

LSC Use Only  
Number: LS-119  
Action: Approved  
Date: 12-7-89

UWUCC Use Only 29  
Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**CURRICULUM PROPOSAL COVER SHEET**  
**University-Wide Undergraduate Curriculum Committee**


**I. Title/Author of Change**

Course/Program Title: LS 499 Senior Synthesis  
Suggested 20 Character Course Title: Senior Synthesis  
Department: Liberal Studies  
Contact Person: Charles D. Cashdollar

**II. If a course, is it being Proposed for:**

XX Course Revision/Approval Only  
       Course ~~Revision~~/Approval and Liberal Studies Approval  
       Liberal Studies Approval Only (course previously has been approved by the University Senate)

**III. Approvals**

<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>
<u>Department Curriculum Committee</u>	<u>Department Chairperson</u>
<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>
<u>College Curriculum Committee</u>	<u>College Dean *</u>
 <u>Director of Liberal Studies</u>	<u>Provost (where applicable)</u>
<u>(where applicable)</u>	

\*College Dean must consult with Provost before approving curriculum changes. Approval by College Dean indicates that the proposed change is consistent with long range planning documents, that all requests for resources made as part of the proposal can be met, and that the proposal has the support of the university administration.

**IV. Timetable**

Date Submitted to LSC: _____	Semester to be implemented: <u>Spring 1991</u>	Date to be published in Catalog: _____
to UWUCC: _____		<u>1990</u>

## CATALOG DESCRIPTION

LS 499 Senior Synthesis

3sh

Prerequisites: 73 or more sh earned

This course helps students understand and handle complex intellectual and social issues from multiple perspectives. A selection of topics is available each semester and summer session, as announced in the undergraduate course schedule. Students should schedule the course during the senior year, or at least no earlier than the last half of the junior year.

GENERIC SYLLABUS--LS 499I. Catalog Description

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II. Course Objectives

1. To allow students to explore and practice synthetic reasoning. (Much of college work involves analytical thinking; that is, students learn to take things apart and study them in terms of structure and function. But there is a complementary intellectual process called synthesis. Synthesis is a way of putting things together, of combining parts into wholes; it is knowing how to weave many separate thread together into a fabric.)
2. To enhance students' abilities to think effectively about broad and complex issues as seen from multiple perspectives.
3. To expand students' interests across disciplinary lines by providing an opportunity to explore concepts and issues with students from a diversity of disciplines.
4. To enrich students' educational experience by providing an upper-level course which draws upon their previous learning.
5. To prepare students to deal more effectively with societal opportunities and challenges by encouraging them to think in a broad, interdisciplinary way.

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\*The number "73" is based on 124sh minus 3 semesters of the maximum load (17sh):  $124-51=73$ . (Or, one maximum semester of 17sh subtracted from the 90sh that currently serves as the upper limit of the junior class:  $90-17=73$ ). Counting from matriculation, if an entering student took 17sh for each of the first 4 semesters, this would add to only 68sh; thus, the 73 sh prerequisite functions as intended--no true "first semester junior" could enroll.

### III.- V. Course Outline, Evaluation Methods, and Required Reading

There will be multiple sections of this course, taught by different faculty, and considering different topics. Specific course outlines, evaluation methods, and required readings will vary by section. By previous Senate action (May 1987), syllabi for individual sections will be submitted for approval to the Liberal Studies Committee and then reported for information to the UWUCC. Each syllabus must demonstrate that the proposed section meets the criteria previously approved by the Senate for sections of this course. Those criteria--which address matters of course outline, evaluation methods, and required reading--are as follows:

#### Approved Senate Criteria for the Synthesis Course:

"All sections of the synthesis course must:

- (1) Nurture and stimulate, either implicitly or explicitly, the students ability to think synthetically. In their proposals for sections of the course, instructors must identify the procedure by which this will be accomplished.
- (2) Contain challenging intellectual content addressing significant issues. In their proposals for sections of the course, instructors identify that content and those issues.
- (3) View the content from the perspectives and approaches of a minimum of two discrete disciplines. In their proposals for sections of the course, instructors must explain how this objective will be achieved.
- (4) Incorporate within its procedures for student evaluation specific methods to ensure that students' synthetic reasoning skills will be evaluated. In their proposals for sections of the course, instructors must identify the means by which this evaluation will be accomplished.
- (5) Address the concerns of women and minorities whenever possible. In their proposals for sections of the course, instructors must explain how they will do this.

