# IN 140/IN 183: University Seminar
# 2007-2008 Assessment Report
# Dr. Robert Money, Coordinator of University Seminar

## (1) Context: The Need for a New Assessment Plan

In the recent past, our curriculum suffered from a lack of clarity regarding the role of IN140, University Seminar; it has been unclear exactly what we wanted IN140 to do. Sometimes, we used it as a "dumping ground." For example, if we thought a skill set important but did not know where to put it (e.g., oral communication), we put it in IN140, without giving serious attention to the implications that this might have for the internal coherence of the course. In addition, we paid little attention to how IN140 might connect to the larger curriculum. We tended to treat IN140 as less of an academic course and more of a stand alone "orientation to college" course. Our inability to see IN140 as an academic course connected to the larger curriculum was, in part, a function of a lack of full coherence within our University Studies program and a lack of clarity regarding how our University Studies program was connected to the University's educational mission, values, and goals.

During 2006-2007, a consensus emerged that our University Studies program needed to undergo re-examination and revision. A Nyberg seminar was convened during the summer of 2007 to focus on this project. The Seminar, comprised of six faculty members representing all colleges across the University, was charged with "refreshing the MPSL in ways that better meet our stated University Studies learning objectives." Accordingly, the Seminar was asked to "produce a definitive set of suggested revisions to the University Studies portion of the MPSL." The product of the Seminar's summer work was a formal report, "Refreshing the Millikin Program of Student Learning." This report proposed numerous revisions to our University Studies program, including several that impacted directly on IN140, University Seminar. The Nyberg report served as the basis for the eventual recommendations for reform of the University Studies program brought to the full faculty by the Council on Curriculum during the fall 2007 semester. Those recommendations were voted on and accepted by the full faculty during the fall 2007 semester.

As a result of these revisions, IN140 was reconceptualized, reformed, and refocused, especially in relation to its function vis-à-vis the larger University

Studies curriculum. Among the more important revisions to IN140 were the following:

- IN140 was formally understood as an **academic** course first and foremost, charged with providing students an "*introduction* to academic inquiry at the college level."
- IN140 was formally understood as the place in our curriculum where students would be *introduced* to the skill set of "**critical and ethical reasoning**." This skill set thread would run vertically through the sequential elements of the University Studies curriculum (i.e., IN250, IN251, and IN350).
- IN140 was formally understood as one of two places in our first-semester first-year curriculum where students would engage in **reflection** (the other location is IN150, Critical Writing, Reading, and Research – the course "cohorted" with IN140). This skill set thread would also run vertically through the sequential elements of the University Studies curriculum (i.e., IN250, IN251, and IN350).
- IN140's focus on student reflection would be intentionally connected to its use of **service learning**. Connecting student reflection to service learning allows IN140 to introduce students to one hallmark of a Millikin education – the commitment to "theory and practice."
- IN140 would continue to engage students in specific **orientation topics**, with the help of a First Year Experience Mentor. This allows IN140 to serve as a targeted location within our curriculum where we take seriously our obligation to help students transition to college life, both academically and socially. This embodies our commitment to the education of the whole person.
- IN140 was formally relieved of its obligation to deliver oral communication. A new element within the University Studies program, "Oral Communication Studies," would target the delivery of that skill set.

This reconceptualization of IN140 links it in very clear and very intentional ways to larger University values and to the larger curriculum, particularly the sequential elements of the University Studies program. As a result of these changes, our assessment of this component of the University Studies curriculum needs to be revised and refocused. This report, responding to the larger institution-wide curricular changes that have occurred over the past year, seeks to establish a clear framework within which the assessment of IN140 can take place. Where possible and appropriate, it will employ methods of assessment used in the past. However, the fundamental reconceptualization of IN140 that has taken place demands that new methods of assessment be utilized going

forward. Of equal importance, it requires that faculty teaching the course be informed of these methods *in advance of teaching the course*. Thus, the primary aim of this report is to put in place a clear assessment structure going forward, full implementation of which will begin fall 2008. This report will be distributed over the summer to all faculty members scheduled to teach IN140 in the fall 2008 semester.

## (2) Description and Learning Goals

The formal course description and the formal course learning goals for University Seminar are as follows:

IN140. University Seminar (3) Fall semester freshman year. This course is an introduction to academic inquiry at the college level. Seminar topics vary across sections. Each section engages students in critical and ethical reasoning, includes a service learning component, and addresses specific orientation topics. The learning outcome goals for students taking IN140 are that students will be able to:

1. use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities;
2. reflect on the significance of contributions to community through service learning; and
3. work collaboratively and creatively with diverse others.

As indicated by the course learning goals, the course asks teachers and students to do several different things. Regardless of the particular substantive content of the course (content is chosen by the particular faculty member teaching the course), each course is expected to do the following: engage students in **ethical reasoning**, engage students in **service learning with reflection**, and discuss **orientation topics** pertaining to the first-year student.

The University Seminar experience is intended to be a *unique* learning opportunity for first-year students entering the university. University Seminar is an *introduction* to academic inquiry; it is not an introduction to any particular major. This distinction is crucial for understanding the learning goals of the course. University Seminar is an academic course designed to facilitate the development of certain specific skill sets while engaging students in a particular substantive content. While allowing for great diversity of substantive content among sections, this introduction to academic inquiry is anchored by two key

skills: (1) critical and ethical reasoning, and (2) reflection. By engaging students in critical and ethical reasoning and reflection, the course introduces students to skill sets that will be further developed by the sequential elements of the University Studies program as well as courses in the students' chosen majors. Moreover, by engaging students in critical and ethical reasoning and reflection, the course facilitates the development of skill sets that are indispensible to professional success, democratic citizenship in a global environment, and the discovery and creation of a personal life of meaning and value. By having student engage in reflection about their service learning experiences, the course takes academic skills out of the formal classroom setting and connects them with our larger community. The course, thus, serves as an initial introduction to Millikin's commitment to "theory-practice" education, a pedagogical commitment that will be reinforced in the students' chosen majors.

In addition to its academic focus, the course also provides students with an opportunity to build community on campus. All students enrolled in a fall section of University Seminar participate in First Week orientation. First Week provides students opportunities to acclimate to campus life and to meet and bond with their University Seminar classmates and instructors. This community building function is reinforced over the course of the semester by the "cohorting" of each section of University Seminar with a section of IN150, Critical Writing, Reading and Research. The students move as a group between these two academic courses. This "cohorting" experience builds community among the students, and allows for the possibility of cross-disciplinary collaboration by the faculty involved.

Finally, the course provides students with an opportunity to engage with specific orientation topics that address a variety of "life skills" issues important for student success as they transition to college. In this regard, the course employs an upper classman as a mentor, again grounding the students on campus and providing them with a "student" resource to consult on numerous topics.

In sum, then, University Seminar is intended to be a place of intellectual growth, shared learning, and community building. In addition, it is the specific location within our curriculum where we take seriously our obligation to help students transition to college life, both academically and socially. We are, after all, interested in the education of the whole person. No other course on campus aims to function in this unique way.

## (3) Snapshot

The seminar topics for University Seminar are varied and are selected by individual instructors. However, all sections are required to deliver the learning goals that are definitive of the course and address orientation topics pertaining to the first-year student.

During fall 2007 semester, 25 sections of University Seminar were offered. This included four honors sections and three "enhanced" sections for students who were co-enrolled in an enhanced Critical Writing, Reading and Researching section. Regular and honors sections averaged 19.5 students. The three enhanced sections averaged 14.3 students.

During the fall 2007 semester, 15 sections of University Seminar were taught by full-time faculty members, 5 by adjunct faculty members, and 5 by full-time administrators. Although most instructors taught only one section, 4 instructors taught two sections.

One section of University Seminar was offered during the spring 2008 semester. Of the 19 students enrolled in this section, 14 did not pass during the fall semester and 5 were new students. A full-time administrator with specific training in how to assist students who are struggling academically taught this section of University Seminar.

