

# **Great Books Colloquium Self-Study**

**February 22, 2019**

## **THE INTERNAL CONTEXT**

### **Program Overview**

**The Seaver College Great Books Colloquium comprises a four-course sequence in which students read and discuss celebrated, "classic" works of Western thought and literature. The Colloquium also includes under-represented and minority voices, particularly in Great Books IV, and Great Books V (an optional course) offers students the opportunity to study classics of the Asian tradition. Although many of the works included represent the humanities, the Colloquium is broadly interdisciplinary. The curriculum includes works of literature and philosophy, such as epics by Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton and philosophical treatises by Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Nietzsche. Students also study works of religious, social, and political thought by such writers as Augustine, Machiavelli, Luther, Rousseau, Kierkegaard, and Freud. The [attached brochure](#) describes the program.**

**Great Books students undertake challenging reading and writing assignments. They read full-length texts of the works in the curriculum and write several essays each term analyzing and interpreting this material. The small classes are conducted as seminars involving discussion and shared inquiry. Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions and, occasionally, to lead discussions. Both discussions and writing assignments emphasize close reading and critical thinking; students identify important**

problems and questions, and they defend their interpretations and evaluations using textual and argumentative evidence. Rather than axiomatically accepting the texts as "great" or "classic" documents that embody artistic or epistemological perfection, students learn to examine the works critically, to query why they command enduring appeal, and to evaluate their relevance to contemporary experience. Conversely, the Colloquium contends that a "great book" makes special demands on the reader. As George Steiner writes: "Each time we engage with it, the classic will question us. It will challenge our resources of consciousness and intellect, of mind and body. The classic will ask of us: 'have you understood?'; 'have you reimagined responsibly?'; 'are you prepared to act upon the questions which I have posed?'"

Because of the program's rigor and reputation, the Great Books Colloquium attracts some of the best students in Seaver College, regardless of their academic majors. Regent Scholars are required to enroll Great Books; however, any student with the interest and commitment is welcome to participate in the experience. Thus, one might describe the Colloquium as a self-selected honors program that provides an intellectually rewarding course of study as well as the opportunity to join a community of like-minded peers. Given the extensive reading and writing requirements and the interdisciplinary curriculum, students who complete the four courses in the Colloquium are able to fulfill five course requirements in the Seaver College General Education Program. In addition to fulfilling the First-Year Seminar requirement, the Colloquium offers students the flexibility

to fulfill, as needed, GE requirements in English, humanities, communication, religion, political science, and sociology.

### **Program History**

”(Mortimer) Adler’s reading of classic works of Western culture took firm root when he was accepted in a new course offered at Columbia in 1921. In 1918 John Erskine, professor of English, had developed a reading course of great books in an education program for the idle Army recruits who remained in Europe for some months at the war’s end. He gained the faculty’s approval to offer the course on a limited basis at Columbia during Adler’s junior year. Called ‘general honors,’ the class was the most significant of all Adler’s undergraduate classes. It presaged what would become the abiding theme of his educational ideas and programs for the rest of his life.” (Mary Ann Dzuback, Robert M. Hutchins: Portrait of an Educator)

University of Chicago President, Robert Hutchins sought to “distinguish the undergraduate program at the University of Chicago in certain ways. He was intrigued with Adler’s casual description of the Erskine general honors seminar at Columbia College. Hutchins decided he ought to begin reading some of the books in that seminar, so he asked Adler if he would be willing to co-teach a seminar with him for freshmen in the college using those books. Adler agreed. According to his account, the news that the president planned to hold an honors seminar for freshmen created quite a stir on campus.” (Mary Ann Dzuback, Robert M. Hutchins: Portrait of an Educator)

**In December of 1984 Mortimer Adler visited Pepperdine University at the request of the Dean of the School of Education, Bill Adrian. Adrian invited Dr. Michael Gose, newly arrived assistant professor in teacher education, to attend Adler's speech, and then, unexpectedly invited him to have breakfast the next morning at the home of the Pepperdine President, Howard A. White. The occasion seemed momentous, as it lay the foundation for the creation of a Great Books Program at Seaver College. Gose approached Norman Hughes and Victoria Myers to begin a discussion on creating a Great Books Program.**

**They developed a proposal for such a program which was sent to the Academic Council. It was defeated unanimously and tabled permanently. As it had been for Adler and Hutchins, starting a Great Books program is not without its complications and perils. Gose, Hughes, and Myers managed to get the proposal untabled. The next time it came up before the Academic Council it was widely known that the proposal had the President Howard White's approval and support. The highly respected Norman Hughes and Victoria Myers were in attendance, and responded graciously and professionally to the questions. The greatest opposition came from the Humanities Division. In deference to them, the proposal was accepted only as an experiment to be re-considered in two years. The Great Books Colloquium began in the Fall of 1986, following which there was a surge in students wanting to major in the Humanities. The two-year review became unnecessary and Great Books, along with International Programs, became two of the signature programs for the school's "brand". Gose (Education), Hughes (Biology), and Myers**

(English) teamed up with Royce Clark (Religion) to launch and guide the program, but it would not have been possible except for President Howard White. It has been one hundred years since Erskine's first cut in Europe at the end of World War I. While the Pepperdine stories only go back to 1984, our heritage goes back a century.

### **Program Coursework and Pedagogy**

The Great Books Colloquium is comprised of four required classes, each of which awards the participating student four credit hours. Each class is small to allow for discussion – or “shared inquiry,” integral to the tradition of Great Books pedagogy. In this tradition the professor serves as leader but not lecturer. She or he comes to class having re-read the classic work under discussion, and ready to raise questions to the students. The students too have attentively read the work and are ready to discuss it.

