

108.22
Special Committee
on Black Studies
Minutes of the meeting of the Black Curriculum Committee.

Tuesday, October 15, 12:15 - 1:20 pm., Sharples Dining Hall.

Members present; Faculty: Mr. Pierson, Mr. Van Til, Mr. Wright, Mr. Shackford.

Students: Marilyn Allman, Allen Dietrich, Clint Etheridge, Nolan Jones (Post Baccalaureate student in Political Science, sat in as a substitute for Marilyn Holifield).

Informal preliminary discussion: Can we recommend to the Political Science department that they consider Mr. Lester Lacey of Howard University (who spoke at Swarthmore, Sunday October 13, at a SASS-sponsored lecture) for a possible appointment? Yes, we can suggest that they do so. Allen Dietrich distributed copies of notes he wrote up from an interview with Edward Sullivan, Dean of Students at Princeton, with whom he had discussed the Black Studies program there. The report is appended to the minutes.

Mr. Pierson has talked to Jean Kopytoff who is informally in charge of Black Studies at CCNY. The large size of the school allows much greater flexibility in the program than is possible at Swarthmore. She is teaching a course in African History and has about equal numbers of black and white students. Her comment on Black Studies is that we need complete openness and honesty in this field, the students do not want to be talked down to, what they want is a good tough course.

The meeting began more formally when Clint Etheridge read out loud his version of the proposal we should make to the faculty; (his written report is appended to the minutes. Since the version was incomplete and copies had not been dittoed for distribution it was difficult to discuss the proposal in detail. It was agreed that student members of the committee should be allowed to use the secretaries to either the Economics or History departments to do typing and dittoing, etc. so that this situation can be avoided.

The main ideas of the version were discussed anyway. Clint wondered if in the masterplan we should spell out the alternatives that we have rejected and thus anticipate arguments and questions from the faculty. It was suggested that we keep the proposal clear, distinct, and unified so that the faculty can vote on it, and that any comments by ^{way of} explanation and argument could be written in a separate report to be read along with the proposal. It was also pointed out that the faculty often agrees to take a course of action without agreeing on the reasons for the action; we should be more interested in getting approval of our conclusions than of the motivations and thinking behind the conclusions.

Mr. Pierson noted that Clint's version of the proposal followed the same format as the original version, but added strength and punch to two points:

1. We should propose a major along the lines of International Relations now rather than waiting a few years for experimentation with courses.

(The original version wanted to avoid a hassle over organizational problems.)

2. We should propose that the Black Curriculum Committee oversee the program-- we need not ask for formal powers but could serve as a communications pipe-line and as a lobbying group.

Both points were discussed. The major would be a hyphenated major, as is International Relations, adding further requirements to the requirements of the major to which it is attached. Can this kind of program be discussed in more detail at this point? Some thought it should be. Some warned of overformalization: it is premature to define a major specifically at this point, we should remain flexible; our aim now is to get the faculty to approve of the principle of a major, then work it out in detail later. Clint warned of complacency: if we do not propose a major now the program might be stunted at this point--though this may be as much as we can expect of Swarthmore.

There are several possibilities for the administration of such a major:

1. All of the 8 departments that plan to offer courses in Black Studies could offer a hyphenated major in Black Studies, to be administered by each department separately.
2. For the sake of centralization the Black Studies major might be attached to only one department, which would then administer it.
3. Or rotate it among the departments involved.
4. The Black Curriculum Committee could administer it.

It was objected that it would not really be possible for the present Black Curriculum Committee to run the program since we have no power. Mr. Van Til thought that the present committee could oversee the program if we avoid setting up unnecessary administrative structures. The main problem is to see that there are a large number of courses in the curriculum. The administration of the program could be simplified by having no admissions requirements beyond the requirements for the major to which it is attached, and by having no comprehensive examination. All we would have to do is state that a student has concentrated in Black Studies after he has taken a certain number of Black Studies courses.

Admission requirements to the program will probably not need to differ from those of the attached major; however, for a meaningful program some kind of coherent examination at the end seems necessary. Perhaps an oral examination, after the comprehensives in the attached major. Sociology-Anthropology no longer has comprehensives but has substituted a thesis. Marilyn Holifield suggested that perhaps a thesis or special project could be required for a Black Studies major, to be reviewed by the appropriate faculty.

