

CONCERNING THE CURRICULUM

Thomas C. Oden

Re: Suggestions for Curriculum Revision, especially concerning "the relative number of Required Courses, Optional-Required Courses and Pure Elective courses".

Introduction: The Need for an Equitable Reduction of Required Courses

It has been widely observed by our faculty that the morale of our students this year seems generally lower than it should be. Although doubtless many factors other than curriculum frustrations may have contributed to this condition, serious conversations with students make undeniable the fact that the complex and proliferating curriculum we have devised remains the source of considerable quite resentment. Often idealized as "flexible", "tailored to the person's needs" and highly individualistic, our curriculum has more often been experienced by our students as rigid, labyrinthine in its complexity and often subjective in its application.

There are many things we cannot and should not do to modify this situation, but some of the things we can do and should do with dispatch this year are: (1) Simplify the curriculum, making it administerable by all the faculty instead of only the few who have special knowledge of all its complexities, and making it more understandable to students who, like characters in a Kafka novel, often feel caught in a maze. (2) Limit the excessive quantity of courses and hours spent in required courses. (3) Bring the GSPU curriculum more into line with what other comparable seminaries are doing in corresponding areas and fields.

We have encouraged our students to think of the Graduate Seminary as a distinctive educational opportunity quite different from undergraduate studies, with special efforts made to maintain this distinction with our Phillips students. We say, "You will be given more freedom to specialize, explore your own interests", "Our graduate program will allow you to expand your own already developing concerns", etc., and this is as it should be. Often, however, they discover rather disappointingly less freedom for pursuing their own interests than in undergraduate study. Why? Because we persist in proliferating our required and required-optional courses to the point where only a precious few electives are optable. Why do we do this? We rationalize that we want to "prevent over-specialization", "provide needed proficiency in every area", "distribute the curriculum", but in more cases than we are willing to admit (in addition to other legitimate reasons) we are discreetly more intent on guaranteeing students in our courses than sound academic reasoning.

As I sought to indicate in connection with the report for curriculum discussion on Nov. 12, a number of undeniable facts point to the wisdom of reducing required offerings. However ambiguous certain points may remain, at least the following points made in the report are unchallengeable:

1. An excessively large number of elective offerings have to be cancelled regrettably because of small enrollment or none at all.

2. The only courses heavily or even moderately enrolled are the

deficiency, added proficiency and basic proficiency courses.

3. The average number of free electives on projected curricula of current CSPU students is considerably less than in comparable seminaries.

4. In a large majority, perhaps more than two-thirds, of the eighteen fields in which we offer courses, we require more deficiency and proficiency hours than other seminaries, according to their required course listings. In scarcely more than three fields (HR, CT, HT) do we appear to require less than the average.

5. According to projected curricula estimated by the Enrollment and Guidance Committee, most of our students should expect to have less than 20 electives, roughly a third should expect less than 10, and as many as fourteen no electives whatsoever.

Although due to the complexity of our varying types of added proficiency requirements some features remain ambiguous, nevertheless the above items are indisputable facts. If we are serious about providing the kind of freedom and flexibility we promise to our students, the conclusion seems obvious that we must now make a concerted effort to effect an over-all reduction of these proliferating requirements. Our catalogue states:

You will have a wide choice to add "electives": that is, courses of your own choice in any area. Usually electives will add up to about one-fourth of the total required for the B.D. degree.

I think we should live up to that catalogue statement. One-fourth of the total required for the B.D. degree would be twenty-two and one-half hours electives. It is abundantly clear that we are not currently measuring up to that general catalogue statement now.

The preceeding section of this report has sought to establish clearly the reasons why our greatest curriculum need is for a general and equitable reduction of required courses. It is not until this need is clearly understood that the intention of the following suggestions will be truly perceived. If it is true, however, that such an over-all reduction is needed, then it behooves us to look most realistically and specifically at our areas and courses to determine where cuts may most appropriately be made.

I. General Suggestions for Over-all Requirement Reduction

Before dealing with specific suggestions for requirement reduction in the four basic areas, I would like respectfully to submit for the committee's consideration several basic principles, possibilities for procedure and general suggestions involving the whole curriculum.

1. If there is to be an over-all requirement reduction it should be shared generally by all four areas.

2. Each area should be willing to reduce at least three and not more than six hours from their claim on required courses, generally speaking if the revision is to equitable. This would involve a total reduction of 12 to 24 hours, which is about what we need to allign ourselves with other seminaries.

3. No deficiency course should be accredited at more than two hours or require more than three hours classwork. If the deficiency exceeds this level, students should be asked to take the necessary work in the undergraduate school. Greek grammar should be an exception to this rule.

