

PLANNING A COURSE

Robert L. Gaudino

I.

Planning a course is a crucial aspect of education because it establishes a point of view, ways of proceeding, indeed the purposes of the entire endeavor. The course plan does not merely determine what actually goes on in class, but in addition determines the style of teaching, the uses of discussion, and the expectations of students. In setting the method and content of education it establishes a process guided by its chosen purposes, and thus creates meaning.

The planning of a course has its proper steps, each of which is best thought through in advance: establishing goals, choosing texts, preparing the syllabus, making assignments, determining themes for papers. The elements must be consciously organized, worked out, and related. The relation of the elements should be articulate, consistent, coherent.

A planned course has its own rules, its own conditions, its selected human capacities, and necessary limits on what it can do. It is a civilized effort with very controlled spontaneity. It is authoritative, with its own sense of proper and improper. It insists on distance, formality, self-denial. It is academic and worthwhile.

I found it worthwhile perhaps because of its conveniences. It guided and shaped my primary years of teaching and was important to my sense of accomplishment, confidence in what I did, and personal satisfaction. But now I am uncomfortable with the kind of course plan to which I had been accustomed, perhaps, paradoxically, because I now find that approach too comfortable. Only recently education was an ordered endeavor, with set expectations. Today, basic premises have been questioned and shaken. There is a new emphasis on the self-awareness of the student as an element in his own education. Thus the course plan I found satisfying in 1964 I now find insufficient. So I have revised my course plan to profit from the new developments, the new approaches, in higher education. To illustrate how the approach, and my perspective, have changed, I shall, in the first third of this essay, describe how I planned a political science course in 1964, and, in the second third, how I plan one now. These rather detailed descriptions surface the different considerations crucial to the planning of the two courses. They exemplify two different perspectives, perspectives that can be seen through a description of the syllabi I used in 1964 and in 1970, for my syllabi were carefully prepared--planned to make visible the course plan, to lay out for the student the content, aims, method, and expectations of the course. In the final portion of the essay I shall describe a method of education even more radical by traditional standards--one that heightens

self-awareness by changing the context of the education from college environment to a strange, experimental environment. It is this method, I believe, that has the greatest potential, but also the greatest risks.

II.

The educational situation in 1964 had its peculiar virtues and satisfactions. Let us assume, for the moment, that it is sufficient to a complete education. Things were not then unsettled inside higher education. The planned course was the expected course. There was no real trouble at the foundations, and it came off without incident. There was no irritable questioning of its rationale, no confrontation with its reason for being. In 1964, it could be planned, executed, even criticized without regard for its premises. Its authority was taken for granted, especially at Williams College, where I teach - small in size and confident of liberal arts. The College has a tradition of good classroom communication between teachers and students, of manageable discussion sections of 15 to 20, and of a looseness of control which allows most teachers to determine their own courses. It is located in the country with modest mountains, a change of seasons, isolation. The students were prepared to accept arbitrary academic authority without evident resistance. All this supports traditionally planned courses.

The title of the American government course I taught in

1964 was "A Study of the American Polity." The subject was not government as such, but polity, regime, milieu. Whatever the term, it referred to the situation of American politics. I mean by situation the meaning and meanings within which, because of which, in spite of which political decisions are made. The idea of the course was to deal with, for example: frameworks of explanation, structures of power, conceptions, styles of life, institutional ambience, for example, America as the "first new nation," distribution of power in local communities, the meaning of class, the way urban villagers live, the United States Senate as manners. The course centered on patterns of significance rather than description and lists, on what gives meaning rather than what happens - in short, the sensibilities shaping action. We analyzed the content of books as a particular statement, a selected significance, a reality according to the author's intentions.

The basic aim of the course was to provide perspective. Perspective puts distance between the seer and the seen. Perspectives vary. There are many different points of origin: an institution, a class, a politician, even the author of a book, his discipline. The idea of otherness is basic to perspective: being aware of that which is different in intention, in practice, in being. The opposition in perspectives which illuminates what is opposed suggests a second basic idea, that of conflict.

Perspective creates the contrast which makes conflict evident.

Here, then, is a theory of the organized course. It is used to shape perspective; it allows the student to see and comprehend in ways not immediate, normal, spontaneous to him. A planned course, in my experience, is three things: discernment, conception, conflict. It is discernment as it involves selection, choice, discrimination. It requires decisions about what belongs. It is conception as it involves logic, coherence, internal relevance. What belongs must be internally related. It is conflict as it involves contrast, resistance, comparison. What belongs and is related must show opposition or at least tension. A course involves ideas, to which materials have relevance, and a movement, which is consistent and understandable, and opposition, which react upon and show each other.

The teacher begins with ideas. They must be his own, derived from his interests, chosen by him. They derive from his own experience with teaching, research, dialogue with colleagues, discussion with students. Without ideas relevant to his work as a student, a teacher will never really have a course. The ideas therefore must suggest inquiry. But the ideas must also, in the course and in his mind, move through various forms of elaboration and conflict. He must be able to choose books expressing the ideas and enabling them to develop. He must be

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ready to defend his choices to colleagues and students. He must be able to show how the books amplify and illustrate his ideas, how the books clarify them through opposing perspectives.

