

Program Name: Ethnic Studies
Program Contact: Dr. Frederick Gaines
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I. Description of Program

Ethnic studies is a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field focused on the analysis of socially-constructed categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, nationality and (non)citizenship. Using a range of materials, from literary and musical works to sociological studies and historical texts, we deeply examine the processes whereby social categories of identity and difference are produced, resisted, inhabited, embraced, and transformed across historical time and geographic space. We trace the ways in which these racialized categories shape and are shaped by a variety of other complex issues, such as colonialism, military conflict, and the relations between capital and labor. Our classes interrogate systems of power and inequality, analyze the effects of social justice movements past and present, and delve into the ontology and phenomenology of the elusive notion of liberation. By familiarizing students with a range of methodological tools for the study of social life, while prioritizing the voices and perspectives of marginalized individuals and minoritized communities, we open up an intellectual space within which the term "ethnic" in "ethnic studies" is both critically deconstructed and strategically affirmed.

Our ethnic studies program plays a crucial role in supporting the mission of the college by providing students with ways to engage with issues of racial and social justice from a broad scholarly perspective that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. Whether students are most interested in the humanities, social sciences, arts, or any other area of inquiry, ethnic studies affords opportunities to investigate the operations of power in ways related to their specific academic interests and their lived experiences. Our department also helps fulfill the college's mission by preparing students to be engaged citizens of diverse communities, the nation, and the world. Ethnic studies classes promote critical thought and respectful dialogue among students as they put scholarly texts into conversation with contemporary public issues and their own individual lives.

The core concerns and values of ethnic studies clearly resonate with many of the key principles articulated by the college and district. The Solidarity Statement issued by the CSM Institutional Planning Committee in January of 2021 affirms that the college's "work, our fight, is to create a campus culture that is antiracist We are committed to this work because Black lives and Indigenous lives and the lives of other Peoples of Color (BIPOC) matter to us. LGBTQ and womxn lives matter to us. Justice-impacted lives matter to us." Valuing the lives of oppressed, minoritized, and/or variously Otherized peoples and populations means recognizing the richly-textured complexity of those lives, those histories, those experiences. It means engaging the long-standing and multiplex intellectual, political, and artistic movements and traditions that have been produced and developed by BIPOC and other marginalized peoples. It means respecting members of these groups as *producers* of knowledge, rather than discursively positioning them as *objects* of knowledge, as specimens for display, as ethnographic informants, or as social problems in need of remediation. Valuing the lives of oppressed peoples also means that we must interrogate the categorical social hierarchies that structure systems of oppression;

we must historicize those categories, tracing the social and political processes whereby such categories were/are constructed. As evidenced in our explanation of the discipline of ethnic studies at the outset of this program review, our field by its very definition makes all of the aforementioned antiracist interventions.

Appearing in CSM's "College Mission and Values Statements" is the assertion that "We [the college] see ourselves as a vibrant hub of intellectual rigor and relevance." The Department of Ethnic Studies is working to help make this vision a reality by diligently and sincerely fostering intellectual engagement, particularly around issues related to power, resistance, and liberation. We assiduously cultivate the life of the mind within and across our various courses, where students delve into the complex and nuanced theoretical frameworks our field provides for the analysis of concepts such as racialization, ideologies of gender and sexuality, borders and the nation-state, colonialism and decolonization, and the relationships between and among such constructions. Over and above our own courses, we are also working to increase the opportunities for intellectual engagement available to our entire CSM community – students, faculty, staff, and local populations beyond the campus.

Since 2009, our department's annual film festival has served EMP Priority #5: "Building on a Tradition of Service to the Community" and SMCCD Strategic Goal #2: "Establish And Expand Relationships With School Districts, 4-year College Partners, And Community-based Organizations To Increase Higher Education Attainment In San Mateo County." Originally founded by professor emeritus Lewis Kawahara as the Asian Pacific American Film Festival (APAFF), this beloved event will, starting in spring 2024, take on a new expanded phase as a film *series* featuring work relevant to a range of marginalized and minoritized communities.