The questions the professor asks can take three different forms. The *first* order of question focuses upon the factual content of the work, and can be answered by simply attending to and citing the text. So, in a desire to elicit such attention, the professor might ask, “In *The Republic*, what does Plato (through Socrates) say about the process of education?” The first student, Marie, replies readily: “In Book Seven, Socrates says that education entails turning around, or as he says, “a turning of the soul from a day that is a kind of night to the true day” (521c). The professor may respond, “Yes, but that sounds pretty metaphorical: what does Socrates *mean* by that?” This is the *second* order of question, and

far more interesting: as an interpretive question, it demands exegesis, and clear understanding of the work's larger context. Thus, such a question will elicit a variety of responses. For example, Joe replies to the professor: "Well, if education means *turning* it's definitely not what the Sophists do, *filling up* their students' heads with "convictions that the majority express" (493b). Irene directs a retort to Joe: "Wait, where did you get *that*?" And Julie, agreeing with Joe, responds to Irene, "well look at section 493 b, where Socrates complains about such students, paying their teachers so as to "learn the moods and appetites of the huge, strong beast" and thus get elected. Ray chimes in, providing a further warrant for Joe's argument, "Yes, and look also at when he describes the best teacher as navigators, who "pay attention" to their craft (488d). The professor is delighted that students are engaging each other, but may here interject, "but how does this analogy of the *ship* relate to the allegory of the *cave* presented in Book 7?" A communal interpretive project ensues, one that will likely entail close reading, new discoveries, intensive interaction -- and, for many an indelible memory.

But the best is yet to come: After a brief break, the professor -- or better, another student, let's call her Sophia -- asks the class, "But is any of this really *true*? Aren't we in college simply to memorize a lot of stuff, get good grades, and then find a good job? What is all this soul-transformational stuff that Socrates is on about?" Sophia's question is a *third* order question, an evaluative question. Such questions are more personal, and are more existential in their stakes, but require just as much: Is Socrates's conception of education

true? If so, what might I have to do to change the way I learn? And if not, where is it incomplete or faulty? Might Socrates' understanding of education be something like what we're doing here, in the shared inquiry of our Great Books class? Now the conversation may take any number of directions, each of which will entail attention not only to the text but the students' own experience, and their intellectual and emotional engagement with what Mortimer Adler describes as "the Great Ideas."

Adler famously identified 102 such ideas. Needless to say, one could add to his list indefinitely. But for the sake of illustration, I will limit myself to Adler's list, and capitalize them when they emerge the imagined conversation that follows: "I think Irene has a point, and I would extend it further. Plato says that the educative process of DIALECTIC leads to the immutable TRUTH that never changes; do we believe that in this postmodern age in which we recognize the varied and PARTICULAR, and everybody is entitled to their own OPINION?" "Yes, we do, especially those of us who chose a Christian university which posits that GOD is, and that GOD grounds all that is, that is, all of BEING. I'm holding out for an education that leads me to the TRUTH, and I'm ready to give a reasoned account for my opinion" "OK, but go back to Socrates's definition of JUSTICE, in which everybody does his or her own work. It's all well and good for a Great Books class to engage in DIALECTIC, but in my EXPERIENCE of Organic Chemistry class, we memorize and learn the facts." "Yes, but in Great Books, too, we have to employ the faculty of MEMORY; and in Chemistry, don't the best students employ their

**IMAGINATION? Any subject can provide the setting for a turning, a transformative experience: in fact, my Chemistry teacher changed my life!”**

**And the conversation continues. The point is this: students in this exchange are deeply attentive to the classic work they have read (note their references to the text), to each other, and to a question that has the potential to bear fruit not simply as knowledge but wisdom. At its best, this is what the Great Books Colloquium does every day, two hours per class, with different works, discussed chronologically over the course of four semesters, and always with ideas and enduring questions that matter at stake. And not only *discussed*: the Great Books Colloquium is as *writing intensive* as any class offered in Seaver College. In each class, students learn to pose a thoughtful question/problem/issue that arises from the text, and to respond to that question with a clearly articulated, interesting thesis, supported by paragraphs that present evidence and argument, and are marked by unity, coherence, clarity and grace. In the process of their work – reading, conversing, writing – our students are sometimes turned, and can be transformed.**

**That’s a description of the *how* of Great Books. But *what* (in addition to Plato) do we read, discuss and write about over the course of four semesters? In Great Books I, our first-semester students begin with Homer’s *Iliad*, an epic that, among many other questions, asks: “What does war do to people? What does it mean to be a hero?”**

**Analyzing the words and deeds of Achilles and Hector, students grapple with questions like**



these – but also with the epic poem as an aesthetic whole, the greatness of which is marked not only by its questions, its interpretive complexity, but by the BEAUTY of its form as epic POETRY – its metaphors and repetitions. Even a philosophical work like Plato’s *Republic*, composed as a dialogue, has an artistic as well as propositional form. A work like Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is more argumentative, but the students encounter in it a wealth of ideas that they can readily apply to their own experience, especially as first-year students: What is human HAPPINESS? What does it have to do with REASON? How does HABIT foster VIRTUE? Why is the intellectual virtue of PRUDENCE indispensable to the practice of the moral virtues of JUSTICE, TEMPERANCE, and COURAGE? And what does LOVE have to do with the life of human flourishing, specifically in the form of *philia*, friendship? We go on to read Greek tragedy, and usually travel as a class to see that work performed at the Getty theater, designed like those of ancient Greece. We may read poems by Sappho. And we always conclude with the great epic of FATE, DUTY, and vocation: Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

In Great Books II we move from classical Greece and Rome into late Antiquity and through the Renaissance and Reformation. As always, the works we read are complex, saturated in their capacity to raise perennial questions that will matter to any thoughtful person: What does St. Augustine’s *Confessions* suggest about the creatural and inter-creatural relationship with the Creator, God? The relationship of humility to love? How does Dante’s *Commedia* – his descent into hell, ascent up Mount Purgatory, and

experience of heaven – suggest that human DESIRE and LOVE can point both to SIN *and* redemption? Machiavelli's *Prince* brings us back to the gritty, bloody world of power politics: can the leader of a GOVERNMENT really be GOOD? In politics, doesn't virtú trump virtue? We usually read a tragedy and a comedy by Shakespeare, which offers students a chance to inhabit the roles of his characters, and to ask, with King Lear: does suffering teach us or cripple us? Or with Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*: what makes a good marriage? Through the debate between Erasmus and Luther, we ask: does human free WILL cooperate with or participate in divine grace?

