

Committee on Educational Policy Undergraduate Program Review  
Department of Ethnic Studies  
May 14-15, 2009  
Review Committee Report

Established in 1990-1 the UCSD Department of Ethnic Studies is an explicitly multidisciplinary department and one of the few nationwide to bring together under one roof the study of a variety of ethnic and racial groups. In addition to its 119 majors and 34 minors (as reported by the College Deans of Advising) the Department serves the campus by offering courses that fulfill general education requirements. Some of these requirements effectively direct students to Ethnic Studies courses. This is most clearly the case with Marshall, which actually requires an Ethnic Studies course, while Sixth requires either an Ethnic Studies or a Critical Gender Studies course. Also relevant is Muir's requirement of a course on "U.S. Cultural Diversity" and Warren's requirement of a course on "Cultural Diversity in U.S. Society."

The Review Committee was deeply impressed by the Department's strong commitment to undergraduate education broadly conceived. The Ethnic Studies faculty sees its task as not merely to teach but to mentor. They are committed not only to imparting knowledge and methodologies but equally to the personal development of their students. For example, abundant anecdotal evidence told of students in danger of falling by the wayside who received personal attention from departmental instructors and staff that helped them to complete their undergraduate studies and in many cases to go on to graduate or professional programs. And an impressive number of students testified, either in interviews or in the surveys conducted by the College Deans of Advising, about "finding their voice" or "finding a safe haven" in the Ethnic Studies Department. This was especially true for students who are the first generation in their family to attend college and/or come from groups considered underrepresented. The high degree of satisfaction expressed by Ethnic Studies majors in the surveys conducted by the College Deans of Advising also attests to the devotion of the Department's faculty and staff. So too does the high degree of retention among majors as well as the high graduation rate among first generation students and those from underrepresented groups who are majors. The commitment to undergraduate education and the personal development of undergraduates is part and parcel of a commitment to an intellectual and social vision shared by the faculty, staff and students of the Ethnic Studies Department. The result is an esprit de corps in the Department that is rare and perhaps even unique on this campus. In what follows the Review Committee will highlight some specific features that contributed to the positive impression just summarized.

**Honors Program.** One of the recommendations in the last review of the undergraduate program was to consider the establishment of an honors program. The Department acted on this suggestion and now offers an impressive program. The Ethnic Studies honors courses cover three quarters, in contrast to the two-quarter sequence in some other Departments. The sequence is currently taught by a senior scholar, while students work on their individual projects under a faculty advisor. The program is highly selective and at present is limited to twelve students because of staffing constraints. In

fact, the program is unable to accommodate all those interested in it. The aforementioned senior scholar asserted that the course is conducted on a level equal to the first year of graduate school. Participants were very positive about the program and testified that it helped prepare them for the graduate and professional school application process. The honors program thus promises to enhance the “professional pipeline” from a student population currently underrepresented at this level. At the conclusion of the academic year the Department sponsors a symposium where the honors students present their research with Ethnic Studies graduate students serving as respondents. The symposium is open to all interested undergraduates and graduate students and is reported to be well attended and well received.

The honors program is by definition selective and apparently unable to accommodate even all those who qualify. Consequently the Department is considering the development of a capstone course available to all majors. One plan under consideration is for the course to involve preparation of a portfolio of papers written for previous Ethnic Studies courses. An exercise of this kind could help the Department calibrate outcome measurements. The Review Committee encourages the department to continue to pursue the possibility of a capstone course.

**Enhancement of the Intellectual Model.** The Review Committee was impressed by the Department’s openness to develop and expand both the subjects of inquiry and the methodologies encompassed under the rubric of Ethnic Studies. We note four instances of this process.

1. The last review of the undergraduate program in 1995-6 encouraged the Department to move beyond a focus on ethnic groups in the United States and increase attention to issues of race and ethnicity outside this country. The Department responded by adding a transnational focus to its mission statement, including a global dimension in many of its courses, and decentering the United States in its course on “Race in the Americas.” At the same time, the transnational emphasis needs to be reflected in newer catalogue copy.
2. In response to the call in the last review for more resources in Asian American Studies the Department added a series of relevant courses. Moreover, the appointment of a specialist in Asian American topics in History, who is an affiliate of the Ethnic Studies Department, also helped.
3. Recent hires also reflect a broadening of perspectives. These appointees bring interests in gender and sexuality studies (especially transnational feminism), cultural studies in music/art/literature, African Diaspora, and expertise on Iran.
4. The Department is actively considering enhancements in the area of indigeneity, which includes Native American Studies, and intersectionality, which involves a comparative and relational approach to the topics of inquiry.

