

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

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DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93106

10 February 1982

TO: Richard E. Oglesby
Dean, Instructional Development

FROM: Walter H. Capps

RE: Instructional Improvement Grants, 1982-83

We are currently enjoying great success, on campus, with an undergraduate course on "Religion and Politics in America Today," jointly sponsored by the Departments of Political Science and Religious Studies. We estimate that close to 500 students are enrolled in the course for credit. With auditors and interested townspeople -- the course was announced as being open to Santa Barbara "Affiliates" of the University -- attendance has occasionally been close to 1000 persons, and in excess of that number on the evening George McGovern spoke.

A very significant component of the course involves the use of media both for instructional purposes and for disseminating the contents to a larger public. Specifically, we have brought some of the distinguished speakers into the television studio in the Learning Center to interview them on the subjects under scrutiny. As a result, we have developed video tapes that can be used for instructional purposes on campus -- we have already made them available to students enrolled in the course -- instructional purposes on other campuses as well as by television stations, both educational and commercial, beyond the campus community. KSBY has utilized the interview with Cal Thomas, Vice President of the Moral Majority, as one of its featured public-service programs. We anticipate that KEYT will do the same, perhaps with several of the programs we have developed. In addition, the speakers who have addressed the class have also been available for television programs of the stations' own devising. KCOY made extensive independent use of Cal Thomas, as did KEYT. George McGovern and Bruce Sievers (the head of the California Humanities Council) were the chief participants in a discussion of "secular humanism" on Carol Howard's ISSUES program at KEYT. William Billings appeared in the same format, addressing himself to questions concerning the new right's disaffection with Ronald Reagan. In all of these instances, credit was given to the campus, to the class, to the departments involved, and to the instructor for the availability of the speakers. As a result, I have become involved with the various program developers of the various local television stations in planning subsequent or follow-up programs on the same issues.

There are many reasons for the success of the class. Significantly, from the first I have had the willing cooperation and great assistance of Learning Resources and Instructional Development -- that is, the offices and instrumentalities which you very capably direct. This, in my judgment, is what makes the class come alive. Beyond this, but through these means, the class both depends upon and is involved in cultivating a total or comprehensive learning environment. That is, we have involved the community in the learning process, and, in the process, have acquainted students with the community. "Community"

in this regard means Santa Barbara community, to be sure; the contents of the class presentations have been reported and interpreted regularly by the political writers for The Santa Barbara News-Press, the Santa Barbara News and Review, as well as The Daily Nexus. The response, throughout the city, has been magnificent. Educationally and pedagogically, we have started with topics and issues very prominent in the daily news, and have built the contents of the course around these issues, always encouraging the students to think about how it becomes possible to form intelligent responses -- indeed, an intelligible orientation -- to both "religion" and "politics" as these venerable subjects surface in these ways. This, from the first, has been the intention of the course; and I can wax eloquently on the subject of the necessary interdependencies of the world of the academy and the other worlds implicit in the subject we are addressing. Hence, the "community" is the larger, more comprehensive community in which students, regardless of their specific vocations, will eventually come to live their lives. And we can demonstrate this by correlating the outline of the course with the headlines on the front pages of the most prominent newspapers in the country. To cite the most current example: the week before William Billings, head of the National Christian Action Coalition, was to speak to the class, the Bob Jones University racial-discrimination case was a topic of frequent and extensive press coverage, particularly in The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. The primary advocate of the principle Bob Jones University affirmed was William Billings. The students knew of this, read about it in preparation for his visit, and were able to ask him substantive and penetrating questions on the issue when he appeared. Needless to say, the class itself was enormously stimulating from beginning to end, and an extensive account of the same appeared the next day in the local papers.

I wish to take credit for this by virtue of the fact that I used a significant portion of my sabbatical leave, last fall, to put the pieces of the course together. "Putting the pieces together" involved traveling -- primarily at my own expense -- to the various places at which I could talk with the intended speakers in advance so as to be able to assess and place what I assumed they would have to say. I was in Washington, D.C. on two occasions. I went to Lynchburg, Virginia, interviewed Jerry Falwell, spent several hours in the main office of the Moral Majority there, became familiar with the personnel of the Moral Majority, discovering Cal Thomas in the process. I was in Norman Lear's office on numerous occasions, in Los Angeles -- that is, People for the American Way. And I attended a meeting of the Minnesota Humanities Council on the subject of secular humanism, a meeting at which several key people in "the new religious right" made presentations. When I issued the invitations to the participants in the course, I had a good sense of what to expect. Many of them, by then, were persons with whom I had talked at some length about the expectations of the undergraduate class.

Consequently, I wish to repeat the class again during the winter quarter, 1982-83. I know the general topic "Religion and Politics in America Today" is the correct one, but I have not yet decided on the sub-topic. I am not certain that it should be "the new religious right," and the religious and political implications thereof -- although interest in the same may be eminently sustainable. But I would like the occasion, this coming summer, to give the subject the same detailed examination that I directed toward it last fall. And I would wish to be able to make one journey to the east coast, if need be, to interview some of the persons whom I would choose to have involved.

In addition, I wish to have the learning-resources component be given a regular budgetary allocation so that we will not have to scramble as we have this year. I think this request is thoroughly justified, given the fact that the learning resources component is an integral part of the course.