With Great Books III, we turn to early Modernity, the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The conversation commences with Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and, with Adam and Eve, we wonder: how can some KNOWLEDGE be forbidden? Is EXPERIENCE – even sinful experience? – an intrinsic part of human development and maturity? How can freedom be found in obedience? We study the philosophers: Descartes' radical skepticism and discovery of a firm founding in his own consciousness, and in the notion of INFINITY that he finds there; Pascal's affirmation of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and depiction of human existence as both wretched and grand; Locke's hard-headed defense of property rights and representative GOVERNMENT; Rousseau's defense of human EQUALITY; and Kant's imperatives of UNIVERSAL moral LAW. After a long stretch of philosophy, most students are glad to conclude with a good story – especially one with the narrative complexity and rich irony of a Jane Austen novel like *Persuasion* which depicts

mature LOVE as deepened by the PRUDENCE that only comes through difficult EXPERIENCE.

With Great Books IV, we turn more fully to our modern age -- or post-modern or post-secular as it is variously called. We begin with the Christian existentialist Kierkegaard who, analyzing Genesis 22 in *Fear and Trembling*, seems to see faith and ethics in tension. In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King, Jr. defends his suspension of the LAW in the name of JUSTICE, and, arguably, restores the link that Kierkegaard severs. Nietzsche's acid critique of Christian LOVE follows and his assertion of the ubiquitous WILL to power: How might one respond to Nietzsche if one holds RELIGION to be vital in personal HAPPINESS? Or to Marx's economic interpretation of HISTORY, and religion as the opium that deadens the alienated worker's capacity for REVOLUTION? Darwin's theory of EVOLUTION is integral to modern Biology, but its implications threaten the faith of some: should it? Our students learn that truth has nothing to fear from inquiry. And we explore perennial questions of GOD, IMMORTALITY, and the possibility of active LOVE in rich and complex narratives like Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*.

We also offer an optional Asian Great Books class in which we engage great texts from the Indian, Chinese, and Japanese traditions: with the *Bhagavad-Gita* we explore the way an obsession with results can paralyze the human will; with the *Tao te Ching* and *Zhuangzi* we

explore how one might act in a spirit of contemplative non-doing or *wu-wei*; reading various philosophers from the Confucian tradition, we investigate the transformative power of ritual; and Basho's haiku help us see the natural world more attentively.

I would encourage the reader of this report to talk with students who have completed the Great Books Colloquium. Many of these will be awarded a medallion at our March 20 banquet, and annual Spring tradition. Then, a few years from now, follow up with these students and ask them what they remember: consistently, our alumni hold up their Great Books experience as being the most transformative and enriching during in their years at Seaver College.

Long may it flourish.

#### THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Through a very generous endowment from the Fletcher Jones Foundation, Pepperdine welcomed its first Fletcher Jones Chair in Great Books in 1996. The faculty envisioned this position as an opportunity to bring in a nationally known teacher-scholar who would lead the program in curricular design, faculty recruitment and mentoring, and raise its national profile. Dr. Darryl Colson was the first professor appointed to the chair, and he was followed by Dr. Donald Marshall, and in 2012 by Dr. Jane Kelley Rodeheffer.

The Great Books Colloquium serves the Pepperdine community through the annual publication of a peer reviewed student journal. *Athena's Gate* publishes essays by Great Books students on the texts they read in the Colloquium, including pieces on Homer, Plato, Virgil, Dante, Milton, and Kant. Student artwork and photographs are also included in the journal. Student editors work with the Fletcher Jones Chair in Great Books, who serves as the faculty advisor. The Fletcher Jones Chair also collaborates frequently with a professor of painting in the Fine Arts division, on a project involving paintings by Fine Arts students based on briefs written by Great Books students that describe specific scenes in Dante, Milton and Aeschylus. The paintings serve the Fine Arts students by being published in *Athena's Gate* and are shared with the entire university community through an exhibition in the Payson gallery.

Great Books students also serve the wider community through Service learning. During the Spring Break, a group of 8-10 Great Books students are selected for a service trip to the L'Arche community in Seattle, where they serve the needs of developmentally disabled adults who live in community with long term volunteers. Great Books IV students who were studying in Buenos Aires last year also undertook service learning at *La Casita* and *Adulam*, two programs for disadvantaged children and their families.

The Colloquium serves the discipline of Great Books in several important ways. The current Fletcher Jones Chair is currently serving a four-year term as president of the Association of Core Texts and Courses, a twenty-five year old international organization

devoted to supporting Core and Great Books program faculty and curricula in the US, Britain, Europe, and East Asia. A number of Great Books faculty attend the annual conference and present papers, and the Fletcher Jones Chair recently won a grant from the Lilly Foundation to offer a conference in July of 2018 on curricula devoted to Asian texts, with faculty participating from the US, China, Taiwan, and Singapore. Several Great Books faculty members have served as editors of the peer reviewed proceedings of the annual conference of the Association of Core Texts and Courses, and Pepperdine is a member of the organizations Liberal Arts Institute, along with Yale, Columbia, the University of Chicago, and other universities in which Great Books courses play a prominent role. The Fletcher Jones Chair frequently gives papers and publishes articles on the classical texts taught in the Great Books Colloquia; she has spoken recently at Samford, the University of Winchester (England), and Concordia College-Irvine; in 2017 she accepted an invitation from Boston College to deliver its annual Stokes lecture to the honors program. In these ways Pepperdine plays a central role in the ongoing conversation related to Great Books education in the US, Europe, and Asia.

## **PURPOSES, GOALS, AND OUTCOMES**

### **The Essential Nature of the Great Books Colloquium**

The Latin *colloquium* means conversation. In current usage colloquium usually refers to an important, high-level discussion. The conversation in Great Books is “important” because the books themselves hold a respected place in the Western philosophical and literary tradition. They are “foundational” texts that ground intellectual inquiry in multiple

disciplines. Academically, an expert on any one of these texts might conduct a seminar that would grow out of his or her expertise, but this would be quite different from a class in the Great Books Colloquium, which adopts as its pedagogy a method known as shared inquiry. In shared inquiry each member of the class participates in the conversation and is expected to have carefully read the assigned text. Participants frame questions about the text and seek to answer these questions through careful reference to the text as evidence in an argument. The professor essentially leads the discussion through posing some (but not all) of the questions. According to the Great Books Foundation, “Shared Inquiry discussion is about the give-and-take of ideas.” It requires a “willingness to listen to others and talk to them respectfully.” It is an exercise in civil discourse where participants engage the rationale of each other’s arguments instead of simply agreeing or disagreeing with them. By engaging the major documents of the Western intellectual tradition through shared inquiry, Great Books students enter the conversation rather than merely learn about it. The papers they write engage important ideas and strive to consider these within the framework of our own time. If the purpose in higher education is to intellectually engage students at the highest levels, then the essence of the Great Books Colloquium is to advance the highest purposes of academia.