"In addition, all sections of the synthesis course should:

- (1) Include a variety of assignments, some of which should require written responses, designed specifically to encourage the student to synthesize new ideas and approaches from the material presented.

- (2) Ensure, if exams are used as a method of student evaluation, that the exams will consist primarily of essay or discussion questions that will evaluate the student's ability to reason by synthesis, rather than by merely recalling content.
- (3) Require readings from an assigned list comprised largely of original/primary materials (as opposed to general surveys or conventional texts from a discipline) and representing at least two discrete disciplinary perspectives.
- (4) Assure the use of the most appropriate resources: these could include books and periodicals, guest lectures, films, audio and video tapes, field trips, and the experiences and perspectives of the students themselves.
- (5) Keep course prerequisites to a minimum."

#### VI. Special Resource Requirements

If individual sections of LS 499 involve equipment or other resources which the student is expected to supply, the proposal must enumerate those items.

#### VII. Bibliography

Proposals for individual sections of this course must include a bibliography of materials used to prepare for and to teach the course, as well as a list of resources upon which the course will draw.

## COURSE ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A. Details of the Course.

A1. This course will meet the requirement, passed by the Senate in May 1987, for a senior-level synthesis course.

A2. No, this does not change the content of existing courses.

A3. Although interdisciplinary courses have occasionally been offered at IUP, the inclusion of a required synthesis course is new. For a rationale, see attached copy of May 1987 Senate action.

A4. The course has not been offered on a trial basis; however, the Liberal Studies Committee requests permission to offer up to four experimental sections per semester to currently enrolled General Education students prior to the start-up date for Liberal Studies students. (See attached time table.) For these students, the course could be considered either an elective or a substitute for a General Education requirement. Before authorizing a substitution, the Director of Liberal Studies will secure the concurrence of the dean whose college would normally have offered the course for which LS 499 will substitute.

A5. No, this is not a dual-level course.

A6. No, this may not be taken for variable credit.

A7. Although interdisciplinary general education courses are offered at many colleges and universities, a course precisely like LS 499 is very rare. The "Tier III" courses at Ohio University come closest to what is proposed for LS 499. Lafayette College requires an interdisciplinary senior colloquium that focuses on current social issues; the course provides "a values-oriented, multidisciplinary perspective" under titles like "The Nuclear Arms Race," "Freedom of Expression: The Problem of Pornography," "The Printing Press and the Computer," "Society, Natural Resources, and Limits to Growth." Brown University has a category of interdisciplinary elective courses that are taught under a "university" rather than departmental designation.

A8. No, the course is not required by any outside agency, but this type of study is recommended in recent national reports on undergraduate curriculum reform. The Association of American College's 1988 report A New Vitality in General Education, after observing that the traditional curriculum relies too much on students to "do their own synthesizing," urges colleges to create "linking" courses to help students "integrate new knowledge into larger structures of understanding." Ernest Boyer, in College: The Undergraduate Experience in America (1986), writes that we need "a program of general education that introduces students not only to essential knowledge, but also to connections across the

disciplines, and, in the end, to the application of knowledge to life beyond the campus." Also, there is a nationally organized Association for Integrative Studies, which provides conferences, contacts, and publications; IUP is now an institutional member.