**New Hires.** The recent hires deeply impressed the Review Committee. In addition to bringing new areas of research and expertise, they all possessed strong academic credentials, reflected intellectual engagement, and displayed an ability to

appeal to undergraduates. The Review Committee was also pleased to note that two of the three searches conducted during the current academic year were at the Associate Professor level. This should alleviate the difficulties that result from the current situation in which Assistant Professors constitute the majority of the Department. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that one of the two Full Professors in Ethnic Studies has administrative duties outside the Department, as does one of the three Associate Professors. Further, another of the Associate Professors holds a split appointment involving obligations to another program. As a result of all these factors, heavy administrative burdens within the Department fall on the shoulders of the Assistant Professors. This is not to say that the Assistant Professors are not up to the task. On the contrary, the Review Committee was impressed by the valuable contributions of the junior faculty to the functioning of the Department. An outstanding example is the current Undergraduate Faculty Advisor, Dr. Wayne Yang. However, all agree that junior faculty should be spared as much as possible from the diversions of administrative responsibilities and committee work. The senior faculty in the Department in fact make every effort to protect the precious time of Assistant Professors, but the situation described above limits the possibilities of relieving the latter. The Review Committee was pleased to learn that one of the Associate Professor level searches has just concluded with a positive result.

**Integration of all levels of the Department.** What appears to build the esprit de corps mentioned earlier is the integration and open channels of communication among all levels of the Department: faculty, graduate students who serve as Teaching Assistants/readers/informal mentors, staff and undergraduates. For example, the teaching assistants in the introductory sequence (ETHN 1A-B-C) participate in designing the examinations. They are thus treated as partners not as “drones.” Not only does this contribute to a better experience for the graduate students but it also improves the attitude of the undergraduates toward the teaching assistant in the course. Another example is the active mentoring of majors by departmental graduate students. Already mentioned was the honors program symposium in which graduate students serve as respondents. Other events, such as those sponsored by the undergraduate Ethnic Studies Collective in the past, drew participation from graduate students and faculty as well. Participants in the honors program testified that faculty advisors made them feel like “active scholars.” And there was much testimony about mentoring of students by faculty in upper division courses. The Department also reported that their majors actively seek to recruit fellow undergraduates to take Ethnic Studies courses and become majors. Especially worthy of mention in this context is the Director of Student Affairs/Undergraduate Coordinator, Yolanda Escamilla. All who come into contact with her sing her praises. An active liaison between students and faculty, she clearly goes above and beyond the normal expectations, particularly her outreach efforts to recruit potential majors who would transfer from community colleges, and contributes mightily to the integration and open communication mentioned at the beginning of this section. We are pleased to hear that she is working to expand outreach to their alumni and improving their database, since they can be a resource for their majors as well as a potential source of funding support. Finally, the faculty group works hard at building a sense of community among its members. A yearly retreat during the summer considers issues of planning and

curriculum, while during the academic year the efforts at mutual support for all levels of instructors are ongoing.

The foregoing has summarized the features of the Ethnic Studies Department undergraduate program that most impressed the Review Committee. In what follows the Committee notes some topics that the Department might wish to consider further with the goal of continuing and enhancing its successes in undergraduate education.