#### **Aspirations for Great Books Students**

- **To develop careful and critical readers**
- **To encourage independent thinkers**
- **To engage students in a tradition of learning that informs their work in their majors**
- **To practice civilized discourse even when differences of interpretation arise**

- **To strengthen students' appreciation for the Great Books program as an exemplary learning cohort**

#### **Aspirations for the Great Books Program**

- **To continue to recruit and train instructors who are experts in their own fields of inquiry to become skilled in shared inquiry**
- **To foster the collegiality that come from a learning cohort such as this**
- **To better reach out to prospective students through recruitment, possibly by developing including Great Books as part of an Honors curriculum**
- **To develop a Great Books minor so that students receive recognition on their undergraduate diploma for their accomplishments**

**The Pepperdine University Great Books Colloquium (Program) follows the model of education devised by Adler & Hutchins at the University of Chicago in the 1950's. This model is in place in various forms in over 200 colleges and universities across the United States, with only a few schools offering liberal arts degrees that are completely based on the Great Books, notably St. John's Colleges in Santa Fe/Annapolis and Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula. The Great Books Foundation (<http://gbj.org>) continues to provide national leadership on the pedagogy of the Great Books, offering workshops to faculty and providing support on how to create and maintain a vibrant Great Books canon for those schools who teach a few courses in the Great Books. Because we teach four Great Books courses on western thought and one on Asian thought, we rely heavily on guidance from the Great Books Foundation and the Association for Core Texts and Courses, whose**



**current President - Dr. Jane Kelley Rodeheffer - is among our Great Books faculty.**

**Accordingly, our educational goals match those of the Great Books Foundation, whose history is outlined here: <https://www.greatbooks.org/what-we-do/history/>**

**The goals of the Great Books Foundation inform and inspire the goals of our Colloquium:**

- **Inspire students to explore essential ideas and learn to read and think critically**
- **Equip teachers to lead engaging, inquiry-focused explorations of challenging texts**
- **Build communities of lifelong learners and engaged citizens**
- **Expand access to inquiry-based learning through partnerships and outreach programs**

**The definitive pedagogy of Shared Inquiry, as conceived by the Great Books Foundation is our method of teaching and learning. Shared Inquiry™, is a method of teaching and learning that enables people of all ages to explore the ideas, meaning, and information found in everything they read. It centers on interpretive questions that have more than one plausible answer and can lead to engaging and insightful conversations about the text. It is based on the conviction that participants can gain a deeper understanding of a text when they work together and are prompted by the skilled questioning of their discussion leader.**

**In this type of discussion, each participant engages in an active search for the meaning of a work by reading closely, asking questions and discussing actively. Discussion leaders provide direction and guidance in order to get participants thinking, listening, and**

responding to questions and answers from others in their discussion groups. The participants in the group look to the discussion leader for questions, not answers.

There are five key guidelines to engaging in a successful Shared Inquiry discussion.

- Participants must read the selection carefully before the discussion.
- The goal of the group is to discuss the ideas in the text and explore them fully.
- Participants should support interpretations of the text with evidence from the work.
- Everyone needs to listen carefully to the other participants and respond to them directly.
- The leader is there to ask questions rather than offer his/her own interpretations of

The Great Books faculty seek to achieve the following program learning outcomes (PLO):

**Program Learning Outcome 1: Frames an interpretive question or problem arising from Great Books readings.**

**Program Learning Outcome 2: Addresses the question or problem using textual evidence from Great Books readings.**

In addition, because we are a small part (25%) of the General Education (GE) program, we also seek to help students achieve three of the five GE core competencies: critical thinking, written communication, and oral communication.

All programs at Pepperdine are required to align their courses with the University's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO), which are:

| <b>INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES: STUDENT LEARNING</b>  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>KNOWLEDGE &amp; SCHOLARSHIP</b>  | <b>FAITH &amp; HERITAGE</b>   | <b>COMMUNITY &amp; GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING</b>              |
| <b>PURPOSE</b>  |   |  |
| 1 Demonstrate expertise in an academic or professional discipline, display proficiency in the discipline, and engage in the process of academic discovery | 2 Appreciate the complex relationship between faith, learning, and practice | 3 Understand and value diversity                         |
| <b>SERVICE</b>  |   |  |
| 4 Apply knowledge to real-world challenges  | 5 Incorporate faith into service to others                                  | 6 Demonstrate commitment to service and civic engagement |
| <b>LEADERSHIP</b>   |   |  |
| 7 Think critically and creatively, communicate clearly, and act with integrity  | 8 Demonstrate value centered leadership                                     | 9 Demonstrate global awareness                           |

Here is the alignment between our coursework and these ILO's:

**Great Books Courses vs. Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO)**

|                        | <b>ILO</b> | <b>ILO</b> | <b>ILO</b> | <b>ILO</b> | <b>ILO 5</b> | <b>ILO</b> | <b>ILO</b> | <b>ILO</b> | <b>ILO 9</b> |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
|                        | <b>1</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>3</b>   | <b>4</b>   |              | <b>6</b>   | <b>7</b>   | <b>8</b>   |              |
| <b>Great Books I</b>   | <b>X</b>   |            |            | <b>X</b>   |              |            | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>     |
| <b>Great Books II</b>  | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   |            | <b>X</b>   |              |            | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>     |
| <b>Great Books III</b> | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   |              |            | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>     |
| <b>Great Books IV</b>  | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   |              |            | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>   | <b>X</b>     |

## MEANING, QUALITY, AND INTEGRITY OF THE DEGREE

### MEANING

The Great Books Colloquium is not a degree program. It is merely an optional subset of the GE program. Accordingly, we will address the discussion of our program meaning, quality and integrity as is apropos for our course sequence. As indicated in our historical summary, our home is general education (GE). We are not a major. We are not a minor. Each of our courses seeks to develop the following Seaver College General Education Core Competencies: student proficiency in Critical Thinking, Written Communication, and Oral Communication.

