

Arts I: A Bold New Program To

(The article on these pages is the text of a booklet, issued recently, on the new Arts I program that will begin this September. The author is Dr. Ian Ross, associate professor of English, and one of two persons comprising the steering committee currently planning details of the program.)

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Modern universities, at least in North America, seem to fail most spectacularly with their freshman students. The University of British Columbia is as concerned as any institution with the unsatisfactory nature of the experience of students and faculty in first-year courses. The cost to society of a large failure rate is on the University's conscience, and disappointment is rife that academic resources cannot be put to better use for freshmen.

Over the past three years the Faculty of Arts has thoroughly investigated and exhaustively debated the problems of educating freshmen. Last November the Faculty accepted a proposal for a pilot project which offers some answers to these problems, and in December the Senate agreed that the project could begin in September 1967.

RESULTS EVALUATED

Every effort is being made to launch the project with suitable provisions for staffing and financial support, and it is anticipated that the results of the project can be described and evaluated in such a manner that those responsible for higher education in comparable situations elsewhere will be moved to take the Arts I experience into account.

As conceived by the drafters of Arts I, the chief problems of freshman education are as follows: the alienation of the students; the flight from first-year courses of experienced instructors; a course structure which, in its lack of integration, bewilders students and fragments their view of the world; a curriculum that appears to be remote from the pressing interests of students and instructors; and a teaching programme consisting of a stultifying round of lectures, perfunctory conferences, and statutory examinations which unnerve students rather than prepare them for intellectual advancement.

This analysis is corroborated and supplemented by an independent observer making a report on health and psychiatric services at Canadian universities. Dr. Conrad J. Schwartz notes among the "increasing signs of student unrest" highly-charged reactions to the growing impersonality of university experience; and a widening gap between students and faculty, caused by lack of opportunities for individual exchanges and the intense specialization of the faculty.

Freshmen are more vulnerable than other students to the wounds caused by an impersonal institution and its aloof but demanding staff. Indeed, it seems that Pascal's definition of the human condition as "inconstancy, boredom, anxiety" is unhappily vindicated for the most eager, and in some ways the most insecure, minds in the University.

REMEDY PROBLEMS

Arts I proposes to remedy the freshman-year problems in specific ways. To give the students a sense of greater freedom as individuals, it will, first of all, enable them to choose between the standard programme and a new one. To combat alienation, it will place each student who chooses the new programme into a section of 120 students who will be taught most of their subject matter by six members of faculty who will devote most of their time to the project.

Because Arts I will occupy so much of the time of students and faculty, topics can be studied in depth, and close student-faculty relationships can be formed. Each student will thus be part of a community of learners. To insure that students will have experienced instructors, Arts I will require that the faculty in the programme have several years' teaching experience and some standing as scholars.

The freedom the faculty will have in devising a curriculum and effective teaching methods, however, is the greatest guarantee that the teaching staff will be well qualified. This fact has already been

attested by the calibre of the faculty who have volunteered for the programme.

To avoid the fragmentation of knowledge caused by the present course structure and the consequent destruction of whatever integrated view of the world the student may possess, Arts I will have as content during each division of the session principally those works which are related to themes of broad human concern, such as war, tyranny, love, or death. Because the instructors will themselves select the sequence of themes, and will do so immediately before they are taught, they should be of relevance to all the participants in the programme.

TEACHING METHODS

The materials for study will be classic presentations of each theme in imaginative and analytic works, as well as contemporary manifestations in the mass media. The faculty — philosophers, economists, historians, literary scholars, sociologists or whatever — will work together in helping the students to achieve an understanding of the themes through lectures, seminar discussions, and tutorials.

The teaching methods adopted will seek to instil in the students the habit of independent investigation which alone insures learning. Thus, the most stimulating materials and the most effective teaching methods will be used for the student who has the greatest need of both — the freshman.

The hope of Arts I is that it will establish a viable alternative to the traditional pattern of first-year education. If valid empirical evidence is forthcoming about such a programme, it can be argued that many freshmen — far more than the 240 who will take Arts I in September 1967 — could choose to pursue their education in groups small enough to achieve a corporate identity and fruitful student-faculty relationships.

Again, more than twelve faculty — the number to be involved in the pilot project — could form teaching teams for freshman groups and arrange meaningful curricula for them. The two teams in Arts I will represent various disciplines in the Faculty of Arts. It is conceivable that teams could be made up of members of different Faculties and thus set for freshmen an example of a stimulating dialogue between specialist intellectuals.

LIVELY INTEREST

As matters stand now, the best minds in the universities often do not have the impact they should because of a failure to communicate. For these and similar reasons, the proving or disproving in action of the basic ideas of Arts I should make the project of lively interest to all concerned with first-year education.

Of necessity, the Arts I faculty will spend most of the summer preparing for the programme: reading on the chosen themes so that new material can be taught effectively; selecting topics for seminars and essays; and discussing with their colleagues ideas for the programme. A commitment to spend the summer in this way has been sought from the volunteer Arts I faculty.

