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Teaching Across Differences

A Proposal for Co-Taught Courses

Thanks to funding from donors, the Benson Center has resources available to sponsor, on an annual basis, a limited number of co-taught courses designed to showcase how faculty who hold contrasting points of view can engage constructively on controversial topics.

Each of the two participating faculty members will work with their Department Chair to determine if the course serves as part of regular teaching load or as an additional course. We anticipate the courses to be offered under existing course numbers within a department and to be approved by the course approval process outlined in the department’s by-laws. Interdisciplinary proposals are particularly encouraged, in which case the course might be jointly listed under two different course numbers or some other mechanisms will be utilized. Rostered instructors and regular faculty are eligible to apply.

The course should be constructed around a topic that is the subject of reasonably well-known controversy. (Specialized disputes within a discipline do not qualify.) The faculty members should represent contrasting positions within that controversy. The course should be expressly designed to facilitate student dialogue by faculty modeling constructive, well-balanced critique of each other’s points. It may be offered at any undergraduate level (1000-4999), although strong preferences will be given to lower-level courses (1000-2999).

The Benson Center will make calls for proposals once or twice per year, and will fund up to five such courses per year. Proposals should specify

a) the instructors who wish to participate;

b) the course number(s) that would be the vehicle for the course;

c) a draft syllabus indicating the course content and how the course facilitates student dialogue;

d) the intended semester;

e) whether the course would be an overload or other mechanism for either instructor;

f) that permission for the arrangement has been granted by the relevant department chair(s).

With the agreement of each faculty’s Chair, the course will count for 1.0 course towards each faculty’s regular course load. Faculty can instead choose to teach the course as an overload. For each such course approved, the Benson Center will provide up to $10,000 to the participating faculty to be used in the following ways: a) to cover course replacement costs if needed by one or both Departments; or b) to be divided equally by the two faculty if they wish to use it as compensation for an additional job (overload). Additional funding, up to $4000, is also available to host a visiting guest lecturer, as a way of bringing further diversity of viewpoint into the course.



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