As noted in the course vs. ILO matrix above, we support the university's mission and its learning outcomes by doing, in the words of Stanley Fish, what university faculty are charged with doing: teaching students to think critically, and speak and write clearly and courageously. There is no greater charge of the educational enterprise. We support the institution by serving as a core within general education. GE is a primary component of our the Seaver College mission, which seeks to offer students a liberal arts education that will prepare them for lives of meaning and lifelong learning. Finally, the Great Books represents a tradition of education that is academically excellent and rigorous because of its shared inquiry pedagogy and the works we read, discuss, and write about. The Great Books offers students the opportunity to learn from some of the greatest poets, theologians, and prosaic writers in western human history. Both academic excellence and Christian thought are pillars within the University Mission: *Pepperdine is a Christian university*

*committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership.*

**Thus, our learning outcomes fit squarely in the middle of the university mission. Every course provides the same learning opportunities: Shared Inquiry in a small seminar format with other student learners. Ours is a sequential, longitudinal program, spanning 3000 years of human history.**

**Fortunately, our curriculum is completely current in terms of its alignment with the curriculum of Great Books schools such as St. John's and Thomas Aquinas College. Our goal is to avoid academic and intellectual sedimentation. Instead, we rely on the primary works of ancient Rome and Greece, the middle ages, modernity, and 19th and 20th century western thought. Our curriculum is ancient and contemporary at the same time, because we only read works that have stood the test of time and which speak to the Great Ideas. We read entire original works (not commentaries or textual summaries) by Plato, Homer, Virgil, up through Woolf, Angelou, Szyborska and Morrison.**

**Our curriculum has not changed appreciably in 34 years. It cannot and must not. The canon wars we fight mean that we hold onto the Great Ideas. Their greatness rings in all other works. Whitehead said: *All of western thought is simply a collection of footnotes to Plato.* We still read Plato. We must.**

## QUALITY & INTEGRITY

The quality and effectiveness of our program can be found in three places. First, our syllabi (see the following typical course syllabi for our four courses:

[Great Books I](#), [Great Books II](#), [Great Books III](#), and [Great Books IV](#)) demonstrate the scope of our courses and what we expect of our students. Second, our program demands and gets high quality written work from our students, both in each class, which is analyzed below, and in our refereed student journal Athena's Gate - see the attached sample of Volume IV: [cover](#) and [contents](#). In addition, our service learning program is a highlight and high impact activity for many Great Books students.

### L'Arche Seattle - Project Serve

The Great Books Program has been involved with the L'Arche Seattle community since 2013 – 2014. It is a veritable immersion experience. Thanks to the program's subsidies, eight Great Books students and I spent the 2014 Spring Break in this community. The students were divided among three houses and stayed with adults with intellectual disabilities and their live-in volunteer assistants. Each day, the students spent part of the morning in orientation and formal learning about the history and tradition of L'Arche. In the afternoon, they participated in community activities. They had dinner and spent the evening with people in their assigned house. In the following year, Great Books partnered with Project Serve. Student participants are required to raise some of the funds – \$100 at first then \$150 in the last two years—but Great Books has continued to subsidize the bulk of the cost, including airfare and most of the overall fee charged by L'Arche. This subsidy

has helped students from low-income background to participate in Project Serve. By all accounts, it has been a wonderful experience for the students. The people at L'Arche have responded positively to the students. Here are [reflections](#) from three of our students who recently served at L'Arche.

### COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES FOR OUR STUDENTS

We achieve a holistic experience in our program via the student experience. The Great Books Colloquium is a four course subset of General Education. It is NOT a degree program. There is no Great Books major or minor. One cannot earn a degree in Great Books. Instead, the Great Books Colloquium provides an introduction to many of the Great Ideas as found in approximately 30 works from the Great Books of western thought. Our greatest goal is to instill in students the ability to think critically about the Great Ideas, thereby helping them develop a kind of intellectual confidence and courage to read and discuss ANYTHING. Once a student completes our four courses, they are unafraid to tackle any text or any idea presented therein. We accomplish this by spending four semesters studying approximately 40 of the Great Ideas from the Great Books. The key to everything we do is the pedagogy of Shared Inquiry applied to complete original works. We do not read critical analyses or encyclopedic summaries. We teach first-year and second-year students how to carefully and thoroughly read difficult, provocative, and life changing works spanning 3000 years of thought. There are no textbooks. Technology is of minor importance. Effectively the teachers of the course are the authors of the works we read and discuss. It is as if students are sitting at the feet of Plato, Dante, Darwin, Woolf,



**and Austen as they learn what these authors have to offer about such questions as: What does it mean to be just? What is required to be heroic? How do we overcome guilt? Why is there evil in the world? Why do humans leave nature and form bodies politic? What does it mean to be virtuous? How do we find happiness?**

**We extend our work in the classroom with several activities beyond it. Every fall semester we take the 120 first year Great Books students to the Getty Villa to see a live performance of Greek tragedy. Every spring we hold an annual Great Books banquet for all of our students with a distinguished outside speaker. This spring it will be Dr. Victoria Myers, emeritus professor of English and Great Books Colloquium co-founder. At this spring's banquet we will present a gold medallion, marked by the cardinal virtues and the Christian virtues, to each student who has completed the program. In the previous two years we had distinguished faculty from USC: Dr. Greg Thalmann and Dr. Heather James.**

**We maintain ongoing contact with several national organizations and Great Books educators, by tying ourselves to the Great Books Foundation, the Association for Core Texts and Courses - ACTC, and by staying in close touch with aspirational Great Books programs such those at St. John's College. Furthermore we conduct an annual Great Books faculty retreat where we discuss how best to approach difficult works such as Kant, Dante, and Dostoevsky.**

## **PROGRAM INTEGRITY**

**In effect we simply teach one course, divided into four parts. it is a two year long conversation about the Great Ideas, based on careful examination of some 35 different classic texts. We are four courses, spanning western thought over nearly 3000 years. Thus, our integrity is a function of the ways the texts to each other across four semesters. Fortunately, Adler and Hutchins developed the model of this integrity by their pioneering work in 1952. We follow their roadmap.**

## **EVIDENCE**

**In order to evaluate our students' achievement of the Great Books PLO's and GE core competencies, we selected 4 students at random from each of the 15 sections of Great Books that we offered in the fall 2018 semester. Eight of these sections were Great Books I and the remaining seven were Great Books III. These 60 students then served as our sample from the total fall 2018 Great Books enrollment of 200 students. We asked these 60 students to do three things: a) complete an online survey (representing indirect evidence) in the early part of the fall semester as described below, b) submit a copy of their first major essay and c) submit a copy of their final major essay, The two essays (representing direct evidence) were then evaluated by our nine Great Books faculty in January of 2019, as described below.**

