

The Exploring Diversity Initiative

MEMORANDUM

To: All members of the Faculty
From: Chris Waters, Director, Exploring Diversity Initiative
Date: Monday 24th November, 2008
Re: A call for course proposals

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to invite you to submit proposals to offer courses as part of the Exploring Diversity Initiative (EDI) – either proposals for funding to develop new courses or substantially revise existing courses for the Initiative, or proposals to have currently-offered courses listed as part of the Initiative.

As I mentioned at the November faculty meeting, this is the first year in which the new Exploring Diversity Initiative is in operation. The new Initiative replaces the old Peoples and Cultures (P&C) requirement; all students are required to complete at least one course that is designated as an EDI course (by a letter 'D' in the catalog) or meet various study abroad criteria in order to fulfill the requirement. In the past, chairs simply determined whether or not a particular course met the P&C criteria; now, for a course to be listed as part of the new Exploring Diversity Initiative it must be approved in advance.

The Exploring Diversity Initiative as it is worded on pp. 8-9 in the *Williams College Bulletin* for 2008-2009 is reproduced on the next page of this memorandum. Briefly, EDI courses should actively promote a self-conscious and critical engagement with issues of diversity; they should encourage students to reflect critically and self-consciously on the operations of difference in the world and provide them with the tools they will need for a lifetime of engagement with the increasingly diverse world in which we live. An EDI course might focus on helping our students become more self-conscious about the differences between themselves and the people or culture they are investigating in that course; it might, by contrast, provide students with new ways of understanding the various interactions between distinct groups of people or societies, either today or in the past. In short, there is no set "blueprint" for an EDI course – other than that such courses meet one or more of the criteria outlined in the Initiative and that students come away from an EDI course with a heightened appreciation for, and understanding of, the operations of diversity. Given that students want to know why a particular course in which they are enrolled is an EDI course, faculty need to make explicit *why* that course is an EDI course and *how* it will achieve the goals of the Initiative; faculty are thus expected to highlight the ways in which their EDI courses engage with issues of diversity and to append a sentence or two to the catalog course descriptions explaining the EDI nature of those courses.

Last year roughly eighty-five courses were approved for the Exploring Diversity Initiative, of which some sixty of them are being offered this year (some of which are cross-listed). A full list of current EDI courses appears on pp. 320-1 of this year's course catalog. Eight of those courses are entirely new, developed for the Initiative and funded by summer course development stipends. Our current goal is to enhance our EDI offerings, developing a more comprehensive set of courses that can meet the requirements of the Initiative next year.

The Dean of the Faculty and the Provost have once again made funds available for the development of new EDI courses and for the substantial revision of existing courses in order that they might meet the goals of the new Initiative. We therefore intend to make available a number of \$2,000 course revision stipends and \$4,000 new course development stipends in the summer of 2009. If you would like to apply for a course development stipend, we urge you to follow the attached guidelines, submitting your proposal for our consideration by **Monday 5th January 2009**. Funding decisions will be made by the Director of the Exploring Diversity Initiative and the Dean of the Faculty and announced by the third week of January; stipends will be disbursed after July 1st.

If you are already teaching a course that you believe might meet the requirements of the new Initiative and you would like to have it designated in the catalog next year as an EDI course, we would welcome your commitment and encourage you to follow the attached procedures, submitting your existing course for our consideration by **Friday 9th January 2009**.

As we continue to assemble a rigorous, intellectually coherent, and challenging group of courses that will encourage our students to think critically about diversity and provide them the tools they need for a life-long engagement with diversity in the world, we do hope you might consider contributing to the success of the Initiative if you have not already done so.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can answer any questions you might have: Chris Waters – office: NAB 329; tel: x2394 / x2106; e-mail: cwaters@williams.edu

Statement from the Dean of Faculty's Office Concerning Course Development Stipends:

Faculty members with continuing appointments are eligible to apply for summer stipends to support the development of new courses for a number of curricular initiatives, including the CRAAS, ISP, EDI, and Tutorial programs. The expectation is that a significant amount of time will be required to create the course – to identify and gather course materials, to prepare lecture, lab, and/or discussion outlines, and to develop a syllabus that meets the goals of the selected initiative. It is also an expectation that each stipend-supported course will be taught at least twice.