Such intensive work warrants additional income, since it will replace normal opportunities for summer school teaching and for research leading to professional advancement. Advisedly, then, the Faculty of Arts has sought the support of a foundation so that each Arts I instructor can be paid the normal summer session stipend of \$1,200.

The Arts I project will also need an operating budget. Clerical help will have to be enlisted and special library requirements met, for example, the duplication of scarce source materials for study. In the interest of expanding the intellectual and imaginative horizons of the students, special lecturers will be invited to speak and will have to be paid their fees.

OUTSIDE ADVICE SOUGHT

Transport will be required on occasion to take Arts I groups to plays, concerts, museum displays, and art exhibitions. Opportunities must be made for students and faculty to study the offerings of the mass media that relate to the curriculum. This will entail expense for film and slide showings, as well as for radio and television sets.

Funds will be required, finally, to enable the project to be studied in progress, and evaluated at the end of each of the three years of its life. The claim for Arts I as a pilot project requires that its evaluative procedures be sophisticated, and that the study be conducted with great care. Faculty involved in this work will need financial and clerical resources.



Two-man steering committee planning the details of UBC's new Arts I program take advantage of a sunny day to hold discussions on the plaza roof terrace overlooking the quadrangle of the Buchanan building. Dr.

Ian Ross, left, associate professor of English, and Gerald F. Macdonald, associate professor of economics. When the

Possibly the advice of consultants outside the University of British Columbia will have to be sought and paid for.

Much will be put to the test by Arts I: on the one hand, the capacity of freshmen to engage meaningfully in the activities of the programme; on the other hand, the ingenuity and vision of the participating faculty in devising a suitable curriculum, as well as their ability to work with each other and the students. It is to be hoped that the Arts I project will be given the fullest support by the Faculty of Arts, the University, and those members of the community who interest themselves in university affairs.

HISTORY OF ARTS I

Shortly after his appointment in 1962 as President of the University of British Columbia, Dr. John B. Macdonald appointed a Committee on Academic Goals, which published its report as *GUIDEPOSTS TO INNOVATION* (1964). The Senate discussed this report and endorsed

thoroughly the Committee's statement of the urgent need to reconsider the principles and practices of undergraduate education.

In connection with the first-year programme, the Committee noted that it is the most sensitive period of a student's life; yet it is the period in which he receives least help" (1964).

Independently, the late Dean Kas Naegele established a Faculty of Arts Committee concerned with education. It published its findings as *EDUCATION: A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE* (1965).

In brief, the Naegele Committee recommended that the student in his first year of Arts should take a core-program of general studies based on such broad concepts as Man and Society, Man and Thought, and Man and Expression, taught by experienced instructors through a combination of lectures to large groups and seminar discussions for small groups. The second year should consist of courses organized and given by different

Challenge First Year Students



Professor of English and the pages, is shown conversing assistant professor of eco-gram is under way an Arts

A council will be established to serve as a public information committee. A third committee, chaired by Professor Robert M. Clark, UBC's academic planner, has been struck to evaluate the program. Photo by B. C. Jennings.

ments, their primary purpose being to introduce the student to several distinctive disciplines.

Finally, the third and fourth years should be regarded as the period in which the student develops his special interest while broadening himself through some study in areas other than those of his concentration.

NEW GROUP FORMED

The ideas concerning the third and fourth years in Arts met the most favourable reception and have already been implemented in strengthened departmental majors programmes. The ideas concerning the first year have had a stormy life.

In the spring of 1965 a Committee of the Faculty of Arts was instructed to devise a pilot project which would implement, where feasible, the proposals of DISCIPLINE AND DISCOVERY concerning first-year education. This Committee reported to the Faculty in the autumn of 1965, but

its proposals were not accepted. Dean Naegele's successor, Dean Dennis Healy, thereupon passed the job of making recommendations to a new group established to advise him on curriculum reform.

The Curriculum Advisory Committee, chaired by Dean Healy, consisted of one representative from each Department and School in the Faculty of Arts and a representative from the standing Faculty Committee on Curriculum, a total of 23 members. It met through the remainder of the session of 1965-66 and sent its report to the Faculty in May.

The chief recommendation of the report concerned Arts I, a programme of interdisciplinary studies, to be taught to compact groups of first-year students by teams of instructors representing different disciplines in the Faculty. It was proposed that the curriculum for each group of students should be devised by the team of instructors assigned to it.

Communication among the groups, and the staffing of them, should be handled

by a Steering Committee elected by instructors who volunteered to participate in Arts I. In the summer of 1966, two sub-committees met to prepare sample programmes for sections of Arts I. The sample programmes and the original report were sent to Faculty members in October 1966.

PILOT PROJECT ACCEPTED

In addition, Departments met at that time to discuss Arts I with members of the Curriculum Advisory Committee and faculty who had helped devise the sample programmes. Over a three-day period in November, the Faculty of Arts met to debate Arts I and the other proposals of the Advisory Curriculum Committee.

The result was that Arts I was accepted as a pilot project for a limited number of volunteer students and faculty: at least two sections of 120 students each, the sections each to be taught by six members of faculty. Successful completion of Arts I will give a student nine units of credit towards his degree. An instructor in Arts I must devote two-thirds of his teaching time to the programme. At its December meeting, the Senate unanimously endorsed the proposal for a pilot project.