## **INDIRECT EVIDENCE**

### **Student Self-Reporting of Student Skills, Abilities, and Learning Experiences**

**We asked students to rate their agreement with each of 17 statements on a sliding Likert scale from 0 to 100, with 0 representing complete disagreement, 100 representing full agreement.**

**These are the statements we asked them do agree/disagree on:**

- 1. I enjoy the discussion format of Great Books**
- 2. I read all of the assigned material before coming to class**
- 3. I participate in class discussion**
- 4. Our class discussions focus on the text we are studying**
- 5. I am an accomplished writer**
- 6. It is easy for me to carry out textual analysis in my writing**
- 7. The works we discuss are challenging**
- 8. Being in Great Books is deepening my faith journey**
- 9. Great Books helps me better understand my life purpose**
- 10. Great Books helps me think critically**
- 11. I am able to frame interpretive questions based on the text we are reading**
- 12. Because of Great Books, I am a confident learner**

**13. I am able to connect Great Books ideas and concepts to other General Education courses**

**14. I discuss the Great Books texts with people outside of class**

**15. Because of Great Books, my appetite for learning has deepened**

**16. My Great Books professors are my mentors**

**17. I am glad to be part of the Great Books community**

**The survey closed with an 18th open ended question:**

**18. Thanks for taking our survey. Please add anything else you believe is important for us to know. (We have read and discussed these results among ourselves, but did not perform qualitative analysis for this self-study.)**

**Here are the average scores for each of the 17 quantitative questions, divided into the two class groups:**

**Average Reponses**

| <b>#</b>                   | <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>  | <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b>  | <b>8</b>  | <b>9</b>  | <b>10</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>GB I<br/>(n = 32)</b>   | <b>87</b> | <b>94</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>93</b> | <b>76</b> | <b>75</b> | <b>70</b> | <b>47</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>79</b> | <b>71</b> | <b>76</b> | <b>64</b> | <b>68</b> | <b>62</b> | <b>88</b> |
| <b>GB III<br/>(n = 28)</b> | <b>93</b> | <b>83</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>91</b> | <b>80</b> | <b>81</b> | <b>87</b> | <b>80</b> | <b>76</b> | <b>92</b> | <b>84</b> | <b>83</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>69</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>75</b> | <b>93</b> |

Under the null hypothesis that the scores on each of the 17 questions is the same between the two Great Books classes, we have the following p-values<sup>1</sup>:

|         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| #       | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  |
| p-value | .05 | .00 | .97 | .54 | .42 | .22 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .12 | .27 | .05 | .06 | .46 | .01 | .11 | .14 |

Notice that we have:

- No significant change over time in the scores on questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 14, 16, & 17. We can interpret this as saying that, over time, our courses consistently perform at the 90th percentile in each of these areas, including participation, textual analysis, writing, critical thinking, and finding value in the program.
- Significantly higher score over time for each of questions 1, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, & 15. We can interpret this as suggesting that, over time, students improve significantly in becoming better discussion participants, writers, readers, and learners.
- A significant drop, over time, in the score for question #2, which means that students grow somewhat lax in always faithfully reading assigned material before coming to class.

## DIRECT EVIDENCE

### Student Writing Analysis

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<sup>1</sup> The *p-value* or *level of significance* in a statistical test measures the probability of rejecting a true null hypothesis. For this experiment, the null hypothesis states that the mean values of the responses on a survey question are statistically the same for the two Great Books classes. The standard of practice is to NOT reject a null hypothesis if the p-value exceeds .10. (Thus, the smaller the p-value, the more confident we are to say that null hypothesis is false.) For example, a p-value of 0.05 for question 1 allows us to confidently conclude that the mean scores of question 1 for Great Books I vs. III ARE significantly different, whereas for question 17, with p-value .14, the responses are essentially the same.

**For this data set, we used the following rubrics to measure PLO 1, PLO 2, and GE writing competency in 120 essays. For each of our 60 students, we evaluate both their first and final essay. Before we launched into all 120 essays, we normed our evaluations across each of our nine faculty members in order to ensure inter-rater reliability. By collecting and analyzing two essays per student, we are able to conduct a paired comparison t-test on the improvement in writing for each of the three rubrics.**

**Here are the rubrics that we used to evaluate each of the 120 essays, with the workload of evaluating these papers divided evenly among the nine of us.**

### **1. Framing Interpretive Questions or Problems (Evidence of PLO 1)**

**Level 1: States a question/problem that does not arise directly from the text.**

**Level 2: States a question/problem that comes directly from the text(s) with partial detail as to its origin.**

**Level 3: Explains how the question/problem ties to specific details/passages in the text(s).**

**Level 4: Describes ways that the question/problem connects with major themes/ideas found in the text(s).**

**Level 5: Clarifies ways that the question/problem applies at more than one level (e.g. symbolic, moral, intellectual, or spiritual).**

## **2. Addressing Questions/Problems with Textual Evidence (Evidence of PLO 2)**

**Level 1: Summarizes/Retells contents of the work.**

**Level 2: Chooses some relevant (and some irrelevant) text or only provides minimal analysis/explanation.**

**Level 3: Clearly explains how relevant textual passages answer the question/problem.**

**Level 4: Uses text to build a mostly clear, cohesive solution to the problem/question.**

**Level 5: Provides a creative and convincing solution to the problem/question.**

### 3. Organization of Ideas (Evidence of GE Writing Competency)

**Level 1: The paper is minimally organized or very short.**

**Level 2: The essay sometimes wanders from the main idea.**

**Level 3: The essay is focused on the main idea throughout, with some gaps or repetitions.**

**Level 4: The essay is mostly organized logically and focused on the main idea.**

**Level 5: The essay explores an idea in an orderly way with each part contributing effectively.**

**Here are the mean rubric scores for both essays in both groups:**

| <b>Rubric</b>          | <b>1</b>      | <b>2</b>      | <b>3</b>      |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Great Books I</b>   | <b>Mean</b>   | <b>Mean</b>   | <b>Mean</b>   |
| <b>First Essay</b>     | <b>2.7188</b> | <b>2.6875</b> | <b>2.9063</b> |
| <b>Final Essay</b>     | <b>3.3125</b> | <b>3.4063</b> | <b>3.6875</b> |
| <b>Significance</b>    | <b>.005</b>   | <b>.000</b>   | <b>.000</b>   |
|                        |               |               |               |
| <b>Great Books III</b> | <b>Mean</b>   | <b>Mean</b>   | <b>Mean</b>   |
| <b>First Essay</b>     | <b>2.6786</b> | <b>2.6429</b> | <b>2.9643</b> |
| <b>Final Essay</b>     | <b>3.7143</b> | <b>3.7500</b> | <b>3.9286</b> |
| <b>Significance</b>    | <b>.000</b>   | <b>.000</b>   | <b>.000</b>   |