### Section B. Interdisciplinary Implications

B1. While we expect some sections of this course may be team taught, we do not expect many to be. Team teaching is only one model for presenting courses that cross disciplinary lines. Guest lecturers or readings can enlarge the number of perspectives presented. Senior students will have knowledge from their majors that they can contribute. But the most important point is that faculty are broader than their primary disciplinary identification would seem to suggest, and many now engage in teaching or conduct research that cuts across disciplinary boundaries. Ernest Boyer, among others, notes that over the last twenty years there have been some remarkable shifts within the world of scholarship: many of the "disciplines" have become amazingly interdisciplinary, and they regularly borrow insights and methodologies from each other and cross over old boundary lines at will. He writes, "We are encouraged by the prospect that, today, new academic alliances are being formed and that . . . knowledge crosses intellectual boundaries" (College, 91). Actually, if one message of the course is that educated adults must be able to look at issues from multiple perspectives, we see real advantages in modeling that by having a single professor teach the course.

B2. No, there are no corollary courses needed in the future.

B3. Some departments do offer seminars or other experiences for seniors in the major. LS 499 does not duplicate or interfere with these, because the goals are different. The purpose of Liberal Studies is breadth; the purpose of a major is study in depth. There is nothing wrong with having an culminating experience in each. LS 499 seeks to develop links between disciplines; departmental seminars seek enhancement within the discipline.

B4. Because the course is restricted to the last three semesters of an undergraduate degree program, no continuing education seats will need to be reserved.

### Sections C. Implementation

C1. a. Faculty. See attached memo from the provost.

b. Classroom space is adequate.

c-f. A modest amount of funding is allotted in the Liberal Studies FY89-90 budget to help with incidental costs that cannot be absorbed by usual departmental budgets; an effort will be made to include amounts in future budgets also.

C2. This course does not depend on grant funding, although a grant application has been submitted to SSHE's Faculty Development Fund.

C3. The course will be offered each semester and both summer sessions.

C4. Approximately 40 to 45 per semester; approximately 6 to 8 sections during the two summer sessions.

C5. The number of students per section will vary because different teaching strategies and other factors will affect optimal class size. Although some sections may, for good reason, be larger or smaller, sections are expected to average 25 to 30 students each.

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Attachments:

- A. Implementation Time Table (approximate)
- B. Provost's Memo on Staffing
- C. Forms for Submitting Proposals to Liberal Studies Committee



## IMPLEMENTATION TIME TABLE

(approximate)

## For the First Class of Students'

Freshman Year	Su 89: none	Fall 89: none	Sp 90: none
Sophomore Year	Su 90: none	Fall 90: none	Sp 91: 1-4 experimental
Junior Year	Su 91: 1-2	Fall 91: 4-6	Sp 92: 15-20
Senior Year	Su 92: 6-8	Fall 92: 42	Sp 93: 42

LSC# \_\_\_\_\_  
Action/Date \_\_\_\_\_

**COVER SHEET: Proposal for Section of LS499 Senior Synthesis**

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SECTION TITLE \_\_\_\_\_

PROFESSOR(S) \_\_\_\_\_

PREREQUISITES (Please see instructions) \_\_\_\_\_

SCHEDULING INFORMATION. When is the earliest semester/summer session that you will be ready to teach the section. Do you anticipate offering this topic repeatedly? If so, how frequently? (Please see instructions)

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SIGNATURES: Professor(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairperson(s) \_\_\_\_\_

College Dean(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Liberal Studies \_\_\_\_\_

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PLEASE ATTACH THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS TO THE COVER SHEET

- I. "Synthesis Summary"--one or two pages explaining your proposal, including: (1) your topic, especially its scope and significance; (2) the disciplines (like biology, economics, aesthetics) whose perspectives you will use; (3) the contributions each discipline will make in terms of point of view, theory, and methodology; (4) your pedagogical methods, including the strategies and activities you will employ to enable students to think synthetically.
- II. Syllabus presented in UWUCC format: (1) Course objectives; (2) Detailed course outline; (4) Evaluation methods; (5) Required reading; (6) Special resource requirements, if any; and (7) Bibliography you used in preparing this proposal. Your syllabus must indicate how you will "address the concerns of women and minorities whenever possible."
- III. Publicity Form, to be submitted for publication in the semester-by-semester Undergraduate Course Schedule.

