

Wising-up: designing a course for the future –Cog Science 301/401

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Wising-up is a transdisciplinary, intergenerational course with a double meaning in its subtitle “designing a course for the future.” It is both a course planned for fall 2019 and a course trajectory towards the future for the university, its larger community, and in fact ambitiously the world. The seed started with an inaugural university seminar entitled “Wisdom: an introduction” as part of the beginning of SAGES in 2003. Hence, the seed was a course that is now sprouting (a sprouting seed) and the flourishing arboreal long-term goal is university transformation.

Through the Cognitive Science Department, Cleveland Brain Health Initiative, Siegal Lifelong Learning Program at Case Western Reserve University, community organizations such as Judson Smart Living and University Circle museum, and Intergenerational Schools locally and internationally, we have been co-designing a course to enable learners of all ages to think and value deeply and critically about the future of human beings and other life forms. We have been enjoying the effort to walk our talk in the planning process by celebrating openness of thought, diversity of values, and action in community.

Our planning process builds on a previously course entitled Wisdom: an introduction offered through the SAGES University Seminar Series in 2003 and a community charrette to explore the idea of this course held in 2017 at the Global Center for Health Innovation. We have learned that wisdom maybe better viewed as a relationship-based aspirational process, rather than an achievable final state. The tentative short-hand title of the course Wising up signals a focus on evolutionary processes with playful/humorous intention. Journaling, experiential and service learning will be key components.

Academic topics (and hence corresponding collaborating academic units at Case and perhaps elsewhere) would include enhancing brain and cognitive health (clinical cognitive neuroscience), deepening value conversations about social and environmental justice (humanities, philosophy and especially ethics and bioethics), reinventing “positive” aging (gerontology/geriatrics), encouraging intergenerational learning (developmental science perspectives), integrating science and art (museums), and environmental literacy (ecology and “natural” spaces). We will explore the idea of the Anthropocene, even as we think critically about the nature of that concept. We will celebrate the mission of the intergenerational schools to develop life-long learners and spirited citizens. The passion and joy of learning as well as the importance of a purposeful life inspire us.