

**Eastern Illinois University**  
**Course Proposal**  
**EIU 4107G, The Idea of a University: Yesterday and Today**

**1. Catalog Description:**

- a. 4107G
- b. The Idea of a University: Yesterday and Today
- c. 3-0-3
- d. F/S
- e. Higher Education
- f. Through a close examination of one classic text-*The Idea of a University* by John Henry Newman, and five critical responses, this course will consider issues Newman raised in 1852: the place of religion and moral values in the setting, the competing claims of liberal and professional education, the character of an academic community, the cultural role of literature, and the relation of religion and science, all of which remain relevant today.

**2. Student Learning/Performance Objectives**

This Senior Seminar will require students to synthesize, analyze and refine ideas/concepts while practicing oral and written communication. To this end, students will

- T Obtain information regarding the idea of a university from one classic text, five critical sources, and a variety of other “outside sources,”
- T Demonstrate critical thinking skills by processing information from diverse sources,
- T Demonstrate ability to conduct rational dialogue on topics generated by course materials and outside research,
- T Bring the skills and viewpoints acquired in their major area of study and courses in the general core to bear on problems/situations not directly studied in their major field,
- T Identify links between their formal course work and contemporary problems/events regarding the idea of a university,
- T Analyze their own views in light of readings and discussions in order to make informed, responsible, and ethical civic and personal decisions function the idea of a university in a democratic society.
- T Produce research papers utilizing scholarly methods of research and provide presentations on the main topics covered in the course.

**3. Course Outline**

Week 1

- T Explanation of syllabus
- T Pgs. ix-11
- T Identifying Newman’s issues
- T Relevance of Newman’s issues to the contemporary university

Week 2

T Preface (3-11) and Discourse One

- a. To what extent does Newman indicate what his ideal of “universal knowledge” includes? Either in 1852 or today, would all subjects of human thought and activity be included in “universal knowledge”? Then or now, how would selections be made? How has the content of the ideal of “universal knowledge” changed between 1852 and the present? What intellectual and social forces have contributed to those changes?

- b. Why does Newman draw a distinction between teaching and discovery? Are they always separate activities? How do they contribute to each other? How do both contribute to the education of students?
- c. What does Newman mean by the phrase “real cultivation of the mind”? How does he relate it to Irish Catholics achieving advancement and overcoming prejudices they have confronted? How might this idea affect the experience of minority groups today? To what extent has education as a path to social and economic mobility, rather than as a path of knowledge, accounted for the broad public support for university education in the past half-century?
- d. In the Preface and elsewhere in *The Idea of a University*, Newman criticizes the periodical press and popular publications. What is the criticism that he brings to bear against them? Are there any parallels to be drawn to modern culture- the influence of popular media, television, and electronic games?
- e. What does Newman mean when he declares that “the philosophy of Education is founded on truths in the natural order?” How does this point of view allow him to draw upon the experience of Protestant universities? What lessons does he draw from them?
- f. What are the factors that Newman outlines as working against the effort to establish “a University, of which Catholicity is the fundamental principle”? Why does Newman believe that some of these factors appeal to Irish Catholics in 1852? What arguments might support or criticize the idea of a college or university being organized today according to either religious principles or some set of political or social ideals?
- g. What is the purpose of Newman’s praise for the role of the papacy in the history of England and Ireland? Why does he outline the history of its achievements in those lands?

### Week 3

T Discourse Two (25-40) and Discourse Three (40-57)

T Discussion of 8 questions covering Discourses Two and Three.

- a. Why does Newman regard as “an intellectual absurdity” the establishment of universities without provision for teaching Theology? How does this argument relate to his contention that universities are places for teaching universal knowledge? Could the arguments he uses for Theology also be used to defend the teaching of other subjects or the teaching of particular political viewpoints in a University? Does Newman’s argument permit any limits to what fields of study might be offered in a University.
- b. What are Newman’s criticisms of Protestant Evangelical theology, which roots religious faith in feeling? Why does he think that this Protestant concept of religion works against the inclusion of Theology in a University?
- c. Compare and contrast Newman’s presentation of the idea of God as understood in natural theology and in Roman Catholic theology. Why does he regard the former as reducing God to the level of a constitutional monarchy?
- d. What is the implication of Newman’s conviction that “religious doctrine is knowledge” for the inclusion of Theology in the University’s program of study? Are modern arguments the same as Newman’s? Would the academic aims of departments of religious studies or divinity schools, which are part of present-day universities, satisfy Newman’s concerns?
- e. What is the argument that Newman sets forth as coming from persons opposed or indifferent to the presence of Theology in the University?
- f. How does Newman portray the various sciences as correcting each other? How does this presentation lead him to contend that Theology must be included among the sciences taught in the University? Why does Newman call Theology “a science of sciences?”

#### Week 4

T Discourse Four (58-75)

T Discussion of 4 questions covering Discourse Four.

