

DATE: January 21, 1970

TO: History Department Staff (page one is not for circulation)

FROM: Barnes and Rolland

SUBJECT: Proposal for a course to be entitled The Negro in American History

The undersigned are convinced that such a course is justified. Having recently participated in a cooperative inter-disciplinary venture along these lines they are equally convinced that the place for such a course is among the offerings of the History Department. We are prepared to debate, if necessary the need for a course in Negro history. Interest in it certainly is substantial and based on our combined experiences in the past two years we believe that materials essential for its presentation are adequate and at hand.

The proposed new course would include African background, the slave trade, slavery, the abolition movement and the emergence of the Negro individually and collectively as a significant element in American cultural, political and economic life. The current Negro Revolution would be covered in its numerous ramifications. While essentially a history course, for which we would be fully responsible, the talents of a few individuals from outside the Department (or even the University) when available, might be enlisted to further the objective of bringing to the non-Negro student especially, something of the flavor of the Negro experience in America.

While we both believe that the Department's ultimate objective should be the integration of Negro history into our period courses in American history we do not see how this can be done at the present time. Also to the extent that it is being done it provides only limited segments of material for those students taking a specific American history course and nothing for the many students who are interested especially in this topic. Both of us, in our own American history and regional history courses are increasing the amount of coverage of Negro history, but there are practical limits to what can be done without jeopardizing other material. We feel that in addition to an important service to the students, such a course will provide us with an educational experience which can be made use of for the benefit of the Department and the University. It will certainly enhance our (personal and Departmental) flexibility in planning future needs in this general area.

Finally, we believe that the Black Identity course has served a useful purpose. In the absence of something better and more manageable it will no doubt be proposed for continuation, but there are many shortcomings in this kind of a program. Staffing, organizational problems, lack of disciplined discussion and a tendency to confuse educational with political processes are among them. The Black Identity course is certainly much better than no course at all, but we think we can improve upon it substantially. Our proposal is attached. (see Page 2 of this memorandum)

Proposal from Professors Barnes and Rolland for a course to be entitled:
The Negro in American History.

We propose a one semester three credit course to carry either a 300 or 400 number (probably the former) to be offered second semester only and each year for the time being. The course to be taught jointly by Barnes and Rolland. To accomplish this we would drop one of the regular sections of Idaho and the Pacific Northwest (History 423). Dr. Barnes would teach the first eight weeks of the remaining regular section of History 423 and Dr. Rolland would teach the first eight weeks of the Negro History course. At the end of eight weeks (or at the halfway point) we would switch with Barnes taking over the Negro History and Rolland the Pacific Northwest. We would plan both courses together in all major details. The accelerated section of the Pacific Northwest course would continue to be Dr. Rolland's responsibility as it has been in the past.

Willard Barnes
S.B. Rolland