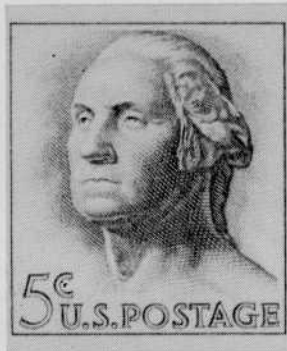


Postage Stamp Scholars



stay-at-home students from Ardmore to Zanzibar take part in O.U.'s mail school

THEY'RE waiting for the mail to arrive: a housewife in Enid, watching *As The World Turns*; a convict in McAlester, working in the prison library; a serviceman in Spain, maintaining B-52s at a SAC base; a teacher in Sand Springs, grading papers during the noon break; a 16-year-old Missouri girl, finishing her high school credits while convalescing from polio; a roughneck off the coast of Louisiana, pulling pipe on an offshore rig. People in all of Oklahoma's 77 counties, in each of the 50 states, in a geography book full of foreign countries—people of all ages, nationalities, occupations are waiting for mail to arrive—mail bearing the postmark "Norman, Oklahoma."

The mail is from the University of Oklahoma's Correspondence Study Department, a part of the Extension Division, and it contains one of 190 college or 80 high school courses in subjects ranging from Beginning Greek to Thermodynamics.

The persons served by the department have a variety of reasons for learning by mail. The Extension Division lists several categories in one of its publications: the shut-ins temporarily or permanently hospitalized or institutionalized (such as our convict in the opening paragraph) with no facilities for schooling; Oklahoma children

temporarily in foreign countries with parents who are employed abroad; teachers in Oklahoma schools who need certain courses to advance educationally; students attending college or high school who have conflicts in class schedules or those who need only a subject or two for graduation; persons who may gain job promotions by extra training; housewives who can do their job better with training in subjects like household management and child psychology; municipal employees and civic-minded individuals who profit by courses in their special field of interests.

These are not all the reasons. "Some people take courses purely for personal satisfaction," says Russell R. Myers, director of the department. "Some are women who marry and drop out of school and want to continue their education from their living rooms. People from all over the world—those who have never been to the United States and have barely heard of Oklahoma—enroll in our courses. For years we have been serving Hillcrest School, a high school sponsored by the Church of the Brethren, in Jos, Nigeria, supplying it with courses of study in every high school area."

Myers and Mrs. Christine Virgin, assistant director, are the Sears and Roebuck of O.U.'s mail order department and are happy as a postman with no dogs on his

route that so many people are taking advantage of correspondence study.

Mrs. Virgin has been with the department since 1948 and has had a part in its growth. "In 1948," she recalls, "3,381 took correspondence courses. Since 1948 there have been 70,738 enrolled in courses. Another way to illustrate the growth is to compare the number of those in our active file today—those currently working on courses—with those in it in 1948. Today there are 5,185 engaged in correspondence work. In 1948 at this time there were 2,752."

"We're the problem-solving department," Myers explains. "Most of those who write us wanting a particular course have a problem. We're glad to help and proud that we are able to help."

Both Myers and Mrs. Virgin enjoy telling of some of those who have taken correspondence work from O.U. "One lady," says Mrs. Virgin, "was in her fifties when she began taking courses toward a high school diploma. She continued taking some college-level courses, then decided to come to O.U. and get a degree. Today she is teaching school in the state. There are also stories of brave young people who have been hospitalized for long periods but who wouldn't stop their education. And we have sent courses to older people, perma-

nently bedridden, who wanted to keep learning."

Many teachers who transfer to Oklahoma from other states take Oklahoma history by mail from O.U.—not because they are intrigued with the state's past, but because they must have credit in the course in order to be certified to teach here.

The most popular course the department offers is William Foster-Harris' Professional Writing Course. One of the recent enrolments came from an aspiring writer in Petah Tiqva, Israel. The course was developed by the late Walter S. Campbell and is currently supervised by Foster-Harris. The professional writing courses have developed the talents of students who have made sales to more than 1,000 publications in the United States and other countries. To enroll, the prospective student must prepare a brief questionnaire with the usual name-address-single-or-married-what-have-you-done?-type blanks to fill in. And, finally, the enrollees must write three or four paragraphs carrying on after the opening, "There was the bleak tension of bitter grief in his face as he turned. His lips opened without sound—once—twice—then the labored words came out: . . ." It sounds pretty serious, and anyone who follows with "Are you still using that greasy kid stuff?" would probably be disqualified.

