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AS Minutes 2005 10 14 Appendix Capstone

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Date: September 27, 2005
To: Core Curriculum Advisory Committee
From: Capstone Development Team
Re: Detailed Description of the Course

1. **Title: Capstone Course: Living Wisdom: Contemporary Challenges**

2. *Rationale for the Educational Experience*

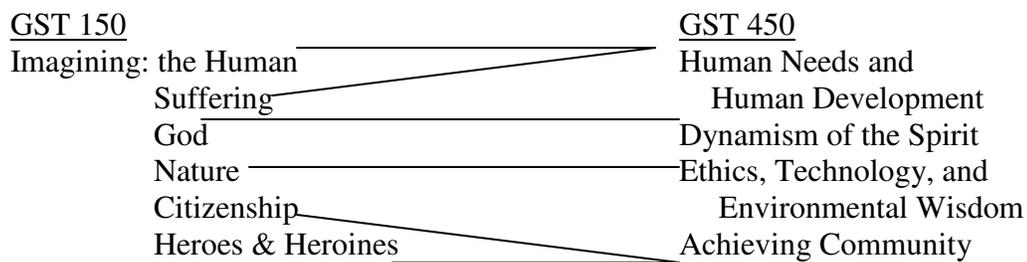
The senior Salve student faces numerous questions.

- In terms of the past, and specifically academics, “How might the coursework undertaken in the Core, as well as in my Major and Minor areas of study, fit together, and how has it shaped me thus far?” These may be called summative questions.
- In terms of the future, the student faces questions pertaining to self and society. “Who am I, where am I going, and how do I understand the world and my relation to it? What is my personal-- including spiritual—trajectory, and how do I perceive the local, national, and even global communities with which I will interact?” These may be called worldview questions.

The basic rationale for the course is to give the student an opportunity 1) to achieve some integration of his or her educational experiences in the Core, in conversation with his or her Major and Minor areas of study, and 2) to think toward the future, both in terms of the type of person s/he will be and the potential interaction s/he will have with various dimensions of the world after graduation. The Capstone course, then, will serve as both an end and a beginning.

The Capstone will have a special connection to the GST 150 Portal course, reiterating some of the first-year motifs in a new, somewhat more concrete and forward-looking key. This is evident when comparing the titles and themes:

GST 150: Portal Course: Seeking Wisdom: From Wonder to Justice
GST 450: Capstone Course: Living Wisdom: Contemporary Challenges



The Capstone development team notes that under each theme, both positive and negative dimensions of the human condition can be explored. The team also notes that the themes interpenetrate, and texts chosen to explore the themes will often (and appropriately) engage several at a time.

The purpose of the course is neither to provide “the answers” under such vast themes, nor to moralize or catechize the students. Rather, the hope is that these themes, and the texts chosen to explore them, will serve as bridges between the conversation started here at Salve and the ongoing conversation the student will have as s/he moves out into the future in relation to the world. We hope these themes allow students to begin to gather wisdom already learned, and to orient the student in the search for wisdom that must continue as his or her life unfolds.

3. Course Description

What have I become while at Salve, and where am I going? As the Capstone of this University’s Core Curriculum, this course encourages students to integrate their undergraduate experience and look toward their future with thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and openness. Using the liberal arts skills of critical reading, discussion, analysis, and writing, this course will challenge students to address issues of personal development as well as social concerns in ways that reflect the mission of the University. Required readings will engage personal, social, philosophical and religious themes.

4. Objectives of the Course

- a) To enable the student to reflect, philosophically and spiritually, on questions of personal development in light of his or her Salve experience.
- b) To enable the student to reflect, philosophically and spiritually, on questions of worldview.
- c) To increase the student’s understanding of a number of contemporary challenges facing the nation and the world at large.
- d) To implement and further refine the liberal arts skills the student has acquired during his or her education at Salve.