- a. What relationship does Newman establish between Revealed Religion as a form of knowledge and secular subjects as a mode of knowledge? Why does Newman claim that to overlook the knowledge of revelation will leave large areas of ignorance? What is the basis of Newman's argument, toward the close of the discourse, that if Theology is not taught, the other sciences will usurp its role?
- b. What is Newman's "man of one idea"? How does this figure relate to those intellects whom Newman portrays later in the discourse as pursuing only their own fields of study, little concerned about other forms of knowledge? Does one encounter such single-minded people today? To what extent should they be praised or criticized?
- c. What is the relationship that Newman draws between Religion and the Fine Arts? What occurs in the Fine Arts if they are separated from Religion? What moral powers does Newman associate with the Fine Arts?  
To what extent, if any, is he right?
- d. What does Newman see as the social and intellectual goals of Political Economy? Why does  
He contend that Political Economy can lead only to an inferior form of virtue? To what extent, if any, is he right?

#### Week 5

T Discourse Five (76-91)

T Discussion of 6 questions covering Discourse Five

- a. What are the characteristics of the university community of scholars that Newman portrays in the opening section of this discourse? Is this a fair description of a university or college community today?
- b. Why does Newman believe that knowledge may be pursued as an end in itself? Why does he emphasize liberal learning as establishing a habit of mind? To what extent, if any, is he right?
- c. How does liberal learning differ from commercial or professional education? Is it possible for professional or business education to include elements of liberal knowledge and liberal learning?
- d. What is the basis for Newman's assertion that Lord Bacon, in relating the sciences to useful knowledge, had transferred them from the realm of liberal learning? Is Newman correct, or is he simply attempting to protect some areas of thought and instruction from having to compete with the sciences? Are the sciences as taught today part of liberal knowledge? Should they be?
- e. What is Newman's distinction between philosophical knowledge and mechanical knowledge? Why does Newman repeatedly insist that the Philosophy of Utility and useful knowledge aim only toward a low form of knowledge, learning and instruction? Is this conviction valid? According to what values today do university students and faculties establish a hierarchy of studies?
- f. What does Newman mean when he declares "Knowledge is one thing, virtue another?" What is the distinction between intellectual excellence and moral excellence? In an age when meritocratic judgements and evaluations often determine the schools one may enter and the professions one may pursue, does Newman's distinction have any present-day validity? How important is character? Does Newman believe that universities as universities can or should determine moral excellence? Can or should universities today attempt to form character and cultivate moral excellence or foster awareness of differing moral values?

## Week 6

T Discussion Six (91-108)

T Discussion of 4 questions covering Discourse Six

- a. Why is the accumulation of mere knowledge- for example, through training the memory or producing “men of information”-not what Newman means by a Liberal Education? How does Newman’s argument on this matter relate to the present-day view that students may achieve a Liberal Education simply by having a wide array of different subjects from which to choose for their programs of study?
- b. What does Newman mean by his assertion that “the power of viewing many things at once as one whole” represents the only true enlargement of the mind”? How might such a power be achieved? Are there experiences in college and university education today by which one can acquire such an intellectual vantage point? Is this a realistic goal for education, or simply an impractical ideal?
- c. Newman declares, A University is ... an Alma Mater, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill”. To what extent is this an accurate description of the modern university? What elements of university life contribute to the recognition of individuality among students? Is the classroom the best site for such recognition, or are other activities- such as athletics, drama, music, fraternities, and religious groups –more likely to produce such an atmosphere in the university?
- d. Although Newman emphasizes learning throughout his volume, in this discourse he stresses the importance of the student community and the manner in which students educate each other. What is the “sort of self-education” that he admires in the English Protestant universities? Does he regard participation in the university community as equally or even more important than the instruction they receive? Would Newman’s comments have validity in university settings where many students commute or where many students are not of the traditional college age?

## Week 7

T Discourse Seven (108-126)

T Discussion of 4 questions covering Discourse Seven

- a. Why does Newman regard the disciplining of the mind for its own sake as a higher goal than the disciplining of the mind for a particular profession or vocation? Here and elsewhere, what does Newman actually mean by achieving mental discipline?
- b. What were the accusations that Newman reports being brought against Oxford University by the writers in the *Edinburgh Review*? Why does he relate this criticism to John Locke’s educational ideas? Are there any writers today whose criticisms of contemporary universities resemble those leveled against Oxford?
- c. How does Newman present the Liberal Education as “useful”? Is Newman’s argument that the Liberal Education allows one to “take up any one of the sciences or callings” valid in the world of specialized learning? What aspects of present-day liberal education work to open the way for later vocational choices and later intellectual attainment? What are “a power and a grace” that Newman contends the Liberal Education brings to a variety of occupations? Are Newman’s arguments in favor of the Liberal Education the same as those of Copleston and Davison, the defenders of Oxford against the *Edinburgh Review*, whom he quotes?
- d. How do you reconcile Newman’s defense of a liberal education which has no professional end, with his contention that the practical end of a University is “that of training good members of society”? Should that goal be the University’s most important practical purpose? What aspects of present-day University education and experience prepare

students to be good members of society? Is there agreement in the contemporary University world as to what kinds of people constitute good members of society?