Given its multiple functions (as described above), University Seminar is best delivered by a diverse and multitalented set of faculty. One of – if not *the* – most important factors in a successful educational experience is high quality teaching. As an institution, Millikin University is committed to providing our students with excellent teachers. This commitment is not confined to the delivery of the major; it extends to the delivery of our University Studies program. Accordingly, faculty quality must be monitored throughout the curriculum. However, judgments about quality must go beyond easy to make judgments such as the number/percentage of full-time faculty instructors delivering the curricular component, or the number/percentage of faculty with terminal degrees delivering the curricular component. These judgments are easy to make because they are easy to quantify. Teaching excellence, however, cannot be reductively captured in this way. While these sorts of easily quantifiable data may be relevant to whether you are likely to get high quality instruction, they certainly do not guarantee it. Of at least equal importance are faculty passion and

commitment to the course, as well as faculty experience relative to the unique nature of the course.

Appendix One provides a brief educational-experiential sketch of the faculty scheduled to teach University Seminar during the fall 2008 semester. This "lineup" of University Seminar faculty is typical. As can be seen, our use of adjuncts and select administrators to help deliver University Seminar is done in such a way so as to allow those with proper qualifications (both educational and experiential) to help deliver the course. We have a diverse and multitalented set of faculty committed to the delivery of this course. Each of these instructors brings her own distinctive skills and areas of expertise to the course – skills and expertise that fit well with the diverse aims of this unique course.

## (4) Assessment Methods

### A. An Old Method Retained

In last year's report (2006-2007), learning outcomes goals for University Seminar were assessed through (1) The Your First College Year student survey and (2) a survey sent to University Seminar faculty. While recognizing the limitations of these methods, this report will continue to employ the YFCY survey instrument. However, that instrument needs to be revised going forward so that it will better track student attitudes and *behaviors* that relate to the specific learning goals of University Seminar. Proposed modifications to the instrument are included below, in section (7), "Trends and Improvement Plans."

*Your First College Year Survey*

Students' experiences with University Seminar are assessed through the Your First College Year (YFCY) survey instrument administered by the Office of Institutional Research. As configured for administration during the spring 2008 semester, the following eight items relate specifically to the learning goals of University Seminar as revised and reformed:
1. The Orientation Topics that were covered helped me to adapt to college life.
2. I could see direct connection from our course content to our class service learning project.
3. Our section's service learning project was a purposeful experience.
4. The academic content of my University Seminar course was challenging.

5. I feel that the content of the course caused me to engage in a great deal of critical thinking.
6. I feel that the University Seminar course was worth taking.
7. There was a strong connection between the instructors of my IN140 and IN150 course.
8. The University Seminar course helped me feel more equipped to succeed in college.

## B. New Methods Needed

Given the reforms made to University Seminar, new methods for assessing the course are required. Further elaboration on these new methods is provided below in section (7), "Trends and Improvement Plans." However, the following new methods will be employed going forward (in addition to continued employment of the YFCY survey instrument):

- Tracking SIR data for University Seminar and comparing that data against similar SIR data for faculty across the University.
- Syllabi audits (using an audit form specifically designed for University Seminar).
- Review of a random sampling of specific artifacts collected for purposes of assessing the two primary academic learning goals of the course: ethical reasoning and service learning with reflection.
  - o Note: The syllabus audit form specifically asks faculty teaching the course to indentify the assignment or assignments that will be used as the basis for artifact collection relative to each of the primary academic learning goals.

## (5) Assessment Data

The fall 2007 offerings of University Seminar were not constructed in light of the revisions made to our University Studies program, including the revisions that impacted on the function and role of University Seminar. Those revisions and reforms were not accepted by the faculty until late in the fall 2007 semester; by that time, University Seminar was already being delivered. Hence, this report comes during a transitional year. As a result, some of the "new" assessment methods cannot be employed uniformly across all sections. This report will include YFCY Survey data, SIR data, and syllabi audit data. While some artifacts were submitted, too few were submitted to enable us to conduct a meaningful analysis. Still, reflection on the few artifacts that were submitted highlight certain issues that need to be addressed going forward. This is explained below. Going

forward, it is imperative that we collect a sufficient number of artifacts from each section so as to enable us to conduct a meaningful review and analysis.

## A. Your First College Year Survey

During the spring 2008 semester, 301 of the 479 students enrolled in Critical Writing, Reading, and Research I/II completed the YFCY survey. This represents a response rate of 63% (compared with a response rate of 54% for the previous year). The total number of respondents (301) includes 281 of our 424 first-year students. This represents a response rate of 66% for our first-year students (compared with a response rate of 52% for our first-year students the previous year). For each survey item statement relating to University Seminar, respondents rated their agreement on a 4-point, likert-style scale (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree). The statistical means for each item over the past three years are identified on the chart below:

| Question | Spring 2006 (358 Respondents) | Spring 2007 (228 Respondents) | Spring 2008 (301 Respondents) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Orientation topics helped me adapt to college life | 2.83 | 2.97 | 2.68 |
| I could see direct connection from course content to service learning | 2.70 | 2.82 | 2.50 |
| Service learning was a purposeful experience | 2.99 | 2.93 | 2.54 |
| Academic content was challenging | 2.70 | 2.85 | 2.61 |
| Content of course caused me to engage in a great deal of critical thinking | 2.78 | 2.86 | 2.61 |
| University Seminar was worth taking | 2.86 | 2.97 | 2.76 |
| Strong connection between IN140 and | 2.47 | 2.60 | 2.29 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| IN150 instructors | | | |
| University Seminar helped me feel more equipped to succeed in college | 2.63 | 2.79 | 2.50 |
| Overall Index Score on Eight Items | 2.75 | 2.85 | 2.56 |

The following chart identifies the percentage of "**positive**" responses ("strongly agree" and "agree") to the individual survey item statements:

| Question | Spring 2006 (358 Respondents) | Spring 2007 (228 Respondents) | Spring 2008 (301 Respondents) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Orientation topics helped me adapt to college life | 57% | 74% | 62% |
| I could see direct connection from course content to service learning | 50% | 62% | 54% |
| Service learning was a purposeful experience | 59% | 66% | 55% |
| Academic content was challenging | 49% | 64% | 56% |
| Content of course caused me to engage in a great deal of critical thinking | 51% | 65% | 56% |
| University Seminar was worth taking | 56% | 69% | 61% |
| Strong connect between instructors of IN140 and IN150 | 38% | 50% | 42% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| courses | | | |
| University Seminar helped me feel more equipped to succeed in college | 48% | 60% | 50% |

The following chart identifies the percentage of "**negative**" responses ("strongly disagree" and "disagree") to the individual survey item statements.

| Question | Spring 2006 (358 Respondents) | Spring 2007 (228 Respondents) | Spring 2008 (301 Respondents) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Orientation topics helped me adapt to college life | 22% | 19% | 24% |
| I could see direct connection from course content to service learning | 32% | 31% | 30% |
| Service learning was a purposeful experience | 19% | 26% | 28% |
| Academic content was challenging | 31% | 30% | 31% |
| Content of course caused me to engage in a great deal of critical thinking | 29% | 28% | 30% |
| University Seminar was worth taking | 25% | 25% | 26% |
| Strong connect between instructors of IN140 and IN150 courses | 40% | 41% | 42% |
| University Seminar helped me feel more equipped to | 32% | 33% | 35% |

| succeed in college | | | |
|---|---|---|---|

## B. SIR Data Comparison

SIR has been collected for the following four items: (1) scale summary data for course organization and planning, (2) scale summary data for communication, (3) overall evaluation of the instructor, and (4) overall evaluation of the course. The following SIR data compares the mean scores for faculty at the university (first number) with average mean scores for IN140 faculty (second number). The three different categories of IN140 faculty are then identified an average mean scores for each category are provided: full-time faculty (third number), adjunct faculty (fourth number), and administrators (fifth number). These data are for the fall 2007 semester.

| | Univ. Faculty | IN140 All(25) | IN140 FT(15) | IN140 Adj.(5) | IN140 Admin(5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Course Organization and Planning:** | | | | | |
| Scale Summary | 4.286 | 4.159 | 4.060 | 4.193 | 4.422 |
| **Communication:** | | | | | |
| Scale Summary | 4.336 | 4.226 | 4.146 | 4.257 | 4.438 |
| **Overall Evaluation:** | | | | | |
| Overall, the instructor for this course was excellent | 4.337 | 4.236 | 4.120 | 4.271 | 4.551 |
| Overall, this course was excellent | 4.116 | 3.894 | 3.797 | 4.034 | 4.046 |

## C. Syllabus Audit Data

For the fall 2007 semester, 20 total syllabi were collected. Each syllabus was audited to see if it contained specific items relevant to the delivery and assessment of University Seminar. The following data provides information regarding the number of syllabi containing the relevant items as specified on the audit form. The audit form was not created until the spring 2008 semester, i.e., *after* the fall 2007 sections of University Seminar had been delivered. The audit form, therefore, could not serve as a guide for faculty in the construction of their syllabi.

