstrate at increasingly sophisticated levels in the next three seminars. The fourth seminar asks students to integrate their learning at the end of this experience.

How is this developmental?

1. Includes a freshman seminar to teach seminar strategies through carefully chosen and shorter texts.
2. The historical ordering of texts is intrinsically developmental in terms of content. Ideas from later ages are built on earlier ones.
3. The level of demand – length of reading, discussion rubrics, writing assignments and rubrics, etc. – will be graduated through the four seminars.
4. The students will discover the convergence of cultures over time, expanding their awareness of that phenomenon.
5. The focus of the fourth seminar readily suggests integrative evaluations and/or capstone projects.

Four-year Seminar plan:

First seminar (spring of freshman year) – **Critical Strategies and Great Questions**

- a. Focus #1 (skill) – Through the selection of shorter, targeted readings, the primary intention of the first seminar is to facilitate the growth of the students' abilities to think and read critically and to participate in shared inquiry.
- b. Focus #2 (content) – Texts will be chosen based on a series of factors, in this order: (1) their accessibility to freshmen [i.e., length, difficulty], (2) their relevance to modern life/modern questions, and (3) their importance in human history. The focus is on texts that best allow students to practice the strategies of critical thinking, critical reading, and shared inquiry. Texts from a variety of times and cultures can/should be included.

Second seminar (fall of sophomore year) – **Western Tradition, part 1**

- a. Focus #1 (content) – Western Tradition, part 1 – Students will read the classics of the Greek and Latin worlds, using a model similar to the current first transfer seminar.
- b. Focus #2 (skill) – Students would be expected to employ and build upon the strategies of critical thinking, critical reading, and shared inquiry that were learned in the first seminar.

Third seminar (fall or spring of junior year) – **Western Tradition, part 2**

- a. Focus #1 (content) – Western Tradition, part 2 – Students will read the classics of the Renaissance through roughly 1900.
- b. Focus #2 (skill) – Students would be expected to employ and build upon the strategies of critical thinking, critical reading, and shared inquiry that were learned in the first and second seminars.

Fourth seminar (fall or spring of senior year) – **The Global Conversation of the 20th and 21st c.**

- a. Focus #1 (skill/integration) – Students would be expected to employ and build upon the strategies of critical thinking, critical reading, and shared inquiry that were learned in the first second, and third seminars. Most importantly, students would be required to spend the last weeks of the fourth seminar looking back on what they have learned and how they have grown, integrating the steps of their intellectual development in a capstone experience.
- b. Focus #2 (content) – The Global Conversation of the 20th and 21st c. – Building on the Western tradition explored in the second and third seminars, readings would focus on the Great Conversation of the modern world, which includes the West but also fully integrates important intercultural and global voices – texts which are now part of the modern conversation (and would be chosen based on such a status). The focus would be on issues or concerns of significant relevance for a 21st c. student, as well as texts that would allow for integrative thinking.