Having the program attached to any of the 8 departments seems a little unrealistic. Mr. Pierson felt that only two fields were really significant for a hyphenated major in Black Studies: History and Sociology-Anthropology.

Black faculty will be hard to find. But with nearby colleges and commuting from New York and Washington, part-time faculty should be fairly available. It is, however, important to have full-time faculty because they can give more to the program and to the college.

We plan to meet again next Tuesday, October 29, at 12:15 p.m., in one of the small dining rooms in Sharples.

Appended to the minutes: Allen Dietrich's "Report on Black Studies at Princeton: Interview with Dean of Students, Edward Sullivan."

Report on Black Studies at Princeton

Interview with Dean of Students Edward Sullivan

Some useful information (perhaps)

1. There were several conferences on incorporating black studies into college curriculums this summer. Two Mr. Sullivan mentioned were at Morehouse and Morgan State. He suggested that we might be able to get some kind of reports from the meetings through the National Humanities Council.
2. The final report of Princeton's Committee on black studies should be available in mid-October. Since it is being made as a report to the President of Princeton, Dean Sullivan suggested that President Smith request a copy of it from President Goheen.
3. There are two young black teachers at Princeton who are teaching some courses in black studies (offered for the first time this fall at student request). Their names are Mr. and Mrs. Drury and they teach history and literature.

Black Studies at Princeton

1. A student-faculty-administration committee was formed last spring at Princeton to make evaluations and recommendations on black studies.
2. One of the first results of this committee is that a course they supported (and Princeton black students organized along with a black Princeton professor) will be offered this fall. The enrollment was estimated to be two-thirds black students.
3. In previewing the report, Dean Sullivan said that the organization of a Afro-American Studies Program was recommended. This would pull courses together from both the graduate and undergraduate divisions of the university. It was hoped that some of the instructors for new undergraduate courses would come from the graduate division. The Afro-American Studies Program would become one of a number of undergraduate-graduate programs at Princeton. On the undergraduate level, degrees would be given in departments, and a special certificate or some other recognition would be given for concentrating in Afro-American Studies.

Unfortunately, the practical aspects of a black studies program at Princeton are more easily faced than at Swarthmore. Having their own graduate division solves many problems. Dean Sullivan couldn't warn of any pitfalls in setting up a black studies program. He only suggested that some form of concrete action be taken soon, especially along experimental lines.

Allen Dietrich

October 15, 1968

BLACK STUDIES AT SWARTHMORE

A Preliminary Proposal

The Black Curriculum Committee wishes to recommend the establishment of a Black Studies rubric or concentration in the Swarthmore curriculum which will enable students:

1. to become familiar with an area of intellectual challenge and current critical importance,
2. to prepare for potential careers relevant to the urban and racial crisis of our times and/or more constructive citizenship relating to that crisis.

To these ends, the Committee feels that a concentration of study within the curriculum which cuts across departmental lines is desirable. The program should be lean and unencumbered in its administration, for it will be made up of a number of offerings or parts of offerings in discrete fields. At an institution the size of Swarthmore the scope of such a program will necessarily be severely limited. Nevertheless, the Committee feels the work should be designated as a concentration of study to underline the presence of these offerings, and to permit the College and its students to view the offerings as a whole.

Since some of the suggestions for work in this area are still in the planning stage, it is not now possible to specify the exact content of the work, and any initial decision to establish the program would have to be reviewed after the new offerings have been introduced. The following departments are suggested for possible inclusion within the Black Studies rubric: Art History, Economics, English, History, Music, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology-Anthropology. As

appropriate offerings or changes in existing offerings are introduced by these departments, the courses and seminars would be listed separately as parts of the concentration in Black Studies.

It is the Committee's view that essential to the success of any such undertaking is the supplementation of existing offerings in this area with black intellectual perspectives. At present, offerings in relevant fields are largely taught by white faculty and our students have little first-hand exposure to current thinking among black scholars. If Black American and African perspectives are added to existing views, the curriculum will provide students with a richer academic experience. As a general guideline, therefore, the Committee recommends that each department represented in the program seek to present its offerings from a multi-racial and multi-cultural view wherever possible.

There are very few persons with this background who can meet Swarthmore's standards for faculty appointments, so suggestions as to possible candidates will need to be sought from all members of the college community: administration, faculty, student body and outside groups. A possible source of teaching personnel which deserves special attention is exchange of faculty with Lincoln, Cheyney and similar institutions.