Guidelines for Proposing a Course and Teaching in Plan II

Approval & Funding. Please obtain the approval of your chair before proposing a Plan II course. Plan II cannot pay the salaries of local faculty, and professors must be released from their home departments to teach for Plan II. We can help with support for teaching assistants for large courses and may have funds to pay for special course expenses. Faculty earn teaching credits for Plan II courses and their home departments may earn credit for offering these classes, just as they do for departmental courses. Funding for signature courses goes to the professor’s home department and not to Plan II.

Plan II Students. Most professors find Plan II students to be highly motivated and a pleasure to teach. The average Plan II student has an SAT score in the 1400s, is a National Merit Something, and graduated in the top 5% of their class. They are often leaders of organizations, and have succeeded on state and national levels in everything from debate to clarinet. Student areas of interest vary widely: although many Plan II students concentrate in the humanities, substantial numbers are pursuing a second degree in science, business, communications, fine arts, or engineering.

Proposal Categories. Plan II welcomes course proposals in the following categories:

1) Honors Social Science (SS 301) 30-45 students:
This one-semester course, often taken in the second or third year, introduces students to contemporary social issues & the methods and materials of social science, usually from the perspective of one discipline. Recent offerings include economics, anthropology, and psychology.

2) Junior Seminar (TC 358) 15 - 18 students:
The Plan II junior seminar requirement is designed with two purposes: to allow our students to explore topics from different academic areas at an advanced level, and to train them in the research methodologies and writing skills needed for their required senior thesis. These are small seminar courses that emphasize discussion, critical thinking, research, student presentations, and writing. Graduate seminars frequently require from their students little more than participation and a massive research-based term paper. Plan II junior seminars sometimes emulate this format with awkward results unless the professor keeps in mind following, that Plan II students have interests and backgrounds in many different fields. Although they should all have good training in writing when they come to you, for most, this will be the first attempt at a research paper of more than 8 to 10 pages. Many will not be well versed in the research methodologies of different disciplines. They will not know what sort of work is expected in your field, and they may not know how to integrate a variety of presentations made by their peers.

We therefore make three recommendations:

1. If the primary requirement is a single long paper, make sure that the students receive graded feed-back from you on their writing by mid-semester on at least one short paper also requiring one rewrite of the short paper if possible. This is the latest useful time for students to learn what you expect of them and how far they must change in order to meet your expectations.
2. Avoid building seminar discussion exclusively around oral presentations based on student research. Our students may not know your field well enough to put the pieces together by
themselves, and they want to learn something from you. We do, however, hope that at least one oral presentation is required in every junior seminar.

3. Each Plan II major is required to give a 10-15 minute oral presentation of his/her thesis at a Plan II Thesis Symposium. Oral presentations in the junior seminars are excellent preparation for this requirement.

Recent seminar topics include "Myths of War and Violence," "Water and Society," "Law, Ethics & Brain Policy," and "Shakespere in Performance." Plan II students take two seminars in the junior year.

3) Modes of Reasoning (TC 310) 30-45 students:
This is a rubric for courses introducing students to formal structures for quantitative reasoning: computer science, game theory, operations research, or statistics and probability. Topics can vary and have included courses on the use of statistics in science or social science and research methods across academic disciplines. The course is typically taken during first or second year.

4) Plan II First-Year Signature Course (TC 302) 15-18 students:
These are small seminar courses that emphasize discussion, critical thinking, short research projects, student presentations, and writing on interdisciplinary topics of contemporary importance. Recent seminar topics include "Pathways to Civic Engagement," "Uses and Abuses of the Bible," "Punishment in a Liberal Society," and "Hunger." All Plan II freshmen take a First-Year Signature Course, either in the fall or spring. The School of Undergraduate Studies (UGS) requires all First-Year Signature Courses to include several essential elements*** and be designated with the writing flag.** Signature courses may only be taught by regular faculty including tenure and tenure-track professors as well as senior lecturers. Funding provided by UGS for signature courses goes to the professor's home department and not to Plan II.