5. Identification of the Relevant Core Goals and Objectives Being Met:

Goal 1: An Education with a Catholic Identity: Catholic identity, whether in spiritual development, moral decision making, or social concern, is marked by several key traits: the importance of free will and personal commitment in spiritual development (as the Catechism notes, “God does not save us without us”); the importance of each individual’s spiritual journey, guided by conscience, but in profound conversation with wider sources

of meaning; a sense of sacramentality-- God comes to us in mediated form, not only in and through the sacraments of the church but also in and through nature, culture, and other people; an affirmation that we are social beings by nature, intrinsically connected to wider communities of nurture, be they family, neighborhood, church, or state, and hence both in debt to and actively responsible for the future shape of community life at all levels. The Capstone course challenges students to consider their own spiritual journey in relation to various sources of wisdom, and their future relationships to various levels of community life, including the natural world.

Specific Objectives:

- **1.4** Understand the enduring influence of the Bible and Jewish, Christian, and specifically Catholic, symbols, stories, ideas, values and practices.
(Theme: Dynamism of the Spirit)
- **1.6** Evaluate their learning and actions from the perspective of Christian ethics.
(Theme: Environmental/ Technology Wisdom)
- **1.7** Understand how to integrate faith, learning, and service as a means to enrich personal and community life.
(Themes: Dynamism of the Spirit, Achieving Community)
- **1.9** Cultivate attitudes and practices that reflect an abiding respect for the dignity of all persons and a commitment of social justice.
(Themes: Human Needs and Human Development, Dynamism of the Spirit, Achieving Community)

Goal 2: Liberal Education: The Capstone course will primarily employ liberal arts skills in its pedagogical method. That is to say, critical reading, writing, analysis, and discussion of texts will play a major role in the course. It is thus a continuation of the skills developed initially in the GST 150 and ENG 150 courses, as well as other courses throughout the Core and in the university more widely.

Specific Objectives:

- **2.1** Engage in critical self-inquiry that promotes self-knowledge in order to develop (1) the ability to evaluate different opinions and beliefs, (2) a willingness to test one's point of view against others, (3) a willingness to recognize faulty thinking and seek other rational alternatives, and (4) a sense of collaboration by learning in community.
(Theme: Achieving Community)
- **2.5** Apply their studies in the Liberal Arts and Sciences to contemporary issues and situations.
(Theme: Environmental/ Technology Wisdom)

Goal 3: Developing Responsible Citizens of the World: This goal is potentially addressed in each theme. Under “Human Needs and Human Development” and “Achieving Community,” global awareness can be fostered either through the sources used, which may come from various cultures, or through the particular issues chosen. Under “The Dynamism of the Spirit,” a sense of general human responsibility can be fostered through an exploration of themes related to Christian service, which transcends national boundaries, or through an exploration of spiritual dynamics growing out of non-Christian traditions. Finally, “Ethics, Technology, and Environmental Wisdom” will explore issues that obviously cut across national boundaries.

Specific Objectives:

- **3.1** Develop an understanding of their own culture, since this culture will be the base for cross-cultural reference.
(Themes: Human Needs and Human Development, Achieving Community)
- **3.4** Gain awareness of cultural differences in order to promote the respect and empathy for one another that is essential for dialogue.
(Themes: Human Needs and Human Development, Achieving Community)
- **3.5** Transcend the inclination to define themselves primarily in terms of group loyalties and identities.
(Themes: Human Needs and Human Development, Achieving Community)

Goal 4: Developing Lifelong Learners: The Capstone course, by its very nature, indicates to students that the coursework as well as extracurricular activities they have undertaken at Salve are not simply finished products, now existing as past achievements; rather, they form part of an on-going, living process that is just beginning.

Specific Objectives:

- **4.6** Apply skills related to critical reading, critical thinking, and problem solving.
- **4.7** Integrate and synthesize information and ideas.
- **4.8** Develop the creative, critical and imaginative skills needed to recognize the beauty, the goodness and the breadth of human experiences.
(Themes: Human Needs and Human Development, Dynamism of the Spirit, Achieving Community)

6. *Basic Outline*

As noted, above, the course will take up four themes: 1) Human Needs and Human Development; 2) The Dynamism of the Spirit; 3) Ethics, Technology, and Environmental Wisdom; and 4) Achieving Community.

Instructors will have discretion in terms of how much time to spend on each theme, but a minimum of two weeks per theme seems reasonable. Assuming a 13 week semester, instructors might use the remaining time exploring new themes of their own choosing, or expanding the treatment of one or more of the existing themes.

