

***A Discussion Paper on the Course  
“Seminar on Current Legal Topics”***

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## **Introduction**

Since schools exist to convey to students certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them become contributing member of society, the learning experiences offered to them in their school life is of paramount concern to the government and other organs responsible for education. And one of such concerns may be to regulate the courses that schools deliver to their students. I assume that it is on this, and of course others, objectives that the Justice and Legal System Research Institute (JLSRI) has taken the initiation to standardize the course “seminar on current legal topics”, which forms the subject of this paper.

Seminar on current legal topics can be analogized with comparative law in the sense that it is a method of legal education rather than an area of law in itself. It is one among the different methods of legal education like legal internship, externship, class lecturing, or clinical training. Seminar, as a method of course delivery, is not unique to law. Rather it is also applicable in a number of disciplines other than law like management, economics and the pure sciences.

It, as a method of legal education, provides students a much steeper ladder of opportunity than other methods to know the law and the practice of law. For instance, seminar, being largely interdisciplinary in nature, prepares students not only for possible legal careers but also more importantly makes them informed, effective citizens; and enhances their presentation and debating skills. The starting point of this paper is that the nature of this course is not well understood and developed in our universities-a factor which is important to effectively exploit the multi-dimensional merits of this method of legal study and law teaching. As far as the writer knows, seminar courses are given in the Law Faculty of the Addis Ababa University (I could not say anything about the situation in other universities of the country due to the short period of time available for preparing the paper). And here even by the time it began to be

offered at the undergraduate level in the 2005/2006 academic year, I believe that it was not offered in a way that describes the nature of the course in the sense that it was not offered in accordance with the essence of what a seminar is, what is current and importantly what makes up a legal issue. This paper hence will attempt to give answer to these (fundamental) questions and other issues that need to be addressed.

As to the methodology employed, what I can say is that this paper is almost full of the writer's personal views on the various issues, due to, as you might know there are no materials written explicitly dealing with this subject unlike other law courses. In fact, the course descriptions of some foreign universities selected randomly has been referred to. The points taken here from, however, served me only as starting points for they being only short descriptions of the course in respective universities course syllabi. As stated earlier, I have not tried to look at the experiences of our universities in relation to this course, except sporadic mention of the case in the AAU, due to short period available for preparing this discussion text. Readers therefore enjoy a wider opportunity to comment and criticize this essay for it being too much the result of personal judgment than one supported by relevant literature on the subject and country experiences. This be as it may, nonetheless, the paper is not fruitless. Above all its purpose on the course, as I am informed by persons who contacted me from the JLSRI, is primarily to come up with ideas that will serve as thought provoking for further discussions, writings, and research works on the course, especially in the Ethiopia context.

The organization of this essay proceeds as follows: Part I discusses the significance of seminar courses on current legal topics, while part II describes the nature of seminars on current legal topics. Part III outlines other important considerations in the selection of topics for seminar courses. The issues of the appropriate time and mode of delivery as well as the method of evaluation of seminar courses and the responsibility of various organs in the course offering

is addressed in the Guidelines developed to outline minimum expected standards to be met in offering seminar courses. And lastly there will be a brief conclusion of the ideas raised.

### **I. Significances or objectives of the course**

I believe that it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the nature of something without considering what it is for. And that is why I begin to approach the treatment of the subject from the discussion of the significances or objectives of a seminar course in law. And of course it is better to bring this part first since the guidelines on the method of delivery and assessment of the course as well as the responsible organs in connection with it later will help to illuminate how the course could really advance these objectives.

Following is a summary of the important expected benefits of a seminar. It has to be noted here that the specific objectives of the courses vary depending on the topic of the seminar and the fundamental questions it is designed to address. Despite these specific differences, however, the following points can be commonly stated as objectives of seminar courses.

A seminar course, being largely interdisciplinary in nature and that it considers developing law topics, helps prepare students not only for possible legal careers but more importantly to make them informed, effective citizens who explore unexplored aspects of various areas of law from different perspectives.

A seminar course helps student understand how courts, legislatures, and administrative agencies seek to interpret the law and protect different rights as new technologies and new institutional practices emerge.

The course provides a forum for not only learning the legal rules governing a specific legal issue, say corruption, but for debating the controversial policy questions engendered by that area of law.

When delivered especially in a comparative way, a seminar develops an understanding of how a wide array of disparate legal systems deal with a particular legal problem and demonstrates that there are very different solutions to these problems than those commonly considered in the context of a single legal system.

A seminar course provides students the opportunity to conduct independent legal research on a topic and prepare a written analysis thereon under the supervision of the instructor. And hence it helps students develop individual responsibility, teamwork and effective leadership.

A seminar course provides students opportunities to enhance their presentation and debate skills with regular instructor feedback. It exposes participants not only to cutting edge legal issues but also to professional communication techniques.

It helps students in their preparation for exit exam by broadening and solidifying their knowledge.

It increases the chance of the effectiveness of internships and externships.

It helps law schools to participate in public issues and to create linkage between them and stakeholders.

It provides input for policy makers.

At last, it can be concluded that seminar, as a method of legal education, provides students a much steeper ladder of opportunity than other methods to know the law and the practice of law as well as become effective in their profession. And as stated above, the next topic on the nature of the course could help us notice clearly how a seminar system of academic instruction could in fact advance the attainment of the above mentioned values.

## **II. The nature of seminar courses on current legal topics**

Often times it may be difficult to tell about the nature, function and scope of say “property law”, “family law” or “contract law” without a prior understanding of nature, function and perhaps the history of the subject of the concerned law i.e. property, family or contract, respectively. However, it is noticeable in many law courses that the terms that make up the title of the course, analyzed separately, can somehow define the nature and the scope of the course. Similarly, it is possible to understand the nature of the course “Seminar on Current Legal Topics” through an independent analysis of the three terms that compose the title of the course-“seminar”, “current”, and “legal”.

These terms, especially the first two, are not legal terms in the sense that they are not peculiarly legal concepts unlike terms say “tax exemption” or “tax deduction”, both of which are concepts having no meaning except in relation to particular laws. It is therefore mandatory to look for the meaning of those terms somewhere outside of the law. In this regard, though the dictionary definition of these words is somehow helpful for our purpose, ascertaining the meaning of those terms, particularly the term “current”, would be largely a function of our individual personal judgment; which may make it hardly possible to reach at a consensus.

The starting point of my discussion is that a seminar course on current legal topics has to be cumulatively a “seminar”, “current” and one on a “legal” topic. Let me take and discuss these elements one by one.