Course Topics. Junior Seminars (TC 358) and Plan II First-year Signature Courses (TC 302) may be offered in virtually any subject taught at the university. Most Plan II courses are interdisciplinary in content and approach. However, do keep in mind that Plan II courses CANNOT be identical to regular department offerings; the College of Liberal Arts does not allow us to schedule courses that have been taught in the professor's home department. The Plan II Course that you propose must be a new course or one substantially different from a course you have taught in another department (i.e. different title, readings/text, assignments, general content). The exception is the TC 302 signature course; Plan II will consider TC 302 proposals for courses previously offered as UGS 302/303 as students can only take one of these courses during their time at UT so there is no possibility of duplication.

Format. Please keep in mind that TC 358 and TC 302 are undergraduate seminars that should be designed to involve lots of discussion and should encourage students to explore the topics covered. Lecturing should be kept to a minimum. Reading in Plan II courses should be a mix of primary and secondary sources. In general, students would rather have a stack of books to buy than an anthology.

Two recommendations from the Plan II Advisory Committee:
1) Students should not be involved in compiling data for the professor's research.
2) Film screenings should be held outside class time, if possible.

Assignments. Plan II courses usually contain writing flag components. Whether they are designated as writing flag courses or not, they should make students write and write and write. In
first-year courses (TC 302), we've found frequent short writing assignments (3-6 pages), starting the first week or two of classes, are more effective than long papers. Most freshmen aren't ready to write a long term paper, and most need guidance on their writing from the outset. In Junior Seminars (TC 358), term papers of about 20 pages are usually appropriate. We also recommend the assignment of formal oral presentations in seminars.

**Exams.** We encourage faculty to give final exams, particularly in freshman classes. Students have reported that a well-conceived final exam helps them pull the course material together. Final exams may only be given during the exam period. Please try to avoid giving hour-long exams during the last week of class, when students are often completing major papers.

**Enrollments.** Enrollments in Plan II courses are kept low. The ideal size for a seminar course is 18 or smaller. Plan II classes are usually open only to Plan II students, but in some cases may be cross-listed with departmental honors courses.

*We can promise you a small class, but we cannot promise you that your section will be full. Junior seminars rarely have more than sixteen students — a good size for a class with intense discussion, frequent papers, with extensive comments from the professor on each paper. We allow our students to select their courses according to their academic interests and strengths up to the enrollment limit in each class.*

**Guidelines for Course Proposals.** The proposal you provide will play an important role in promoting your class and attracting students to enroll, especially if you are new to Plan II or are not known to our students. What you submit to us now (though you will have the chance to revise it later) is what students will see when choosing their courses during registration. The proposal should give a sense of the content and scope of the course, and why it would be of interest, but it does not need to be as detailed as a syllabus.

Yours should include the following:
1) General description of the course content, concerns, and goals (one to two short paragraphs)
2) Major texts/readings (if you are using an anthology, please specify works to be read.)
3) Course Requirements - Your grading policy with percentages for papers, exams, assignments, oral presentations and class participation. Please specify the number and length of all papers. 
   • Please state whether you intend your course to carry a flag. We encourage all faculty to designate their courses with an appropriate flag or flags (courses can carry up to three) based on content.* All First-year Signature Courses (TC 302) are required to be writing flag courses.**
   • All First-Year Signature Courses (TC 302) must meet the Signature Course requirements outlined by the School of Undergraduate Studies,***
4) A brief biography of yourself including awards, publications, academic areas of interest, non-academic interests/hobbies.

*Please keep in mind that your proposal should convey a sense of why the course would be of interest to students. It helps to put your topic in the context of a larger intellectual landscape. This is especially important for topics that might be unfamiliar to most students.*

*Flags: [http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/core/flags](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/core/flags)*
**Writing Flag Requirements: [http://ugs.utexas.edu/flags/faculty-resources/criteria/writing](http://ugs.utexas.edu/flags/faculty-resources/criteria/writing)*
***Signature Course Essentials: [http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/essentials](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/essentials)*