Though some new courses will meet the criteria for more than one curricular initiative (for example, EDI courses that are designated as tutorials), the faculty member is eligible to receive only one stipend for that course. In addition, faculty members should not apply for more than one course development stipend in any given year.

DEADLINES:

Monday 5th January – deadline for submission of applications for funding, either substantially to revise existing courses for EDI recognition (\$2,000) or to develop wholly new EDI courses (\$4,000)

Friday 9th January – deadline for submission of existing courses for EDI recognition

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(as it appears in the *Williams College Bulletin*, 2008-2009)

Williams College is committed to creating and maintaining a curriculum, faculty, and student body that reflects and explores a diverse, globalized world and the multi-cultural character of the United States. Courses designated “(D)” in the College Bulletin are a part of the College’s Exploring Diversity Initiative (EDI); they represent our dedication to study groups, cultures, and societies as they interact with, and challenge, each other. Through such courses, Williams College students and faculty also consider the multiple approaches that engage these issues. Rather than simply focus on the study of specific peoples, cultures, or regions of the world, in the past or present, however, courses fulfilling the EDI requirement actively promote a self-conscious and critical engagement with diversity. They urge students to consider the operations of difference in the world and provide them with the tools to do so. The ultimate aim of the EDI requirement is to lay the groundwork for a life-long engagement with the diverse cultures, societies, and histories of the United States and the rest of the world.

Courses that comprise the Exploring Diversity Initiative fall under a variety of categories, including (but not limited to) the following:

1. Comparative Study of Cultures and Societies. These courses focus on the differences and similarities between cultures and societies, and/or on the ways in which cultures, peoples, and societies have interacted and responded to one another in the past.
2. Empathetic Understanding. These courses explore diverse human feelings, thoughts, and actions by recreating the social, political, cultural, and historical context of a group in order to imagine why within that context, those beliefs, experiences, and actions of the group emerged.
3. Power and Privilege: These courses link issues of diversity to economic and political power relations, investigating how cultural interaction is influenced by various structures, institutions, or practices that enable, maintain, or mitigate inequality among different groups.
4. Critical Theorization: These courses focus on ways scholars theorize the possibilities of cross-cultural understanding and interaction; they investigate the ways that disciplines and paradigms of knowledge both constitute “difference” and are reconfigured by the study of diversity-related questions.
5. Cultural Immersion: In various ways these courses immerse students in another culture and give them the tools with which to understand that culture from the inside. They include those foreign language courses that explicitly engage in the self-conscious awareness of cultural and societal differences, traditions, and customs as an integral aspect of language study.

All students are required to complete ONE course that is part of the Exploring Diversity Initiative. Although this course, which may be counted toward the divisional distribution requirement, may be completed any semester before graduation, students are urged to complete the course by the end of their sophomore year. Courses used to fulfill this requirement may not be taken on a pass/fail basis.

By immersing students in foreign cultures, and often by furthering language acquisition, study abroad programs can offer a robust way to study cultural diversity. Students wishing to fulfill the EDI requirement via the completion of a study abroad program must submit a petition before their departure proposing EDI credit for a particular course on their program, for particular experiences (such as independent research or a homestay), or for a specific language training program they will undertake while abroad. The petition will require students to describe how they believe their proposed study abroad experience will meet one or more of the goals of the Exploring Diversity Initiative; it will be considered by the Director of the Exploring Diversity Initiative working in concert with the Committee on Academic Standing.

The one-course EDI requirement must be met by all members of the class of 2012; members of the classes of 2009, 2010, and 2011 who have already completed a course designated “Peoples and Cultures” do not need to complete an EDI course.

The Exploring Diversity Initiative

Summer Course Development Stipends – Application Procedures

The Dean of the Faculty and the Provost have made funds available for the development of new EDI courses and for the substantial revision of existing courses in order that they might more readily fulfill the mandate of the Initiative. Several stipends were awarded last year and additional stipends will be made available this year. Based on the awards from these two competitions, we hope to have a series of new and revised courses that we can submit as part of the Initiative in the course package in early 2009.

Summer stipends of \$4,000 will be available for the development of entirely new EDI courses. Stipends of \$2,000 will be available to members of the faculty who wish substantially to revise a course already listed in the course catalog in order to bring it more fully into line with the criteria of the Initiative. “Substantial” revision entails a significant rethinking of the aims of the course and/or a major revision of readings and assignments that will bring the course squarely into the orbit of the EDI.