I wish to tell you more of what I have in mind. There is a good possibility, of course, of having George McGovern back again next year. We have talked of this possibility, and will pursue it in more detail when he returns within a couple of weeks. I am certain that there are other persons who could play a similar role, depending upon the way in which the sub-topic is conceived and executed. And I must say -- though not for announcement yet -- that I have had some encouraging initial responses from former President Jimmy Carter, whom I am hoping to interview in connection with a book I am writing on the subject in the near future. I mention Jimmy Carter if only to indicate that I believe next year's class might even become more of an event than this year's.

In specific terms, I am requesting:

- (1) a summer stipend of 1/9 of my regular academic-year salary to free the time for me to conceive the specifics of the course
- (2) a travel grant of approximately \$600 to support a trip to the east coast to identify participants and discuss the course with them
- (3) per diem expenses of approximately six days (if possible) in connection with the same trip
- (4) a media grant to support the work of television services, to be used in support of specific elements of the course itself and to create video tapes for related and additional instructional purposes

The request comes with great thanks for the support and assistance you and your staff have provided during this initial experimental stage of the project.



cc - W. Richard Comstock
John Moore

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DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93106

July 31, 1982

Dr. Richard E. Oglesby
Dean, Instructional Development
Kerr Learning Resources Hall

Dear Dick:

Background on this is that I submitted a preliminary request for support of a project in Instructional Improvement and Development for the 1982-83 academic year some months ago. The intention was to utilize the resources of your office to develop the "Religion and Politics in America Today" undergraduate course (R.S. 153) as a deliberate media venture. I submitted the request while teaching that course during the winter quarter 1982. As you well know, I was bringing the illustrious guest speakers from the course into your television studios for interviews. My minimal intention was to create or establish a more regular way of doing this were we to offer the course again.

The committee's initial response was that the proposal was not specific enough to warrant funding at this time. I agreed with the consensus for, admittedly, my vision of what a successor course would look like was not as clear then as I wanted it to be.

But since that time I have done considerable work on the subject and have consulted a number of persons of various kinds of expertise. I think my sense of the course is clearer now. Consequently I am resubmitting the proposal.

I wish the course this year to focus on "current issues" having directly to do with the polarization of American society. You know, of course, that last year's course focused on "the rise of the New Right." This subject came into prominence because the substance of the course dealt with the function of political action groups; and we chose to give specific attention to political action groups operating in the religion-and-politics field, that is, political action groups with a specific religious orientation. Having created our subject in this way, the New Right became a natural item of interest.

I wish to continue the same probe while taking it to the next level of inquiry. Rather than simply focusing on the New Right, I would like the course to help identify the working intellectual assumptions of the dominant positions now vying against each other in the religion-and-politics field. I would like for students to hear what these positions are so that they can search for the fundamental intellectual assumptions and principles. And, as before, I would like for the class to become a forum, in part, for leading advocates of such positions to present their views.

I am writing a book on this topic, which I intend to have completed (that is, in press) before the class is offered. (I will be on sabbatical

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to do. And in the next several weeks, I will be taking the steps to create the course I have envisioned.

I should mention too that I have discussed these plans with Maurice Mitchell (former President of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions) who is currently a member of the board of directors of the Annenberg Fund. Mr. Mitchell has encouraged me to submit a proposal to Annenberg for funding of this course on a regular basis, though, of course, there is insufficient time to do this prior to its intended offering in 1983. But, if the public dissemination factor were given sufficient place, this is the kind of activity the Annenberg Fund rewards.

I won't utilize this memo to discuss the pedagogical principles on which the course is built. Suffice it to say, in brief, that in no sense is the course being established in order to take advantage of "trendy" subjects. Instead, it has been my experience (both with this course and with the one I offer on "the impact of Vietnam") that when we start where the students are, as it were, we can utilize that point of entry to probe deeper into philosophical and convictional presuppositions. In neither situation have I had to work very hard to encourage students to read the relevant literature. On the contrary, we tend to run out of relevant reading material because the students pursue the literature out of a collective sense of excitement and enthusiasm to come to terms intellectually with a subject whose occurrence and vitality they understand to be surrounding them. The fundamental purpose of the course is to place that subject in a fitting and workable perspective. I think it belongs to the more comprehensive purpose of undergraduate education, namely, to assist in the process of forming an intelligible orientation to the world.

My request to you is severalfold. First, I wish to proceed from here on in cooperation and conjunction with the Instructional Development staff. I would like to offer the course as an Instructional Development offering (by whatever formal nomenclature is appropriate). Second, I would like the media component to be a regular feature of the class, to be included in a careful prearranged manner. Third, I would like some partial additional summer salary in support of my own efforts in this regard. As I trust this prospectus indicates, I have already given considerable time to the project. I have been lucky to have been invited to Washington several times during the past several months, and I have taken advantage of those visits to take additional days and extended trips to put the pieces of the project together. All of this, so far, has been at my own expense. Indeed, my participation in the Family Forum last week was entirely at my own expense. The side trip I took into Atlanta, on the trip before, to try to secure the participation of former President Jimmy Carter was also at my own expense. I would have no difficulty identifying rather significant personal expenses already. But there is no other way in which a course of this kind can be put together. I shall be no more specific than this except to suggest that the 1/9 annual salary supplement would seem to me to be in order.

All of these items will need to be discussed in greater detail. And this, of course, is the purpose of my request.

Respectfully,



Walter Canns