

to write topical summaries which could then be compiled for a course reader.

In conclusion, our efforts to integrate Asian Studies into the liberal arts curriculum were perceived by those participating, and by many in the UPS community, as a success. To those of us who teach in both IPE and Asian Studies, the experience reaffirmed not only the value of studying and understanding Asia, but also the value of building bridges between two dynamic interdisciplinary programs with committed faculty and clearly defined goals.

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***The Co-curricular Initiative:  
Integrating Asian Studies into the  
Liberal Arts Curriculum  
at Trinity College  
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Trinity College***

In 1998, Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut began a curricular experiment which, by the accounts of the participants, including students and faculty members of the College, the Hartford community, and scholars and artists from outside, has had considerable success in bringing the studies of different areas outside of the United States to the attention of Trinity undergraduates. This experiment is introduced in the following paragraphs from an Asianist point of view. Readers wishing more information are directed to a paper written by Dario Euraque, "Multidisciplinarity and Cross-Cultural Study in the Liberal Arts College of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".<sup>1</sup> Euraque is a Latin-American historian at Trinity, and director of the curricular experiment in its first two years.

First of all, some background about the teaching about Asia at Trinity College. Asian Studies is one of the six concentrations housed under the International Studies Program, together with African, Russian, Latin American, Comparative Development, and Middle Eastern Studies. While changes will result in wider diversity in the near future, historically the College has not been particularly international in its student body. As if to compensate, Hartford has a sizable population with an international heritage and connections. In recent years Trinity has made significant progress in building links with the community. In this context there are plenty of opportunities for Asia specialists to reach to larger audiences. In addition to the International Studies Program, which provides the curricular framework for the teaching of Asia, Trinity has put other institutional structures in place. The College regularly organizes special events and Asia specialists are always invited to participate. For example, we had a conference on race and ethnicity last year, and I delivered a paper in which I discussed racial tension in Huang Chun-ming's stories in the context of racism in different parts of the world.

As valuable as these opportunities are to me as a

researcher, for students they may amount to no more than one of the many events that take place in a school year. As such, they are like any "event" in that they can be described as top-down, one-way transmission of knowledge. There is little student involvement apart from showing up at the right place at the right time (and sometimes not even at the right time). We all have had the experience of being "evented-out," where we as teachers tire ourselves out by organizing event after event that are attended by only a handful, and often the same handful, of students. For the most part this sort of reaching out is similar to preaching to the converted. The believers appreciate the effort, but the non-believers remain as indifferent as ever.

Officially named the Co-curricular Initiative, this experiment tries to take advantage of the space between the curricular and the extra-curricular with the hope of bypassing the pitfalls of mere "events" described above. Perhaps a description of the substance of the Initiative will explain how that is done. Using as an example last year's theme, entitled "Migrations, Diasporic Communities, and Transnational Identities," the Initiative featured a faculty lecture series, a film series, occasional arts performances and exhibitions, an on-line discussion forum, special guest speakers, and a scholarly conference at the end of the year. In addition, the Initiative selected a cluster of introductory and advanced level courses, and a special independent study course that students could take in conjunction with other activities in the series. On average the Initiative sponsored one or two events a week which were open to the College as well as the broader community. Discussions triggered by these events were then carried out by electronic means, in the context of regular classes, and through independent study courses in the curriculum.

There are several noteworthy things in the design of the Co-curricular Initiative. First of all, the avowed goal of the steering committee was to make the series as multidisciplinary as possible, which was contingent upon the choice of the topic and the willingness of the college members to participate. A glance at the topics of the Co-curricular Initiatives so far, "Decolonization" in 1998, "Diaspora" in 1999, and "Millennium" in 2000, indicates that the topics are of such global dimension that different disciplines, including the sciences, have insights to share. In fact, the steering committee was initially concerned that the science constituent of the college might feel left out from this campus-wide initiative which, on the surface, seems to favor the arts, humanities and social sciences. However, the scientists did us proud, contributing presentations to the "Diaspora" series such as "The First Diaspora: The Peopling of the Globe by Humans and their Ancestors" by a biologist; "Modeling the Spread of Disease in Populations" by a mathematician; and "Global Warming and Future Migrations" by chemistry students.

Even when the topic is right, for the initiative to succeed the faculty members have to be willing to take on extra work with no compensation, slight recognition, and a large amount of aggravation. Considering its scale, the

Initiative operated on a shoestring budget of \$25,000, the bulk of which went to transportation and honoraria for outside speakers, film rentals, and operational costs for the conference. Trinity colleagues devoted their time and energy pro bono.