## IN140 University Seminar
## Syllabus Audit Form

|  | Syllabus is acceptable on item | Syllabus has item included but not in acceptable form | Syllabus does not have item |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TOP of FIRST PAGE:** Course Identification: course number, course name, faculty, semester | 17 (85%) | 2 (10%) | 1 (5%) |
| SOMEWHERE in SYLLABUS: | | | |
| Faculty contact info: name, office, office hours, office phone, email address | 20 (100%) | | |
| Course description: Standard description (see below) plus faculty written course description/overview | 17 (85%) | | 3 (15%) |
| Standard course learning goals (see below) | 13 (65%) | 3 (15%) | 4 (20%) |
| Additional course learning goals (as specified by faculty member), if any | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Instructor's grading policy - scale and weights for assignments & for the semester | 17 (85%) | 2 (10%) | 1 (5%) |
| Instructor's attendance policy – penalties | 19 (95%) | 1 (5%) | |
| Academic honesty & integrity statement (standard) | 20 (100%) | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| University disability statement (standard, see below) | 15 (75%) | 1 (5%) | 4 (20%) |
| Specification of a written assignment that will serve as ethical reasoning artifact for assessment purposes | ***See note below | 6 (30%) | 14 (70%) |
| Specification of a written assignment that will serve as service learning with reflection artifact for assessment purposes | ***See note below | 12 (60%) | 8 (40%) |

***Note: Regarding the audit in relation to artifact identification, the data provided above were calculated based on a review of the syllabus only. If the syllabus under review clearly identified an assignment relevant to the academic learning goal in question that could easily serve as an artifact for assessment purposes, then a mark went into the "syllabus has item included" column. If the syllabus did not clearly identify an assignment that could be so used, a mark went into the "syllabus does not have item" column. Faculty may well have provided additional assignments or elaborated on existing ones such that those assignments could have been used for these purposes. For purposes of this audit, however, marks were made as a function of clear identification on the syllabus itself.

### D. Artifact Collection

No artifacts were collected for previous reports. This year, a minimal number were collected.

11 artifacts related to critical and ethical reasoning were collected from four sections of University Seminar. The artifacts were all formal written assignments in which students were asked to respond to various prompts. Each prompt was relevant to the particular course content selected by the faculty member.

10 artifacts related to reflection on service learning were collected from five sections of University Seminar. The artifacts from four of the sections were

formal written assignments in which students were asked to reflect on their service learning experiences. The artifacts from the fifth section were less formal written journal entries.

## (6) Analysis of Assessment Results

### A. YFYC Survey

YFCY results continue to demonstrate support for the notion that University Seminar course content engages students in the process of academic inquiry. Over half (56%) of all respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the course content caused them to expand their critical thinking. The same percentage (56%) agreed or strongly agreed that course content was challenging.

Overall, survey respondents felt that service learning was a valuable component of their University Seminar experience.  Over half (55%) felt that their class service learning project was a purposeful experience.  About the same percentage (54%) saw a connection between their service learning project and course content.

As a whole, University Seminar students felt that they benefited from the inclusion of first-year orientation topics within their course.  Nearly two-thirds (62%) of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that class orientation topics (citizenship, academic strategies, diversity, healthy relationships, and wellness) helped them adapt to college life.

Survey respondents continue to perceive a weak connection between their IN 140 and IN 150 instructors.  Less than half (42%) either agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong connection between their University Seminar and CWRR I instructors. In fact, an equal percentage (42%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

When viewed in general and in comparison to previous administrations of the survey, the YFCY data for 2008 indicates that while a majority of freshmen continue to respond positively to their University Seminar experience, fewer freshmen responded positively to their University Seminar experience compared with the previous two years. The overall index score of **2.56** for the eight items relating to University Seminar decreased over the spring 2007 administration (**2.85**) and the spring 2006 administration (**2.75**). The Coordinator of Institutional

Research notes that in comparison to the results of the YFYC survey from the previous year, "IN140 and IN150/151 scores for 2008 are the lowest; each question's mean score for 2008 is statistically significantly lower than that of 2007." This is not the sort of trend line that we would like to see. Yet, the question of interpretation remains. How should we interpret this data?

First, it would be a mistake to infer that the reduction in "positive" responses in 2008 automatically translates into an equivalent increase in "negative" responses in 2008. As the chart comparing negative responses over the past three years indicates, the percentage of students responding negatively on the individual survey item statements has been remarkably consistent over the three year period. Over the three years for which we have data, only two items have seen negative response fluctuation of more than 3%. Those two items are (1) service learning as a purposeful experience (where 7-9% of respondents had a more negative reaction in 2008 and 2007 than in 2006) and (2) orientation topics help me adapt to college life (where 5% of respondents had a more negative reaction this year than in 2007).

Second, it should be noted that on all items but one (service learning as a purposeful experience), more freshmen responded positively to their University Seminar on the 2008 survey compared with the responses given from two years ago (2006). While the higher scores were in many cases marginal, they were higher on every item but one.

Third, it should be noted that over 300 respondents completed the survey in 2006 and 2008. This correlates with the fact that the statistical results comparing the positive and negative responses from 2006 and 2008 are quite similar across the board. In 2007, the year with the highest means and highest percentages of positive responses, significantly fewer students (approximately 72 fewer students, or 25% fewer students) completed the survey.

One possible interpretation of the data to this point is that the results from 2007 were an aberration; perhaps resulting from the substantially lower number of respondents. A second possible interpretation is that we made substantial improvements in 2007, only to lose momentum in 2008. As noted in the context above, one explanation for the loss of that momentum might well be the lack of clarity regarding the role of University Seminar in our curriculum.

**B. SIR Data**

This is the first time in our assessment of IN140 that the SIR data of University Seminar faculty have been collected for review and compared with the SIR data of faculty at the university. SIR data is included in this report as *part* of an effort to ensure faculty quality in University Seminar. The goal of our assessment, after all, is to help us self-monitor and work to ensure that our students receive a quality educational experience in IN140. SIR data seems relevant to the pursuit of that goal. While SIR data is not determinative of teaching effectiveness, it is an important piece of evidence. Faculty members wishing to present a case for tenure and/or promotion are required to include SIR data. Clearly, then, the institution is committed to the value of SIR data, even if that data must be properly contextualized and understood in relation to other dimensions of teaching pedagogy and effectiveness.

During the fall 2007 semester, full-time faculty taught 15 (60%) of the 25 total sections. Adjunct faculty taught 5 sections (20%), while administrators taught 5 sections (20%).

The SIR data for the fall 2007 offerings of University Seminar show that on each of the four evaluated items, the average mean scores for IN140 faculty were *below* the mean scores for faculty at the university. In terms of the number of individual faculty above/below the university mean on each item, the data show that 12 faculty scored above the university mean on the scale summary for organization and planning, while 13 scored below the university mean for that item. 13 faculty scored above the university mean on the scale summary for communication, while 12 scored below the university mean for that item. 14 faculty scored above the university mean on overall evaluation of instructor, while 11 scored below the university mean for that item. And 11 faculty scored above the university mean for overall evaluation of course, while 14 scored below the university mean for that item.

SIR data further show that the average mean scores for our full-time faculty teaching sections of IN140 were lower when compared with the average mean scores for both our adjuncts and our administrators. This holds with respect to each of the four evaluated items.