Eligibility: All members of the faculty, except those with visiting appointments.

Application deadline: no later than **Monday 5th January 2009.**

Timing of course offerings: All courses for which stipends are awarded *must* initially be offered in the 2009-10 academic year; you should check with your department/program chair to make sure that any course you propose for funding can be offered next year. All course titles and course descriptions will be included in the EDI section of this year’s course package, to be included in the 2009-10 course catalog. It is expected that all new and substantially revised EDI courses will be offered more than once.

Application procedure: Your proposal should be submitted to Chris Waters (as either a hard copy or via e-mail), with a copy to your department/program chair, by the 5th January deadline and must include the following:

- Your name and department/program and your sense of how often you will offer your course.
- An indication of whether you are applying for a stipend to develop a brand new EDI course or to revise an existing course to meet the new EDI criteria.
- The course title and a course description, suitable for inclusion in the 2009-10 course catalog. (In its initial proposal, adopted by the faculty, the CEP mandated that the course description must conclude with a sentence describing why the course is an EDI course; *please make sure you include such a sentence in your course description.*)
- A brief, one-paragraph commentary on the content and intellectual scope of the course and why and how, precisely, it fulfills the mandate of the EDI. Also, please note the level at which the new course will be taught – 100-, 200-, 300-, or 400-level.
- In an application for a stipend to revise an existing course, please discuss your plans for revision, where possible including a syllabus and elaborating your planned changes.

Decisions: Funding decisions will be made by the Director of the Exploring Diversity Initiative and the Dean of the Faculty. The selection criteria will be based on the number of proposals received and the availability of funds, and on how successfully the proposed course contributes to the overall goals of the Initiative. Funding decisions will be announced in mid-January; stipends will be disbursed after July 1st.

Questions: Please contact Chris Waters – office: NAB 329; tel: x2394 / x2106; e-mail: cwaters@williams.edu.

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Existing Course Recognition – Application Procedures

When the CEP drafted the Exploring Diversity Initiative and suggested that it replace the old “Peoples and Cultures” requirement, it ascertained that there were many courses already being taught at Williams that might continue to exist happily under the new EDI rubric. At the same time, it mandated that all “currently starred [Peoples and Cultures] courses will become un-starred. Each year, instructors of courses that might be included in this initiative will be asked to provide a brief (one paragraph) description of what aspects of the initiative best describe the course; in addition, instructors will be asked to provide a one-sentence descriptor for the end of the course description in the catalog.” In short, the adopted Initiative asked faculty to take ownership of their courses, developing their own rationale for the inclusion of their courses under the new EDI rubric. We therefore very much welcome the submission of existing courses you believe meet the new EDI criteria and request that you follow the procedures outlined below.

Eligibility: All members of the faculty currently offering courses that might meet the EDI course criteria.

Application deadline: no later than Friday 9th January 2009.

Timing of course offerings: All titles and descriptions of courses accepted for the Exploring Diversity Initiative that will be offered next year will be included in the EDI section of the next course package and will appear in the 2009-10 course catalog as EDI courses. Other courses accepted for the Initiative will appear when first taught as an EDI offering.

Application procedure: Your proposal should be submitted to Chris Waters (as either a hard copy or via e-mail) by the deadline. You should also inform your department/program chair of your plans to submit specific courses for EDI recognition. Your application should include the following:

- Your name and department/program, the current course number, and your sense of how often you offer your course.
- The course title and a course description, suitable for inclusion in the 2009-10 course catalog. (In its initial proposal, adopted by the faculty, the CEP mandated that the course description must conclude with a sentence describing why the course is an EDI course; *please make sure you include such a sentence in your course description.*)
- A brief, one-paragraph commentary on the content and intellectual scope of the course and why and how, precisely, it fulfills the mandate of the EDI. Where possible, please submit a syllabus in support of the application.

Decisions: All decisions about which existing courses will be designated EDI courses will be based on how successfully the proposed course contributes to the overall goals of the EDI and announced by the third week of January, in time for submission as part of next year’s course package.

Questions: Please contact Chris Waters – office: NAB 329; tel: x2394 / x2106; e-mail: cwaters@williams.edu.