Clearly, our students are improving significantly in their ability to a) ask interpretive questions, b) effectively answer these questions based on the texts we read, and c) write well organized and lucid essays. We are achieving our two PLO's and GE writing competency. Most importantly, our students are engaging in the liberal arts, as first conceived by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Boethius.

#### MORE EVIDENCE FROM ALUMNI

Because we have been teaching the Great Books for nearly 35 years, we have nearly 3000 alumni of our program. Some of the things they say about the program were recently written up by Michael Gose in his recent text: *Great Books: 100 Years, 100 Stories, 2018*. Here is a [collection](#) of student testimonies describing the effect that their Great Books education made.

Each of our Great Books faculty members hears from our alumni via email. We have hundreds of these messages. Here is a sampling of what they tell us:

Saturday, December 29,

2018

Ethan Hays

ethan.hays@gmail.com

Hello DT (Dr. Thompson),

How are you my friend? I am hoping at least one of these email addresses still works for you - it has been some years.

I just wanted to touch base and say hello. I now live in Brooklyn (which shocks me) and work in marketing (which also shocks me). I married an amazing lady named Amanda about 5 years ago. She's a lifelong soccer player and coach turned exec at Major League Soccer.

I continue the good reading habits you taught me. I would say I average about a book a week, mostly non-fiction. Best I read this year were Will & Ariel Durant The Lessons of History, and Yuval Noah Harrari's Homo Deus. But I also have longer-term reading projects like Proust's In Search of Lost Time, which I'm currently about 2/3 of the way through, chipping away chunks as I'm able.

How are things with you?

Best,

Ethan (Seaver College class of 1998)



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FEB 4 2019

Kyle Eastman 5:57 PM

Hi Dr. Contino,

I was listening to a podcast over the weekend and a quote from the guest John O'Donohue really resonated with me and the experience I had in your great books courses. He

describes beauty as, “an emerging fullness, a greater sense of grace and elegance, a deeper sense of depth, and also a kind of homecoming for the enriched memory of our unfolding.” In reflection, the great books courses truly helped me to be able to recognize beauty as described by O’Donohue. With the instantaneous, glamorized media aimed at grabbing and redirecting the people’s limited attention, being able to step out of the daily hustle to appreciate instances of intricacies that are still present and possible in every interaction. The whole podcast made me think our class discussions, and made me miss being around the introspection that you encouraged so well. Here’s the description of the show if you have some free time!

**Kyle is currently Performance & Corporate Wellness Manager at Cuirim Sports Recover, Orange County, California**

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**From Emma Ujifusa - Seaver College Great Books Student - Fall 2018**

When we attended the admitted students day during my senior year of high school, there was a reception for the Regents Scholars. At this reception, Don Thompson shared a brief introduction to the Great Books program. We enjoyed our time at the reception and on the drive home began discussing what we enjoyed about the school. My dad highlighted the Great Books program. He thought it was so interesting that Dr. Thompson had brought with him a bag of all of the books that we would read throughout the Great Books courses. My dad raved about this to anyone and everyone that would listen to his stories about my college choice. When I finally made my choice, he kept

asking me about Great Books. As soon as I began taking the course, every time I was home, he would ask me what I was reading and how many books I had read so far.

—

Fri, Nov 21, 2008, 1:49 PM

Good afternoon, Professor Contino:

Though you may not remember me, I write to express my profound thanks for your teaching and encouragement in years past. A 2007 Pepperdine graduate, I took your Great Books III course and a reading group that you later taught. The many lessons I learned in your class still play in my head. Moreover, you kindly authored a law school recommendation on my behalf. For your teaching and mentoring, I am extremely grateful. Indeed, your efforts have borne fruit. I am now a second year law student at Yale Law School. Blessed with a fortunate first-year at Duke Law School, Yale Law School accepted me as a transfer student last summer. As I consider seriously a career in law teaching, your example often comes to mind. Professor Contino, please do know how much I appreciated your classes and your efforts on my behalf. I wish you very well in your good work.

With Great Thanks,

Brendan

Brendan Groves

**Yale Law School, Class of 2010**

**316-737-4413**

**Brendan.Groves@yale.edu**

**Brendan is currently Senior Counsel to the Deputy Attorney General at U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C.**

—

**Hello Dr. Dillion,**

**I just wanted to say hello and let you know a bit about my semester in Florence as it comes to a close. I wanted to say thank you again for the letter of recommendation that helped me get the RA position. It has been the most amazing semester of my life so far! I've traveled to Marettimo (island off of Sicily), Cinque Terre, Ravenna, Milan, Verona, Venice, Amsterdam, Prague, Malta, Siena, and more parts of Sicily. Over Christmas, I'll be going to Greece, Tunisia (specifically Carthage) as well as Switzerland and Rome. I've gotten to see Dante's house and tomb as well as his death mask. A few days ago, a group of us ate dinner at the country home of Machiavelli where he wrote The Prince.**

**I'm doing so well and this program has absolutely changed my life! My Italian is coming along pretty well too, although I'm not quite fluent enough to read all of Divine Comedy in the original Italian. But I got to hear a performance of some of Inferno and it was so cool to hear it in the original language. Again I just wanted to say thank you for making this possible for me and that I hope you have a wonderful break!**

**Sincerely,**

**Jenna Petrunaro**

—

**Hi Dr. Dillion!**

**How are you? Are you still in Malibu for this semester? I am studying abroad in Italy right now and can't help but smile at all of the things I am seeing that relate to what we learned in Great Books I and II! I'm heading to Greece soon and can't wait to geek out over everything there.**