I habitually place a quotation at the head of my syllabus. The introductory quotation for the 1964 course was from Santayana:

In hearty and sound democracy all questions at issue must be minor matters; fundamentals must have been silently agreed upon and taken for granted when the democracy arose. To leave a decision to the majority is like leaving it to chance -- a fatal procedure unless one is willing to have it either way.

The quotation suggested a then commonly accepted view of public authority in America: an agreement at the roots which makes possible a politics and politicians of consensus and majority rule. The course opened with a book which argued this view. We read the book not as truth, but as showing a premise of American democracy which had currency both in academic analysis and in the common wisdom of the time. Even then, it was not, of course, a view shared by all Americans. The presidential election of that fall made the point, helping illustrate the importance of differences in perspective. It was not easy to see Senator Goldwater's electoral stance - the significance of his actions and opinions - without comprehending his meaning, the inter-

connectedness of his values and attitudes, and especially his particular idea of consensus. He did not accept compromise as necessary in every instance. Nor was he convinced that the fundamentals were agreed upon. He was not willing always to have it either way. Nor did he see the political questions at issue as minor matters. The ordering analytical framework of political compromise, so important to the discipline of political science, was not his. These two very different approaches put into contrast and clarified each other. By their very opposition, they made each other more evident.

My 1964 course syllabus was divided into six sections: Content, Purposes, Procedure, Responsibilities of the Student, Required Texts, and Schedule of Reading.

Content. The first paragraph made evident the basic premise of the academic effort: getting beyond the familiar, customary ways of seeing. It proposed escape from one's own opinions, a temporary abandonment of self.

A liberal arts course is not only a movement of ideas but necessarily a contact with experience. Especially so when the study centers on American institutions and government. We are too ready to mistake our own experience for that of every part, to insist on our own motivations and insights as definitive for all. What we take for truth is too often both abstract and limited, a haphazard view of life reflecting more our own advantages than

the unsettling ambiguities of American institutions, practices, values.

The aim was to see the American policy through situations, institutions, processes, practices, attitudes not immediately evident to the student's experience and common sense. The student was asked to put himself aside in order to see these outside things more completely. He was asked to give up reference to his own needs and perceptions. The various experiences of public authority were approached as external and unknown to ordinary personal experience. It was assumed that the student's perception is limited, abstract, unsystematic, and that the shortcomings could be corrected by study of selected writings. These writings came mostly from the academic disciplines, but also from journalists and public figures. What was especially unseen by the student would be the "unsettling ambiguities," which the use of different authors aimed to bring out.

The intention of this course is to encourage a transition, a movement from private to public concerns, a widening of self-consciousness to citizen-consciousness, a grappling with objectivity. Objectivity, of course, but not ^{for} scholarship or a professional life so much as for citizenship or a public life. The objectivity sought was in fuller comprehension of public issues and problems rather than the elaboration of the method and scope of study in the social sciences. The kind of college, the nature of the students, their proposed

lives settle this issue. At Williams, the value of a public life did not then have to be proved. It was an easy assumption. Nor did anyone object to the process of objectifying, of using books to get beyond themselves. Nothing academic had to be proved. It was what one did in college.

Our starting points are the three distinct identities of our government (president, congress, supreme court) and the bureaucracy which influences them. Four practical case studies aim to open an understanding of the governmental process as it fuses and dislocates persons, institutions, motivations. After this, the full situation of politics is explored: the dilemma of the parties, federalism as an issue of conflicting judgments, the local power structures, voter alienation and response. Our study closes with a contrast of communities: four specifically different milieus within the amorphous majority. Three distinct yet practically fused elements, then, organize this course: the established institutions, the different processes of choice and action, the contrasting attitudes and cultures which unevenly shape the American consensus.

This was the movement of the course: the integration of the elements into a flow and contrast. The institutions were treated as identities, as styles, as personality types,

as peculiar orderings of decision making. The case studies showed different processes with different kinds of persons and purposes operating: an election, two bills on their way through the Congress and the executive branch, and a Supreme Court case. Then, issues, controversies, problems are used to explore the situation of politics: the parties' stance, the significance of federalism, the structure of local power, determinants of voters' behavior. Sources used made different judgments on these themes. Finally, reference to the perspectives of separate classes and groups: the suburban middle class, the black bourgeoisie, the urban villagers, and classes in a small town.

Purposes. There were three stated purposes in my 1964 syllabus:

- 1) To discover and understand the character of the American policy, its assumptions and practices as well as the quality of its peoples.
- 2) To suggest and assess some of the major problems and issues of our twentieth century political situation.
- 3) To encourage the student to begin that most difficult and painful task of discovering the premises of his own thought and action.

I intended that the student become aware that political issues and problems are first of all problems of meaning. They are not just demands of material wants, but serious questions involving basic issues of reality, identity, commit-

ment. It is among these purposes that the student as an individual appeared. His judgment becomes an object of education. It was assumed to be imperfect, existing in an unformed, unsystematic state, as yet unencumbered by the richness and variety of experience. His perspective was to be shaped, influenced, augmented, opened, expanded by analysis and comprehension of the assigned reading materials. It was the acceptable, workable, confident assumption of that time that the student would develop and grow in judgment through a serious disciplined reading and discussion of selected books and articles. There was faith in the proposition that the academic process itself, a carefully defined process of making the subjective objective, improves a student's judgment through the careful use of a rigorous method and with the content of the scientific and humanistic disciplines. Knowledge, objectified through clear assumptions and a precisely defined method, subject to validation in definite repeatable ways by others, was accepted as the sufficient condition of education. The approach of perspective, as defined above, widened the kind of sources which could be used as knowledge and related them to their premises but still retained the analytical approach dependent on written sources.