#### Week 8

T Discourse Eight (126-147) and Discourse Nine (147-164)

T Discussion of 8 questions covering Discourses Eight and Nine.

- a. What are the varieties of religion that Newman outlines in the early portion of this discourse? Among these, what does he mean by “the Religion of Civilization”?
- b. Why does Newman contend that Knowledge, rather than religious experience, may be a better discipline for moral activity? How does Knowledge supplement Religion as a source of moral discipline?
- c. What is “a gentleman’s religion”? Why is Newman so concerned with conscience being replaced by a moral sense? What are the dangers he portrays as arising from the “Religion of Reason” and “a godless intellectualism”? How do the passages from Lord Shaftesbury illustrate “the Religion of Philosophy”?
- d. How do the various secular moral philosophies Newman describes eventually tame Pride? How do they transform and redirect Pride into a kind of self-respect that overcomes many antisocial tendencies? What are the qualities Newman associates with “the Gentleman”? What is the relationship of the gentleman to the Christian?
- e. Why does Newman contend that the Church must have active jurisdiction over the life of the Catholic University? How may liberal Knowledge possibly lead to ignoring Religious Truth? How may Liberal Learning adulterate the Catholic Faith?
- f. What are the complaints of practitioners of Theology and Physical Science against each other? Why is deduction the method of Theology and induction that of physical science? Why does Newman believe there should be no essential conflict between religion and science. To what extent, if any, is he right?
- g. Why does Newman contend there cannot be a “Christian Literature”? What are the moral dangers that students and faculty may encounter in the study of Literature? At the same time, why does he believe that Literature must be taught in the Catholic University? Could any of the dangers Newman describes be used as an argument to limit the kinds of literature students today encounter in universities? Are there issues today that would lead some people to use such arguments to impose boundaries on university study?
- h. How does teaching pure doctrine in the Catholic University make it safe for the University “not to prohibit truth of any kind” within its walls? Do universities today feel secure in not prohibiting discussion of any sort of truth? Should they feel secure?

#### Week 9

T Christianity and Letters (166-177) and English Catholic Literature (178-199)

T Discussion of 9 questions covering Christianity and Letter (166-177) and English Catholic Literature (178-199).

#### Week 10

T Christianity and Physical Science (200-217) and Christianity and Scientific Investigation (218-233)

T Discussion of 6 questions covering Christianity and Physical Science and Christianity and Scientific Investigation.

Week 11

Interpretive Essays (257-361)

Discussion of interpretive essays One and Two: responses to Newman

- a. "Newman in His Own Day" by Martha McMackin Garland
- b. "Newman's University and Ours" by Frank M. Turner

Week 12

T Assessment Activities

Week 13

T Interpretive Essays Three, Four, and Five: responses to Newman

- a. "Theology and the University: Newman's Idea and Current Realities"
- b. "The paradox of Self in *The Idea of a University*" by Sara Castro-Klaren
- c. "Newman and the Idea of an Electronic University" by George P. Landow

Week 14

T Oral Presentations (10 minutes each)

Week 15

T Oral Presentations (10 minutes each)

**4. Evaluation of Student Learning**

Students' writing will be evaluated weekly on the basis of written responses to questions posed in the text. Students may re-write the first submission for a higher grade. Students' writing will also be evaluated on the basis of a final paper.

Students' ability to synthesize, analyze, and refine ideas/concepts and to present them orally and rationally will be evaluated on the basis of class discussion and final oral presentations.

Students' speaking skills will be evaluated on the basis of class discussion and final oral presentations.

Written response to questions		30%
Class Discussion	30%	
Oral Presentations	10%	
<u>Final Papers</u>	<u>30%</u>	
Total	100%	

**5. Rationale**

- a. As a Senior Seminar this course will address issues raised across the liberal studies curriculum, particularly the natural sciences, the fine arts, self-knowledge, ethics, logic, philosophy, and religion.
- b. Prerequisite: 75 hours
- c. This course does not duplicate any course offerings.
- d. This course will not be required of any programs other than general education senior seminar.
- e. No majors are excluded from this seminar.

**6. Implementation**

- a. Initial instructor: Don G. Smith
- b. Primary text: Turner, Frank M. (ed.), *The Idea of A University* by John Henry Newman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
- c. Additional costs: none
- d. First term offered: Fall 2002

**7. Community College Transfer**

Not Applicable

**8. Date approved by department 3-30-2000**

**9. Date approved by the CEPS Curriculum Committee 4-24-2000**

**10. Date approved by the Senior Seminar Advisory Committee \_\_\_\_\_**

**11. Date approved by CAA 10/19/2000**

Contact Person: Don G. Smith, PH.D.