## **2.1 Seminar**

As has been stated earlier, seminar is a method of delivery of course just like class lecture is. As such, we need to find out what makes it different from other methods of legal education. Accordingly, I will begin from the definition of the term, though this may not still yield us adequate insight into the nature of the course since it is a term susceptible to different meanings.

From the many web descriptions of the term “seminar”, which etymologically is derived from the Latin word *seminarium*, meaning “seed plot”, we may consider the following as relevant for the purpose of this paper and emphasize on what is common to them. The writer is of the opinion that these common definitional elements can describe the term as it is used in the context of “seminar on current legal topics.”

- “A class that has a group discussion format rather than a lecture format.”
- “Lecture and dialogue allowing participants to share experiences in a particular field under the guidance of an expert discussion leader.”
- “Seminar is a meeting that calls for a high degree of participation; primarily used for training purposes.”
- “It is a course offered for a small group of advanced students.”
- “A seminar engages a small group of students in advanced study concentrated on each student’s original research or important recent advancements in a field. Seminars are organized under the direction of a faculty member.”
- “An educational experience in which a faculty member directs students in discussions involving the development and/or review of concepts which are applied to practical situations.”
- “A form of small group instruction, combining independent research and class discussion under the guidance of a professor, usually open to undergraduate seniors and graduate students.”
- “A small class composed of advanced students in which discussion of the material to be covered in the courses replaces the lecture format.”
- “A seminar is a group of students who meet to discuss a subject with a tutor; usually someone (or a group) prepares a paper for discussion and shares the research they have done and their opinions on the subject. Seminars are more interactive than a lecture and are often student led.”

- “Seminar is, generally, a form of academic instruction, either at a university or offered by a commercial or professional organization. It has the function of bringing together small groups for recurring meetings, focusing each time on some particular subject, in which everyone present is requested to actively participate. This is often accomplished through an ongoing Socratic dialogue with a seminar leader or instructor, or through a more formal presentation of research.”

Moreover, the Oxford dictionary tells us that a seminar is “a small class at a university, etc for discussion and research; a class meeting for systematic study under the direction of a specified person.”

It may be possible for us to identify the elements common to all or many of those definitions. The definitions exhibit general similarity on the meaning of the term “seminar” concerning the respective roles of the instructor and of students, the nature of the subject to be covered, the target group, the mode of delivery and the purpose of the course.

First, the definitions tell us commonly that seminar is basically a training-style course and hence is different from a lecture. We can also note that seminar is basically conducted through research than class discussions.

Second the different definitions tell us that the targets of seminar courses are primary senior or advanced students.

Thirdly, we can notice that seminar courses highly demand the active participation of students, and as a result the role of the students in such course is greater while the lecturer is usually limited to guidance and supervision functions.

Fourthly, they show us that seminar courses are normally intended for small number of students and as an experience and knowledge-sharing forum among them.

Fifthly, it is noticeable in the above definitions that seminar courses primarily focus on a particular subject.

And sixth, a seminar course provides not only an intellectual but also a practical exploration of the law and the legal profession.

Thus, we may argue that a seminar course should exhibit a significant number of the above definitional elements of the term since it is in this sense that its difference from a lecture system of academic instruction will come clearly visible.

## **2.2. Current**

Since one of the important purposes of seminar is to inform students about current developments in different areas of law, it is a must that the topic we select is “current”. Yet, as I have tried to point out above, this term is more open to contention than the terms “legal” and “seminar”. In the case of the term “legal”, for instance, it is possible to say something about it by referring to the term “law” and in the case of the word “seminar” it is a bit easier to find dictionary definitions for it on which many, if not all, of us may agree.

The writer has not found a definition for the term “current” and of course the terms “seminar” or “legal”, in the course descriptions of the universities referred to, unlike their other courses like “contract” or “international trade” law. In many of them, the conception of the term “current”, in the selection of the topics for their seminar courses, seems to mean “contemporary”. However, this is no more than a substitution of a word by another word, which is not really much helpful in understanding the nature of what is “current”.

Assume the following as a list of topics selected by designers of seminar course at one of our universities in this academic year:

- A. The economic impacts of Ethiopia's accession to the World Trade Organization.
- B. The side effects of Ethiopian's new legislation governing Non Governmental Organization's and Civic Associations.
- C. Judicial independence in Ethiopia
- D. The validity of the colonial agreements over the Nile
- E. The legality of International Criminal Court's attempt to arrest Sudan's president
- F. The powers and functions of local governments in Ethiopia

Which of the above topics in your view are "current"? Well, as I said earlier it would be difficult to expect the same answer to this question. One may argue that topic "A" is current since it points out a work in progress, while another may argue that topic "B" is current since the law (governing NGOs and CAs in Ethiopia) is enacted two month before. Our choice of these topics as "current", without doubt, is primarily based on time factor, in the sense that it is based in the first place on the "contemporary" nature of the topics. The same could be the case in our selection of the topic under "E". In this sense, it is difficult to choose the topics under "C", "D", and "F" as "current" since they are not contemporary i.e. they are not recent in their time dimension. Specifically, the question of judicial independence in Ethiopia has been with us long before, the colonial agreements over the Nile have been concluded and been challenged for long, the powers and duties of local governments has been defined in the 1994 Constitution and other laws, which are not recent in the "contemporariness" standard. So does this mean that the topics under "C", "D", and "F" do not qualify as (good) topics for a seminar course?

Putting yourselves in the position of a student who is required to take a seminar course, which one of the two category of topics i.e. A, B, and E (which

many of us can regard as current in the sense of being contemporary) on the one hand, and C, D, and F (which in the above sense, many of us may, I suppose, regard as not current) on the other hand, can attract you more to know about the topic? Here again individual preferences are natural expectations. The point I want to make, however, is that attractiveness of a topic, in addition to the time factor, is an important consideration in regarding it as current. By attractiveness again what I mean is that the topic should be interesting in the sense that it should inspire students desire to read, to argue, to research, and then to know more about it. Let me take the opportunity to explain this idea in some detail below.

The topic under “A” can be considered as current not solely because it is about a present situation but also because, I argue, it is interesting when we see it from the perspective of a least-developed country. The same is true for topic “B”: it is current not only because the legislation is enacted two months before but also because it interesting to see why a country like Ethiopia which strongly needs the development partnership of NGOs and CAs come up with a law which is considered as restrictive by many. Moreover, topic “E” can be regarded as current not solely because the ICC’s attempt to arrest Sudan’s president is started last year but because it is also interesting to see that it is the first of its kind to prosecute an acting president.