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PLEASE NUMBER ALL PAGES. PROVIDE 12 COPIES TO LIBERAL STUDIES COMMITTEE.

**PUBLICITY FORM FOR SYNTHESIS SECTION**

For Publication in Semester-by-semester Undergraduate Course Schedule

**TOPIC TITLE:**

**PREREQUISITES:**

**PROFESSOR:**

**DESCRIPTION (limit 100 words):**

**READINGS (provide author and short title):**

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A SYNTHESIS PROPOSAL

1. PLEASE CONSIDER CAREFULLY TWO DOCUMENTS FOUND IN THIS PACKET:
  - a. Criteria for the Synthesis Course, as approved by the Univerisity Senate, February 1989.
  - b. "A Model for Thinking About the Nature of Synthesis," prepared by an ad-hoc synthesis planning committee, Fall 1988.
2. PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS. The Liberal Studies Committee is willing to react informally to brief, one or two page preliminary proposals prior to your investing substantial time in preparing a full syllabus. This is not required, but it is a way to see if you are "on the right track" and receive some suggestions while you're still getting started.
3. PREPARING YOUR PROPOSAL. Look carefully at the sample proposal in this packet. It is not intended to suggest a "best" or "right" or "only" way to design a course. It is intended to define the form that the LSC asks you to follow when submitting a proposal.

When reviewing your proposal the LSC will be equally interested in the content and the pedagogical approach. The content should be intellectually challenging and significant; the pedagogical approach should nurture synthetic thinking. The committee encourages proposals that are inventive, creative, experimental, and that show a willingness to take risks. The committee will also expect the proposal to be carefully planned and to be consistent with the Senate's criteria. Your attention is called especially to the criteria relating to the inclusion of women and minorities, to the use of writing, and to the selection of reading that reflects more than one discipline. The use of "conventional textbooks" is strongly discouraged.

4. PREREQUISITES: Synthesis sections should be accessible to as many senior students as possible. Because students cannot enroll until they are in one of their last three semesters, you can assume that most, or nearly all, of their Liberal Studies knowledge area requirements are behind them. If it is absolutely necessary for students to have chosen certain core LS courses rather than others--for instance, chemistry as their science option or economics as one of their social sciences, you may indicate this as a prerequisite. You should consider, however, that adding such a restriction may eliminate some students whose insights will be valuable precisely because they bring other perspectives from other LS courses or from their majors. As the Senate's criteria put it: "Keep course prerequisites to a minimum." You are strongly advised against listing any upper-level courses as prerequisites.
5. PUBLICITY SHEET. Information about synthesis sections will appear in the Undergraduate Course Schedule on a semester by semester basis. This is your opportunity to present your topic as attractively and as

accurately as possible to students who are choosing sections. You should avoid the use of jargon and obscure, technical language. Students will find it helpful to read your own explanation of the topic (how broadly or narrowly you define it, which disciplinary perspectives you will emphasize, and how you expect to approach it); they will also be interested in the types of assignments, classroom activities, and evaluation methods you will use.

6. PROVIDING SCHEDULING INFORMATION. Whatever you say here is tentative and intended only to assist the director of Liberal Studies in general planning. Your semester schedule is prepared by your department chairperson in consultation with the college dean. There is no prescribed pattern for your involvement in LS 499. Some of you will likely choose to teach the same topic over and over; others may choose to submit new topics rather frequently. Some of you will probably teach LS 499 fairly regularly; others will move in and out irregularly according to your other responsibilities. You must also realize that in any given semester (and especially in the summers) we may have more volunteers than we need, and so the Liberal Studies director, deans, and chairpersons will have to work this out as equitably as possible with both students and faculty in mind.
7. DEADLINES. To allow your chairperson sufficient time to include LS 499 in your schedule, you will need to have your proposal approved during the semester one year prior to the one in which you first intend to teach the course. That is, Fall 1992 sections must be approved during Fall 1991, Spring 1993 during the Spring 1992, and so forth.