

Dear Academic Senate of UCSC,

I was very disturbed to hear about recent discussions regarding limiting the Stevenson Core Course. The Stevenson Core Course is an opportunity for students to think critically, engage in discussion with their peers, and be challenged both philosophically and academically.

I remember my core courses fondly. Both quarters of the course had challenging readings, engaged discussion, and thoughtful critique of my work. My two professors of the second quarter, both undergraduate seniors, provided me with such valuable feedback that they inspired me to become a teachers assistant and grader later in my undergraduate career, which was deeply rewarding.

The readings are also very important. Many students don't have any formal knowledge about the Quran, the Bhagavad Gita, or other religious and philosophical texts. This exposure in a small class setting helps students make sense of the texts and fosters understanding. In this time of fake news and threats to religious and personal freedom, I think it's important that students get this exposure and that they have a group of peers to discuss it with. I have had many discussions with people who don't have that kind of exposure, and it has been to the detriment to their personal and political outlook on life.

Having spoken to students of other colleges at UCSC, I have learned that the Stevenson College Core Course is much more memorable and valuable than that of other colleges. And I can tell you first hand that lectures can be ignored and slept through, while small classes cannot.

If you want an educated and critical thinking class body, keep the Stevenson Core Course as it is (and expand core courses at the other colleges). It is a positive differentiator for UCSC and supports both liberal arts and STEM curriculum. Even UCSC's claim to being sustainable is being cannibalized by schools with larger budgets, but the most pressing issue in today's workforce is critical thinking. Let's not deprive UCSC students of that.

Thank you,

Alex Sassoon, Stevenson Class '11