Moreover, a topic which many not be current on the face of it when measured by the time factor may be current due to the contemporary nature of what it is going to address. For instance, the topic under “D” can be current if what it purports to cover is about the 2002 Nile Basin Initiative Act and the subsequent developments in relation to it like the problem of food security vis-à-vis the increase in Ethiopia’s population.

By way of conclusion, thus, it can be said that the selection of topics for seminar courses as “current” shall not be solely with the conception of this

term based on the time dimension of the topic but it shall also take into account the topic's nature of being "interesting". This, however, is without forgetting that what is "current" is more likely to be "interesting" and what is interesting is more likely to be what is "current". And hence, both types of topics which I call "time-sensitive" i.e. that are recent (like the ones under A, B, and E in the above example) and "evolving topics" that persist long along with time changes (like those under C, D, and F above) can be used as topics for seminar courses in law.

### **2.3. Legal**

The third important aspect of "seminar on current legal topics" is that the seminar should be on a "legal" issue. Though depending on the context in which we use the term "legal" it may mean different things, it is easier to define it compared to the other elements of the course that have been discussed above. According to the Blacks Law Dictionary, the use of term "legal" in such expressions as a legal obligation, a legal standard, a legal procedure, a legal claim or a legal trade means something "permitted by, in conformity with, falling within the province of law. For the purpose of this essay, the writer would like to pick up the expression "falling within the province of or relating to law" as more relevant to describe the term "legal" in the context we are using it. And hence, seminar courses should be on topic that fall within the province of or are related to law.

Despite the fact that this dictionary meaning of the term is clear, admittedly it is practically still open to contention for we all may not agree on what can be regarded as "falling within or is related to law." It is particularly difficult to determine how much should a topic be related to the discipline of law in order for it to qualify as a legal topic. Nevertheless, we might still face instances of topics that are not related or are related only remotely to law, let alone that they don't fall within the subject of law; and as a result of which that can be excluded easily from being topics for a seminar course in law.

Let me cite here a topic addressed at a seminar course, entitled by the time as “senior seminar/current legal topics”, for regular law students of the law faculty of AAU in the 2005/06 academic year. And one of the classes for this course was conducted in the form of a debate and/or discussion between representatives from the ruling party and of an opposition party. In correctly recall that the theme of the debate or discussion was purely on broad policy matters. Though some points were said by the contenders about the election process (I mean the 2005 election), I would surely say that they were not in anyway about the country’s electoral law or explicitly constitutional law.

The point here is that, topics of the above type can not be (good) topics for seminar courses in law for they do not fall within the ambit of law nor are related to law in a direct or at least in a significantly closer manner. And, generally, thus the writer holds that the topics to be included in a seminar course syllabus have to be current topics of interest to law in the sense of being falling within the discipline of law or at least being related to it.

### **III. Other considerations in designing seminar courses**

Apart from the key requirements that a seminar course being “current” and “legal”, the following points are in my view important factors that need to taken in to account in designing a seminar course.

a) What is our justification for taking up the time of our students? i.e. what is the purpose of the seminar? We have to be very clear on this. How will the department benefit? How will students benefit? What is the relevance of the seminar to the department’s goals, objectives and strategies?

b) What is the learning outcome expected of students? What will students learn as a result of a topic’s presentation and discussion? How does it relate to the

department's goals, objectives and strategy? In this line, it is important to see that the evaluation methods employed can really measure whether or not students have acquired these skills since the course aims at developing students' writing, presenting and debating skills. Moreover, the instructor has to be flexible in his/her approach to the course. For example, s/he can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the course, and of course, minimize the burden on him/her through dividing students in to appropriate number of groups if the class size is difficult to manage with the caution that writing assignments may involve the free-rider problem when they are given in groups and thinking of the need for incorporating exams in the ways of assessment may help to minimize this risk and see that points do not go to undeserving students.

c) In addition to the problem of "what is it that you want students to learn?" please consider the point "how can you, as course administrator or instructor, help them to know the topic", And how can you, as a member of a course coordinator or instructor develop students' interest in the seminar?

d) Try to use the seminar as a forum to cover issues which in your view can not be covered by the core courses i.e. by the normal classes. An instructor at the normal classes may not or may not adequately address draft laws, new amendments to existing laws, or unconventional court decisions related to the subject in his/her classes though he/she might mention the fact and possibly say something about it. Seminar, however, as a forum for introducing students with current developments in the law and its practice, can be used more appropriately to thoroughly, cover these issues.

Addressing the above points will enable us to prepare an interesting and effective seminar as measured by the objectives of a seminar course stipulated before.

## **Conclusion**

Legal scholarship must be related to legal education, so that teaching does not reflect only one aspect of legal training whether it be class lecturing or clinical training. And seminar is one way of forging a relationship between legal scholarship and legal education. Seminar courses on current issues in law provide students opportunities and skills to know the law and its practice better than other ways. They help students to acquaint with new developments in these areas better than other laws since articles and books dealing with these developments often appear only much later. A seminar course protects students from being shallow and mechanistic in their legal reasoning since it exposes them to a true synthesis of law and other disciplines and areas of learning.

There are, nonetheless, certain points that must be sufficiently addressed while attempting to introduce this course in school curriculum. The most important of these is to define the nature, scope, method of assessment, and mode of delivery of the course as well as the role of different organs in relation to the course. In this respect it has been said that the terms that make up the title of the course are self-defining of the course though they themselves are difficult to describe. Some of them are not legal terms, while others are susceptible to different definitions. Anyway, we need to see that our seminar course is 1) really “seminar” 2) it is on a current issue, and that 3) it is on a legal issue.

First the seminar course we purport to offer has to exhibit largely the feature of a seminar rather than other method of academic instruction, especially that of class lecturing. It should be one focused on a particular subject then a general area of law, be used to cover topics that otherwise can not be caught by formal classes, must be research-oriented, shall normally targets senior students and so forth. Secondly, the seminar should be on a current issue surrounding the law and its practice. This term, wide open to differences of option, has been explained to mean either a time sensitive issue or an evolving topic. Thirdly,

the topics to be covered in a seminar shall be within the discipline of law or are (significantly) related to law in one way or another.

In addition to the above considerations, the writer believes that seminar courses on current legal topics in their nature demand that they be administered by academics who possess various skills and abilities in addition to academic excellence, individuals who better understand the overall significance and specific objectives of the course, and who are knowledgeable in other fields in addition to law. And we can expect to get all these elements when the course is administered by a committee than by a single instructor. To mean that we have individuals with different abilities and skills will ultimately enable us to enhance the effectiveness of the courses since in this committee we can have individuals who can:

- a. select proper topics for seminars
- b. select and assign competent instructors for each seminar
- c. ensure the appropriate modes of delivery for the courses
- d. professionally determine the time and year that is appropriate for the courses
- e. can upkeep the very essence of the courses.