The ethnic studies department regularly collaborates and exchanges ideas with other CSM academic departments and programs. Our chair, Dr. Frederick Gaines, is a primary point of contact for the Umoja learning community, is a pillar of support to the students in this program, and teaches courses central to the program. In terms of curriculum, our connections with the history department have been particularly fruitful, as history faculty have offered important perspectives, ideas and resources for promoting students' intellectual engagement and making curricular connections across the disciplines. These cross-disciplinary and cross-campus engagements, which aim to enhance students' academic learning and positively affect the campus climate, relate to EMP #1, "Supporting Our Students' Aspirations," and EMP #2, "Creating Equitable Opportunities for all of our Students."

The *CSM Forward 2028 - Education Master Plan* highlights the importance of "investment in academic support for transfer level and foundational courses." Among the transfer-level courses that the college will need to offer, moving forward, are those that will fulfill the Area F/Area 7 (Ethnic Studies) transfer requirement, which will be part of the integrated Cal-GETC pattern providing single pathway for entry for both the Cal State system and the UC system.

The foregoing is just a brief introduction to our growing Department of Ethnic Studies. Our full-time faculty would be happy to answer any questions you may have about the department.

II. Previous Program Review

a. Results of Last Program Review Submission

In our last program review, we cited the need for an additional full-time faculty member. Thankfully, as a result of our dean's support, we were indeed able to create a new full-time faculty line, and in the fall semester of 2022 we hired Professor Edgar Mojica Villegas. Professor Villegas is now teaching sections of Ethnic Studies 101 (Latin American and Indigenous Peoples History and Culture), Ethnic Studies 103 (Asian Americans and U.S. Institutions), Ethnic Studies 107 (Introduction to Native American Studies), and Ethnic Studies 300 (Introduction to La Raza Studies). With the advent of the new ethnic studies graduation/transfer requirement, student demand for ethnic studies courses has increased exponentially across the campus and district, and Professor Villegas' presence has been essential in terms of our ability to meet that demand. In addition to his teaching, Prof. Villegas has also been involved in multiple campus committees and events. In fall semester of 2022, he spoke at the San Mateo County History Museum as part of a panel titled "Striking for Change: The College Readiness Program and its Legacies," which was one of the opening-day activities for the CSM centennial exhibit "100 Years of Making Dreams Come Through." He is also an active member of the Sustainability and Social Justice Committee, and in that capacity he organized a special event during the spring semester of 2023, including a screening of the 2012 film *Dancing Salmon Home*, a lecture by Chief Caleen Sisk of the Winnemum Wintu Tribe, and a community luncheon at which CSM students, faculty, and staff were able to converse with Chief Sisk and several other Winnemum Wintu representatives.

b. Programmatic Changes

Our last Program Review also discussed the CSM Asian Pacific American Film Festival (APAFF), an annual event founded over a decade ago by Emeritus Professor Lewis Kawahara. At the writing of our last program review, this annual tradition had been interrupted by the pandemic, but we hoped to be able to resume and expand it. Thanks to a budget augmentation granted after that program review, we are in the process of doing just that. Our plan is to broaden and diversify the thematic focus, so that it becomes an Ethnic Studies film series, featuring creative voices from a range of marginalized and minoritized communities. We also plan to distribute our showings across the semester rather than concentrating them in a single day (hence the change from "festival" to "series"). We hope these adjustments will both strengthen the conceptual foundation of the festival and grow the audience.

c. SLO Assessment Results: Delivery-Mode Gaps

Our department is still adjusting to the increased student demand for online asynchronous courses. Although our view as professionals in ethnic studies is that asynchronous delivery modes are not ideal for teaching in our field, we do understand that asynchronous offerings are one part of the District's plan to make education more accessible. While we haven't reached any firm conclusions as to best practices for asynchronous teaching in our discipline, we are actively grappling with this question as a department.

