

## The “Dumbing Down” of the curriculum at W&L- November, 2018

Over the last several years, a number of courses have been added to the curriculum which seem of dubious academic value, dedicated to the espousal of a political agenda, trivial, inane, or some combination of the above. A review of the current catalogue by departments is revealing:

1. Creating Comics- English Department
2. Superheroes (i.e. comic book characters)- English Department
3. Literature, Race, and Ethnicity- English Department
4. Representations of Women, Gender and Sexuality in World Literature- English Dept.
5. Fresh/Local/Wild; The Poetics of Food- English Dept.
6. Literature of Gender and Sexuality before 1900- English Dept.
7. Cowboys and Indians (described as a post-modern study)- English Department
8. Muslims in the Movies- History Dept.
9. Women and Gender in Modern Europe- History Dept.
10. History of Violence in America- History Dept.
11. Morning in America? Society, Culture, and Politics in the Age of Reagan (notice the question mark after “Morning in America”)- History Dept.
12. Building a Suburban Nation: Race, Class, and Politics in Post-War America-History Dept.
13. African Feminisms- History Dept.
14. Queering Colonialism- The brief description states that “colonialism has simultaneously supported and been supported by heteronormative, patriarchal, and white-supremacist regimes.” -History Dept.
15. News, Media, Race, and Ethnicity- Journalism Dept.
16. Post-modernism: Power, Difference, and Disruption- Course description states that after reading post-modern writers, “we read several critical appropriations of these works in contemporary race theory, post-colonial studies, and feminist philosophy.-Philosophy Dept
17. Social Inequalities and Fair Opportunity- Philosophy Dept. Aside from the appropriateness of this course in general terms, why is this in the Philosophy Department, rather than Sociology or Political Science
18. Martin Luther King Jr.: Poverty, Justice, and Love- Philosophy Dept. Again, if anywhere, this should be in Sociology, Political Science, or History
19. Philosophy of Sex-Philosophy Dept.
20. Philosophy of Science Fiction- Philosophy Dept. Is this course really necessary?

These are just some of the courses which have been or are being offered and which seem of dubious value. There are course in other departments as well, but we did not try to list all of them. As in other colleges, many of these courses seem to exist to meet the ever narrowing and increasingly politicized specializations of the professoriate. Graduate schools have encouraged this narrow and often trivial pursuit of knowledge and research interests. As has been said, graduate students are often encouraged to "know more and more about less and less." This is reflected in the increasing number of course which

focus on race, gender, class, etc. Why cannot a broader approach to curriculum be encouraged? For example, we would encourage a study of colonialism, but do we really need a course on “Queering Colonialism”. Do we really need classes in comic books with so much great literature to study? Can't we just study World Literature, instead of having a class dedicated to women, race, and gender in said literature? Surely, these topics would arise naturally without having whole classes dedicated to them. Would it not be possible to save money by eliminating some of these courses? Such questions should at least be asked and considered. The Generals Redoubt encourages a broad discussion of curricular issues among all the elements of the W&L community.

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