

As suburbs change, so do 'short courses'

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By Tim Richard
staff writer

Someone writing the history of suburbia should save the "short course" schedules of Oakland Community College. They catalog the shifting interests of adults, both in their economic and leisure interests.

Up are business and real estate. Language courses are growing with the interest in ethnic "roots" and international trade.

Down are arts, crafts and general cooking. So are the "mind" courses like yoga and transactional analysis, along with support for divorce and photography.

"We've been criticized that the non-credit short courses cut into enrollment for credit courses," said George Cartsonis, college relations director who formerly ran the short course program at the southeast campus system. "But they (short courses) have turned into a major recruiting device because they offer a non-threatening exposure to college, for women particularly."

"MANY THINGS start as non-credit courses and become credit courses," said Charles Yeramian, dean of student services at the Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills.

Classic example: microcomputer courses, which is now part of the credit curriculum.

Second classic example: the Business and Professional Institute (BPI), an outgrowth of the short course program, which corporations now hire to train employees.

There are many names for the program: non-credit, continuing edu-

cation, community service and short courses. In general, the programs don't offer regular college credit (although some offer professional people "continuing education units"). They last only 5-7 sessions rather than a three-month term.

At least eight people must sign up before a course will be offered. Tuitions support the program, which is run as a break-even operation. Often OCC administrators make what Cartsonis calls "horseback judgments" of whether a course will succeed.

AT ORCHARD Ridge, the largest of OCC's five campuses with a credit enrollment of 7,000, short courses draw 4,500 additional people a year — 1,400 or more in each of three semesters, Yeramian said.

"About 500 are repeaters (people taking two or more courses a year)," he said.

They come to Orchard Ridge not only from western Oakland County and neighboring Livonia, where the brochure is sent, but from Algonac on the east, Ecorse on the south, Bridgeport (near Saginaw) on the north, Fowlerville and Lansing on the west, Yeramian said.

This semester's registration dates are May 2-6 during daytime hours and May 2-6 in evening (6-8 p.m.) hours. Brochures are available by calling the campus at 471-7520 during business hours.

WHAT WILL a social historian of the '80s learn by perusing the current short course list and enrollment numbers? Yeramian and Diana Pipa, administrative secretary and

coordinator, ran through the printouts and said:

• Business — stocks are always popular; mutual funds and tax savings are growing; real estate investments and starting your own business draw 30 to 40 every session. The BPI alone will enroll 400 of the 1,400 students.

• Fitness — 200 will sign up for swimming, aerobic dance, camping, karate, kayaking and scuba diving.

• Dance — the professional Harbinger Dance Co. is a resident professional troupe. It will draw 125 to ballet, tap, jazz and modern dance for teenagers and adults.

• English Language Institute — It teaches English as a second language to the foreign-born, many of

whom come with relatives. Blocs of Arabic and Chaldean people are drawn. They run from age 18 to 30 or 35.

• Motorcycle safety — also offered at Auburn Hills, it's an OCC perennial, drawing 200.

• Foreign languages — Italian and Japanese came on strong in the early '80s. Chinese, Russian, Swedish and Arabic have come along. Orchard Ridge is working on offering Finnish. (Credit courses are offered in Spanish, French and German.)

• General interest — 500 sign up for astrology, assertiveness, communications, psychology and a host of others.

AN INSTRUCTOR who is popular

may have a following.

Yeramian cited Marvin Rich, board chairman of Majestic Properties, Inc., who draws 50-125 to his real estate investing course; William C. Kenner, a physical therapist who teaches acupuncture; and Georgina Cascardo, who teaches Italian.

"People call and ask when she's teaching," said Yeramian of Cascardo's courses. (A new batch of Italian courses is coming in the fall cata-

log.)

Some individual courses have an unexplained popularity, Yeramian said. A Civil War course drew 20 and will be offered again. The single life drew 38 to a series of lectures. Building your own home drew 37 in fall, the first time it was offered, and 76 in the winter.

Cartsonis said the surest survey of a course or teacher's popularity is the attendance sheet.

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