**Non-hierarchical structure of the major.** As presently structured, none of the courses requires a prerequisite course. Neither the introductory sequence (ETHN 1A-B-C) nor the Theories and Methods course (ETHN 100) is required to enroll in (other) upper division courses. This structure has certain advantages. It allows complete flexibility in fulfilling the requirements for the major. This is especially helpful for those who declare the major at an advanced stage in their undergraduate careers and for transfer students. They can still enroll in upper division courses while leaving ETHN 1 or 100 for their senior year. This system also helps non-majors seeking to fulfill general education requirements with Ethnic Studies courses. They can take any upper division course(s) that interest them without having to worry about a prerequisite. This also increases student enrollments in these courses and sometimes students can be directed to the major through these courses. Finally, as some instructors reported, having students with varied degrees of familiarity with Ethnic Studies approaches sometimes contributes to a richness of class discussion. At the same time the totally flexible structure has drawbacks. All three levels of participants (instructors, teaching assistants and students) reported that often the highly diverse audience in a course forces instructors to devote considerable course time to bringing those without any previous Ethnic Studies experience “up to speed.” This was often a frustration not just to instructors but also to Ethnic Studies majors in the course. The Department might wish to consider a minimal prerequisite for upper division courses, such as one quarter of the introductory three quarter sequence. Alternatively or additionally, a prerequisite could be considered for some, but not all upper division courses. This latter course of action would allow some upper division courses to remain freely available to non-majors.

**Compensation of Readers.** The Department does not require readers to attend the courses whose examinations they grade. The reason is because it cannot afford to pay the readers for the additional 30 hours such a requirement entails. Instructors do invest considerable efforts to prepare the readers to carry out their assignments. Further, the Department attempts to assign readers to courses with whose subject matter they are familiar. Still, the readers agreed that actually sitting in on the course would be a real benefit, both in gaining more familiarity with the subject and in observing the pedagogic approach of the instructor. Payment for the readers currently comes from Temporary FTE funds supplemented by departmental resources. The Review Committee notes that other Departments use some of their block grant monies for this purpose, enabling them to pay readers to attend the class. We realize that the allocation of block grant funds is a complex matter with other competing priorities and suggest this merely as an option to be considered.

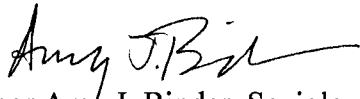
**Transnational focus and intersectionality.** The Department is closely connected with other instructional units, including Literature, History, Urban Studies and Planning, Critical Gender Studies, and Education Studies. In light of the Department's interest in enhancing its transnational focus and furthering intersectionality, it might consider the following. Ethnic Studies already has a large number of affiliated faculty, and over half its upper division offerings are cross-listed. Still, the Department might benefit even further from resources already present on campus. There appears to the Review Committee to be room for a further expansion of the Ethnic Studies purview both synchronically and diachronically without straining departmental resources. The result could be additional (cross-listed) course offerings, additional faculty who could serve as second readers on honors papers, and an incorporation of additional methodologies by increasing the databases. The synchronic aspect involves contemporary ethnic groups not usually part of most Ethnic Studies units, for example, the Uighurs, Kurds, Copts and others. The diachronic aspect involves looking at the pre-modern period, for example, taking into consideration the existing scholarship devoted to the question of ethnicity in antiquity. Archaeologists have engaged in wide ranging debates over questions of correlating identity with material remains and issues of ethnogenesis. Current UCSD faculty are involved in these subjects, and the Review Committee encourages the Department to consider extending its outreach to relevant individuals.

**Junior faculty/senior faculty balance.** The Review Committee already noted the heavy administrative burden that falls on the shoulders of junior faculty because of the paucity of senior faculty in the Department. We realize this is a transitory situation, resulting from recent separations and a retirement, which will be remedied by some new appointments and as junior faculty advance to tenure. We applaud the administration's willingness to upgrade some of the searches to the Associate Professor level. We urge the administration to continue to be sensitive to this problem until the Department achieves an appropriate balance in the distribution of its faculty.

**Increasing majors.** We suggest the Department consider ways to increase the number of majors. They are to be commended for teaching a wide section of the campus undergraduate population through the ETHN 1A-B-C series, and perhaps this is where they can more systematically introduce students to the major. The number of majors has increased in past years, but has remained steady recently. With the new faculty hires to teach elective courses and mentor students, this should attract more majors (and minors), but a strategic plan should be implemented to ensure this happens.

By way of conclusion the Review Committee wishes to thank Associate Vice Chancellor-Undergraduate Education Barbara Sawyer for her guidance, Dan Reeves from Academic Affairs for his meticulous organization and execution of two-day visit, and Marciela Ramirez of the Academic Senate for her expert assistance during our interviews and meetings.