SIR data show that on the four evaluated items, those instructors receiving the ten highest marks fell into the following categories (FT=full-time, Adj=adjunct, and Admin=administrator):

Organization and Planning: FT, FT, Admin, Admin, Admin, FT, Adj, FT, Adj, Admin
- Full Time: 40%
- Administrator: 40%
- Adjunct: 30%

Communication:  FT, FT, Admin, Adj, FT, Admin, Admin, Adj, FT, FT
- Full Time: 50%
- Administrator: 30%
- Adjunct: 20%

Overall instructor:  FT, FT, FT, Admin, Admin, FT, Adj, Adj, Admin, Admin
- Full Time: 40%
- Administrator: 40%
- Adjunct: 20%

Overall course:  FT, FT, FT, Adj, Admin, FT, Adj, Admin, Admin, FT
- FT: 50%
- Admin: 30%
- Adj: 20%

SIR data show that on the four evaluated items, those instructors receiving the ten lowest marks fell into the following categories:

Organization and Planning: FT, FT, Admin, Adj, FT, FT, FT, FT, FT, FT
- Full Time: 80%
- Administrator: 10%
- Adjunct: 10%

Communication:  FT, FT, FT, FT, Adj, Admin, FT, FT, Adj, FT
- Full Time: 70%
- Administrator: 10%
- Adjunct: 20%

Overall instructor:  FT, FT, Adj, FT, Admin, FT, FT, FT, FT, Adj
- Full Time: 70%
- Administrator: 10%
- Adjunct: 20%

Overall course: FT, FT, FT, Admin, FT, Adj, Adj, FT, FT, FT
- FT: 70%
- Admin: 10%
- Adj: 20%

These findings help substantiate the earlier claim that teaching quality should not be identified with full-time status or terminal degree possession. In general, relative to the percentage of courses taught by each category of instructor, the data show:
1) Full time faculty consistently under-represented in the top ten and consistently over-represented in the bottom ten.
2) Administrators consistently over-represented in the top ten and consistently under-represented in the bottom ten.

## C. Syllabi Audits

Again, the syllabi were audited under a formal rubric that was not constructed until the spring 2008 semester, meaning that it was not available to faculty prior to the construction of their syllabi for the fall 2007 offerings. In essence, then, the data is a snapshot of what faculty were already doing on their own, without any common source for orientation or guidance. The data reveal that on most items, faculty members were already doing quite well. Under the audit, only three items received less than a 75% rate of delivery. Those were the following:
- Clear statement of course learning goals (7 syllabi or 35% did not include)
- Clear identification of an artifact for ethical reasoning (14 syllabi or 70% did not include)
- Clear identification of an artifact for reflection on service learning (8 syllabi or 40% did not include)

As indicated in section (1) "Context" above, there has been uncertainty as to the precise nature of the learning goals for the course. This likely explains the failure of some syllabi to include clear statements of the course learning goals and the failure to "tag" specific assignments as artifacts relative to those learning goals. In light of our reforms to the University Studies program, that uncertainty is no longer present. The learning goals are clearly stated in curricular documents and in the University Bulletin. Moreover, the course learning goals are provided on the syllabus audit form that will be distributed to all faculty teaching the course in advance of their construction of syllabi. Hence, we should expect to see near (if not actual) 100% marks in the future.

While syllabi often did not explicitly "tag" specific assignments as "artifacts" for purposes of ethical reasoning and reflection on service learning assessment purposes, this does not mean that faculty were not giving students assignments aimed at developing and measuring these skills. As was noted by one faculty member:

> My course was discussion-oriented and participatory in nature. To fully understand whether we were successful in meeting these learning goals would therefore require an assessment of our discussions throughout the semester. I am confident that most of my students' learning took place during class as they struggled with current issues and learned to defend and reconsider their views.

This is an excellent point and likely applies with equal force to most (if not all) sections of University Seminar. Nevertheless, an expectation going forward is that each syllabus will clearly identify a written assignment that will serve as an artifact for ethical reasoning and a written assignment that will serve as an artifact for reflection on service learning. Again, since guidance will be provided to faculty in advance, we should expect to see near (if not actual) 100% marks in the future.

### D. Artifact Collection

Of the 11 artifacts collected for purposes of assessing ethical reasoning, 5 had no discernible ethical dimension. These five artifacts asked students to think critically and reflectively in relation to course content, but they did not provide students with an opportunity to engage in ethical reasoning. (While ethical reasoning is a species of critical reasoning, not all critical reasoning is ethical reasoning.) The remaining 6 artifacts were from two sections. While these six artifacts clearly showed students engaged in ethical reasoning, the sampling is too small and too localized to extract any meaningful data.

Again, the decision to focus IN140 on ethical reasoning was not made until after the delivery of University Seminar began. Moreover, there is still no consensus on a rubric for ethical reasoning. Hence, faculty cannot design assignments in light of the rubric. The rubric situation is discussed in section (7), below.

Reflection on the few artifacts collected, however, does help reveal several issues that must be addressed going forward. These include the following:

1) Several artifacts asked students to engage in *critical* reasoning, but had no discernible *ethical* dimension. This is a somewhat predictable consequence of the fact that the focus on ethical reasoning was not clarified until *after* the fall IN140 offerings were underway. Still, faculty must become more intentional about the construction of assignments that demand students to engage in ethical reasoning, and not simply critical reasoning.
2) Faculty must reach some consensus about an appropriate rubric to employ for purposes of assessing ethical reasoning. This will provide guidance for faculty as they construct assignments relative to their course's content to enable students to demonstrate ethical reasoning.
3) Faculty must commit not only to the construction of assignments that target ethical reasoning, but to the collection and delivery of those assignments to the IN140 faculty coordinator.

The artifacts asking students to reflect on their service learning experiences were reviewed using the reflection rubric included in appendix four. Again, there has been no consensus reached regarding the employment of a rubric for assessment of reflection. Hence, faculty did not design assignments in light of the rubric.

Of those artifacts that did connect reflection to service learning, the average rubric score was 11.625. This results in a "low green" score. However, the minimal number of artifacts examined does not provide us with sufficient information to make credible judgments about the extent to which reflection on service learning is being demonstrated by our students.

Reflection on the few artifacts collected, however, does help reveal several issues that must be addressed going forward. These include the following:
1) Some artifacts, while asking students to be reflective, did not connect that reflection to service learning. Faculty must become more intentional about the construction of assignments that demand students to engage in reflection in relation to their service learning experiences, and not simply reflection.
2) Faculty must commit not only constructing assignments that target reflection on service learning, but to the collection and delivery of those assignments to the IN140 faculty coordinator.

## (7) Trends and Improvement Plans

### A. Improvement in Assessment Methods

Given the significant reforms to the University Studies program and the reconceptualization of University Seminar, new assessment methods are needed. The following ideas for improvements largely focus on improved methods for assessing student learning in University Seminar.

**1. Improvement to YFCY Survey Instrument**

We currently have 10 survey item statements on the Your First College Year (YFCY) survey instrument that specifically target IN140. While these items rely on students to self-report, several of them are not simply attitudinal reports, but *behavioral* reports. This instrument remains a valuable tool in our assessment of IN140 going forward. Of the 10 items currently used, however, two focus on oral communication skills. Since oral communication is no longer a responsibility of IN140, these items should be dropped from the survey. These two items are the following:
- The University Seminar class helped me to become more comfortable speaking in front of my classmates.
- The University Seminar class helped me to become a more effective communicator.

In their place, we should substitute items that ask students to self-report behaviors related to (1) ethical reasoning and (2) reflection, the two skill sets that the reforms to our University Studies program specifically assign to University Seminar. Going forward, we should include the following 10 items placed in the following order on the Survey instrument:
- 1. The academic content of my University Seminar course was challenging.
- 2. The course caused me to engage in a great deal of critical thinking.
- 3. I used ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on an issue that impacts my personal life and/or my local, national, or global community.
- 4. Our section's service learning project was a purposeful experience.
- 5. I could see direct connection between our course content and our class service learning project.
- 6. I engaged in reflection on my service learning experience.
- 7. The orientation topics that were covered helped me to adapt to college life.
- 8. There was a strong connection between the instructors of my IN140 and IN150 courses.