It might be the case that a subject selected as deserving to be supplemented by a seminar course need the taking by a student of a per-requisite course. And one of the functions of this committee will be to set out requisite course(s), if any, for the taking of a seminar course. This is especially true where the student has opted out a course classified by the faculty as elective one but found to be important or introductory to the subject on which the seminar course is prepared. In this case, the Committee may decide that only students who have taken the pre-requisite course are eligible to take the seminar course. And this may result in the reduction of the 30-40 class-student ratio below this. As far as the class-student ratio is concerned, the Committee may, moreover, reduce or increase this ratio taking into account the human and

material resources as well as the physical facilities of the respective faculties/ universities. The number of students, rooms and instructors each faculty has as well as the faculty's capacity to publish and distribute reading materials to students are important determinants in this regard. All these can help to maintain the very definition and nature of the term "seminar", which as explained in the core text means a class of small number of students.

At last, I would like to confess that the paper is a kind of a leap to the "ought" without first showing to the reader what the "is" in the context of the universities in this country. But still I claim that the benefits of this course are not yet adequately exploited by our universities. Many of them, according to my informal pieces of information, have not yet offered such a course and in the ones already offering the course, it is not being offered in a developed and structured manner i.e. in a way that reflect the nature of the course. Thus, developing and structuring the course needs the contribution of all of us.

And hence, the following guidelines are developed to serve as a starting point for further discussions on various issues in connection with the offering of the course like the organs that need to play a role in the offering of the course, their individual functions, and the mode of delivery and assessment of the course.

# **Guidelines on the Administration of the Course “Seminar on Current Legal Topics”**

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2009

## **Preamble**

Where as seminar course on current legal topics can enhance the effectiveness of law schools in producing competent and multidisciplinary legal professions,

Where as the significances of the course are not currently exploited by many of our universities/law schools since they do not offer the course,

Whereas in the universities that have already been offering the course, it is not offered in a manner that reflects the nature and objectives of the course,

Since the advantages of the course can best be exploited if its offering is guided by guidelines governing the mode of delivery and evaluation of the course as well as the roles of various stakeholders,

Whereas it is recommendable to standardize the administration of the course, which is the one of the objectives of the New National Law Curriculum,

Now therefore, the following guidelines, suggesting minimum standards to be observed in relation to seminar courses on current legal topics, are developed.

## **1. Scope**

These guidelines are meant to apply to all law schools/departments in Ethiopia.

## **2. Definition**

- 2.1. “Current topic” shall mean a topic that is time sensitive as well as time evolving or attractive.
- 2.2. “Legal topic” shall mean a topic which is within the field of law or one related to law.
- 2.3. “Seminar” shall mean a course offered to a small group of students in a class discussion format and research.

## **3. Objectives of the course**

The offering of the course “seminar on current legal topics” has the objectives of preparing students not only for possible legal careers but also making them informed and effective citizens who explore unexplored aspects of various areas of law from different perspectives as well as providing them a forum for not only learning the legal rules governing a specific legal issue but also for debating the controversial policy questions engendered by that area of law and thereby helping them develop professional communication techniques, individual responsibility, teamwork and effective leadership.

## **4. Obligations of Law Schools**

- 4.1 All law schools shall designate a committee from among their academic staff (here in after named Course Administering/Coordinating Committee or simply as Committee) which will carry out the task of coordinating and administering seminar courses in the schools.
- 4.2 They shall allocate adequate time, as proposed by the Committee, for the identified seminar courses and see that it is used effectively.

- 4.3 They shall arrange adequate number of rooms to effectuate the class-student ration proposed by the Committee.
- 4.4 They shall take appropriate steps to facilitate the preparation of reading materials and ensure their adequate accessibility (availability) for students.

## **5. Appointment and composition of the Committee**

- 5.1 Members of the Course Administering Committee shall be elected from among the academic staff by the Faculty Dean of the respective universities. The Committee shall be under the supervision of the Faculty Dean.
- 5.2 In determining the composition of the Committee the Faculty Dean shall take into account such factors as academic competence, experience, and exposure of each academic staff.
- 5.3 The number of members of the Committee shall also be fixed by the Faculty Dean of the respective universities.
- 5.4 In determine the number of members of the Committee the Faculty Dean shall take in to account the number of seminars planned to be given in the faculty and its number of students, and the faculty's number of academic staff.
- 5.4 Notwithstanding the above provisions, the number of members of the Committee may not be less than three.

## **6. Meetings, quorum and voting procedure**

- 6.1 The Committee shall hold ordinary and extraordinary meetings.
- 6.2 Decision in the Committee shall be made by a simple majority vote of members present in meetings.
- 6.3 The quorum shall be constituted when a simple majority of members are present.

6.4 The Committee may issue its own bylaws.

## **7. Powers and functions of the Course Administering Committee**

- 7.1 It shall determine the number of seminars to be given taking into account their human and material resources.
- 7.2 It shall assign in due time instructors for the identified seminar topics.
- 7.3 For the purpose of carrying out the above task, it shall strive to set out criteria for selection of instructors for each course. In this respect it may consider, among others such points as competence specialization, and experience.
- 7.4 It shall fix adequate time for the delivery of the selected topics. For this purpose it shall consider the semester total course load and the scope of the subject to be covered by each seminar. It shall select before hand the subjects/topics on which seminars need to be conducted.
- 7.5 It shall determine the class-student ratio for each course.
- 7.6 It shall hear complaints from students in their relation with the instructor and look for solution for them.
- 7.7 It shall see that the instructor has employed proper evaluation and delivery methods.
- 7.8 It shall direct, coordinate and supervise the instructors assigned for seminar courses to see that they have employed proper course delivery and evaluation methods, and that they have effectively used the time allotted for the course.
- 7.9 It shall ensure that each of the contents of the course really reflect the essence of course i.e. that they address a current legal issue.

## **8. Class-Student Ration**

In determining the class-student ration, the Committee shall:

- 8.1 Observe the 30-40 class-student ration stipulated in the Legal Reform Document.
- 8.2 Notwithstanding the above stipulation, the Committee may decrease or increase the 30-40 class-student ratio by setting clear criteria like the taking of a prerequisite course or the material and human resources of the faculty.