The process of enrolling in a correspondence course is not a difficult one. A letter of inquiry to the Correspondence Study Department at O.U. will elicit a prompt response which will consist of a catalog of courses and an application form. The catalog contains information about each course—prerequisites and a description of what is to be covered. If any further question arises or a prospective enrollee has a doubt, he can receive expert counseling from Myers or Mrs. Virgin, as amiable and informative a pair of pen pals a student could have. They are so genuinely concerned that it's a shame that most of their correspondents never get the chance to meet them in person.

THE college and high school courses are constructed by members of the O.U. faculty and by state high school teachers, respectively. The college courses, which are for undergraduate credit, although some of the courses are on a graduate level, are approved by the chairman of the course department. High school courses are constructed for only those areas ap-

proved by the State Board of Education.

A person may take a maximum of 30 hours of college credit courses by correspondence (except for the College of Business Administration which limits its maximum to 15 hours). This is true nationally as well as at O.U. Two weeks is the minimum time for each one hour of college credit, so that the least time one could complete a three-hour course in the Philosophy of Education is six weeks.

"Few finish in the minimum time," says Myers. "The maximum time we allow is one year although we will extend the limit in special cases."

A PERSON is more limited in the high school curricula. Only two units may be taken through correspondence, a unit being two semesters of one subject. Some high school students take college courses from the department. "They are allowed to take up to three hours," explains Myers. "There are certain regulations which must be met. The dean of admissions sets up the qualifications and approves applications. Again, there are exceptions, and there have been those who have completed high school entirely by correspondence."

After enrolling, a student receives a complete study guide of the course, a syllabus outlining the area to be covered and a complete list of assignments. The student may rent a textbook for the course from the department for 25 cents per month. The student then follows, presumably, the reading assignments, prepares the assigned papers, answers the enclosed questions and mails the completed lessons to Norman. A faculty member grades each lesson, sending his comments and suggestions by return mail. There is at least one examination for each course which is administered either at O.U. or by the registrar of a college or university near the student's home.

High school courses are supervised by a person appointed by a high school principal in the student's home town. The supervisor also gives the tests.

The department is continually adding new courses to its curriculum and upgrading and revising older ones. Each year about 25 courses are revised or added. Only science courses which require laboratory work are unavailable to those who wish to take correspondence courses.

Faculty members who prepare courses

and grade students' work are paid by the department, which is a self-sustaining body. Costs for preparation of the courses by teachers, the printing of catalogs and study materials, mailing expenses and salaries for department personnel are paid from the fees received from the students. The cost for a unit of high school study is \$12.50, which is also the cost for each hour of college credit.

The Correspondence Study Department has been a part of the University for more than 50 years, having been organized in 1910. The first correspondence work was offered through the School of Teaching as an aid to teachers who could study in residence only during the summer sessions. By 1917, applications were received from 70 of the 77 counties in Oklahoma, 18 states, most European countries and a single Asian nation.

The department survived the Depression budget cut of 1933 and has prospered ever since, constantly enlarging its curriculum and services to not only Oklahomans but people from every corner of the world.

In 1942, the department furnished courses to men and women in the armed forces, also constructing courses in pre-flight aeronautics for a pre-induction program. In September 1943, the O.U. Correspondence Study Department was the first in the nation to offer a three-hour college course in Japanese; in 1952, it was still the only course of its kind in the world.

After the war ended, the department enrolled hundreds of veterans under GI benefits in high school and college courses. Almost 400 courses were available in 1947, including one in federal taxation for veterans and one for candidates for naturalization.

During the teacher shortage of those years, the department helped by teaching many students in many high schools with its offerings.

From the original 16 students who took a few education courses in the first year of its creation, the department has expanded its influence in a phenomenal manner. "It's not the best way to attend college," admits Mrs. Virgin, "but it's the only way some people have, and it fulfills a vital need in the educational system."

Whether you have finished college, the Correspondence Study Department has something that will interest you—from nutrition to nuclear engineering, it's there . . . just a five cent stamp away.