- 9. The University Seminar course helped me feel more equipped to succeed in college.
- 10. I feel that the University Seminar course was worth taking.

## 2. Incorporating Review of SIR Data

As one element in an on-going effort to monitor faculty quality, the coordinator of University Seminar will continue to review SIR data relevant to the delivery of University Seminar. Given that the purpose is programmatic assessment, the coordinator will continue to compare SIR data for faculty teaching University Seminar and compare that data with SIR data for faculty at the level of the university. An effort will be made to ensure that the quality of faculty instruction in University Seminar as measured by SIR data is comparable to the quality of faculty instruction across the university as measured by SIR data.

## 3. Syllabi Audits

The coordinator of University Seminar will conduct an audit of all University Seminar syllabi *prior to the start of the fall semester*. The primary purpose of this audit is to ensure that all sections of University Seminar intentionally address the specific learning goals that are definitive of the course and explicitly "tag" artifacts relevant to the two primary academic goals of the course: ethical reasoning and reflection on service learning.

A syllabi audit form specific to University Seminar has been created. It is included in Appendix Two (below) and is posted on the University Seminar webpage: http://www.millikin.edu/teaching/in140/.

## 4. Artifact Collection

As noted on the syllabus audit form, faculty teaching University Seminar must explicitly identify in their syllabi specific assignments that will be collected as artifacts for purposes of assessing the two primary academic learning goals of the course:  ethical reasoning and reflection on service learning. In some cases, a single assignment will suffice for both. In other cases, two assignments will need to be "tagged." Faculty are responsible for forwarding copies of these artifacts to the coordinator of University Seminar, who will collect them and review them as appropriate for assessment purposes. It is preferred that these artifacts be forwarded to the coordinator in electronic format; however, hard copies will also be accepted. Appropriate records will be maintained.

A course shell has been created on moodle. The course shell is titled: "IN140/183: University Seminar Artifact Deposits." Faculty are invited to instruct students to upload the tagged assignments as they complete them on that course shell. Students should be instructed to include their seminar section number in the file name.

### B. Faculty Development

#### 1. Workshops

On February 5, 2008, a faculty workshop on ethical reasoning was held. Dr. Robert Money, Associate Professor and Chair of the Philosophy Department and Coordinator for University Seminar led the workshop. The invitation to the workshop made clear its purpose. Here is the text of the invitation:

Our University Studies program now intentionally incorporates three major skill sets into the sequential elements:
- Reflection (IN140, IN150, IN151, IN250, IN251, IN350)
- **Ethical Reasoning (IN140, IN250, IN251, IN350)**
- Writing (IN150, IN151, IN250, IN251, IN350)

While any faculty member is welcome to attend, this workshop is specifically designed for those faculty members who have an interest (or may have an interest in the future) in making contributions to those parts of our University Studies program that are now charged with facilitation and development the skill set "ethical reasoning." That is, faculty teaching IN140, IN250, IN251, and IN350.

This workshop is intended as an initial step in what will be a larger and on-going process of faculty conversation, collaboration, and development. The aim of this process will be to reach a consensus regarding:
- what this skill set involves
- how we will assess those courses charged with the responsibility of delivering this skill set

At the workshop, faculty members will have the opportunity to:
- Consider some of the ways that one faculty member employs a particular reading to engage his students in ethical reasoning.

- Enter into a conversation about what is (and what is not) meant by "ethical reasoning."
- Examine a tentative ethical reasoning rubric and consider the viability of its use across those elements of the University Studies program responsible for the delivery of this skill set.

The power point presentation created for this workshop can be found on the University Seminar webpage: [http://www.millikin.edu/teaching/in140/](http://www.millikin.edu/teaching/in140/). It is anticipated that similar sorts of workshops will be offered going forward.

### 2. Summer 2008 Nyberg

During summer 2008, faculty coordinators for three of the sequential elements of the University Studies program will convene a Nyberg Seminar to discuss ways in which the implementation of the recently reformed University Studies program can make good on its promise to drive the three primary skill set threads (i.e., reflection, ethical reasoning, and writing) vertically through the curriculum. The Seminar will produce a formal report.

### 3. First Week and Ethical Reasoning: A Pilot Program

Dr. Money has proposed that First Week be revised in specific ways, ways that would allow for a more rigorous and intentional academic overview of critical and ethical reasoning. This proposal will be piloted during the fall 2008 semester. A full description of the proposal is included in Appendix Three, below.

### C. Continued Work on Common Assessment Rubrics

Given the diversity of faculty teaching the course and the diversity of substantive content covered, it would be helpful to develop and distribute to all faculty teaching the course a common rubric for the assessment of ethical reasoning and reflection. A proposed rubric for each skill set has been floated to University Seminar faculty. A copy of those proposed rubrics is included in Appendix Four (below).

## (8) Closing Remarks

In closing, it should be noted that a great deal of work has been and is being invested in IN140. First and foremost is the commitment and passion of those

faculty members who step to the plate to deliver this important element in our University Studies program. As evidenced by the data above and appendix one, this group of faculty is multitalented and brings a wealth of competencies to the delivery of this unique course.

In addition to the actual delivery of the course, a number of substantial efforts are being made to improve the assessment mechanisms for IN140, all with the aim of helping us make University Seminar a quality educational experience for our students. Within the last year alone, we have done all of the following:

- Conducted a campus wide conversation and debate about the nature of our University Studies program.
- Voted to implement a series of reforms to our University Studies program.
- Maintained a quality University Seminar experience for our students during this transitional time.
- Conducted a workshop on ethical reasoning for faculty involved in the delivery of the sequential elements of University Studies.
- Constructed a syllabus audit form.
- Constructed a structure to engage students in ethical reasoning during First Week.
- Substantially revised the assessment structure for IN140 (i.e., written this report!)

These are substantive and meaningful efforts to maintain and improve the quality of the educational experience provided by University Seminar. And in the end, providing a high quality educational experience for our students is the point of it all.

**Appendix One: IN140 Faculty Bios for Fall 2008**

**Sally M. Betscher** received her B.A. in philosophy, Magna Cum Laude, from Lawrence University, 1978 and her M.A. in philosophy from the University of Michigan, 1980. Sally is a life-long resident of Decatur. After a bit of a hiatus from academics, taken to raise her six children (four of whom are attending university), Sally returns to academic life to teach in the University Seminar program. Her graduate studies were in philosophical ethics, primarily focusing on the British thinker, Philippa Foot, because of Foot's ability to draw on philosophy to make sense of practical ethical issues. Betscher's philosophy of education reflects Foot's belief that real philosophical thinking aims to integrate theory with practical action. She joins the program this year because she believes that thinking is a pleasure that can be cultivated by learning to be more attentive readers, clearer writers, and engaged conversationalists. Betscher's commitment to the integration of thinking and doing is also reflected in her work as a personal trainer at the Decatur Athletic Club, where her workouts are renowned for having brought at least one 18 year old to his knees. Please note that Betscher keeps her office hours at the Athletic Club and will answer any of your questions when you sign up for her 6:00 A.M. circuit class. ☺

**Ann Borders** teaches in the Department of Theatre and Dance and in the School of Music. She has degrees in Musical Theatre and Vocal Performance and maintains an active performance schedule. Favorite recent roles include Mrs. Potts in *Beauty and the Beast*, Golda in *Fiddler on the Roof* and Mother in *Ragtime*.

Originally from Ohio, **Aaron Copley** received his BA in Communication from Wittenberg University and his MA in College Student Personnel from Bowling Green State University. This will be his second year teaching a section of IN140: Of House and Home. Beginning his Millikin career as an Area Coordinator for Residence Life in 2006, Copley is currently helping students make a home here at Millikin as the Assistant Director of Residence Life.

**Holly Dunsworth** received her Bachelor of Arts in Interpersonal Communication from the University of Evansville and her Master of Science in Education from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. She has been affiliated with Millikin University since 1995, serving in a variety of positions in student development, enrollment management, and business and finance. After taking some time away when her children were born, she returned to teaching University Seminar in 2007.

**Josh Hayes**, Director of Academic Development, came to Millikin in 2004 and has taught University Seminar every year since 2005. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, a Master of Business Administration degree, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Educational Administration & Foundations.