Procedure. The method used was that of disciplined discussion:

We begin our study during a time of change.

We will attempt modest experiments. The course

will proceed primarily as conversation based upon a conscious reading of the texts indicated. The student should increasingly find his own way in this effort, do his own thinking and analysis, establish his own independence through disciplined study. Important to the student's growth in self-reliance is the extent and quality of his participation in class discussion.

The change referred to is the effort to shift from a teacher-dominated discussion to fuller student participation. But this change took place on academic terms, according to the college's rules of the game. It aimed to encourage greater student activity, but the teacher had the advantage of experience in this pursuit. He has been doing it longer, and had shaped himself more along the lines of its demands.

Let us look at this method of learning. Lecture (complete control of the learning situation by the teacher) and discussion of sources are the two main methods of instruction in undergraduate education. This course was taught at a small liberal arts college where discussion gets more emphasis. It is also the method which proved most efficacious in my own first years of teaching.

This is the way I use this method. I assign complete books in two or three installments, encourage the student to read them through and read them thoroughly, discuss each installment in an hour-and-a-half class. One must avoid books which list, which simply describe, which insist on

too many on-the-other-hands. The book should be analyzed as an argument, as a means of selecting and emphasizing, as a set of premises from which to make observations. The author makes judgments, and consequences follow. A close, recent, concentrated reading is required to come to a full understanding of the text. And complete notes. My own procedure is to read the assignment carefully before class, take detailed notes at the time of reading, then reread the notes immediately before class. At this time, I take a separate set of notes on the author's basic themes and on the assumptions and movement of his argument. I proceed in class by questions based on the line of reasoning in the text, using the second set of notes as a guide. Those notes are most valuable as a preparation, setting the themes and questions and premises. In class, one is apt to lose touch with them as the arguments and lines of reasoning gain a momentum of their own. It has been my experience that a discussion takes on its own motion. At its best, it allows an understanding of the book and author not immediately evident in the first reading, or, for that matter, not by reading alone. The discussion then is a process of discovery. Through focused exchange, relevant questions and answers, the pressures of dialogue, new understanding is created. Close preparation is essential, but analysis, when most effective, goes beyond that preparation. I have been made continually aware that reading a book for discussion, together with the note taking and concentration on themes,

followed by the exchange in class, shows me the author, his work, his intentions much more thoroughly and clearly than reading the book on my own. It is an activity which stimulates both teacher and student into seeing more than they would on their own. Both improve in understanding. It has other benefits as well. It keeps the teacher alert and interested in the courses and the books he teaches, and keeps him on the lookout for new, different, useful books. It brings to the student, when he consents to be engaged, the unexpected perspectives and the excitement of ideas in motion.

Such discussions are not accidents: they do not come about without planning. Their preparation depends on certain prerequisites. Discussion is a very civilized instrument of learning - both fragile and vulnerable, difficult to bring off without the proper supports. Analysis requires strong institutional authority to encourage it, the tradition to support it, the dedicated personnel to make it work, the continuing experience to value it. In short, it depends on a climate which encourages study and reflection: the time, the place, the space. Most importantly, it must have students and teachers who believe in it, are ready to use it, and able and willing to learn by it. It cannot be proved except as it proves itself in the experience of it. Beforehand, much must be taken on trust.

Responsibilities of the Student. In my 1964 syllabus

I explicitly set forth what I expected of the student. The first of the American government course requirements was:

- 1) You will have a summer reading assignment:

Seymour Lipset's The First New Nation. We

will discuss this book at the first class

meeting in the fall and use it in an analysis

of other readings.

Summer reading is helpful in preparing a student for study new to him. Here, only one book was assigned, but a book essential to the perspectives of the course. It is a clear articulation of the established view of democratic consensus and the meaning of the United States as a modern nation. It contains a good discussion of public authority using the orientation of contemporary social science and is written with full consciousness of premises and consequences. It is a good book to introduce the student to textual analysis. The only difficulty proved to be trying to cover all its themes in one hour-and-a-half class.

Important ideas were left unexamined. It is very important to allow enough time for full consideration of a text.

But it is almost impossible to exhaust any assignment in one period. What is most important is that the discussion go on to the new assignment in the next period. A class must never fall behind the reading schedule. Students and teacher find it most satisfactory to discuss the reading they have immediately prepared. It is essential to content, tone, participation. Even things read long

before must be reread just before. This immediacy of contact with the source is what gives the discussion the dynamic, creative, originating quality it needs in order to move. Both student and teacher must be in close touch with the material.

Summer or intersessional reading is best as general preparation. It is getting acquainted, a grounding in what is unfamiliar. The books chosen should suggest ideas, themes, problems which will occur later. It is helpful in discussion to have common sources to refer back to. The books must be readable, challenging, contrasting, and sufficient enough to the subject to give some idea of the themes to be discussed. Students are willing to do summer reading at their own pace and with their own selection of books from the list. The instructor should not expect either complete or thorough mastery.

- 2) You will be responsible for the assigned readings at each class meeting. We will work directly from the texts indicated. Bring your books and notes to class. Be prepared to answer any questions about the readings. Deficiency in attendance or preparation will significantly influence your final grade.
- 3) There will be a final examination which will cover comprehensively all of the readings of the semester. You will be

responsible for the specific content of
the assignments.