4. Optional-required course sequences which have no good rationale of course groupings should be eliminated. One might note especially the optional-required choice between courses in CH/HR/PR/CM/EC. What are the reasons for grouping such courses together as alternatives for a requirement? Might there be better ways to prevent over-specialization than lumping together a conglomerate of diverse and unrelated fields?and Some of these groupings, such as HT/PhT/CT/Eth have never really been discussed by the faculty working in those fields. Also wording such as "one course in each of two of" several fields seems unwieldy and less well-defined than our curriculum should be.

5. Since some of our faculty currently are being asked to carry enormously heavy teaching loads in large required classes while others of the faculty principally teaching electives frequently have a rather small student-hour load comparably, it seems that we may not be utilizing the potential teaching power of our faculty to its best ability. Perhaps the Curriculum Committee and the faculty should look for means better to utilize this potential. Perhaps one rule of thumb might be that no faculty member should be asked to carry more than eight hours total of deficiency and required courses (as defined by columns 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Table 1, excluding wider choice added proficiency courses in which a choice is allowed between courses in a specified group of fields). Currently some faculty members are being asked to carry as much as one-sixth of the total curriculum required load whereas others carry as little as one-twentyfourth of the total load.

6. Excluding deficiency and semi-deficiency courses, no AREA should require more than twelve hours of required basic proficiency for all students. Currently the Biblical Area requires 12 hours, Heritage Area 11-12, Culture Area 12. Perhaps Area IV should constitute something of an exception to this rule, but currently it is requiring 17-18 hours, plus four hours of limited choice Homiletics, thus making roughly 21-22 hours of basic proficiency requirements of every student in the Life and Work Area (not counting Hom. 503 and Adm. 505 which are semi-deficiencies). Of a total of 52 hours of specific requirements in the curriculum, Area IV slightly more than one-third of these hours are in Area IV.

7. Special effort should be directed toward reducing required basic proficiency courses in fields where GSPU is requiring substantially or noticeably more than other comparable seminaries. Fields which perhaps need to be reviewed in this connection include: Sociology of Religion, Philosophical Theology, Administration, Church History and perhaps generally in Area I.

8. Fields requiring added proficiency courses in which only two choices are available should be urged to allow wider choice. This suggestion actually applies only to three fields: NT, OT and Hom.

9. Every step taken in curriculum revision should proceed carefully with democratic procedures and with full consultation of faculty colleagues. Perhaps the Curriculum Committee should review the question of whether it is best to proceed in faculty consultation according to Areas.

Table 1. Requirement Distribution by Fields and Areas (Current):

FIELD	1 Deficiency or Semi-Def. (Asterisk= added class hours)	2 Required Basic Prof.	3 Choice betw. Two Courses	4 Choice betw. Specified Courses in One Field	5 Choice betw. Courses in Spec. Group of Fields	6 Average Core Hours in Com- parable Seminaries	7 AREAS Total Claim on Required Curriculum (not incl. Columns 1 or 5)
NT	NT 505 (3)* NT 572 (3)*	NT 515 (3) NT 526 (3)	NT (3) NT (3)			(8)	I. BIBLICAL <u>27 hours</u> (9 hours poss. minimum)
OT		OT 512 (3) OT 513 (3)	OT (3) OT (3)			(8)	
BTh				BTh (3)		(-)	
Area I Totals: 6**		12	12	3		16	
CH	CH 501 (1)	CH 525 (4) CH607/724 (3-4)			CH (3)	(5)	II. HERITAGE <u>11 hours</u> <u>minimum</u>
HT	HT 502 (1)	HT 522 (4)			HT (3)	(5)	
Ec					Ec (3)	(-)	
Area II Totals: 2		11-12				10	
CT		CT 612 (3)			CT (3)	(4)	III. CHRISTIAN FAITH & HUMAN CULTURE <u>16 hours</u> minimum
PhT	PhT 501 (2)* PhT 502 (1)*	PhT613 (3)			PhT (3)	(2)	
SR	SR 504 (1)			SR (2-3)		(-)	
CM		CM 612 (3)			CM (3)	(2)	
PR					PR (3)	(-)	
Eth	Eth 501 (1)*	Eth512 (3)			Eth (3)	(4)	
Area III Totals: 5 ***		12		2-3		12	
Hom	Hom 503 (3)		Hom651/682(4)			(5)	IV. LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH <u>24 hours</u> <u>minimum</u>
Lit		Lit 620 (3)			Lit (3)	(3)	
Pas		Pas 611-12(4)			Pas (3)	(4)	
Adm	Adm 505 (1)	Adm 504 (1) Adm 512 (3) Adm791-92 (3-4) (Practicum)			Adm (3)	(4-5)	
RE		RE 621 (3)		RE (3)		(3-4)	
Area IV Totals 4		17-18	4	3		20	
Over-all Totals 17*****		52	16	8	9		74 hours (not incl. deficiencies)