During the discussions concerning Arts I, the drafters of the proposals consulted members of different Faculties at the University of British Columbia. In addition, they examined material from universities where new programmes are being discussed or attempted, such as York (Ontario), Essex and Sussex (England), Harvard, Columbia, Chicago, and Berkeley.

Professor Joseph Tussman, who has been instrumental in setting up an experimental college for first and second year students at Berkeley, addressed the Curriculum Advisory Committee and genially submitted to a long evening of incisive questioning. The views of students at this University and others have been canvassed. In devising Arts I, the two enemies of scholarly work — insufficient evidence and haste — have surely been avoided.

STUDENTS VOLUNTEER

Students entering the Faculty of Arts in September 1967 will have an opportunity to volunteer for a new programme, Arts I. Its chief aims are to introduce the student effectively to the intellectual life of the University, and to give him a less fragmented view of education than is normally offered to freshmen. The studies undertaken will encourage a broad, though disciplined, approach to the world within and without the University.

Arts I will seek to teach the student that the humanities and the social sciences must complement each other when a thorough understanding is desired of man and his works. The programme, in consequence, will concern itself with problems to which a flexible response must come from the interaction of the disciplines. The historian will demonstrate his need, at times, for the concepts and techniques of the economist; the philosopher, his awareness of the findings of social anthropology; and the sociologist, his reliance on literary insights.

The Arts I faculty stand to gain immensely from doing these things in each other's presence and in such a way as to command the attention and respect of beginning students. In this way, the basic idea of a university as a community of scholars will be revitalized for student and professor alike.

Lectures, debates, seminars, tutorials, and periods of individual study will all be used to promote in the student the spirit of critical inquiry which should inform a true education.

HIGH STANDARD

A feature of the programme will be the sequence of oral reports and essays assigned with the aim of inducing the student to become fully articulate. Throughout the session, he will be called on to collect and assess information, develop ideas and arguments, and foster the powers of his imagination. Since the student will have a considerable amount of time to give to his writing, and since he will receive in ample measure the criticism of his peers and instructors, he will be expected to reach a high standard of composition.

It should also be possible for a student in Arts I with artistic or musical gifts to express his ideas in a medium other than words, and thus play a part in increasing the sensitivity and awareness of participants in the programme.

Jointly the instructors will devise a lecture schedule for the section of Arts I to which they are assigned. Individually, they will arrange a sequence of seminars and tutorials for the group of twenty students for which each is responsible. To present to the student different points of view arising from different academic backgrounds, seminar leadership will be exchanged from time to time among the instructors.

These arrangements should encourage vigorous and sustained student-faculty interaction. His share in planning the curriculum will give every instructor a stake in the programme by allowing him to make the best use of his special qualifications as well as his ideas about an integrated approach to education.

Students will be asked to assume, in their turn, responsibility for seminar planning, and they will be encouraged to criticize constructively the whole programme so that improvements can be made for their successors in Arts I.

THEMES ILLUSTRATED

The two groups of faculty who worked on illustrative programmes for Arts I last summer chose the following themes:

I	II
Communications	War
Tyranny	Love
War	Death
Imperialism	Work
Utopia	Education

Both groups suggested that six weeks should be given to each theme, and that relationships between the themes should be stressed throughout the session. A week of Arts I was envisaged as having perhaps two lectures, one of them to be given by a specialist invited to address the Arts I students. The lectures would be supplemented and complemented by two seminar discussions on similar aspects of the theme being studied.

In tutorials, students would read essays to their seminar leaders and get advice about presentations to the seminar groups. Music, arts, films, and broadcasts with a bearing on the theme would receive attention. The bulk of the student's time would be spent in independent reading, thinking, discussion, and writing stimulated by the requirements and, hopefully, by the very environment of Arts I.

The sample reading listed by both faculty groups ranged from the profound (Plato/Shakespeare) to the provocative (Goodman/McLuhan) with the deliberate intention of challenging the student to think independently and imaginatively. It is likely that the actual programme embarked on in September will have similar features.

It is intended that Arts I should take the place of the present compulsory freshman English course and the two electives open in the first year. In addition to the Arts I programme, the student will probably take an intensive language course, or a combination of two sciences, or a science and a mathematics course.

THREE YEAR TEST

A choice will be made by each individual in consultation with a faculty adviser. On the basis of his experience in Arts I and his continued contact with an adviser, the student should be in a good position to make an educated choice from the array of departmental offerings at the second year level. Also, he will be allowed to proceed to the second year offering in English.

Arts I is a pilot project, to run for three years, with students and faculty volunteering for each session of the programme. The Dean, in consultation with the Faculty of Arts, is charged with the duty of arranging a valid procedure for evaluating the achievements of the programme. The results of such an evaluation could be of the first importance for students, parents, school teachers, professors, academic planners, architects, civil servants, and members of governments, in fact, all who make choices relating to education.

In the assertion by this kind of programme of the values of character strength, mental resilience, and imaginative vision may lie an answer to the explosions of knowledge and population which strain to its limits the existing order.