Responsibility was clear here. The requirements were evident and the expectations definite. The sanction was unequivocal: the grade was used as a control for preparation, attendance, quality of participation, mastery of content. But more than sanction, its basic function was as a measurement of performance, not merely to aid the student in his own development, but to assess him against the standards of disciplined knowledge. Such knowledge, to be sustained and advanced, requires the measurement and discernment of performance. Disciplined knowledge requires evaluation of the persons and processes that are the subject of study. It has little stake in the student's self-growth, identity discovery, personality formation.

Implied in the use of the grade as a sanction, and a corollary to the use of the grade as a measurement, is the assumption that for most students education is neither easily accepted nor voluntarily pursued. Disciplined discussion goes against the common inclinations of a young person. It depends upon a system of authority, a set of arrangements, and reinforcements. Such discussion is, in fact, very artificial. It requires sustained endeavor which cannot be left to chance.

For this kind of discussion to succeed, both student and teacher have to be serious about the effort. They must be willing to accept the authority which fosters it. The

student, lacking experience in it, has to accept much more on trust than the teacher. In 1964, this was easier and less questioned. It was what was done in college. The fundamental premise that such discussion is valuable was not challenged. The supports for knowing what is external to oneself were accepted without doubt or misgiving. Those who resisted this knowing, and there were more than we admitted or recognized, did not make trouble. They settled for modest grades and an undistinguished degree. They did not make public demands. Their misgivings were accepted by themselves as personal and kept as private. In any event, their unrevealed objections would have had no public standing, no public grounds on which to show themselves.

Both teaching and study are challenging in the system of disciplined discussion. But it is the subject matter which is the challenge, which demands full attention, the focused effort. The ideas of the course, the planning of them, the organization of sources, the uses of class time demand not only skill but intelligence, always oriented to content. The student is very important in this work. He is to receive and use the knowledge. He must be seen, responded to, understood for the purposes of this knowledge. He needs help in reading, analyzing, applying. He must be made at ease in the flow and discovery of discussion. Cooperation and trust are essential to success. And criticism as well. The skilled and experienced student is able to

perceive faulty conceptions or ideas, failure in the coherence of organization, careless use of the classroom. He has become aware of the expectations of the planned course. His performance is good. It is a pleasure, critical though he may be, to have him present. His behavior supports the continuance of the endeavor.

- 4) Three very short (three or four pages) analytical papers based on assigned books are required. The purpose of each is to contrast the ideas of the author considered with the material previously studied. This involves a critical analysis not a book review or simple recapitulation of content. Each paper is due, fully completed, before class on the day indicated. A class discussion will follow. Late papers are conventionally inferior papers and will be so judged.

The paper was planned to reinforce the method of discussion, not in the usual sense of the paper as research, using citations from a variety of library sources put together into a coherent argument, but as independent examination of a single source. One book was assigned and the student's task was to analyze it on his own in the context of the themes and issues of previous discussions. He was asked in writing and by himself what in class he does by speech and in the company of others. Such a paper is not easily a success. The student is new at the task, unskilled by himself, without personal command of the activity, uncertain

how exactly to proceed. The momentum of the discussion, its way of developing insight through its own movement, is lacking the quality which could be improved if the students were able, among themselves, to hold each other to the task. They are not used to doing this. The will, the time, and the familiarity with the activity are not there. Analysis is shaped under discipline not picked up in casual conversation.

III.

That is how one planned a course in 1964. It was what could be expected. It seemed entirely adequate at the time. The most recent syllabus I have prepared was for an autumn, 1970 course called "Perspectives on the City." There has been change, both in expectations, and in method. The change involves augmentation more than transformation of the old syllabus. The old learning is still there, solid in its premises, but something different stands alongside it and looks at it: comparison, another perspective, a different starting point, - risks.

In the 1970's, there is a new situation of learning in the liberal arts. This situation involves a new consciousness which is pressing traditional ways of educating; a new kind of student criticism, outside the old boundaries, which asks to learn according to different premises; and a new meaning of education arising not out of the experience of the classroom but from a suspicion of it.

The new aim is to shift the foundation of education from knowledge, systematic thought organized and validated by precisely defined method, to the person learning. It is a radical shift, setting very deep oppositions into motion. As a way of education, it stresses the direct, the unplanned, the unorganized, the uncontrolled. It prefers internal consciousness to systematic understanding of the external world. Graded performance is seen as a betrayal of self-awareness, as a sacrifice of growth within one's capacities, as a loss of the natural actions closest to one's identity. Thus is the contemporary liberal arts education, and the methods it has used to serve its own purposes, exposed to a really unsettling criticism. The two perspectives are in direct conflict.

