

29 Aug 2019

Meeting with Robert Price

Dear Rip,

We were glad to have the opportunity to meet with you and discuss your course proposal for OLLI Winter 2020 term. This letter will summarize some of the important points of our discussion, so that we are all of the same understanding about the various topics we covered. Our purpose is to help you refine the planning and course proposal, especially with attention to aspects that are important to the OLLI students and the purpose of the Ashland OLLI program. We wanted to point out places that might need special attention in that development effort.

Our understanding of the course you proposed could be summarized as follows:

“An Approach to Understanding Quantum Mechanics”

This brief statement describes what you plan to cover in the class. In specific, you described a primary goal of the course is to question assumptions about scientific knowledge, especially as this applies to those made in Quantum Mechanics over the past one hundred years.

You have obviously spent a long professional career thinking about, researching and teaching this topic. In considering how to best bring some of that expertise to the OLLI program, we made several suggestions.

1. Spend some time trying to focus and simplify your course and catalogue description. You identified your target student as someone who has not necessarily had a deep background in the sciences. Therefore, the course needs to be tailored to that audience. A few well-chosen sentences in the catalogue “message” should convey the course in a way that the lay student can understand. That work of simplification is actually quite a challenge when the body of knowledge is great. The goals of an OLLI student in taking a class is quite different from those of a university student.
2. A very helpful part of your process would be to work on developing a course outline that is strict and economical. You mentioned that you might solicit help from current OLLI instructors, and we encourage that option - but only once you have more closely defined what you want to cover. One of the observations in the appraisals of your previous OLLI course was a perception of your difficulty staying “on topic”. Working from a well-defined outline plan for each session is a good way to maintain that focus.
3. Planning ten weeks for a new course is not usually recommended for several reasons. Even though you have enough material that you could cover, we strongly suggest you consider starting with a 6 to 7- week class schedule. This means you will need to selectively plan for covering only a part of all you could discuss - a challenge for every OLLI instructor in their course development. Once again, think about the prospective student. Many of us are reluctant to commit to the longer classes for a variety of reasons. Think about starting “smaller” and making a stronger impact in what you do cover. It is important for instructors to remember that the OLLI students are looking for a positive learning experience, not an academic degree.
4. Class size should reflect your desire for good discussion opportunities. We commented that a limit of 15-20 students is probably an ideal group for the depth of discussion you would like to elicit.
5. You suggested that given your desire to work on more refinement of the course, we would withdraw the proposal for the Winter '20 term, and that has been done. This will give you time to consider how you wish to modify the course and proposal.

We appreciate the time you are devoting to this course, and hope our discussion was helpful. Of course, we are available for questions, and want to continue communication with you as you proceed.

Sincerely,

Priscilla Arnold

cc: Copied to Curriculum Committee Co-Chairs  
Sara Brown  
Susan Stitham

I processed an attached Word document's text through T<sub>E</sub>X/L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X to produce this .pdf.