**Todd Hauser** {bio needed}

**Jo Ellen Jacobs** has two main research interests, Harriet Taylor Mill and aesthetics. Jacobs has written two books and several articles on Mill, including *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill*. She has also written articles on the aesthetics of kissing, snow, shadows, suntanning, and music, and edited dictionaries, journals, and a book series in aesthetics. She earned a Ph.D. at Washington University in St. Louis, an M.A. at Boston College, and a B.A. at Eastern Illinois University. She studied abroad at LaTrobe University in Australia. Jacobs has twice taught on Semester at Sea and has taken students to Thailand, Greece, Paris, and London.

**Julie Jones** received her B.A. from Missouri Southern State University, 1992 and her M.A. from Pittsburg State University, 1994. Her teaching interests include U.S. 20th Century Diplomacy, the American West, Women's History, and Gender Studies. She began teaching at Millikin in 2005.

**Heather Kind-Keppel** is currently a Program Coordinator for Social Justice and Leadership Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Heather has a B.A. in History, a M.S. in Counseling, and a M. Ed. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. Her passions and research interests include (but are not limited too):  Women's Issues, working with survivors of sexual assault and rape, mentoring and socialization for both women and our students, women's history, organizational communication and culture, all issues pertaining to social justice, and leadership education for women and identity based student organizations.

**Robert Money** received his B.A. from Furman University, 1990, his J.D. from Emory University School of Law, 1993, and his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa, 1999. His teaching interests include ethics and ethical theory, political philosophy, the history of philosophy, philosophy of law, and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Dr. Money serves as Director of the Pre-Law Program, faculty advisor to Millikin's moot court teams, and faculty advisor to the Theo-Socratic Club. Dr. Money is Chair of the Philosophy Department and faculty coordinator for University Seminar.

**Roslyn O'Conner** received her B.S. in Education from Southwest Missouri State University, 1985 and her MA with an emphasis in ecology from the University of Missouri-Columbia, 1990. She began teaching and working as a lab technician at Millikin in the fall of 2000. Before coming to Millikin, she was a high school science teacher, a laboratory coordinator at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and taught biology at Richland Community College. Her responsibilities at Millikin include teaching general biology and interdepartmental courses and preparing various laboratories for laboratory coursework.

**Keiko Ono** {bio needed}

**Molly Pawsey** is an Area Coordinator in the Office of Residence Life at Millikin University. She received her Bachelors Degree in Communication from Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio, and received her Masters Degree in College Student Personnel from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. She taught a Leadership Theories and Leadership Development course at Heidelberg College as a part of her graduate assistantship as well as leading many diversity and leadership development workshops. Her academic interests include social justice education, spiritual development in college students, and women's programming.

**Carrie Pierson** is the Learning Recourse Specialist at Millikin University. She obtained her Bachelors degree in Special Education and holds certifications to teach students with disabilities and also received her Masters degree in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. Carrie's job at Millikin University is to support students with documented disabilities, assist students who have not yet decided on major, assist students who are academically struggling, and set up the tutoring program for the university.

**Amanda (Landacre) Podeschi** graduated from Millikin University with a B.A. in Social Science Secondary Education (2002), and has a M.A. in History from the University of Illinois at Springfield (2005). As a social and cultural historian, she focuses on gender roles in history, oral history, as well as American history, pre-1900. She is going into her fourth year of teaching IN 140, and has focused on bringing oral history into the classroom, both academically and through service learning. She also works as the Associate Dir. of Development in Millikin's Alumni Office.

**Eric Roark** received his B.A. from Iowa State University, 2001, his M.S. (Sociology) from Iowa State University 2003, and his PhD (Philosophy) from the University of Missouri, 2008. His teaching and research interests include social and political philosophy (especially left-libertarianism), applied ethics, the history of philosophy, and epistemology.

**Michael Rogers** is a Computer Science professor in the Mathematics and Computer Science Department. He has a BSc from the University of Winnipeg, an MA and PhD in Statistics from Iowa State University, and -- since he just loves universities with the initials ISU -- a Masters in Computer Science from Illinois State University. He is a commercial pilot (although no airline will ever, ever, ever offer him a job :-), amateur astronomer, and crossword addict.

**D. Rene Verry** earned her degrees in experimental psychology from Madison College (now James Madison University) – B. S. / Summa Cum Laude, Trinity University in San Antonio - M.A., and Purdue University – Ph.D. Rene's research interests lie in both the basic and applied areas of psychology: animal learning & motivation – animal training & environmental enrichment of captive animals, psychology applied to the workplace, and perception. An avid animal lover, Rene shares her life with 3 former shelter dogs and works with local shelters to train and re-home shelter dogs. Her motivation for teaching U.O. is to share the joy of animal companions with others, explore our relationships and obligations to other species, and reflect on what a life of meaning and value means. Intensely curious, sees learning as the never ending adventure and invites you to join her.

Since August 2007 **J. Mark Wrighton** has been Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Millikin University. He earned a Ph. D. in Political Science from the University of Iowa in 1997, served as a lecturer at the University of Texas – Pan American from 1997 to 2000, and was a member of the faculty at the University of New Hampshire from 2000 to 2007. His primary research interests are American political institutions and congressional elections, and he has been a frequent national commentator on American elections. He has published research pieces in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *The Journal of Politics*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *Political Behavior*, *Congress and the Presidency*, and *The American Review of Politics*. In 2004 – 2005, he served as an American Political Science Association congressional fellow on the staff of the House Republican Policy Committee.

## Appendix Two: University Seminar Syllabus Audit Form

| | Syllabus is acceptable on item | Syllabus has item included but not in acceptable form | Syllabus does not have item |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TOP of FIRST PAGE:** Course Identification: course number, course name, faculty, semester | | | |
| **SOMEWHERE in SYLLABUS:** | | | |
| Faculty contact info: name, office, office hours, office phone, email address | | | |
| Course description: Standard description (see below) plus faculty written course description/overview | | | |
| Standard course learning goals (see below) | | | |
| Additional course learning goals (as specified by faculty member), if any | | | |
| Instructor's grading policy - scale and weights for assignments & for the semester | | | |
| Instructor's attendance policy – penalties | | | |
| Academic honesty & integrity statement (standard) | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| University disability statement (standard, see below) | | | |
| Specification of a written assignment that will serve as ethical reasoning artifact for assessment purposes | | | |
| Specification of a written assignment that will serve as service learning with reflection artifact for assessment purposes | | | |
| **OPTIONAL ITEMS:** | | | |
| Course schedule | | | |
| Course conduct policies (i.e., food, cell phones, late policy) | | | |
| Final exam policy | | | |
| Make up policy | | | |
| Grading Rubrics | | | |
| Textbooks & fees policy | | | |
| Resources policy (guide to technology, library, writing center, etc.) | | | |
| | | | |

## Several Standard Descriptions

Here are standard descriptions of various items mentioned above. Faculty can simply cut and paste these into their syllabus, if they so desire:

**Standard Description of University Seminar (from 2008-09 Bulletin):**

IN140. University Seminar (3) Fall semester freshman year. This course is an introduction to academic inquiry at the college level. Seminar topics vary across sections. Each section engages students in critical and ethical reasoning, includes a service learning component, and addresses specific orientation topics.

**Standard Learning Goals of University Seminar (from 2008-09 Bulletin):**

The learning outcome goals for students taking IN140 are that students will be able to:

1. use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities;
2. reflect on the significance of contributions to community through service learning; and
3. work collaboratively and creatively with diverse others.

**Standard Academic Honesty and Integrity Statement (from A&S College) (faculty modify as necessary to reflect your personal policy):**

All students are expected to uphold professional standards for academic honesty and integrity in their research, writing, and related performances. Academic honesty is the standard we expect from all students. Read the Student Handbook for further explanation (available on the Millikin University web site). Staley Library also hosts a web site on Preventing Plagiarism, which includes the complete university policy. It is located at: http://www.millikin.edu/staley/research/prevent_plagiarism.asp. Visit and carefully read the Preventing Plagiarism web site.

