

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

January 10, 1969

To: Students, Faculty and Staff

From: Frank C. Pierson, Chairman
Black Studies Curriculum Committee

The faculty members of the Black Studies Curriculum Committee think it would be useful if every member of the College community could see the enclosed report, dated December 17, 1968, and signed by every member of the Committee. The plan proposed is analogous to that of the concentration in International Relations in that Black Studies would be recognized as part of a student's major field, but would not form a separate discipline itself.

Report of the Black Studies Curriculum Committee

The Black Studies Curriculum Committee was appointed by Courtney Smith in May, 1968 as an outgrowth of discussions with members of the Swarthmore Afro-American Students Society. Spokesmen for this group emphasized that little work is being done in the Black Studies area at Swarthmore and that the resulting gap in the curriculum should be filled as soon as possible.* In his letter of May 17, 1968 President Smith said:

"I will continue to encourage departments to be considering what studies can appropriately and effectively be made a part of their offering at the earliest opportunity but it is my hope that your committee will give focus to all of our efforts and see how individual additions to our program may build into some larger and more coherent program."

This report is addressed to the latter issue.

General Plan

While some important questions remain unresolved, the Committee agrees that Black Studies should be made a part of the Swarthmore curriculum at this time. As citizens, our students will need to develop greater understanding of Afro-American and African experiences. Many will pursue careers which will bear directly or indirectly on the urban and racial crisis. Scholarly work in Black Studies has already achieved significant results and major gains can be expected in the near future. This is an area in which members of our faculty will have increasing need for general familiarity and, in some cases, special expertise. The beginnings of a program already exist at the College and the addition of further work would fit in well with present offerings in a number of departments. For these reasons we conclude that Black Studies should be given a distinctive place in the Swarthmore curriculum.

*Black Studies may be defined as the role of blacks in society considered from cultural, historical and social points of view.

More serious differences arise over precisely what this place should be. Should Black Studies be treated as a separate major or as a scattering of courses along present lines, as a minor which could be attached to certain existing majors or as different groupings of courses among which a student could choose a particular rubric depending on his individual academic interests?

Initially, the Committee feels a broad and rather flexible approach should be followed with respect to these questions. Some of the courses are still in the planning stage. Faculty appointments are still to be made. The direction of student interests in this area is still unclear. The precise ways in which the different aspects of Black Studies can best be related to various academic disciplines are still to be determined. Thus, any step taken now should not preclude major readjustments later on.

The Committee accordingly concludes that students majoring in any subject bearing on Black Studies should be permitted to concentrate in this area as an aspect of the work in their major. Tentatively, the subjects falling in this category are Art History, Economics, English, History, Music, Political Science, and Sociology-Anthropology, but others might be added at a later date.

Recommendation I. Students majoring in subjects of which Black Studies are a part will be permitted to concentrate in the latter area as an aspect of the work in their major under conditions approved by the departments involved.

Specific Elements

Since the approach to Black Studies will differ among departments, it will not be possible to spell out in detail the requirements for the different concentrations in this area at this time. If general approval for the different concentrations in this area is given to the Committee proposal, individual departments will be invited to establish such requirements as they deem appropriate. Certain overall provisions, however, call for general faculty action.

One such question is whether the minimum requirement for a concentration in Black Studies should be set as low as two or three courses or as high as six or seven. If we limit the question of minimum requirements to courses that will be primarily concerned with Black Studies alone, it seems unlikely that students could take more than six courses in this area in addition to the work in their major. On the other hand, anything below four courses would hardly be enough to qualify as a concentration. It therefore seems appropriate, at least for the immediate future, to set the minimum at approximately five courses.

Another question is whether the work in Black Studies should be limited to the standard course form or whether considerable diversity should be allowed. Two quite different considerations need to be kept in mind in this connection:

1. In a relatively new area of this sort a certain amount of flexibility will need to be exercised just to get the program off the ground.
2. If the approaches taken by individual departments are not carefully planned and closely monitored, the work in this area will prove of little lasting significance.

The Committee therefore feels that experimentation with thesis projects, special reading courses, off-campus work-study arrangements and the like should be permitted in this area only where there is assurance the work will meet customary standards of the departments involved.

Still another question is whether there should be one or two basic courses which would be required of all students concentrating in Black Studies. Eventually, this might be desirable but it is too early to say whether, for example, a particular course in history or sociology would fill this need. On the other hand, since introductory course work in a number of departments is or can be limited to one semester, basic courses in Black Studies could be made available to students in these departments in the following semester of

the same year. The specific courses which students wishing to concentrate in Black Studies will take will have to be worked out by the individual departments concerned.