The autumn 1970 course takes account of this situation. It accepts the conflict. The course exists in an academic environment, a guiding situation. The organized course is still the central effort, still in command of persons, facilities, time. In this particular course, there is still the close analysis of varied sources, the conflicting perspectives of those sources, the logic of movement from part to part, emphasis on growth of judgment through contact with these sources, the enforced conditions of discussion. But there is an additional element: the attempt to gain perspective on this way of educating. Putting the disciplined discussion into perspective is to see it as it is: an academic way of learning. As such, it has its own virtues, its special

kind of authority, its learning beneficial to certain kinds of persons in certain situations. It is exclusive and selective. Therefore, in order to account for a different perspective the course aims also to include different methods, the ungraded methods based in different ideas about the origin and purpose of education. The purpose is to understand this opposition, as well as to encourage the expression of different kinds of student personality each represents. My 1970 syllabus opens as follows:

The purpose of this course is more concerned with seeing than with doing. Perspective is emphasized over problem solving; understanding more important than control. The course stresses the suspension of judgment for the purposes of judgment. It tries to use differences and tensions as the essential mode of learning. It assumes that conflict expands perception, that learning at its core is uncomfortable. It tends to smile, with sympathy but still to smile, at any one conviction which insists on excluding all others. It is, therefore, quite academic in its distance, reserve, suspended action. It is also incomplete:

"I think that going into Vista is the smartest thing I ever did. I don't think any book on the ghetto, or urban problems, or on the school crises has ever moved me so much as

living in the midst of it. These are just some feelings and emotions that books can never bring out. Values and everything about middle class life are questioned. Outside, maybe only a few blocks away, there is a completely different culture with completely different laws and values. I don't think that once you are here you can ever go back and be the same."

(A recent Williams graduate)

Yet we will use books, films, papers, discussions. Not to experience so much as to prepare for experience, just as one prepares for a visit to an alien place or to an unknown people. This, then, is not the visit proper, but an anticipation of it. The actual experience, in spite of the most sober preparation, always feels new because it is new. That is, it is involvement, active response, judgment tested. Here, we try simply to see.

The "seeing" quality of education is emphasized in this course, even to the neglect of experiencing, problem solving, system building, data collecting, scholarship. While this seeing eliminates activities, both academic and practical, it does not eliminate reflection, either academic or practical. There is no scholarly effort at gathering and objectifying either facts or theories. Neither is there immediate, spontaneous, non-verbalized experience, nor prudent application

of the various sciences to contemporary problem solving and control. There is no "active" work. The aim is reflection on one's own qualities and outlook, on the life situations of other persons, on the meaning of books, on the appearances of the city, on the significance of the sciences, on the methods of education. The primary aim of this educational method is awareness rather than resolution of problems - thought in the form of reflection. Here we return to the two different perspectives in education. Reflection is common to both, whether reflection on data and theory or reflection on self, even though object, form, criteria of excellence certainly differ. Thus, though the content and methods of the course would not completely satisfy either perspective, it would make use of both, and more importantly, show both. It shows their opposition as one of valid perspectives and prepares the student for a judgment on that opposition.

Within the 1970 course structure, I employed three elements of learning: seeing, writing, reading.

SEEING: THE FILMS

The purpose is quite literally to look at the actual scenes, movements, contrasts of land, city, and people. These observations are not part of the formal course structure.

WRITING: THE PAPERS

The paper will be the students' response to

the personality and ideas of a person now living in the city. It may take a variety of forms: straight description, analysis, fiction, celebration, criticism, etc. But there must be a real living person present with whom the student has spent some time and understanding. The writing should show the city as well as the person. The paper will not be graded.

READING: THE DISCUSSIONS

The content is different perspectives on the city, contrasts among the ways the city is understood and lived. We meet together on Wednesdays and Fridays in three separate sections. There will be a final examination based on the books read, which will be graded.●

The film is a new resource which I have used for two years now. As a medium, it is appreciated by those with new ideas of learning. In this course, it is not used academically, as books are used, for close analysis. It could, of course, be used in that way very effectively, but not in this course. The films are not treated as a consistent, created, achieved expression of their directors, not as an external completed works of art. Rather they are used as an occasion for the student to see himself, to see the way he responds. Also, there is the primary purpose of quite literal seeing as well: the actual pictures of

land, of transformed land, of city. These pictures aim to improve the student's actual seeing of things around him, to increase his awareness of things which he has kept indistinct. Thus, in the context of the course these films are not intended to be subject to the use of a critical method. The student evaluates them on his own grounds, according to his own reasons. Of course, I join in, make judgments and comments of my own, but all talk is voluntary, free in movement, uncomparated. It is not used to evaluate students or to grade them. The talk is not performance. Rather it often proceeds very indifferently, sometimes confused and unproductive. Participation and engagement are not achieved just by creating this situation. Since the form and expectations are new, it takes more experience and continual use to feel at ease, to find the right accommodation. Anyway, the solution is not in better planning of talk. That is not what it is about. Neither the activity nor the results can be planned.

The paper is also not taken as performance. It is not judged by academic criteria. Each paper is definitely open to comment and judgment but not to grading, comparison, ~~or~~ measurement. Its source is not written, stable, well-established like a book, but a real person who must be perceived, followed, responded to, even understood. The student's own personality is engaged, the quality of his judgment challenged, his human sensitivities given a

chance to do something. Both sensibility and discernment are tested.

Here, within a formal course, both films and paper try something different. They provide a contrast with the established approach. The organized, enforced, coherent, comparative analysis of texts continues in the reading element of the course. The voluntary individual assessment of perception, feeling, response gets attention in the seeing and the writing elements.