**By the way, have you considered teaching Great Books III and IV? That would be the best class EVER!**

**Thanks!**

**Best wishes,**

**Savannah Wix**

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**Abby Gibson, January 4, 2019, unsolicited comment on the Great Books at Pepperdine FB page:**

**Without a doubt, Great Books was the most impactful part of my undergraduate career at Pepperdine. The books and ideas I encountered in the colloquium upended so much that I thought I was certain about, particularly in my faith, and I am an exceedingly better person and Christ follower for it. I will always carry with me the important and life-giving lesson I learned throughout these courses—that questioning everything is a sign of strength and faith rather than weakness and doubt. I can't praise this program highly enough and I will do everything in my power to make sure it always has a place at Pepperdine. Also, as a graduate student studying history now, it did wonders for my writing, discussion, and critical thinking skills. I wish all students could take it!!**

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In a research project funded by President Benton, Don Thompson has conducted focus groups of 35 year old Seaver College alumni since 2014 and has spoken with over 250 of them. Many of these alumni were in Great Books, but not all. The final two questions he asks alumni in each focus group are: 1. Looking back, what is one thing you wish you had done when you were an undergraduate? 2. If you could advise a current Pepperdine student, what would you tell them?

The answers he gets to both questions from EVERY focus group are the same: TAKE GREAT BOOKS & DO AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM.

### OUR FACULTY

The achievements of our faculty are best described through their Curriculum Vitae, linked here: [Cyndia Clegg](#), [Paul Contino](#), [Jacqueline Dillion](#), [Michael Gose](#), [Tuan Hoang](#), [Frank Novak](#), [Jane Kelley Rodeheffer](#), [Jeffrey Schultz](#), and [Don Thompson](#). Because all faculty in the Great Books program are themselves seasoned scholars, we cannot help but be devoted to maintaining its rigor and excellence. We each pour our lives into the program and its students. ALL of our faculty hold terminal degrees. Their disciplines are enumerated in each faculty CV - as described above. However, we do NOT

seek particular specializations for our faculty members. We are an interdisciplinary program, spanning the liberal arts. Accordingly each professor is expected to be able to teach every course. Each professor must first and foremost be an avid learner, interested in all disciplines and able to guide students through the many fields that we encounter in our four courses. We view ourselves as first learners and accordingly we do not seek faculty members with particular disciplines, but faculty who are interested in our pedagogy and engagement with the Great Ideas, spanning all disciplines. The work of reviewing our program is shared by all of us. We all have reviewed the student essays that are described above and we all have shared in the writing of this self-study. We meet 2-3 times per semester to discuss the program and we participate in an annual retreat in August to discuss ways to improve the program.

Many of us teach and mentor students beyond the four courses. Many of our students complete the colloquium and then find themselves wanting to continue. So, several of us meet periodically with exceptional students who, having finished the four courses, wish to continue reading and learning. The process is lifelong for us and for our students.

In terms of grants and external funds - in addition to our endowed Fletcher Jones Chair of Great Books - we have acquired the following external funding:

**Curtis McGraw Foundation of Princeton, NJ**

**Received \$50,000 for Undergraduate Research, Service learning, and a**

**Visiting Artist series for the Pepperdine Great Books Program for 2013-14, renewed**



for \$15,000 for 2014-15.

**Liberal Arts Institute of the Association of Core Texts and Courses**

Secured \$65,000 in funding from Pepperdine, Rhodes College, and the Apgar Foundation for a conference: “The Intersection of Secular and Religious Cores” held at Rhodes College in September of 2014.

**Global General Education and Asian Texts: A Lilly Fellows Program Regional**

Conference on the Incorporation of Asian Texts and Cultures in Core Text and General Education Programs in Christian Colleges and Universities. \$14,000 grant from the Lilly Fellows Program in partial support of an international conference held at Concordia University-Irvine July 12-14, 2018, co-sponsored by NYU, Chinese University of Hong Kong, ACTC, Concordia-Irvine, and Pepperdine

**Glazer Institute of Pepperdine University: Teaching Grant to Develop Course**

Unit in Jewish Studies for Great Books IV (2015/16) (\$4,000)

Our faculty consist of 2 assistant professors, 1 visiting professor, and 6 full professors. Our diversity can be described in three dimensions:

**Gender Diversity:** Three women and six men.

**Ethnic/Racial Diversity:** Eight of us are white, one is Asian

**Religious Diversity:** Three are Catholic, one Lutheran, one Episcopalian, one from the Christian Church, and three from the Church of Christ.

## **SUSTAINABILITY: EVIDENCE OF PROGRAM VIABILITY**

**Our program is still in high demand. Each fall, approximately 110 entering students enroll in Great Books I. Approximately 15% of these students do not continue with Great Books II, largely because it is too rigorous and difficult for them. Of the 85% who continue with Great Books II, 100% of these finish all four courses. Thus, our overall program attrition is 15%. Over the 35 year history of our program, our student-faculty ratio is a constant 14-1. Our seminar format demands this ratio in order to allow our pedagogy to be a fully discussion based experience.**

**All faculty undergo periodic RTP review of their work as scholars and teachers through their home divisions. Eight of us are housed in Humanities, one in Natural Science. The seaver dean provides an annual operating budget of \$15,000 for our program. This provides for faculty development and our annual retreat, our annual banquet, our student journal, our annual trip to the Getty Villa, and some assistance in sending students to the ACTC student conference and faculty members to the Professors' ACTC conference.**

**Regarding classroom usage, we simply use traditional classrooms and the Great Books room in Payson library. Ideally, all of our classes belong in the library room, but there are too many sections, so we use space in CAC to fill out our schedule. Great Books program director is currently Don Thompson, who is now in his 25th year teaching in Great Books and represents the only faculty member outside of the Humanities Division.**

## **SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS**

**We plan to keep teaching the Great Books Program. It is rigorous, popular and serves as a core to our GE program. In addition, we are developing a proposal to do a six course Great Books minor. In cooperation with the Center for Faith and Learning and David Holmes, GE director, we are recruiting new faculty for the coming fall to teach a first year seminar on Human Flourishing that will include works by Plato, Aristotle, and other selected Great Books works. Students who complete this new seminar will be invited to join our full Great Books program, beginning with Great Books II.**