

Weekend Seminars: Opportunities for Fun and Extra Income

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Not too long after I was hired, one of my colleagues told me about weekend seminars, something I had not seen at any of the stateside universities I was familiar with.

He told me that if I had a subject that was of particular interest to me and it was something, I believed was worthy of study for university credit, I could submit a proposal to the administration to offer a weekend seminar on the subject. The proposal would require substantiation of the academic value of the subject matter, an explanation of how/where it would fit in to an existing discipline, something about my background that qualified me to expound upon the subject, and suggestions for texts and perhaps additional teaching materials. These seminars provided several benefits for both students and faculty.

For students, they provided the opportunity to pick up single elective credits to accumulate the hours needed for graduation; a chance to learn about something they were interested in, but not quite enough to take a three-semester hour course on the subject, and, in some situations where there may not have been much to do at an isolated installation, an interesting and valuable weekend activity.

For faculty members (as the title of this memoir states), the seminars offered an opportunity to have some fun, earn extra income, and perhaps even more importantly, to talk about things that were of specific interest to them and share some of their expertise.

I had never paid much attention to the weekend seminar offerings since most of them seemed to be in the computer science area which was not my area of expertise. There were a few others, and I decided to investigate them. I discovered there were several seminars in or closely related to my business and management disciplines and that there really was no need for me to “develop” any additional courses. I could simply request to teach the existing courses. Of course, the opportunity to develop one of my own was still there.

One thing I did notice is that some of the more narrowly defined seminars became “proprietary property” so to speak, of the faculty member that originally developed them. They were rarely, if ever, taught by other faculty members as long as the original developer remained with the university. This appeared to be one of the advantages of developing a seminar. I had no problem with that since some of them required specific knowledge and experience that the rest of us probably did not have.

I remember one seminar that I believe was either a sociology or a history offering. If my memory serves me correctly it was simply called "The Sixties" and was in fact, a study of that most turbulent and interesting period in U.S. History.

Having spent the early sixties in the military, and part of the end of the decade on a university campus in the middle of much of the student activism of the day, I thought it would be interesting to see how this seminar was being presented.

I do not remember the name of the individual who developed and taught this seminar, but I do remember attending it one weekend. The faculty member was a somewhat tall slim, gentleman with a beard and long hair, whose demeanor and manner of dress indicated that he was more than likely, on a "specific" side of the political line during that period.

He brought in guest speakers who were able to present differing points of view that had led to some of turbulence of the decade. There was a black couple who were active in the Civil Rights Movement and had participated in several marches. I cannot say with accuracy whether they had marched with Dr. King, but they were clearly deeply embedded in the movement. In total contrast, there was a retired Air Force Colonel who had been a POW in Vietnam, and the instructor himself, who had clearly been a part of the anti-war movement. He also had some interesting videos of events that had taken place in the sixties. What a great seminar weekend that was, well-managed controversy, heated discussion, and stimulation. Personally, I loved it and thought it to be a valuable experience for the military students in attendance who had not personally experienced those turbulent years.

Eventually I requested and was granted, the opportunity to teach several the existing seminars in my own fields. They were often at locations that were too far away (2-3 hours or more) to travel back and forth on Saturday night and Sunday morning and required overnight stays. In those cases, most of the time the area directors were kind enough to authorize billeting for Friday and Saturday night and that allowed my spouse and me to arrive early on Friday and take in some of the local scenery and attractions.

These seminars provided me with many enjoyable weekends and some extra income for several years.

This note would not be complete without thanking Alex Randall for developing the Creative Problem-Solving seminar. I recently learned from reading his memoir submission that he was the faculty member who developed it. I thoroughly enjoyed leading that seminar.

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