To motivate students and to counteract their passivity to “top-down, one-way transmission of knowledge,” the Diaspora series sought to involve students in a number of ways. The most important was that all events were student-led. As event hosts, students had to research the topic, study the work of the speakers or guests, introduce and summarize issues for the audience, and lead discussions. Admittedly, the number of student-hosts was small relative to the college population of about 2,000 students. However, by their example these students presented to their peers models of engaged and active intellectual endeavors outside the classroom.

What is the role of Asian Studies in this multidisciplinary endeavor? Let me use my own involvement in the Diaspora series as an example. In the first semester I recommended the Hong Kong film “Tian Mi Mi” (Comrade, Almost a Love Story) to the film committee. I wrote a short synopsis of the film, which was placed on the Diaspora web site, and provided sources of information about the film to the student host (not an Asian Studies major) who was responsible for presenting the film. I did not attend the screening, but the discussion apparently went very well. Afterwards, I received e-mail inquiries about the film from students, many of whom, as far as I know, had not taken any class about Asia before.

In the second semester, I appeared on a panel with two colleagues. My topic was “Chinese Diasporic Memoirs in the U.S.” The other two papers, given by Michael Lestz and Vijay Prashad, were about the situation of indigenous peoples of South Taiwan in the face of influx of Mainland Chinese, and the 1913-1916 rebellion against indenture in the Indian diaspora, respectively. A student from my Chinese class assumed the role of host and moderator. Interestingly, most questions came from the non-Asian studies contingent among the audience, and discussion also continued electronically afterwards.

The third task that I performed for the Diaspora series was to direct two one-half credit independent study courses. One of these involved an English major who took my Chinese literature class in conjunction with the Diaspora series. What that meant was that in addition to following the course syllabus like other students, she did extra work, including an independent project that explored an issue of the Chinese diaspora. After consultation, we agreed that in order for her to earn that half credit, her assignments would include

- 1) attending at least nine events (about two-thirds of the total in the fall semester) of the Diaspora series
- 2) keeping a journal about the events she attended, with insights and questions
- 3) participating in on-line discussions with at least one lengthy entry a week

4) developing a teaching plan for the session on Chinese diaspora in my course, teach that class, and submit a report after the class.

That a student could anchor his/her participation in the Diaspora events to a course in the regular curriculum, I think, best exemplifies the strength of the Co-curricular Initiative. There were more than thirty such courses, and sixteen students took advantage of them. I referred earlier to the lukewarm attitude of students toward individual “events,” and we also understand that it is an uphill battle to convince a liberal arts college of the importance of integrating the teaching of Asia into the general curriculum. Perhaps, then, an arrangement such as Trinity’s Co-curricular Initiative, whereby Asianists join colleagues in other disciplines in a cluster of events focusing on a global issue, is another way of promoting Asian studies in the liberal arts setting.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>In *Teaching Matters: Essays on Liberal Education at the Millennium*, Hartford, CT: Trinity College, 1999.

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## *Five Steps* **Joan E. Ericson** **The Colorado College**

Integrating Asian Studies into the Liberal Arts curriculum at Colorado College is part of the process of “internationalization,” a principal goal for our institution identified by President Kathryn Mohrman. The mandate of internationalization has helped to facilitate the efforts of the Asian Studies program to build linkages and alliances across the curriculum. Our program has been quite successful, frankly, because we are opportunistic, flexible and practical: we sought to build on what was already in place, to always connect with interests and courses of other faculty across the disciplinary, and even divisional, divide. We’ve made a special effort to connect with colleagues in the natural sciences by supporting opportunities for them to travel, research and build their own networks through our Asia-partners program. Rather than rely on courses in areas of our own specialties, we’ve tried to bridge and facilitate, and often to underplay the claims of Asian exceptionalism, without losing what is exceptional, even uniquely so, among things Asian.

The focus of my remarks will be to outline “five steps” that I have used or proposed at Colorado College, steps that might be easily replicated in other institutional environments. I should confess that we have benefited from the mandate of “internationalization” as well as an enviable endowment (one that makes Asia-partners, among many other programs, possible). But our general strategy, to integrate Asian Studies into the liberal arts and avoid isolation or marginalization, requires not so much resources, however much these may help, but a willingness to embrace the college-wide directives and mandates—make the trend your friend—and make colleagues in other fields see the vitality