## **9. Prerequisite Courses**

The Committee may stipulate one or more prerequisite courses for the taking of a seminar course.

## **10. Determination of number of seminars and subject/topic selection**

### ***10.1 Determination of number of seminars***

In determining the number of seminars to be given in a semester the Committee shall consider:

- a) The human and material resources/capacity as well as the physical facilities of the respective universities, especially those available at the disposal of law faculties.
- b) The number of courses given in a semester and their total credit hours.

### ***10.2 Topic Selection***

10.2.1 Topics for seminar courses may be proposed by students, instructors, or other stakeholders.

10.2.2 In determining the topics on which seminar course are to be prepared, the Committee shall consider the following points in the circumstance of the case:

- a) Topics that reflect the essence of the course i.e. topics that are “current” and “legal.”
- b) Topics that give students knowledge that can make them competent legal professionals locally and internationally.
- c) Topics that address issues that can not be (adequately) raised or covered by the theoretical, practice-oriented, blend or basic law courses.
- d) Topics that reflect national and international developments in the area of law such as draft laws, newly enacted laws, and recently adopted or ratified treaties.
- e) Topics proposed by, if any, students, instructors, or other stakeholders.

10.2.2.1 In addition to the above points,

- a) The Committee shall decide on whether the seminars shall be on topics that are broad or narrow in scope.
- b) Ensure that there is flexibility and diversity in the courses offered from year to year.

## **11. Assignment of Instructors**

11.1 The Committee shall assign competent instructors for each seminar.

11.2 It shall also assign adequate number of instructors for each seminar taking into account the class-student ratio.

11.3 For the purpose of Sub-1 above, the Committee shall set out criteria for the selection of instructors for each seminar. In this respect, the Committee shall consider among others, such points as academic competence, area of specialization, experience, and interdisciplinary character, acquaintance with current developments.

## **12. Time Allocation**

In determining the credit hours that each seminar shall carry the Committee shall consider:

- a) The number of courses and the total course load in the specific semester.
- b) The scope of the subject to be covered by the specific seminar.

### **13. Roles of the course instructor**

An instructor so assigned by the Committee for a seminar course shall:

- 13.1 Determine the contents of the seminar course assigned for him/her, prepare a course outline thereto and distribute same to students.
- 13.2 Approve/ amend/reject the topics proposed by students for their assignments to see that they come up with meritorious topics that fall within the scope of the course.
- 13.3 Put in place effectively the course delivery methods identified in consultation with the Committee and employ news and current awareness tools that to keep students up-to-date with the latest legal developments.
- 13.4 Prepare relevant reading materials for his/her course.
- 13.5 Facilitate the delivery of the course in an effective manner by employing different ways like inviting guest speakers.
- 13.6 Observe the rules of his/her university, and specifically his/her faculty.

### **14. Type and nature of assessment**

- 14.1 Evaluation of students shall be made based on assessment of term papers, reading assignments and their presentation, exam and attendance and class participation.
- 14.2 To the extent possible, the instructor has to include external assessors in evaluating students.
- 14.3 Writing assignments may be given individually or in groups depending on the number of course participants.
- 14.4 Topics for term papers shall be selected by students from within the areas covered by the course in consultation with the instructor and that they shall principally be based on primary data.
- 14.5 In case of group assignments, the instructor has to see that each member of the group has to taken some part in the presentation or alternatively the paper can be presented by a group representative and other group members shall answer questions to be forwarded by other students and the instructor.
- 14.6 The instructor has to see that the exam is comprehensive enough by incorporating questions, from lectures, students' presentations, and reading assignments.

## **15. Percentage of points**

The respective percentage of points to be allotted for each form of evaluation as well as their number (term papers, reading assignments and their oral presentation, exams and attendance and class participation) shall be determined by the instructor, in consultation with students, taking into account the nature of the topic to be covered by the course and the specific significant objective expected to be attained by it and the number of students.

## **16. Modes of Delivery**

16.1 Socratic delivery methods and debating among students on their reading of the reading materials shall be given important place in the delivery of the course.

16.2 Research works, individually or in groups, and their oral presentation in class shall also be employed as a significant method.

16.3 Lecturing by the instructor has to be only supplementary.

## **17. Roles of the Justice and Legal System Research Institute**

In line with its general objective of reforming and standardizing the legal education and law curriculum for law schools in the country, the JLSRI shall strive to:

17.1 Help law schools in making available competent instructors for the seminars through arranging trainings for their staff.

17.2 Identify the problems faced by law schools in relation to offering seminars and look for solutions for them.

17.3 Arrange an annual discussion forum at which law schools can share their problems and good experiences in relation to various issues surrounding seminar courses.

## **ANNEX**

***Discussion Paper on the Course “Seminar on Current Legal  
Topics”  
Yiyayal Mekonnen  
June 2009***

### **Outline**

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## **Introduction**

Since schools exist to convey to students certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them become contributing member of society, the learning experiences offered to them in their school life is of paramount concern to the government and other organs responsible for education. And one of such concerns may be to regulate the courses that schools deliver to their students. I assume that it is on this, and of course others, objectives that the Justice and Legal System Research Institute (JLSRI) has taken the initiation to standardize the course “seminar on current legal topics”, which forms the subject of this paper.

Seminar on current legal topics can be analogized with comparative law in the sense that it is a method of legal education rather than an area of law in itself. It is one among the different methods of legal education like legal internship, externship, class lecturing, or clinical training. Seminar, as a method of course delivery, is not unique to law. Rather it is also applicable in a number of disciplines other than law like management, economics and the pure sciences.

It, as a method of legal education, provides students a much steeper ladder of opportunity than other methods to know the law and the practice of law. For instance, seminar, being largely interdisciplinary in nature, prepares students not only for possible legal careers but also more importantly makes them informed, effective citizens; and enhances their presentation and debating skills. The starting point of this paper is that the nature of this course is not well understood and developed in our universities-a factor which is important to effectively exploit the multi-dimensional merits of this method of legal study and law teaching. As far as the writer knows, seminar courses are given in the Law Faculty of the Addis Ababa University (I could not say anything about the situation in other universities of the country due to the short period of time

available for preparing the paper). And here even by the time it began to be offered at the undergraduate level in the 2005/2006 academic year, I believe that it was not offered in a way that describes the nature of the course in the sense that it was not offered in accordance with the essence of what a seminar is, what is current and importantly what makes up a legal issue. This paper hence will attempt to give answer to these (fundamental) questions and other issues that need to be addressed.