As a Common Core course, roughly 75% of the required reading in the Capstone will be common across all sections. In order to fulfill this, the Capstone development team will designate at least one major common text per theme (see Appendix for a list of texts under each theme that are currently candidates for Common Core material).

In addition, the Capstone team also envisions two other possible forms of common reading, perhaps chosen annually by a special committee, with an eye toward books of contemporary interest: 1) A common pre-semester text, to be read by the student either over the summer (if taking the course in the fall) or winter break (if taking the course in the spring), and/or 2) an additional common text to be read during the semester (perhaps one week might be left open within the syllabus each semester for this text).

Other books, articles, research projects, etc. beyond the Common Core reading will be chosen by the individual instructor at his or her discretion. Thus the content, tone, and direction of each Capstone section will bear the stamp of the faculty member teaching it.

7. *Suggested Pedagogical Styles*

- The Capstone will in large part be a **liberal arts style seminar course**. The number of students in the class, we hope, will be in the 15-20 range. A significant portion of the course will be devoted to reading, writing, and discussion.

- It will be up to the professor, in terms of the types of assignments given, to help students approach the required material in such a way that an **integrative educational experience** occurs. Three integrative tasks include:

- a) Giving students the opportunity to integrate past learning in the Core Curriculum in relation to the Capstone material.
 - b) Giving students the opportunity to integrate ideas from their Major and Minor areas of study in relation to the Capstone material.
 - c) Giving students the opportunity to integrate future-oriented worldview questions in relation to the Capstone material.
- To a large extent, the themes chosen for the course are integrative in nature, as will be the texts. The themes play off of GST 150, ENG 150, RST 210, and PHL 220; the texts will be chosen, to a large extent, based on their ability to facilitate integrative questions.
 - In addition, however, certain pedagogical methods can enhance the integrative nature of the course, such as: 1) framing assignments in such a way that oral and written reflection on the texts explicitly include summative and worldview questions, and/or 2) assigning a major project (such as a significant paper, or an interactive individual or group presentation) that requires explicit reflection on such questions.
 - The development team envisions a close relationship between this course and the students' electronic portfolios. Papers and other projects in the course will be uploaded into the student's electronic portfolio. Attention will be given both to integration of past work in the Core ("summative" use of the existing portfolio) and to rounding out the portfolio toward completion.

8. *Credits:*

Three

9. *Rationale for Suggested Year of Offering the Experience*

Since the purpose of the course is summative and integrative in nature, generally the Capstone will be taken in the fall or spring semester of the senior year. For those students who face insurmountable difficulties in fitting the Capstone into their senior year schedule, a small number of second semester junior year sections will be offered.

10. *Exemptions*

None

11. *Concerns of Professional Departments*

As addressed in section 9 above, provisions will be made for those students whose senior year clinical, field, or student teaching placements make it difficult or impossible to schedule a senior year course. Also, perhaps evening sections can be offered for those students whose daytime hours are consumed by their placements.

12. *Unusual Support*

With respect to staffing the course, Religious Studies and Philosophy will be the lead departments in providing instructors for the Capstone. This is due to the philosophical and spiritual themes in the course, as well as its special relationship to GST 150. However, as with GST 150, the course is not intended to be overly specialized in this regard, but rather open to a wider range of faculty who might be interested in teaching it. Therefore, potential Capstone instructors will likely be drawn from a variety of disciplines in addition to Religious Studies and Philosophy.

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Appendix: Texts under consideration for Common Core selections

Human Needs/Human Development

Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy, Carlos Eire

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America, Barbara Ehrenreich

Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools, Jonathan Kozol

Dynamism of the Spirit

The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living, Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler

In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership, Henri J. Nouwen

Ethics, Technology, and Environmental Wisdom

Another Turn of the Crank: Essays, Wendell Berry

Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril (Searching for a New Framework), Sallie McFague

The Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Ilya Schor (Illustrator)

Achieving Community

Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life, Richard Madsen, et al

Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals (HPC Classics Series), Immanuel Kant

Creating True Peace : Ending Violence in Yourself, Your Family, Your Community, and the World, Thich Nhat Hanh

