

Carolina!

weird science

Strange classes entice honors students

By SHAYLA STUTTS
Staff Writer

When students attend college for the first time and plan a schedule, their agenda includes courses with obvious objectives: history, math, English and maybe University 101. In some majors, it's at least two years before a student actually explores his major in depth.

For those students who haven't passed the two-year mark and are bored with the rigor of classes, or for those who have begun more serious studies as upperclassmen and are still not challenged, college academic life may lose its spice.

Unique courses for more curious students are offered by the USC Honors College. Interested students should inquire about the academic requirements if they desire acceptance to the Honors College.

One class that emerged from numerous student requests is Native American Spirituality, which explores the tribal histories and customs of the Hopi, Cherokee, Apache and Lakota nations, with special attention to their tribal spiritual pathways.

Journalism senior Svetozar Postic took Native American Spirituality in its premiere at USC this past semester along with 15 other students.

"I always felt the Native American Indians have a lot of spiritual power," Postic said. "The class was a lot more experiential than I thought it would be."

Students participated in sweat-lodge ceremonies held at a farm in Blythewood. Their shamanic journeys were guided by medicine man/Professor Kenneth Trogon. These journeys included four 20- to 30-minute rounds of chanting, praying and profusely sweating inside

the lodge. The heat is increased by pouring water over 32 stones placed in a metal barrel in the middle of the lodge, similar to a sauna. The ceremonial lodge, about 10 feet in diameter, is made out of wooden sticks covered in canvas.

"The Indians used the sweat lodge before every important event like Vision Quest and related rites of passage to purify their bodies," Postic said.

Lloyd Raleigh, a Baccalaureus senior, also took the class. "I was interested in the Native American Indians," he said. "It was a positive experience. We were immersed in a culture."

A student doesn't have to participate in the sweat-lodge ceremonies in order to receive a grade. The ceremonies may be in conflict with a student's religious beliefs.

"The idea is that everything is intertwined," Raleigh said. "We all share the same Earth and the same God."

During the ceremony, the professor induces an altered state of consciousness, or altered brain patterns, through beating a drum 200 beats per minute. This method is known as psychotherapy. "Spirit helpers" are also contacted to help someone in need.

"The spirit helpers contacted during the ceremony have a Christian counterpart: angels," Postic said. "Such ceremonies were a way of life for the Indians."

Not only ways of life, but factors surrounding suicide are discussed in Suicide and Literature, another unique course taught for the first time this semester. Suicide factors include depression, hopelessness, alcoholism and substance abuse, as



Patrick Holland/The Gamecock

well as other mental disorders.

Professor Ron Maris said, "The impetus of the course is my own interest in the subject. The subject is presented through the literature of Sylvia Plath, William Shakespeare, Albert Camus, William Styron and others. We also discuss what churches have to say about a person's right to take their own life, especially in light of the Kevorkian suicides."

Each student keeps a journal on suicide, writes a suicide note, does an exercise on the role of humor in suicide and reports on one suicide case history.

Steven Burritt, a broadcasting junior, said, "It's been interesting. Professor Maris does a good job of interjecting humor into the course, surprising as that may be." Burritt plans on working with high school and middle school children with drug problems.

Classes dealing with spirituality

and death have proven popular to students. William Mould, dean of the Honors College, said, "I like to keep things alive and hopping in the areas of student interest, especially areas which surprise the students. Students often think they hate a subject, then they take a stimulating class and return a year later glad they took it."

Mould said students with technical-oriented majors often take courses unrelated to their specified career. For example, in the Native American Spirituality class, there is a political science major, a chemistry major and a biology/pre-med major, among others. This proves that well-rounded student aspirations are academically healthy.

"We shouldn't stereotype people," Mould said. "It is delightful to see students exploring beyond their set majors. It is exciting when a student goes beyond the norm. This is when learning truly takes place."

New year, new habits

By JENNY McINTYRE

What was your New Year's resolution? Was it to quit smoking? Exercise more? Eat healthier? Lose weight?

So, have you started? If you're one of those people who make resolutions only to break them a week or two later or never start them at all, you're not alone. Most people find themselves struggling with New Year's resolutions sooner or later...usually sooner.

The following suggestions can serve as guidelines for determining reasonable goals and help you on your way to achieving the ultimate you.

■ Start with a list of why you want to do this.

This serves two functions: to get you motivated at the beginning and to keep you motivated when things don't seem as promising. You may find that a few weeks into your program, you may be feeling a little burned out. A quick read over your list is a great pick-me-up.

■ Be clear about what you want to achieve.

Rather than just saying "I want to quit smoking," give yourself a road map for success. Be specific about your goals. If you want to quit smoking, great! That is your major goal. Now write subgoals. Exactly how are you going to quit? Set a quit date, find alternative activities, and write them down. This gives you a plan to work from and makes you really think about all that is involved in your goal.

■ Set realistic goals.

Nothing is more discouraging than immediate failure, yet many people set themselves up for failure by setting unrealistic goals. If you've never even jogged around the block before, you are probably not going to win this year's Carolina Marathon, but a lot of people expect miracles such as this from themselves. They set their goals too high and expect too much too quickly.

Take exercise, for example. Joe is a non-exerciser who decides he wants to take up running. He gets the gear, gets all psyched up and decides to start running three miles

a day, seven days a week. I give him two days before he gets either injured or fed up with feeling like he spent the night in a torture rack.

John (Joe's twin brother) also wants to start running, but he sets his goals a little lower. The first couple of weeks, he goes out for 20 to 30 minutes every other day, alternating walking and jogging. In the following weeks, he gradually adds more running time and eventually achieves reaches his goal of running in the Copper River Bridge Run.

■ Reward yourself.

Changing habits takes a long time, and reaching your final goal may take even longer. It's helpful to reward yourself for achieving your mini-goal with something that's important to you. For the beginning exerciser, maybe something that will be beneficial to the ultimate goal, such as some sports equipment

■ Don't beat yourself up.

Everyone makes mistakes, including slipping up on a behavior-change plan. You don't have to be perfect to reach your goal; you just need to make the better choices most of the time. Take a step back, look at what didn't go as planned and figure out what to do about it next time. RELAX! (Nuff said.)

■ Use your resources.

USC has a wealth of resources. Campus Recreation sponsors aerobic classes throughout the week, and the PE Center has much to offer for the indoor and outdoor athlete. The Open Door Drop-In Center provides peer counseling on a variety of health issues, including an eight-week weight-loss program. The Counseling and Human Development Center offers one-on-one counseling as well as classes on reducing stress and other personal development issues.

Best of luck, don't give up, and have a healthy day!

Jenny McIntyre is a graduate assistant with Health & Wellness Programs in the Thomson Student Health Center.

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