Respectfully submitted,



Professor Amy J. Binder, Sociology  
University of California, San Diego



Professor Linda Vo. Asian American Studies  
University of California, Irvine



Professor David Goodblatt, History, Review Committee Chair  
University of California, San Diego

Received

Academic Division  
UCSD

## APPENDIX

An additional issue was not communicated during the Department Debriefing and the Exit Interview with the administration. This was due to the inability of the Review Committee to agree on whether, let alone how, to present the issue. That inability continued in subsequent exchanges among the members of the committee. Consequently this appendix reflects the views only of A. Binder and D. Goodblatt. While Binder and Goodblatt regret that this issue was not communicated in the aforementioned venues, it was discussed in the interview with the Department Chair, Vice Chair and Undergraduate Faculty Advisor. Moreover, the Department will have the opportunity to respond in their written reply to this report.

**Social Justice.** The Department's mission statement includes the promotion of "social justice." We two members of the Review Committee observe that while every person of good will supports such a goal, defining what social justice consists of in any given circumstance has been contested for thousands of years. As a Department devoted to diversity and committed to interrogating received ideas and paradigms Ethnic Studies should, we believe, be especially sensitive to situations of conflict where the opposing sides hold divergent and even contradictory narratives of justice. We emphasize that we do not question the right of individual faculty members to express their opinion and to engage in political activity. And in light of the recent revision of the academic freedom guidelines in APM 010 there is almost total license for faculty members university-wide to make whatever political or intellectual arguments they think appropriate in class. Finally we believe departments are sovereign to act as they see fit. Nevertheless we wish to call attention to the potential consequences, intended or not, of adopting one narrative in a conflict and dismissing or ignoring the opposing narrative. There are members of the university community who believe that a recent statement posted on the Department's website did this. While the website has a disclaimer to the effect that the postings do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Department, in the case at hand it was clear that the posting in fact represented the opinion of the Department. The statement began, "The faculty and graduate students in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, San Diego condemn...." The Addendum published subsequently also spoke in the name of the Department without qualification. Moreover, the Department supported a resolution to the same effect brought before the Associated Students. The Associated Students in the end refrained from adopting any of the conflicting resolutions brought before them, concluding that adopting one of the conflicting resolutions would have a divisive and exclusionary effect, necessarily disaffecting one group of students. We think that the Associated Students ruling was a wise one, and that the call in the UCSD Principles of Community to respect the perspectives of others would seem to militate against such one-sided declarations.

February 12, 2010

PROFESSOR STEFAN LLEWELYN-SMITH, Chair  
Committee on Educational Policy

SUBJECT: Ethnic Studies Department's Response to the Report of the CEP Undergraduate Program Review Subcommittee for the Department of Ethnic Studies

Dear Professor Llewelyn-Smith:

On behalf of the Department of Ethnic Studies, I write to provide the Department's response to the Subcommittee's report.

We thank the Review Committee for recognizing our Department's many successes in undergraduate education: our dedication to the intellectual and personal development of our students, our rigorous and wide-ranging curriculum, our outstanding teaching and mentoring, and our strong record in retaining and graduating underrepresented and/or first-generation college students, as well as in sending an impressive number of students to graduate and professional schools. We pride ourselves on our ability to provide a first-rate liberal arts education and learning environment that rivals that offered by premier liberal arts colleges across the country.

We also appreciate the Committee's suggestions for continuing and enhancing our department's successes in undergraduate education. Below I outline our response to these suggestions:

- **Adding prerequisites:** At this point, we do not anticipate adding prerequisites to our upper division courses. The current structure provides our majors with the maximum flexibility in fulfilling the requirements for the major, an important consideration in light of the current push to improve students' time-to-degree. It also enables more students to enroll in our courses out of interest or to fulfill general education requirements, which can lead to the recruitment of more majors.
- **Compensation of readers:** Given the grave budget situation, we will not be able to pay readers to attend courses whose examinations they grade. Indeed, we are considering just the opposite action: cutting reader hours due to the budget cuts.
- **Further expansion of the Ethnic Studies purview:** The Committee encourages the Department to expand our outreach to relevant individuals and instructional units on campus to further enhance our focus on transnationalism and intersectionality. As the report notes, our department already maintains a close and active relationship with a large number of affiliated faculty (39 faculty from 14 departments), with whom we share courses and student advising. We update our affiliated faculty list annually and actively seek out faculty whose research and teaching focus on the fundamental theoretical and political questions regarding the critical conceptualization of race and ethnicity (as well as indigeneity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, and nation), and the (re)production of power, violence and inequality.