III. Current Program Review

a. Population-Level Equity Gaps

Key factors contributing to equity gaps between different student populations include lack of access to computers, lack of transportation, and lack of timely financial aid for purchasing books. We have been advocating for the campus to address these gaps since before the pandemic. In fall of 2020, former VPI Mike Holzclaw assured the Educational Equity

Committee that enough laptops and hotspots had been purchased to meet all student technology needs. What we see today, however, is that students report attempting to check out laptops and being told that there are no more left. We strongly believe that providing technology access is essential to closing the gaps we've observed. Similarly, our students frequently report that they are unable to come to class due to lack of transportation. We hope the existing district shuttle service can be expanded. On a related note, while most of our courses are cost-free, some of them involve reading literary selections that are not available electronically and thus cannot be acquired through the library's electronic resources system. While many students have financial support for buying books through special programs, such as those for veterans, we consistently find that these monies are not forthcoming in a timely manner, and as a result students are not able to get their books in time. We are attempting to remedy this situation through our resource requests, as we seek to acquire class sets of some literary works by important authors of color.

b. Modes of Delivery Comparisons

Prior to the 2020 pandemic our department did not offer online courses. Our comparative data regarding modes of delivery are thus relatively recent and are necessarily inflected by the impact of the pandemic itself. As of now the available data show us that our asynchronous courses have lowest passing rates. Passing rates for students enrolled in asynchronous courses were only 78%, as compared to synchronous courses (80%) and hybrid courses (82%). The gaps in delivery-mode effectiveness seem to have been particularly detrimental for African American students. From spring 2021 through spring 2023 the passing rate for African American students taking asynchronous courses was 40%. By contrast, the passing rate for African American students in synchronous courses was 60%, which represents a significant difference. Similarly, for Pacific Islander students, the passing rate for asynchronous courses was 63%, as compared to 80% for synchronous courses. For Hispanic students, the passing rate for asynchronous courses was 74%, compared to 80% for synchronous courses.

We know that lack of access to technology and lack of familiarity with specific technologies are contributing factors in these gaps. But we continue to assert that the asynchronous modality is not the best form of engagement with our discipline, particularly for our students from marginalized backgrounds. We do, however, understand that asynchronous courses will continue to be offered, and we plan to work with our instructional designers to develop best practices for asynchronous instruction. At the same time, we would also like to explore ways of encouraging more students to take our synchronous courses, as we feel that real-time conversations and dialogues - a major part of the ethnic studies experience - are simply not replaceable by asynchronous activities.

c. Challenges and Opportunities

The new ethnic studies graduation/transfer requirement represents both a challenge and an opportunity. Due to an increase in demand for our courses, we have seen a much more diverse body of students enrolling in our classes. On the one hand, this gives us an opportunity to reach a wider audience who would traditionally not take ethnic studies courses as part of their educational path. At the same time, this broader demand also requires that we strategize ways of maintaining the integrity of our field as we continue to expand our offerings.

The state-wide process of gaining Area F approval for all of our courses has been extremely taxing and time-consuming. Although all of our classes were approved for area F after initial submission, several of them have subsequently been sent back to us for resubmission

without any explanation. We are currently in the process of attempting to figure out what changes the reviewers would like to see so we can revise and resubmit the courses.

IV. Planning

a. Learning Assessment Plans

One major intervention that we hope will close a significant population-level equity gap will consist of a study abroad program which will be offered in the summer of 2024 in Ghana. Students participating in this program will have the opportunity to take several courses which are typically offered here on campus. We are interested in finding out whether the passing rates for students taking ethnic studies courses as part of this study abroad experience in Ghana are higher than those of students taking the same courses on campus. If we find a significant difference, we would like to explore the possibility of creating Study Abroad programs geared to students of other marginalized communities - e.g. programs in Latin America and Oceania.

b. Program Goals

Another major goal for our department is to have all of our courses reapproved for the Area F transfer requirement as soon as possible. We also, as per our earlier discussion, hope to develop new strategies to improve our asynchronous instruction. We plan to consult with our campus instructional designers to achieve this goal. We also hope to incorporate an information literacy component into our instruction. In order to do so we plan to engage in dialogues with library faculty to the greatest extent possible.