If you submit work that is not your own, that is, plagiarized or copied from any source without proper citation, or if you are caught cheating on any assignment, you will fail the assignment and you will probably fail the course. In addition, the Registrar and the Office of Student Services may be notified so that they can take action according to university policy, which means that you may be dismissed from the academic program and university. If you have difficulty with any assignment in this course, please see me rather than consider academic dishonesty.

**Standard University Disability Policy Statement:**

Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you should submit your documentation to the Office of Academic Development at Millikin University, currently located in Staley Library 014D.

**Appendix Three: First Week Pilot Program on Ethical Reasoning**

The Initial Proposal

The following is a proposal for a pilot offering of a structure during First Week that aims to jump-starting the delivery of critical-ethical reasoning in IN140, University Seminar. Participation for the fall 2008 semester is voluntary/optional.

This proposal is put forth in response to some concerns by some faculty about the need for faculty development in this area of instruction. It is also put forth in a context in which we all understand that the full "transitioning" of IN140 will take time.

I assume a maximum of 28 participating sections and a minimum of three faculty members participating in the actual delivery of the material in the Large Group Sessions. The proposal is simply modified if there are fewer participating sections or more faculty involved in delivery of Large Group Sessions.

The proposal is for a structure that uses two days within first week, Thursday and Friday. It divides each day into the following time slots. "A Sections" include up to 5-6 sections; similarly for "B sections."

**Thursday**

   10-11:15 – Large Group Session for A Sections: Basic Elements of Critical Reasoning (B sections meet w/seminar instructor during this time)

   11:30-12:45 – Large Group Session for A Sections: Critical Reasoning Applied to Ethics (B Sections meet w/seminar instructor during this time)

   1:15-2:30 – Large Group Session for B Sections: Basic Elements of Critical Reasoning (A Sections meet w/seminar instructor during this time)

   2:45-4:00 – Large Group Session for B Sections: Critical Reasoning Applied to Ethics (A Sections meet w/seminar instructor during this time)

**Friday**

   10-11:15 – Large Group Session for A Sections: Critical Reasoning Applied to Ethics (B Sections meet w/seminar instructor during this time)

   11:30-12:45 – Small Breakout Sessions for A Sections (B Sections meet w/seminar instructor during this time)

   1:15-2:30 – Large Group Session for B Sections: Critical Reasoning Applied to Ethics (A Sections meet w/seminar instructor during this time)

2:45-4:00 – Small Breakout Sessions for B Sections (A Sections meet w/seminar instructor during this time)

Under this format, each student would be exposed to a basic introduction to critical and ethical reasoning over the span of three, 75 minute class periods in a large group session. This would be followed by a smaller breakout sessions (each section meeting with its individual faculty instructor) to work on application of reasoning skills to a specific concrete reading in applied ethics. (This reading could be common/shared, or specific to the particular section/faculty instructor.)

This format employs larger size classes (maximum of 80-100 students) in the Large Group Session meetings. The purpose of those larger meetings is to provide a basic conceptual framework to assist in the delivery of ethical reasoning in the particular sections over the course of the semester (and in the other sequential elements over the course of the student's time at Millikin). Again, the goal will be to provide an introduction to all students of basic concepts in critical-ethical reasoning and to illustrate the application of those concepts to a particular reading in applied ethics. These Large Group Session meetings will be too large to employ Socratic discussion-driven pedagogies. Those pedagogies will be employed in the breakout sessions and over the semester.

This proposal is not meant to be the beginning and the end of ethical reasoning. Nor is it meant to in any way pre-empt faculty from delivering ethical reasoning in their own ways over the course of the semester, something that must happen given the learning goals of the course. This proposal is simply a proposal for an "introductory crash course" in critical-ethical reasoning and as a way to provide commonality across sections, without taking away from the content openness that is hallmark of the course and a major draw for faculty.

Common readings and texts could be employed in the crash course First Week format. Beyond this, each section would go off in the direction dictated by its particular content matter and under the guidance of the particular faculty instructor over the remainder of the semester.

I envision this format as being part of on-going faculty development for the delivery of this skill set. Faculty teaching sections of IN140 who would not actually be delivering material during the Large Group Session meetings would attend each meeting session with their students. These sessions, supplemented by targeted faculty development meetings during the course of the year focusing

on critical-ethical reasoning, would help provide faculty with the necessary support to enable them eventually to deliver the material on their own during first week meetings with their particular sections. As that began to happen, the load born by the initially few faculty members delivering the Large Group Session materials would be dispersed.

This format would provide students with a pointed indicator that "we are not in Kansas (high school) anymore." Students would be mailed the first reading over the summer. Students would be informed that this was crucial introductory material, that they would be held responsible for it (tested on it, graded, etc.).

This format would unify first week around a core *academic* process of inquiry. This would help send a message not only to the students, but to the larger university, in particular some of our colleagues who mutter under their breath (in dark places) that IN140 is not a non-academic course.

<div align="center">Further Elaboration on the Proposal</div>

The following plots out what the First Week schedule might look like in terms of time, topic, and readings. The readings that I am suggesting we use are short and concise. Again, the aim is to *introduce* students to some of the basic components of critical-ethical reasoning and to provide them an opportunity to see those basic components "in action."

Here is what the First Week schedule would look like. Directly following the schedule are some comments in relation to the texts mentioned in the schedule.

<div align="center">**<u>Thursday, August 21, 2008</u>**</div>

First Large Group Meeting: Basic Elements of Critical Reasoning
- 10-11:15 for A sections (repeats for B sections at 1:15-2:30)
- Introduction to the Nature of Argument
    - Selection from Ch.3, *Doing Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues* (p.43-51)
- Topics to cover:
    - Arguments
    - Statements
    - Deductive Standards
    - Inductive Standards
    - Validity (Strength)

- o Soundness (Cogency)
- o Common Forms of Argument

Second Large Group Meeting: Critical Reasoning Applied to Ethics
- 11:30-12:45 for A sections (repeats for B sections at 2:45-4:00)
- Ethical Argument
    - o Selection from Ch.3, *Doing Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues* (p.51-56)
    - o Selection from "Analyzing Ethical Arguments": http://philosophy.tamu.edu/~gary/bioethics/reasoning/index.html
        - ▪ Re(constructing) arguments, especially incomplete arguments (enthymemes)
        - ▪ Evaluating arguments
- Topics to cover:
    - o Argument to *ethical* argument
    - o Conclusion is normative
    - o Common linguistic markers
    - o Premises must include at least one ethical (normative) statement
    - o Implied premises
    - o Criteria for assessing ethical premises:  the four Cs
        - ▪ Clarity
        - ▪ Coherence
        - ▪ Consistency
        - ▪ Completeness

### Friday, August 22, 2008

Third Large Group Meeting: A Case Study: Cultural Relativism
- 10-11:15 for A sections (repeats for B sections at 1:15-2:30)
- Reasoning about Cultural Relativism
    - o Selection from Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (Chapter Two, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism")
- Topics to cover:
    - o Present argument structure to them (clarity)
    - o Discuss "cultural differences argument" and invalid nature of that argument
    - o Discuss consequences of accepting CR (consistency)
- Note: Focusing on this topic is a way of connecting to orientation topics related to diversity and democratic citizenship.

Smaller Breakout Meeting with Seminar Instructor: A Case Study: Homosexual Sex

- 11:30-12:45 for A sections (repeats for B sections at 2:45-4:00)
- A Case Study: Homosexual Sex (or other applied topic at discretion of seminar faculty instructor)
    - Selection from Corvino, "Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex?"
- Topics to cover:
    - Only the charge that homosexual sex is unethical because it is unnatural.
    - Construct the argument and evaluate the ethical premise using the tools introduced in the larger group meetings.
        - I have a power point already constructed for this. An easy resource for faculty to use, if desired.

Here are a few comments regarding my suggestion of these texts for use during First Week.

The selection from *Doing Ethics* is reasonably concise and clear. In addition, its use of examples will be helpful for students in their effort to grasp basic conceptual points. We can, of course, elaborate on points made in the text, ignore others, provide additional examples, etc. Similarly, the website has a very nice set of examples dealing with implied premises. This will provide an opportunity for students to "fill in the missing premise." We can construct additional examples, if needed.