A PROPOSAL FOR CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENT

Thomas C. Oden

The following statement proceeds along similar lines and with the same basic intentions as the statement "A Proposal for Curriculum Adjustment" by Dr. E.M. Hawkins, distributed earlier to the faculty. This statement constitutes part II of an earlier paper discussing the need for an equitable reduction of required courses and general suggestions for over-all requirement reduction.

The table on the next page contains the entire proposal. This statement will be an explication and elaboration of the table. We now proceed by fields:

New Testament Greek courses would remain the same, although it seems questionable whether they should be regarded as "deficiency" courses, since they are regarded as such at virtually no other theological seminaries. It would perhaps be preferable to regard them as required basic proficiency courses and exempt students who had fulfilled the requirement. NT 515 and 526, previously not uniformly required of all students should be required of all. Four additional added proficiency hours, structured in any way the NT field should choose, would bring the total required NT hours for all students to 10 which is more than the total number in the entire Area III or IV. Hopefully these four hours would be widely selective electives instead of limited to only two or three courses.

Old Testament 512 and 513, also previously not uniformly required of all students should be so required, giving six basic proficiency hours to OT and no required electives.

Biblical Theology would remain as it is with three required hours.

Whereas currently the Biblical disciplines (Area I) claim 9 hours minimum and 33 hours maximum of the total required curriculum, under this proposal they would have 19 hours minimum and 25 hours maximum.

Church History 501 would remain unchanged. Included in this proposal is a proposal for team teaching inter-relating three courses: CH525, CH714 and HT522. These three courses now constituting 11 hours, should be required of all students (not just Disciples in the case of CH 714), and could be offered concurrently in two semesters in four courses numbered CH525 a & b, and HT522 a & b, with integrated syllabi, the former for 6 hours, the latter for 4 hours, reducing the total required hours in the historical disciplines from 11 to 10. CH525a would cover the History of the Church to the Reformation, taught by Dr. Hawkins, consulting with Dr. Thomas, for 2 hours credit. CH525a would not attempt to deal extensively with theological analysis, but would be integrated at every point with HT522a, which would be taught by Dr. Thomas, consulting with Dr. Hawkins, for 2 hours credit, and would center in primary source readings and theological analysis in patristic and medieval theologians. CH522b would be a four hour course, required of all students, taught by Dr. Hawkins, covering the History of the Church since the Reformation, and especially emphasizing the origin and development of the Disciples of Christ, spending roughly one-half of the four hours on general Church history and one-half on Disciples' history. Similarly CH525b would not attempt to deal extensively with theological

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Old Testament 512 and 513, also previously not uniformly required of all students should be so required, giving six basic proficiency hours to OT and no required electives.

Biblical Theology would remain as it is with three required hours.

Whereas currently the Biblical disciplines (Area I) claim 9 hours minimum and 33 hours maximum of the total required curriculum, under this proposal they would have 19 hours minimum and 25 hours maximum.

Church History 501 would remain unchanged. Included in this proposal is a proposal for team teaching inter-related three courses: CH252, CH71A and HT252. These three courses now constituting 11 hours, should be required of all students (not just Disciples in the case of CH 71A), and could be offered concurrently in two semesters in four courses numbered CH252 a & b, and HT252 a & b, with integrated syllabi, the former for 6 hours, the latter for 4 hours, reducing the total required hours in the historical disciplines from 11 to 10. CH252a would cover the History of the Church to the Reformation, taught by Dr. Hawkins, consulting with Dr. Thomas, for 2 hours credit. CH252b would not attempt to deal extensively with theological analysis, but would be integrated at every point with HT252a, which would be taught by Dr. Thomas, consulting with Dr. Hawkins, for 2 hours credit, and would center in primary source readings and theological analysis in patristic and medieval theologians. CH252b would be a four hour course, required of all students, taught by Dr. Hawkins, covering the history of the Church since the Reformation, and especially emphasizing the origin and development of the Disciples of Christ, spending roughly one-half of the four hours on general Church history and one-half on Disciples' history. Similarly CH252b would not attempt to deal extensively with theological

Table 2. A Proposal for Curriculum Adjustment (Oden):

