

**Rethinking the Rhodes Curriculum: Report and Proposal for a New Curriculum**  
**Educational Development Committee/Presidential Task Force #3**  
**April 10, 2002; Revised May 8, 2002**

*I. General educational goals of a liberal arts education at Rhodes*

Education in the liberal arts and sciences is ‘liberal’ because it promotes freedom. It enables students to live in a community characterized by freedom from acquired prejudices, by free inquiry, and by the exchange of informed ideas and reasonable discourse. Therefore liberal education subjects all serious issues to questioning, and those questions are to be examined with a mind open to and prepared for the challenges of unfamiliar experiences, evidence, and arguments. Liberal education is an education for the examined life, an education in what it means to be human. It provides the means and motivation to become good citizens, life-long learners, moral and ethical persons and fulfilled individuals.

Subsumed under these general goals are more particular goals, gathered under three general categories, that serve as a guide to Rhodes’ general degree requirements:

1. **Ability** (critical thinking, analytic and synthetic reasoning, oral and written communication, proficiency in a second language, creative thinking, problem solving, research skills, information fluency and use of technology in the service of the above abilities). We expect students to apply these abilities in many disciplines and in a variety of areas, including issues of aesthetic appreciation, reasoning about ethical and value-laden responsibilities and obligations, and understanding the problems of the world.
2. **Content** (an informed understanding of the world that includes knowledge about the natural world, human behavior and societies, the ethical and moral foundations of civilizations, and the products of cultures, such as art, music, literature, philosophy, and mathematics). This understanding will also require an understanding of methods of inquiry in the humanities and sciences, and an exposure to diversity and constructions of difference in human experience.
3. **Engagement** (experiences in using the abilities developed in (1) to make connections between theory and practice and between the areas of knowledge and understanding achieved in (2)). Experiences may include opportunities to study abroad, to do ‘hands-on’ work

in science laboratories, art studios, or on concert and theatre stages, to become involved in service learning, in original research, in interdisciplinary courses, and in programs designed to allow faculty and students to be experimental and innovative.<sup>1</sup>

## ***II. Proposed multi-disciplinary model for general education at Rhodes:***

The proposed curriculum is based on a set of liberal arts “perspectives” that combine ability and content, together with a set of desired experiences that enhance these perspectives. These general degree requirements are designed to provide breadth in the students’ academic program; depth in a particular area is to be achieved by the major. The perspectives outlined in the attached summary would help enable students to communicate with their fellow human beings, to make ethical and aesthetic judgments from a critical perspective, to promote an understanding of their own and other cultures, as well as the natural world in which these cultures exist, and to develop and express individual creativity. In addition to these perspectives, students would be required to take a minimum of six courses that provide a specific “experiential” component. These courses need not be separate from the courses designated “perspectives”. Some of these experiences would be mandatory. It would be the task of the Educational Development Committee and the Curriculum Committee to develop appropriate criteria/ definitions for the perspectives.

In terms of courses required for graduation, the total would be 32. If we were to keep a credit-hour-based system, the total number of hours would be 128.

***Please see attached “Summary of Requirements”***

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<sup>1</sup> Language about educational goals in Parts I and II is derived from the *Rhodes College Catalog*, 2001-2002, pp. 7-8; “Report of the Task Force on the Rhodes Curriculum,” 1998; the Rhodes “Plan for Excellence,” 1991-1998; Kennan Shelton, “Notes on the Rhodes Curriculum,” Feb. 2002; and Michael R. Drompp and David Jeter, “Sketch Proposal for a New Rhodes Curriculum,” Mar. 5, 2002.

