

## **Admissions talk**

### **I.] History and Philosophy of the “Core Curriculum”**

A.) Unclear when it started. Not just to me

Hutchins in 1920s & 30s. But also predecessors

There have been many different “philosophies” about the core—at least as they amount to particular views

General education is a practice here. People learn it by doing it.

Natural Sciences, Civilizations, Humanities, Social Sciences

B.) Many changes in the content and identity of Social Science courses over time

Classics & SCS—continuity, more or less

PIR a bastard

Mind & SSI: Clientalistic courses

C.) Common characteristics over time

Staff courses—faculty led, interdisciplinary, graduate student training

Tensions between the interests of scholarly debate and the aims of general education

Pre-specialization courses. Non-disciplinary

Courses educate the faculty and graduate students

## **II.] Old Idea/ Still good on many levels**

A.) Problems posed by contemporary high school education in the United States that General Education still addresses extremely well.

Emphasis on creativity at the expense of rigor and analysis

AP tests: modular knowledge, Wikipedia knowledge. The world as the answer to a multiple choice question

B.) Even when they come from the very best schools, many students still lack

critical reasoning ability;

critical reading skills;

ability to write in a concise, persuasive and orderly manner

## **III.] PIR as Illustration. Three Goals in Core Teaching in PIR:**

A.) critical reading, writing, oral argument

Reading with charity

Criticism with respect

This is liberal education/ liberal learning

B.) Introduction to a domain of learning.

The very idea of social, political and economic analysis.

PIR: Liberalism and modernity.

Basic categories (market, individual, state, culture, society) ,

Central debates (nature, history, power, autonomy, freedom, liberty, equality),

A bit about science (logic, argument, explanation, evidence, objectivity)

Call this General Education

C.) Normative commitment to the cultivation of democratic political norms

Development of citizenship capacities: argument, critical analysis,

Capacity to address normative disagreements on respectful and rational terms

Illustrate through practice the possibility that disagreements can be fruitful and that one can become better, even while remaining different and in disagreement, through charitable reflection of another's position.

Learn about yourself through the encounter with another

Dialectic of recognition

Collective problem solving

Driver of innovation through the dissection and recomposition of taken for granted

This is not a liberal or conservative position; nor is it democratic or republican position.

It is a democratic position,

But, as I understand it in practice here at the University of Chicago, it is also the position of General Education.