Recommendation II. Students concentrating in Black Studies will take at least five semester courses or their equivalent in this area. Departments in fields bearing on this subject will be encouraged to offer a basic course in Black Studies which could be taken after the first semester of the regular introductory course has been completed.

Staff Recruitment

If students at Swarthmore are to gain a full and balanced understanding of the Black Studies area, it is important that they have access to authorities and observers with black as well as white perspectives. Since both our students and faculty are predominantly white, the Committee believes that black teachers with black perspective should be given top priority in the staffing of personnel for the Black Studies program.

The problem is that many other institutions are planning or have already taken similar steps and the number of qualified black scholars does not even approach the extent of the demand. Some argue that if institutions like Swarthmore aggressively compete for these teachers, the Negro colleges and other less well endowed schools will be seriously undercut, the net gain of all our efforts coming to less than zero.

The view of the Committee is that a black scholar who decides he would be most effective at Swarthmore should be permitted to make this choice himself, and that, in the long run at least, it would be advantageous for all concerned if the options open to such scholars were many rather than few. At the same time, the scarcity of supply obviously poses a formidable problem and we

will have to resort to a variety of arrangements in order to attract qualified personnel. Some of the possibilities are part-time appointments, joint appointments with Haverford and Bryn Mawr, exchange professorships with Lincoln and Cheyney State, and visiting scholars from such institutions as Howard and the New School for Afro-American Thought in Washington, D. C. Without impairing essential academic standards, the College will probably have to consider persons for appointments in this area who do not possess some of the more usual academic credentials. The members of the Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society, majors in the departments concerned and other interested students should participate actively in finding qualified personnel.

Recommendation III. Recognizing the acute interest which the black students as represented by their organization, the Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society, majors and other interested students have in the successful development of this program, the faculty recommends that such students have an active participating voice in both the recruitment and evaluation of potential personnel. In order to correct the imbalance in its total curricular offerings, Swarthmore should emphasize the black perspective in its Black Studies offerings by making a special effort to recruit black teachers who will also meet the college's high academic standards. Part-time appointments and sharing arrangements will have to be considered because of the severe scarcity of qualified personnel.

Black Studies Curriculum Committee:

Marilyn C. Allman
Allen J. Dietrich
Clinton A. Etheridge
Marilyn J. Holifield
Don A. Mizell
Asmarom Legesse
John S. Shackford
Jon Van Til
Harrison M. Wright
Frank C. Pierson, Chairman

December 16, 1968

Swarthmore College
Curriculum Offerings in Black Studies
1968-69

Economics

Social Economics course (Marcus Alexis): the economics of race, discrimination and poverty; comparative educational, housing, and health patterns, consumption patterns in center city areas, programs for dealing with urban poverty. Dr. Alexis, a nationally known Negro economist, is Professor of Economics, School of Business Administration, University of Rochester.

Labor course (Frank Pierson): sections of course deal with employment and unemployment in urban centers, movement of labor from rural to urban areas, discrimination in hiring and promotion policies, black worker career patterns, private and public manpower development programs.

Labor and Social Economics seminar (Frank Pierson and Frederic Pryor): several weeks on the foregoing topics.

History

African History course and seminar (Harrison Wright):

American History courses and seminars (Robert Bannister and James Field):

The general courses in American history and the American history seminar deal with selected issues in this area.

Colloquium on special area (Harrison Wright): e.g., last year's colloquium on South Africa.

Political Science

Politics of Urban Ghetto course (Paul Lutzker and Alvin Echols):

According to Mr. Lutzker, "The course is conceived of as a confrontation of the general concepts and theoretical approaches of the discipline with the concerns of people involved in community organization. In what ways can confrontation with concrete problems clarify the ambiguities of the discipline's formulations of general principles? In what ways can the work of academics aid community action organizations in understanding the nature of the decision-making process they are trying to influence or alter?" Mr. Echols, an active leader in the Philadelphia Black Community, is head of the North City Congress.

Politics of Africa course (Raymond Hopkins)

Other courses and seminars, such as Political Development, Political Sociology, and Politics and Legislation, bear on this general area.

Psychology

A number of courses, including Psychology of Attitudes, Social Psychology of Social Issues, and Problems in Urban Education, bear on this general area.

Sociology and Anthropology

Courses:

Societies and Cultures of Africa (Asmarom Legesse)

Race and Ethnic Relations in the U.S. (Jon Van Til)

Social Change (Robert Mitchell): in studying theories and case studies of social change, special attention is given in this course to the modernization process in Africa.

Cities and Society (Jon Van Til)

Seminars:

Race and Culture (Jon Van Til)

Urban Sociology (Jon Van Til)