May 2, 2002

**Summary of Requirements**

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b># of courses required</b>	<b>Possible departments/courses represented</b>
<b>I. FOUNDATIONS AND VALUES</b>	Courses that introduce students to critical thinking and expression through the examination of human values (Two of these must be taken within the student's first year.)	<b>a total of 4</b>	Search & Life courses (religious studies, philosophy)
<b>II. INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES</b>		<b>a total of 2 courses drawn from 2 different categories</b>	
(a) US	Courses that deal with the multiple forces that shape and direct the regions and culture of the United States		courses in US history, politics, literature, art, etc.
(b) International	Courses that deal with the multiple forces that shape and direct the regions and cultures of nations (other than the United States)		courses in history, international studies, economics, politics, etc.
(c) Social	Courses that study human interaction, whether focusing on the behavior of individuals, groups, or institutions		courses in anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, urban studies, etc.
<b>III. CULTURE</b>		<b>a total of 2</b>	
(a) Cultural Diversity	Courses that have a major component that requires critical reflection on issues involved in the construction and encounter of human difference	1	courses as described in Appendix I (attached)
(b) Aesthetic	Courses that analyze creative expression and the means to aesthetic engagement	1	courses in literature, art history/theory, music history/theory, theater, etc.
<b>IV. ARTICULATION, COMMUNICATION, ANALYSIS</b>		<b>a total of 4 (to 6 depending on student prep)</b>	
(a) Writing	Courses that actively foster the development of writing skills.	1	ENG 151 or ENG 155
(b) World Languages	Courses that develop skills in a language and culture other than English	1 to 3 (depending on student prep)	courses in the foreign languages
(c) Quantitative	Courses that develop skills in quantitative methods and reasoning to investigate their subject matter	1	courses in math, computer science, psychology, philosophy, chemistry, physics, international studies, etc.
(d) Natural World	Courses that investigate the natural world using scientific methodologies	1	courses in biology, chemistry, geology, physics, etc.

## 6 “Experiences” out of 7 (including 2 Written Comm., 1 Sci. Lab, 1 Creative Expression)

<b>Experience</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b># of courses required</b>
Written Communication	Courses that actively foster the development of writing skills (beyond ENG 151)	2; science majors may substitute a quantitative course for one of these
Scientific laboratory		1
Creative expression	Courses that develop skills in creative expression	1
Oral communication	Courses that actively foster the development of effective oral communication	
Service Learning		
Study Abroad		
Student Research	A small class (not one-on-one) with a significant research component	

## Overview of Changes

<b>Changes from Current General Degree Requirements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Addition of Quantitative, Diversity, and Writing requirements</li> <li>2. 32 (rather than 37) courses will be required for graduation, 12-14 (rather than 15-17) of which will be general degree requirements. (37.5-43.75% rather than 46.875-45.9% )</li> <li>3. The “normal” course load will be 4 courses per semester or eight per year. Limited ability to drop courses.</li> <li>4. Fractional courses will be allowed (1/4; 1/2; 3/4): for example, applied music; Bio/Chem 310; Directed Inquiries.</li> <li>5. Additional experiences are possible.</li> </ol>
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## Appendix I

### **Anthropology and Sociology:**

A/S 264 Life Histories: The Aging Self in Context  
 A/S 310 Gender and Society  
 A/S 343 Racial and Ethnic Minorities

### **Art:**

Art 365 Advanced Topics in Art History (when appropriate)

### **Economics and Business Administration:**

Econ 265 Topics in Economics (when appropriate)

### **English:**

Eng 220 Topics in Women and Literature  
 Eng 221 The Novel of Manners  
 Eng 245 Special Topics in Film (when appropriate)  
 Eng 265 Special Topics (when appropriate)  
 Eng 364 Black Writers in America

### **History:**

Hist 205 Selected Introductory Topics (when appropriate)  
 Hist 241 Native America and American History  
 Hist 242 African-American History  
 Hist 243 Slavery in the US  
 Hist 245 Women in US History  
 Hist 249 History of Southern Women  
 Hist 252 African-American Work Culture  
 Hist 345 Gender in the American West

### **Urban Studies:**

US 190: Urban Perspectives (when appropriate)  
 US 350: Topics in Sociopolitical Relations (when appropriate)  
 US 351: Topics in Urban Public Policy (when appropriate)  
 US 462: Practicum in Urban Studies

### **Music:**

Mus 105: Topics in Music (when appropriate)  
 Mus 118: Black Music in America

### **Political Science:**

PS 214: Modern Ideologies (when appropriate; same as Phil 214)  
 PS 230: Black Politics

### **Psychology:**

Psych 232: Psychology of Women

### **Religious Studies:**

RS 200: Topics in Theology (when appropriate)  
 RS 232: Social Issues (when appropriate)  
 RS 251: Religion in America  
 RS 253: Judaism  
 RS 270: Topics in the History of Christianity (when appropriate)

### **Theatre:**

Th 365: Special Topics in Theatre (when appropriate)

### **Women's Studies:**

WS 200: Introduction to Women's Studies  
 WS 400: Feminist Theory