Field ↓	1 Deficiency or Semi-Def. (Found- ation) Courses. Asterisk=added class hours	2 Required Basic Proficiency (incl. Choice betw. 2 Courses)	3 Added Proficiency	4 Area Totals
NT	NT 503Greek(3)*	NT 515 (3)	}(4)	I. BIBLICAL DISCIPLINES 19 minimum, 25 maximum
OT	NT 572Greek(3)*	NT 526 (3)		
BTh		OT 512 (3)		
		OT 513 (3)		
		BTh609 (3)		
Area I Totals: 6**		15	4	
CH	CH 501 (1)	{CH525a&b (6)	}(3)	II. HISTORICAL DISCIPLINES 13 minimum, 14 maximum
HT		incl. CH714 HT522a&b (4)		
Area II Totals: 1		10	3	
CT		CT 612 (3)	}(3)	III. THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES 9 minimum, 11 maximum
PhT	PhT501&502 (2)*	PhT 613 (3)		
Ecum				
Area III Totals: 2*		6	3	
Eth.	Eth. 501 (1)*	Eth 512 (3)	}(3)	IV. SOCIO-CULTURAL DISCIPLINES 8 minimum, 11 maximum
HR				
CM		CM 613 (2)		
SR	SR 504 (2)			
Area IV Totals 3*		5	3	
Adm	Adm 505 (1)	Adm511Orien.(1)	}(3)	V. PARISH DISCIPLINES 22 minimum, 25 maximum
		Adm 512 (2)		
		Adm 91/92		
		Practicum (3)		
Hom	Hom 503 (2)	Hom 651/682 (3)		
PR-Pas		Pas 611-612 (4)		
RE		RE 621 (3)		
Lit		Lit 620 (3)		
Area V Totals 3		19	3	
Over-all Totals 15****		55	16	72 minimum, 86 maximum

analyses, but would be integrated at every point with HT522b, designed to center in primary source readings and theological analysis in reformation and post-reformation theologians. Dr. Thomas could participate in certain portions of CH525b which deal specifically with Disciples' theology. The whole sequence of CH525a & b and HT522a & b should be well-planned and integrated by all three participants in the historical disciplines. In addition to this 10 hr. sequence, one additional 3 hour course of added proficiency would be elected by the student from Area II, the historical disciplines.

Historical Theology would become integrated into a 10 hour sequence, as described above, with Church history.

Constructive Theology would remain unchanged.

Philosophical Theology deficiency courses (PhT 501 & 502) should be reduced to a single course with two hours accreditation (three hours classwork). PhT 613 remains unchanged. Add 3 hr. required elective in Area III.

Ecumenica, Ethics and History of Religions remain unchanged.

Christian Missions, CM 613, following Hawkins' suggestion, reduced from 3 to 2 hours, with missions receiving greater emphasis in CH525, Adm 512, and Eth 512.

Sociology of Religion, SR 504 should be increased from one to two hours credit, and recommended as a semi-deficiency course for all students lacking sociology in their transcript. Since few theological schools, even those much larger and with more numerical faculty strength than ours, are currently offering full programs in sociology of religion, and since less than 10% (according to recent reckonings) require it in their core programs, it seems dubious that we should have it included in our basic proficiency list required for all students.

Church Administration 505 and 511 (Ministerial leadership and Orientation) should remain unchanged, as well as Practicum, Adm 91/92. Since practicum has recently been expanded in its scope, interests and effectiveness, it seems reasonable, following Hawkins' suggestion, for Adm 512 to be reduced from 3 to 2 hours.

Homiletics offers some interesting possibilities for possible consideration for team teaching, in connection with the Biblical disciplines and other fields. Hom 503 should remain as a deficiency course, but should be delayed (perhaps renumbered 603) until the basic biblical sequence is completed, which again according to Hawkins' suggestion, should enable it to be adequately offered in two hours. Likewise if biblical and theological studies could presuppose Hom 651/682, sufficient background would enable these courses to be offered as three hour courses.

Pastoral Care would remain unchanged. Limited offerings in Psychology of Religion could be absorbed into this field without damage to actual offerings. Little is being offered currently in PR, making its status as a separate field questionable.

Religious Education perhaps should be changed to Christian Education. RE 621 would remain unchanged, but added proficiency requirements in RE specifically would be dropped.

Liturgics would remain unchanged. Three hours of added proficiency would be required, to be chosen from among all the parish disciplines.
in Area V

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Constructive Theology would remain unchanged.

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Homiletics, Ethics and History of Religion remain unchanged.

Christian Missions, CM 613, following Hawkins' suggestion, reduced from 3 to 2 hours, with missions receiving greater emphasis in CH222, Adm 512, and Esp 512.

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