As to the methodology employed, what I can say is that this paper is almost full of the writer's personal views on the various issues, due to, as you might know there are no materials written explicitly dealing with this subject unlike other law courses. In fact, the course descriptions of some foreign universities selected randomly has been referred to. The points taken here from, however, served me only as starting points for they being only short descriptions of the course in respective universities course syllabi. As stated earlier, I have not tried to look at the experiences of our universities in relation to this course, except sporadic mention of the case in the AAU, due to short period available for preparing this discussion text. Readers therefore enjoy a wider opportunity to comment and criticize this essay for it being too much the result of personal judgment than one supported by relevant literature on the subject and country experiences. This be as it may, nonetheless, the paper is not fruitless. Above all its purpose on the course, as I am informed by persons who contacted me from the JLSRI, is primarily to come up with ideas that will serve as thought provoking for further discussions, writings, and research works on the course, especially in the Ethiopia context.

The organization of this essay proceeds as follows: Part I discusses the significance of seminar courses on current legal topics, while part II describes the nature of seminars on current legal topics. Part III outlines other important considerations in the selection of topics for seminar courses. The issues of the appropriate time and mode of delivery as well as the method of evaluation of

seminar courses and the responsibility of various organs in the course offering is addressed in the Guidelines developed to outline minimum expected standards to be met in offering seminar courses. And lastly there will be a brief conclusion of the ideas raised.

### **I. Significances or objectives of the course**

I believe that it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the nature of something without considering what it is for. And that is why I begin to approach the treatment of the subject from the discussion of the significances or objectives of a seminar course in law. And of course it is better to bring this part first since the guidelines on the method of delivery and assessment of the course as well as the responsible organs in connection with it later will help to illuminate how the course could really advance these objectives.

Following is a summary of the important expected benefits of a seminar. It has to be noted here that the specific objectives of the courses vary depending on the topic of the seminar and the fundamental questions it is designed to address. Despite these specific differences, however, the following points can be commonly stated as objectives of seminar courses.

A seminar course, being largely interdisciplinary in nature and that it considers developing law topics, helps prepare students not only for possible legal careers but more importantly to make them informed, effective citizens who explore unexplored aspects of various areas of law from different perspectives.

A seminar course helps student understand how courts, legislatures, and administrative agencies seek to interpret the law and protect different rights as new technologies and new institutional practices emerge.

The course provides a forum for not only learning the legal rules governing a specific legal issue, say corruption, but for debating the controversial policy questions engendered by that area of law.

When delivered especially in a comparative way, a seminar develops an understanding of how a wide array of disparate legal systems deal with a particular legal problem and demonstrates that there are very different solutions to these problems than those commonly considered in the context of a single legal system.

A seminar course provides students the opportunity to conduct independent legal research on a topic and prepare a written analysis thereon under the supervision of the instructor. And hence it helps students develop individual responsibility, teamwork and effective leadership.

A seminar course provides students opportunities to enhance their presentation and debate skills with regular instructor feedback. It exposes participants not only to cutting edge legal issues but also to professional communication techniques.

It helps students in their preparation for exit exam by broadening and solidifying their knowledge.

It increases the chance of the effectiveness of internships and externships.

It helps law schools to participate in public issues and to create linkage between them and stakeholders.

It provides input for policy makers.

At last, it can be concluded that seminar, as a method of legal education, provides students a much steeper ladder of opportunity than other methods to know the law and the practice of law as well as become effective in their profession. And as stated above, the next topic on the nature of the course could help us notice clearly how a seminar system of academic instruction could in fact advance the attainment of the above mentioned values.

## **II. The nature of seminar courses on current legal topics**

Often times it may be difficult to tell about the nature, function and scope of say “property law”, “family law” or “contract law” without a prior understanding of nature, function and perhaps the history of the subject of the concerned law i.e. property, family or contract, respectively. However, it is noticeable in many law courses that the terms that make up the title of the course, analyzed separately, can somehow define the nature and the scope of the course. Similarly, it is possible to understand the nature of the course “Seminar on Current Legal Topics” through an independent analysis of the three terms that compose the title of the course-“seminar”, “current”, and “legal”.

These terms, especially the first two, are not legal terms in the sense that they are not peculiarly legal concepts unlike terms say “tax exemption” or “tax deduction”, both of which are concepts having no meaning except in relation to particular laws. It is therefore mandatory to look for the meaning of those terms somewhere outside of the law. In this regard, though the dictionary definition of these words is somehow helpful for our purpose, ascertaining the meaning of those terms, particularly the term “current”, would be largely a function of our individual personal judgment; which may make it hardly possible to reach at a consensus.

The starting point of my discussion is that a seminar course on current legal topics has to be cumulatively a “seminar”, “current” and one on a “legal” topic. Let me take and discuss these elements one by one.

## **2.1 Seminar**

As has been stated earlier, seminar is a method of delivery of course just like class lecture is. As such, we need to find out what makes it different from other methods of legal education. Accordingly, I will begin from the definition of the term, though this may not still yield us adequate insight into the nature of the course since it is a term susceptible to different meanings.

From the many web descriptions of the term “seminar”, which etymologically is derived from the Latin word *seminarium*, meaning “seed plot”, we may consider the following as relevant for the purpose of this paper and emphasize on what is common to them. The writer is of the opinion that these common definitional elements can describe the term as it is used in the context of “seminar on current legal topics.”

- “A class that has a group discussion format rather than a lecture format.”
- “Lecture and dialogue allowing participants to share experiences in a particular field under the guidance of an expert discussion leader.”
- “Seminar is a meeting that calls for a high degree of participation; primarily used for training purposes.”
- “It is a course offered for a small group of advanced students.”
- “A seminar engages a small group of students in advanced study concentrated on each student’s original research or important recent advancements in a field. Seminars are organized under the direction of a faculty member.”

- “An educational experience in which a faculty member directs students in discussions involving the development and/or review of concepts which are applied to practical situations.”
- “A form of small group instruction, combining independent research and class discussion under the guidance of a professor, usually open to undergraduate seniors and graduate students.”
- “A small class composed of advanced students in which discussion of the material to be covered in the courses replaces the lecture format.”
- “A seminar is a group of students who meet to discuss a subject with a tutor; usually someone (or a group) prepares a paper for discussion and shares the research they have done and their opinions on the subject. Seminars are more interactive than a lecture and are often student led.”
- “Seminar is, generally, a form of academic instruction, either at a university or offered by a commercial or professional organization. It has the function of bringing together small groups for recurring meetings, focusing each time on some particular subject, in which everyone present is requested to actively participate. This is often accomplished through an ongoing Socratic dialogue with a seminar leader or instructor, or through a more formal presentation of research.”