As teachers, we are accustomed to analysis based on or reflecting the premises, methods, and theory of our professional disciplines. We aspire to be objective, coherent, and ordered. It is a conscious intention, and a source of security. These sensibilities are those of a well developed mind: arrangement, clarity, logic, consistency, system, specificity. We like to make distinctions. They are important to us. So are words, precise and neutral. We like to approach reality with the mind. We are used to the terms of the mind. Distance, reserve, convention, a planned environment are important. Student and teacher do not meet directly as full persons. Personality is controlled in the interest of method. The disciplined command of self. Such is our history. Almost routine. Of course, it is willful, but a will very much in control of mind. Answerable to study. But the activity of study is now subject to doubt, made uncertain by the loss of the authority of the impersonal.

The conscious growth of self is much closer to the everyday movements of life, to common sense, to ordinary responses. It is among the first things, the most familiar, the things which come most readily. It is where we all begin - with a sense of self. And, we keep more or less in touch with this sense through the years. More in touch when we are unsettled by conflict. Sense of self shows in opposition, in the reaction to what is different. But, then, it is too often blind. The difficulty is in being aware of what is at stake on both sides of a controversy, in reflecting on ourselves and on the other. Reflection requires gentler pressures than the conflict which originates it.

Reflection on self, as education, requires a teacher more able to listen than lecture, whose patience is able to overcome his desire to explain, who is at ease with silence as with words. Personality and character are more to the point than verbal skills and intellect. There are direct, lengthy, engaged encounters. Confused results - the particular nuance and the fluid ambiguity - lend more to reflection on self than the general, overt description, the fixed clarity, and definite achievements. Experiments work better than steps. Little can be formally prepared, predetermined, or predicted. Content is hard to schedule. Long stretches of time are wasted, none of it accountable to performance. In the place of active accomplishment is patient consideration, a peculiar kind of

judgment, a shaky kind of trust. And, there are no grades, no performance, not even any agreed upon standards by which to judge a performance. Success is more the feeling it is so, than an action which makes it so.

Speaking as a teacher, my training, experience, background, profession, college, colleagues encourage the traditional academic approaches to learning. Why not accept this sober situation? Why unsettle the academic with a contrast so foreign to it? What purpose can be served by confronting it? Especially when most of us lack the skills to do it effectively, and when the risks to the traditional activity of study are so great.

The most academic answer is that by confrontation the academic is grasped, comprehended, faced, put into place, fully understood. This full understanding is our work: it is seeing. It is very easy, without the presence of the new perspective, not to think about the meaning and character of our study. The method of disciplined discussion (and the disciplined knowledge it depends upon), where it is the most successful, will easily produce a special confidence, a righteous certainty, an exclusion of other means of learning. Such narrowness is probably a condition of its success, for it creates the confidence necessary to its functioning. It is truly an exceptional process: dependent upon an established kind of community and a prepared kind of person, and producing very refined kinds of knowledge.

Its conditions are hard to duplicate in the life a student lives once he leaves college, for they are not the conditions of everyday life. Education in touch with that life will use different resources, different parts of a person, different aspects. The contrast of this educational method with the traditional activity of study can bring recognition of the difference between the ways of college and the ways of everyday life.

Probably a number of students are not well educated by disciplined analysis. It escapes them. More seriously, they escape it. They elude their education, giving it up to the others who talk, who thrive on the talk. The academic life, being both demanding and refined, shapes itself on a particular kind of person at ease with it, adept at using it, comfortable with its effects. Such characteristics are not common to all students. Those who lack the bent, do not benefit from the education it gives. Being itself definitive, academic learning educates a definitive kind of student and neglects the others.

There is a special defect in much of academic learning. It does not encourage genuine interaction among students, not on their own grounds and not challenged by different environments. Students learn a great deal in college, but little about educating each other. They begin to understand their books but not their fellow students. To be sure, some lose patience with the slow, confused, unresolved talk through which persons reach for

themselves. They are bored with it, seeing that talk as a waste of academic time, which certainly it is. Just as academic time wastes personal time.

In the 1964 course, students took responsibility for but no initiative in learning: the framework was the conception of the teacher. It was all planned, organized, and carefully prepared. Academic learning does not suffer for this, but the individual growth of the student may. Judgment is enhanced for many, but in an abstract, removed, uninvolved way. This is the student who listens to himself speaking. The chief difficulty of such distance and indifference is that the student is unmoved by his education.

But there is a problem under the old methodology even for the committed student. The absence of initiative does not mean that the individual student is not critical or that he is not participating and profiting. On the contrary, this student is very much a contributor. He responds. He demands good readings, coherent relatedness of sources, and adequate analysis of meaning. He has both questions and answers. The difficulty is that he tends not to use himself as an educational resource. He uses only the discussion as such, never becoming the subject or the cause, never using himself as the object of his education. Of course, the risks of any shift in reference point are great, especially when reflection on self is joined to that popular contemporary idea that the only thing worth knowing is that which fits, that which suits "me," that

which gives "me" no discomfort or pain.

IV.

The films and papers of the 1970 course try to encourage the student to see himself. But this effort is still fundamentally academic, justifiably so as part of a regularly scheduled course in a college environment. The main effort is still textual analysis. A fuller testing of self requires something more immediate, continuous, effective. The student needs autonomy, being on his own - the opportunity to use initiative. And, just as much, he needs the experience of resistance, of circumstances and persons and attitudes which do not yield to him - the encounter with strangers. Initiative among strangers: both conditions are best met outside of the classroom, away from the college, free of controlled discussion. Where experience instructs, not refined knowledge. I have experimented with this experiential kind of education in a special program in India with 17 Williams undergraduates. A description of this program suggests a new method of organizing a course.

