

Minutes of the meeting of the Black Curriculum Committee.

Tuesday, November 5, 1968, 12:15 - 1:30 p.m., Sharples Dining Hall.

Members present: Mr. Pierson, Mr. Wright, Mr. Legesse, Mr. Van Til, Mr. Shackford, Marilyn Allman, Al Dietrich, Don Mizell, Clint Etheridge.

Review from the last meeting: we agreed that we will not propose Black Studies as a separate major but as a "rubric or a concentration"--i.e. as an additional focus within a major.

The first question discussed was: What shall we expect or ask other departments to do? Is there extra pressure we need to put on departments (eg. English or Psychology), or shall we just wait and see how our proposal takes effect?

1. Can departments be sure of getting money to hire new teachers and moonlighters when that is necessary? It seems that the College is willing to support the program at least initially for quite a long way. We probably do not have to worry/about getting funds.

2. Should there be a basic introductory course? This could take two possible forms: additions to present introductory courses, or a new, interdisciplinary Introduction to Black Studies. The interdisciplinary course is a good idea, but not possible in the near future. In making additions to present introductory courses, in Sociology-Anthropology there might be added a special 20 level course--that can be taken after Soc-Anth 1. Five 20 level courses are now offered.

3. Would an interdisciplinary introductory course satisfy the distribution requirement? The purpose of the distribution requirement is to introduce students to various disciplines, not materials.

4. Latitude would have to be allowed for students in fringe areas such as Economics or English, where most of the Black Studies courses they would take would be offered in fields outside their major. (This bias would naturally

SRC  
+ return  
CCL

push students interested in Black Studies into more central majors--eg. History and Sociology-Anthropology). Introductory courses in other fields might be waived so that students would not have to go through them in order to get to the Black Studies courses offered. History 1-2 is already waived for certain terminal courses; the same might apply to courses in Black Studies. English 1 also might be waived.

5. Should we set a minimum number (3,6,5?) of courses in Black Studies to be required for any Black Studies Concentration? We should not specify the number now.

The second topic of discussion was perspective and personnel.

1. Mr. Wright said that if perspective is important then SASS has a role in influencing appointments. If we are trying to present special subject matter with a variety of points of view, then it is not a question of whether SASS should be involved but whether students in general should. And this is a separate issue that does not concern this committee. Clint said that Black Studies would not try to be "consistent in its message"--Swarthmore cannot be a black liberation school. Mr. Wright said that there seem to be three levels of "perspective": first, that a teacher should be black; second, that he not be an "Uncle Tom"; third, that he be an academic scholar. If the third point is the only really important point, then the faculty is quite capable of judging this by itself. Mr. Pierson said that academic scholarship was not the only important factor in making appointments. Black Studies is an unusual area and does not fit into the regular system. Here we need a fuller approach, one that involves a cross-section of the community.

2. Scholars in Black Studies are rare, especially black scholars. Because of this situation white colleges will be accused of draining black scholars from black institutions. Should Swarthmore be concerned with this problem of "imperializing"?



Mr. Van Til suggested that this could be solved by faculty exchanges--eg. we exchange an economist for a historian or sociologist. This way we could avoid the charge of imperializing. Don Mizell said that this would apply only to part-time faculty--it is also important to get full-time faculty. Mr. Van Til said that not all faculty need to be black--especially after a while (though they are very important for a symbolic beginning). Don said that he hoped it would be more than an initial token symbol, that the attempt to get black faculty would persist as a priority. We are already over-stocked with white teachers in this area (African and American history, Sociology). Mr. Van Til said that he would be glad to release his courses in race / to another teacher, since he would then be free to offer courses more directly related to his present interests.

Don suggested that we get graduate students to teach Black Studies courses if other teachers are not available. Other possibilities are sharing teachers with the University of Pennsylvania, Haverford, and Bryn Mawr. Could a full professor be hired in a department that is already top-heavy with professors? Mr. Pierson said that for rare teachers special arrangements could quite likely be made. For example, perhaps a professor would be hired to teach one Economics course, and the rest of his time would be take up directing a research project or community study program. Money from the Ford or Rockefeller Foundations might well be available for such an arrangement.

Returning to the question of "imperializing", Mr. Legesse said that if we are going to try to get top scholars we will probably have to get them from the major schools in the country, not from black institutions. Howard and Lincoln are having difficulty hiring black teachers. Most of the younger teachers are white.

Marilyn Allman explained that this was partly due to the administrations in these schools which are trying to make the schools more white--both faculty and students. Don Mizell added that most of the power in black institutions is white (trustees) and most of the financing comes from white philanthropists. The black administrations are therefore often quite strict in discouraging black power on campus, for fear of losing funds. As a result, liberal young black teachers find that they have much more freedom at white institutions. The general conclusion was that we should not worry about charges of imperialism but should play the market as we can.

Marilyn Allman suggested that we try to get more black people into this community. One way would be to open the Black Studies program to people from Chester, with no tuition fee.

We will meet again next Wednesday, November 13, at 5:30 p.m. in Sharples Dining Hall.