Moreover, the Oxford dictionary tells us that a seminar is “a small class at a university, etc for discussion and research; a class meeting for systematic study under the direction of a specified person.”

It may be possible for us to identify the elements common to all or many of those definitions. The definitions exhibit general similarity on the meaning of the term “seminar” concerning the respective roles of the instructor and of students, the nature of the subject to be covered, the target group, the mode of delivery and the purpose of the course.

First, the definitions tell us commonly that seminar is basically a training-style course and hence is different from a lecture. We can also note that seminar is basically conducted through research than class discussions.

Second the different definitions tell us that the targets of seminar courses are primary senior or advanced students.

Thirdly, we can notice that seminar courses highly demand the active participation of students, and as a result the role of the students in such course is greater while the lecturer is usually limited to guidance and supervision functions.

Fourthly, they show us that seminar courses are normally intended for small number of students and as an experience and knowledge-sharing forum among them.

Fifthly, it is noticeable in the above definitions that seminar courses primarily focus on a particular subject.

And sixth, a seminar course provides not only an intellectual but also a practical exploration of the law and the legal profession.

Thus, we may argue that a seminar course should exhibit a significant number of the above definitional elements of the term since it is in this sense that its difference from a lecture system of academic instruction will come clearly visible.

## 2.2. Current

Since one of the important purposes of seminar is to inform students about current developments in different areas of law, it is a must that the topic we select is “current”. Yet, as I have tried to point out above, this term is more open to contention than the terms “legal” and “seminar”. In the case of the term “legal”, for instance, it is possible to say something about it by referring to the term “law” and in the case of the word “seminar” it is a bit easier to find dictionary definitions for it on which many, if not all, of us may agree.

The writer has not found a definition for the term “current” and of course the terms “seminar” or “legal”, in the course descriptions of the universities referred to, unlike their other courses like “contract” or “international trade” law. In many of them, the conception of the term “current”, in the selection of the topics for their seminar courses, seems to mean “contemporary”. However, this is no more than a substitution of a word by another word, which is not really much helpful in understanding the nature of what is “current”.

Assume the following as a list of topics selected by designers of seminar course at one of our universities in this academic year:

- A. The economic impacts of Ethiopia’s accession to the World Trade Organization.
- B. The side effects of Ethiopian’s new legislation governing Non Governmental Organization’s and Civic Associations.
- C. Judicial independence in Ethiopia
- D. The validity of the colonial agreements over the Nile
- E. The legality of International Criminal Court’s attempt to arrest Sudan’s president
- F. The powers and functions of local governments in Ethiopia

Which of the above topics in your view are “current”? Well, as I said earlier it would be difficult to expect the same answer to this question. One may argue that topic “A” is current since it points out a work in progress, while another may argue that topic “B” is current since the law (governing NGOs and CAs in Ethiopia) is enacted two month before. Our choice of these topics as “current”, without doubt, is primarily based on time factor, in the sense that it is based in the first place on the “contemporary” nature of the topics. The same could be the case in our selection of the topic under “E”. In this sense, it is difficult to choose the topics under “C”, “D”, and “F” as “current” since they are not contemporary i.e. they are not recent in their time dimension. Specifically, the question of judicial independence in Ethiopia has been with us long before, the colonial agreements over the Nile have been concluded and been challenged for long, the powers and duties of local governments has been defined in the 1994 Constitution and other laws, which are not recent in the “contemporariness” standard. So does this mean that the topics under “C”, “D”, and “F” do not qualify as (good) topics for a seminar course?

Putting yourselves in the position of a student who is required to take a seminar course, which one of the two category of topics i.e. A, B, and E (which many of us can regard as current in the sense of being contemporary) on the one hand, and C, D, and F (which in the above sense, many of us may, I suppose, regard as not current) on the other hand, can attract you more to know about the topic? Here again individual preferences are natural expectations. The point I want to make, however, is that attractiveness of a topic, in addition to the time factor, is an important consideration in regarding it as current. By attractiveness again what I mean is that the topic should be interesting in the sense that it should inspire students desire to read, to argue, to research, and then to know more about it. Let me take the opportunity to explain this idea in some detail below.

The topic under “A” can be considered as current not solely because it is about a present situation but also because, I argue, it is interesting when we see it from the perspective of a least-developed country. The same is true for topic “B”: it is current not only because the legislation is enacted two months before but also because it is interesting to see why a country like Ethiopia which strongly needs the development partnership of NGOs and CAs come up with a law which is considered as restrictive by many. Moreover, topic “E” can be regarded as current not solely because the ICC’s attempt to arrest Sudan’s president is started last year but because it is also interesting to see that it is the first of its kind to prosecute an acting president.

Moreover, a topic which many not be current on the face of it when measured by the time factor may be current due to the contemporary nature of what it is going to address. For instance, the topic under “D” can be current if what it purports to cover is about the 2002 Nile Basin Initiative Act and the subsequent developments in relation to it like the problem of food security vis-à-vis the increase in Ethiopia’s population.

By way of conclusion, thus, it can be said that the selection of topics for seminar courses as “current” shall not be solely with the conception of this term based on the time dimension of the topic but it shall also take into account the topic’s nature of being “interesting”. This, however, is without forgetting that what is “current” is more likely to be “interesting” and what is interesting is more likely to be what is “current”. And hence, both types of topics which I call “time-sensitive” i.e. that are recent (like the ones under A, B, and E in the above example) and “evolving topics” that persist long along with time changes (like those under C, D, and F above) can be used as topics for seminar courses in law.

### **2.3. Legal**

The third important aspect of “seminar on current legal topics” is that the seminar should be on a “legal” issue. Though depending on the context in which we use the term “legal” it may mean different things, it is easier to define it compared to the other elements of the course that have been discussed above. According to the Blacks Law Dictionary, the use of term “legal” in such expressions as a legal obligation, a legal standard, a legal procedure, a legal claim or a legal trade means something “permitted by, in conformity with, falling within the province of law. For the purpose of this essay, the writer would like to pick up the expression “falling within the province of or relating to law” as more relevant to describe the term “legal” in the context we are using it. And hence, seminar courses should be on topic that fall within the province of or are related to law.

Despite the fact that this dictionary meaning of the term is clear, admittedly it is practically still open to contention for we all may not agree on what can be regarded as “falling within or is related to law.” It is particularly difficult to determine how much should a topic be related to the discipline of law in order for it to qualify as a legal topic. Nevertheless, we might still face instances of topics that are not related or are related only remotely to law, let alone that they don not fall within the subject of law; and as a result of which that can be excluded easily from being topics for a seminar course in law.