"Experience" is not easy to identify as an activity and even harder to define. It could refer to any human action. What does it mean? Experience requires extension in time, going through a situation, having direct contact with it. As occurrence, it is personal, immediate, unexamined. It is the effect of particular events, places, persons.

Learning from experience requires reflection upon it: an examination of one's impressions, sensations, feelings after occurrence. Ordering these personal effects, relating them to the external world, and assessing their significance for one's own perspective are very different from ordering data, relating it to generalized theory, and assessing its significance to the advance of a discipline, although both are acts of thought. In thinking about experience, one should have a sense of the unique, but also a feeling for the milieu - contact with what is on hand and yet awareness of situation. The appropriate sensibility is not the same as one needs for reading and analysis. Identifiable pressures increase. There is more strain, more discomfort, more disorder.

There is a problem of communication. Because experience starts with that which is particularly one's own, there is resistance to precision in expression and clarity of meaning. Words are put off, judged as inadequate to express one's feelings and impressions. This resistance to speech has no place in academic discussion where the effort is to find the exact word to express the very specific meaning. .
Since it uses fully conscious precise communication from commonly accepted interests and definitions, academic study has great difficulty with the inarticulateness of experience. But education, whether academic or experiential in origin, involves communication. It must have comprehensible writing and speech, no matter how imperfect and inexact their use.

Some argue the traditional classroom is an experience. Of course, this is true, but the experience is a very special one. It is set up to provide specific, precise, clear articulation of some defined external reality. But it lacks the time, the skills, the personnel for encouraging exploration of self. It is evident there is a clear difference between the two kinds of educations in the objects they take seriously. One seeks particular knowledge made objective through selection and method. The other seeks to know the self, its quality and responses but most of all its change and growth.

The students from Williams went to India for five months after five months of academic work on campus. Seventeen sophomores and juniors began a study of transition and social change in India in September of 1969. They were resident on campus for the fall semester and the winter study period in January. In the fall, they studied development economics and Indian art together with a double credit discussion course on transition in India. There was a summer reading list used as a preparation and background for study.

The students lived in India from February through June. They talked with government officials, businessmen, teachers, villagers, politicians, planners, religious figures, social workers. They lived with Indians in their homes and in dormitories, both in the city and in villages and in industrial centers. Each student was responsible

for a major paper. The fall courses in economics and Indian art and the double credit seminar on India were graded as courses normally are. The winter study was pass-fail, as was the spring semester in India.

By far the most important aim of extending such a study to residence overseas was the fusion of analysis and experience. The purpose was to go beyond the untouched abstractions and unfelt conceptions of a classroom thousands of miles away from the reality of India. The aim was to pick up the formal discussion and place it down inside the nation's institutions and among its people: right in the offices and public spaces of Delhi, in the open fields and narrow lanes of village life, in the movement and new confusion of an industrial city, in the classrooms of Indian higher education. The program aimed to fuse thinking, seeing, feeling into a whole understanding, to match the encounter of ideas with the meeting of people, to push beyond mere conceptualization to a touching of India itself.

But the dynamics of the situation were stronger than this expectation. The organized course in India did not come off exactly as planned. The pain, discomfort, uncertainty had been anticipated. The young American in India is at all kinds of disadvantages. The most evident are the physical: the adjustments to climate, living, food, various illnesses. The most difficult are the adjustments to a wholly new way of seeing and doing things. But pain and risks are not best handled in the prepared, disciplined

discussion. The form is not right for the maladjustments of setting and personality. It is not sufficient to the internal movements, the tossing and turning, of conscience and judgment. This ferment can not be contained within the ordinary procedure of academic analysis.

The important discovery was that this program was not the mere transplant of an American college to a foreign environment. That is, Williams college was not recreated in India. The same activity did not take place there. There were few similar discussions. The place was not conducive to it, nor is higher education conducted that way there. But it was more than place. The dialogue appropriate to self awareness, reflection on experience, conscious choice of interest is more personal, face to face, unencumbered. Not only did the academic projects fail, but the formal discussions lacked the content, the focused articulation, the generating movement of the college environment. What was learned in India is not as well learned under academic conditions.

Halfway through this experiment, and ^{after} the students had stayed three weeks in a village, there were no serious health problems or psychological upsets. Indians spoke well of the students. The students in turn showed an open yet not uncritical acceptance of people and things they encountered. Each showed increased perception of what was around him, yet felt in very direct ways the limits of his own abilities to see and sympathize.

There was a strong sense of the private personal experience over that of the group, but also a desire to know what was happening to each other. Generally, despite the discomforts, harassments, irritations, the orientation was receptive, trustful, interested, critical.

There was also a sense of discovery at that time, but not in every case confident of itself. For some, the absence of closely defined academic responsibilities was a problem. Which raised our most fundamental question: just what kind of education was possible in India? How relevant was it to the kind of educating college usually does? Very little of what happened was associated with the normal college experience. One more academically inclined student argued that more could be gotten out of books in the college environment. The foreign environment resisted formal academic instruction or sustained coherent analysis shaped on the disciplines of study. Students in this environment take on a new mental set and cluster of expectations. The ways in which they do learn, as well as the content, tends to vary with the kind of student, his personality and way of being. The discipline of the classroom is hard to enforce. There is too much going on outside. And inside himself, the student is discovering a person with some definite judgments, tastes, expectations, limits.