I suggest the Rachel's reading on relativism (*The Challenge of Cultural Relativism*) for a couple of reasons. First, students are already familiar with the basic idea behind relativism. It, therefore, provides us with the perfect opportunity to have them think critically about a view with which they are already familiar and with which many of them will (initially) profess sympathy. Second, the crass and unsophisticated type of relativism with which students (and the larger culture) flirt poses a serious challenge (threat) to the very coherence of ethical reasoning. If students are going to take seriously the notion that there is such a thing as ethical reasoning (or reasoning about ethical matters), then we need to provide them with some basis for at least "hesitating" to endorse a view that would seriously undermine the claim that meaningful ethical reasoning is possible. Third, the text explicitly carries out "in action" the formulation of argument and analysis of argument in terms of validity/soundness. (By presenting the

"diversity argument" for relativism and criticizing it as invalid, it provides an opportunity for us to invite students to work to transform this invalid argument into a valid one.) Moreover, the text explicitly requires the reader to think in terms of the implications of endorsing relativism. Fourth, it uses examples to illustrate points and is written in a very accessible way. Finally, the issue connects up to orientation topics on diversity and democratic citizenship.

For the smaller breakout sessions, if we want to use a common text, then I suggest the excerpt from Corvino on homosexual sex ("Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex?"). (We would use only the first four pages, focusing on the objection to homosexual sex on the grounds that it is "unnatural.") I suggest this for a couple of reasons. First, I have a power point already constructed that I could share with individual instructors for use as they see fit within their session. Second, the reading perfectly illustrates the points that would be made in the earlier large group sessions – especially in terms of how to evaluate ethical premises in terms of clarity and consistency. Third, the topic is engaging and relevant (both in terms of personal ethics and in relation to larger political issues). My experience has been that students are able to grasp Corvino's argument and are willing to engage the text. Fourth, it would allow us to model how to approach a controversial topic with civility and reasoned consideration as opposed to emotive outburst. Finally, the reading clearly connects to orientation topics on diversity, democratic citizenship, and healthy relationships. In this way, it connects to something that each seminar must address. It would be impossible to find a common reading by basing selection on substantive content of the course as that is too varied across sections.

If we do not want to go with a common reading across all breakout smaller group sessions, then some could use the Corvino excerpt and I could work with those who might rather find a reading more directly related to the substantive content of their course (e.g., ethics in relation to the environment, ethics in relation to animals, etc.).

**Appendix Four: Possible Rubrics**

Ethical Reasoning Rubric (Draft)
2008
Millikin University
IN140/183 University Seminar

Evaluation of IN140 Goal: Students will use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities.

**1. Identifies, accurately describes, and appropriately reformulates the ethical problem, question, or issue.**

| GREEN, 5 Points | YELLOW, 3 Points | RED, 1 Point |
|---|---|---|
| Clearly identifies the ethical problem, question, or issue. Identifies integral relationships essential to analyzing the issue. | Summarizes the ethical problem, question, or issue, though some aspects are incorrect or confused. Nuances and key details are missing or glossed over. | Does not attempt to or fails to identify and summarize the ethical problem, question, or issue accurately. |

Comments:

**2. Identifies and critically evaluates ethical judgments made by others and arguments given in support of those ethical judgments.**

| GREEN, 5 Points | YELLOW, 3 Points | RED, 1 Point |
|---|---|---|
| Analysis of other positions is accurate, nuanced, and respectful.<br><br>Critically evaluates support given for other positions, including discussion of implications and consequences. | Analysis of other positions is thoughtful and mostly accurate.<br><br>Undertakes some effort to evaluate support given for other positions. | Fails to engage other positions, or significantly misrepresents other positions.<br><br>No effort to evaluate support given for other positions. |

Comments:

**3. Presents, develops, and supports <u>own</u> position (judgment) on the problem, question, or issue.**

| GREEN, 5 Points | YELLOW, 3 Points | RED, 1 Point |
|---|---|---|
| Presents and supports own position. Position includes substantial original thinking that acknowledges, refutes, synthesizes, or extends other views.<br><br>Justifies own position while integrating contrary views or interpretations to qualify position as appropriate. | Presents own position, though some aspects may have been adopted. Position includes some original thinking that acknowledges, refutes, synthesizes, or extends other views.<br><br>Justifies own position and begins to relate alternative views to qualify position, though in a superficial way. | Fails to present own position or position presented is clearly inherited or adopted from an external authority with little original consideration.<br><br>Fails to justify own position. Simply makes assertions. Little integration of perspectives and little or no evidence of attending to others' views. |

Comments:

**4. Considers the influence of context and identifies implicit assumptions surrounding the ethical judgments and/or arguments made by others or by self in support of those ethical judgments.**

| GREEN, 5 Points | YELLOW, 3 Points | RED, 1 Point |
|---|---|---|
| Analyzes the issue with a clear sense of scope and context, including an assessment of audience.<br><br>Identifies and explores implicit assumptions and their ethical implications. | Presents and explores relevant contexts, though superficially.<br><br>Recognizes implicit assumptions and their ethical implications, although in a limited way. | Does not relate issue to other contexts (cultural, political, historical, etc.).<br><br>Does not recognize surface or implicit assumptions, or does so superficially. |

Comments:

## 5. Communicates effectively.

| GREEN, 5 Points | YELLOW, 3 Points | RED, 1 Point |
|---|---|---|
| Language clearly and effectively communicates ideas. May at times be nuanced and eloquent. Errors are minimal.<br><br>Organization is clear; transitions between ideas enhance presentation. Few problems with other components of presentation.<br><br>Final product communicates the intended issue or goal effectively. | In general, language does not interfere with communication. Errors are not distracting or frequent.<br><br>Basic organization is apparent; transitions connect ideas, although they may be mechanical.<br><br>Final product communicates the intended issue or goal in a general manner. | Language obscures meaning. Grammar, syntax, or other errors are distracting or repeated. Little evidence of proofreading.<br><br>Work is unfocused and poorly organized; lacks logical connection of ideas.<br><br>Final product does not communicate the intended issue or goal. |

Comments:

Overall Rating/Criteria Score:
____1. Identifies/describes accurately the ethical problem, question, or issue.
____2. Identifies and evaluates ethical judgments and arguments of others.
____3. Makes and supports own ethical judgment or position.
____4. Considers context and implicit assumptions or presuppositions of ethical positions.
____5. Communicates effectively

____ TOTAL SCORE

| Excellent (Green—Go) | Adequate(Yellow--Caution) | Nominal (Red—Stop) |
|---|---|---|
| 25-20 | 19-13 | 12-5 |

Reflection Artifact Assessment Rubric (Draft)
2008
Millikin University
IN140/183 University Seminar

Evaluation of IN140 Goal: Students will engage in service learning with reflection.

| | EXCELLENT (GREEN-- GO) | ADEQUATE (YELLOW—CAUTION) | NOMINAL (RED—STOP) | POINTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Connecting Course Content to Service Learning Experience | An excellent reflection demonstrates the student's ability to recognize the significance of course content to her service learning experiences. [5 points] | An adequate reflection demonstrates the student's attempt to recognize the significance of course content to her service learning experiences. [3 points] | A nominal reflection lacks any awareness of the significance of course content to service learning experiences. [1 point] | |
| Writing for audience | An excellent reflection demonstrates the student's ability to write for a personal audience. [5 points] | An adequate reflection demonstrates the student's attempt to write for a personal audience. [3 points] | A nominal reflection lacks a demonstration of the ability to write for a personal audience. [1 point] | |
| Critical Thinking | An excellent reflection demonstrates the student's ability to think critically about course content in relation to her service learning experiences. [5 points] | An adequate reflection demonstrates the student's attempt to think critically about course content in relation to her service learning experiences. [3 points] | A nominal reflection lacks any critical thinking about course content in relation to service learning experiences. [1 points] | |

Total Points for this Student:

Final Signal Rating:

| Excellent (Green—Go) | Adequate(Yellow--Caution) | Nominal (Red—Stop) |
|---|---|---|
| 15-12 | 11-8 | 7-3 |