Let me cite here a topic addressed at a seminar course, entitled by the time as “senior seminar/current legal topics”, for regular law students of the law faculty of AAU in the 2005/06 academic year. And one of the classes for this course was conducted in the form of a debate and/or discussion between representatives from the ruling party and of an opposition party. In correctly recall that the theme of the debate or discussion was purely on broad policy matters. Though some points were said by the contenders about the election

process (I mean the 2005 election), I would surely say that they were not in anyway about the country's electoral law or explicitly constitutional law.

The point here is that, topics of the above type can not be (good) topics for seminar courses in law for they do not fall within the ambit of law nor are related to law in a direct or at least in a significantly closer manner. And, generally, thus the writer holds that the topics to be included in a seminar course syllabus have to be current topics of interest to law in the sense of being falling within the discipline of law or at least being related to it.

### **III. Other considerations in designing seminar courses**

Apart from the key requirements that a seminar course being “current” and “legal”, the following points are in my view important factors that need to taken in to account in designing a seminar course.

a) What is our justification for taking up the time of our students? i.e. what is the purpose of the seminar? We have to be very clear on this. How will the department benefit? How will students benefit? What is the relevance of the seminar to the department's goals, objectives and strategies?

b) What is the learning outcome expected of students? What will students learn as a result of a topic's presentation and discussion? How does it relate to the department's goals, objectives and strategy? In this line, it is important to see that the evaluation methods employed can really measure whether or not students have acquired these skills since the course aims at developing students' writing, presenting and debating skills. Moreover, the instructor has to be flexible in his/her approach to the course. For example, s/he can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the course, and of course, minimize the burden on him/her through dividing students in to appropriate number of groups if the class size is difficult to manage with the caution that writing

assignments may involve the free-rider problem when they are given in groups and thinking of the need for incorporating exams in the ways of assessment may help to minimize this risk and see that points do not go to undeserving students.

c) In addition to the problem of “what is it that you want students to learn?” please consider the point “how can you, as course administrator or instructor, help them to know the topic”, And how can you, as a member of a course coordinator or instructor develop students’ interest in the seminar?

d) Try to use the seminar as a forum to cover issues which in your view can not be covered by the core courses i.e. by the normal classes. An instructor at the normal classes may not or may not adequately address draft laws, new amendments to existing laws, or unconventional court decisions related to the subject in his/her classes though he/she might mention the fact and possibly say something about it. Seminar, however, as a forum for introducing students with current developments in the law and its practice, can be used more appropriately to thoroughly, cover these issues.

Addressing the above points will enable us to prepare an interesting and effective seminar as measured by the objectives of a seminar course stipulated before.

## **Conclusion**

Legal scholarship must be related to legal education, so that teaching does not reflect only one aspect of legal training whether it be class lecturing or clinical training. And seminar is one way of forging a relationship between legal scholarship and legal education. Seminar courses on current issues in law provide students opportunities and skills to know the law and its practice better than other ways. They help students to acquaint with new developments

in these areas better than other laws since articles and books dealing with these developments often appear only much later. A seminar course protects students from being shallow and mechanistic in their legal reasoning since it exposes them to a true synthesis of law and other disciplines and areas of learning.

There are, nonetheless, certain points that must be sufficiently addressed while attempting to introduce this course in school curriculum. The most important of these is to define the nature, scope, method of assessment, and mode of delivery of the course as well as the role of different organs in relation to the course. In this respect it has been said that the terms that make up the title of the course are self-defining of the course though they themselves are difficult to describe. Some of them are not legal terms, while others are susceptible to different definitions. Anyway, we need to see that our seminar course is 1) really “seminar”<sup>2)</sup> it is on a current issue, and that 3) it is on a legal issue.

First the seminar course we purport to offer has to exhibit largely the feature of a seminar rather than other method of academic instruction, especially that of class lecturing. It should be one focused on a particular subject then a general area of law, be used to cover topics that otherwise can not be caught by formal classes, must be research-oriented, shall normally targets senior students and so forth. Secondly, the seminar should be on a current issue surrounding the law and its practice. This term, wide open to differences of option, has been explained to mean either a time sensitive issue or an evolving topic. Thirdly, the topics to be covered in a seminar shall be within the discipline of law or are (significantly) related to law in one way or another.

In addition to the above considerations, the writer believes that seminar courses on current legal topics in their nature demand that they be administered by academics who possess various skills and abilities in addition to academic excellence, individuals who better understand the overall

significance and specific objectives of the course, and who are knowledgeable in other fields in addition to law. And we can expect to get all these elements when the course is administered by a committee than by a single instructor. To mean that we have individuals with different abilities and skills will ultimately enable us to enhance the effectiveness of the courses since in this committee we can have individuals who can:

- a. select proper topics for seminars
- b. select and assign competent instructors for each seminar
- c. ensure the appropriate modes of delivery for the courses
- d. professionally determine the time and year that is appropriate for the courses
- e. can upkeep the very essence of the courses.

It might be the case that a subject selected as deserving to be supplemented by a seminar course need the taking by a student of a per-requisite course. And one of the functions of this committee will be to set out requisite course(s), if any, for the taking of a seminar course. This is especially true where the student has opted out a course classified by the faculty as elective one but found to be important or introductory to the subject on which the seminar course is prepared. In this case, the Committee may decide that only students who have taken the pre-requisite course are eligible to take the seminar course. And this may result in the reduction of the 30-40 class-student ratio below this. As far as the class-student ratio is concerned, the Committee may, moreover, reduce or increase this ratio taking into account the human and material resources as well as the physical facilities of the respective faculties/ universities. The number of students, rooms and instructors each faculty has as well as the faculty's capacity to publish and distribute reading materials to students are important determinants in this regard. All these can help to maintain the very definition and nature of the term "seminar", which as explained in the core text means a class of small number of students.

At last, I would like to confess that the paper is a kind of a leap to the “ought” without first showing to the reader what the “is” in the context of the universities in this country. But still I claim that the benefits of this course are not yet adequately exploited by our universities. Many of them, according to my informal pieces of information, have not yet offered such a course and in the ones already offering the course, it is not being offered in a developed and structured manner i.e. in a way that reflect the nature of the course. Thus, developing and structuring the course needs the contribution of all of us.

And hence, the following guidelines are developed to serve as a starting point for further discussions on various issues in connection with the offering of the course like the organs that need to play a role in the offering of the course, their individual functions, and the mode of delivery and assessment of the course.