Formal seminars aiming at some general analysis were difficult to get moving. Students were the most

responsive in direct one-to-one contacts about what has happened to them, how it affects them, the judgments they make, preferably close to the time and place of their experience. The quality of this learning is personal, individual, specific, self-animating. Yet it is just this kind of learning and approach to learning which is most in tension with the traditional academic structure and expectation. There is a necessary tension between direct, personal, concrete perceptions and the generalized objectified, logically rigorous analysis of the disciplines. Each student to a greater or lesser degree and in his own way became the originator of his education. It was not the carefully defined requirements of formal study which originates what he should learn but his own interests and sensibilities. But such learning was chaotic, not fixed in its focus or emphasis. It turned on the background, taste, affinities of each individual. To understand and to evaluate it, one must start with the individual himself and not with formal constructs of political science, art, or economics. This results in a sharpening of perception and insight, but along the lines the student himself chooses, not those marked out by a course of study. There is real and practical learning. But is it academically respectable? Probably not. Appreciation of it will require new premises of learning and new grounds of evaluation.

The more practical, and less controversial, question

is: does this kind of learning lead to or make possible academic learning? The answer seemed to be: it may, but it does not necessarily. If the student already has in him a dedication to and interest in academic study, it will help enormously. It provides him with questions, themes, ideas he wants to pursue in depth later. It gives him essays, practical insights, pictures which reinforce his more academic orientations. It impresses on him, strongly enough, how much can be learned from books. But if he does not have this academic interest, it is not miraculously found or created. The student ordinarily resistant to academic forms seemed reinforced in his own, more direct, individually responsive ways of learning.

At the close of this experimental program I realized that while the academic work at Williams was a preparation, a backdrop, a common beginning, it prepared for something very different from itself. It did not bring into being something like itself. It launched experience which was more private than public, more subjective than objective, more adolescent than middle-aged, more personal than communal, more discovery than dramatic change, more individual awareness than external description, more self than science, indeed more India than Williams. This, then, was education reaching out to experience: ^{to} ~~those~~ those irritating, upsetting, invigorating, demoralizing, ~~stimulating~~ stimulating discoveries one calls one's own.

In the process things became more clear, more definite, more seen in the mind. One begins to come into one's own not by adaption to worthy standards of academic analysis or disciplined study but through perspective on the largely untested self set down in disconcerting, alien, uncomfortable circumstances.

The great failure of the program was the required academic project. It was treated in many ways: postponed, evaded, divorced, abandoned, renounced, circumscribed, and even completed. Most importantly and usually: it was neglected often consciously and on grounds of principle, and in some cases with the pride of doing something worth doing. This final project was intended as a final indication of the academic quality of the effort here. It was important to the academic purposes of the program, to its respectability. It was a common ground between the experiment and the traditional college environment which provided familiar grounds for the assessment and judgment in keeping with the college's established idea of what it does. But the fact remains that these projects just did not succeed as creditable pieces of academic research. A good number of the students sat down to write something different. They wrote about themselves not as scholars but as involved observers, changing in the very act of observing. And some went so far as to argue that an institutional program abroad was an impossibility. The focus had to be each one of them. Yet on even these ideas, a very articulate minority of students disagreed.

style and possible vocational choices. More than this, the decision not to do a project was a creative one. Creative in the specific sense of the discovery of what they would like to do. Action may not necessarily follow, but they learned more about what they would like to do. All looked forward to ~~the~~ remaining time in college, ~~_____~~. They felt it would be different, more worthwhile, more relevant, and the change is primarily in themselves.

V.

We have come a long way from "Planning a Course." We seemed to have stumbled upon a very unformed, not very articulate kind of learning, a learning of which we still lack adequate experience and full understanding. Still we have learned that the milieu, set of values, type of person, preconditions suggested by what we do, by planning a course, form a perspective on education. That perspective does not constitute the whole of education. But it is the kind of educating we can do well. I have argued that it is not so sturdy. There are evident risks in qualifying it. It must be defended, protected, preserved by gifted teachers and willing students, those who actually make use of it. But its very defense and preservation demand that it be recognized and valued for what it is and what it is not. A complete education must have more than it can do or can give. We should not

Their remedy was simple: select only academically qualified and committed students in order to preserve the academic quality of the endeavor.

The students who decided not to do the project did so consciously. It was a choice, an educational decision with certain consequences for the student's own understanding of himself and his continuing education. Each student seemed to make a distinction uncommon in this time: a distinction between the requirement itself and students' acceptance of it without real commitment. The student did not turn against the system of discipline and its academic logic which allows such unfelt projects. Rather, he questioned himself about what really did interest or hold him. He did not assault the impersonality and irrelevance of the methods of traditional education, but sought those things which appealed to him and could, at the same time, relate him back to that education. The students became more definitive about what they need and expect, more demanding from the definite grounds of their interests and limits. It is my judgment that they will choose a variety of life styles, but only a few of them are ever likely to choose scholarship or disciplined study as a vocation. Starting from the needs of the academic disciplines themselves, an academic project is both necessary and worthwhile, but it is much less so when seen from the perspective of the student's own life

be partial. We need, with all its unsettlement and threat, the other perspective of personal experience. A real risk.

