

Science Course Tested for Core Curriculum

Fall 2003

Columbia College's Core Curriculum, known for its stability, has in fact changed a great deal over the last 84 years, but this year the faculty will consider what would be one of the Core's most significant changes ever: the introduction of a science course.

The proposed course, "Frontiers of Science," debuted last year with six sample lectures as part of the 2002–2003 Theater of Ideas series at the Miller Theatre.

This fall 350 freshmen, selected at random, have been given the option to participate in a pilot course by the same name. Students who take part will attend 75-minute lectures by such faculty as 1998 Nobel Laureate in Physics Horst Stormer, who is conducting research in nanoscience, and Wallace Broecker, professor of earth and environmental sciences and a National Medal of Science winner for his work in rapid global climate change. The lectures will be paired with small seminars led by faculty including the course's designers—Darcy Kelly, professor of biological sciences, the recent recipient of a four-year \$1 million Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant, and David Helfand, chair of the Department of Astronomy. An evaluation of the pilot course will help the faculty decide whether or not the new science component will be incorporated into the Core Curriculum, according to Kathryn Yatrakis, Columbia College's dean of academic affairs.

The Core, the cornerstone of the undergraduate program at the College, aims to engage all students in considering major achievements in literature, philosophy, history, music, art, and science. If the faculty decides to include a new Core course in science in the curriculum, the course will replace one of three science courses currently required of all students in the College, said Yatrakis, adding that it would "be one of the most important additions to the College's Core since its inception in 1919."



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