- **Increasing Our Majors:** As noted in the report, our faculty, staff, and students actively and concertedly recruit students to take Ethnic Studies courses and become majors. We have galvanized our recruitment efforts around two groups of students: freshmen and transfer students. Our undergraduate advisor, Ms. Yolanda Escamilla, has established partnership with local community colleges and has outreached to students there on a regular basis. She also holds open forums with undeclared majors, both freshmen and transfer students, to introduce them to Ethnic Studies. For their part, the faculty continues to recruit students through their outstanding teaching in the large lower-division introductory courses and through the freshmen seminars. Starting next year, the senior faculty will co-teach a series of three freshmen seminars designed to introduce students to the range of cutting-edge research conducted by our faculty. Some of our faculty (such as Professor Wayne Yang, a highly successful undergraduate teacher) have offered to teach in the colleges' freshman core sequences in part to recruit freshmen to Ethnic Studies. We firmly believe that these efforts will yield an increase in the number of majors.

Finally, our faculty respectfully but firmly request that the Appendix be removed from the Subcommittee's report. We base this request on the following reasons: the appendix was not signed by all three committee members; the issue raised in the appendix was not communicated during the Department Debriefing and the Exit interview with the administration; and most importantly, the concerns raised in the Appendix did not emerge from the extensive data set that the Committee itself collected and that the Department painstakingly culled and provided for the review.

Sincerely,



Yen Le Espiritu, Chair  
Ethnic Studies

August 31, 2010

**PROFESSOR YEN ESPIRITU, Chair**  
**Department of Ethnic Studies**

SUBJECT: Department of Ethnic Studies Undergraduate Program Review

Dear Professor Espiritu,

At its July 23, 2010 meeting, the Committee on Educational Policy and Courses (CEP) considered the report of the CEP Undergraduate Program Review Subcommittee and the Department's response to the report. The Review Subcommittee wrote that it was "deeply impressed by the Department's strong commitment to undergraduate education broadly conceived," and the full CEP shares this overall positive assessment. The enthusiasm expressed by students and the faculty's diligent work towards developing an engaging and challenging curriculum for its students is to be commendable. We outline below our final recommendations:

**1. Prerequisites:** The CEP agrees with the Review Subcommittee's recommendation that the Department add prerequisites to its upper division courses. While we appreciate the flexibility & ease the Department has created for students by keeping prerequisites off upper division coursework, it's come at a cost to majors. The lack of prerequisites indicates that little or no previous familiarity with the methodology and content of ethnic studies is necessary for upper division coursework. This may prevent faculty from covering advanced subject matter in courses, which majors are prepared and eager to take on. It also requires basic concepts to be explained across the curriculum, representing time that could be used reviewing new material or engaging in more in-depth study.

The Review Subcommittee recommended that the Department consider adding prerequisites selectively at the upper division level, focusing on courses that are of primary concern/interest to its majors; the CEP supports this recommendation.

**2. Extending Faculty Outreach:** The Review Subcommittee recommended that the Department consider furthering its collaborations with other campus programs and departments working in related disciplines, particularly those with a transnational focus and furthering intersectionality. The Department's response noted the strong interdisciplinarity of the affiliated faculty and its commitment to seeking out faculty working on race and ethnicity. We encourage the Department to continue its efforts and to, as the Review Subcommittee recommends, think broadly about its discipline. This may mean approaching faculty working in fields not typically affiliated by the Department, but who would benefit from collaborating with the Department.

**3. Increasing Majors:** The Review Subcommittee recommended that the Department develop a strategic plan for increasing its majors. We support this recommendation, particularly given the Department's plan to hire new faculty.

Finally, the Department has asked that the Appendix submitted by a minority of members be removed from the Review Subcommittee's report. The CEP determined that the report should remain as part of the record, as it was submitted with the report. Though it represents a majority opinion for the Review Subcommittee, it is clearly identified as standing apart from the principle recommendations of the Review

Subcommittee. Some members of the CEP wished that the Department had responded to the comments included there, and we encourage you to consider doing so at the time of your follow-up review.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that the CEP is very impressed with the Department of Ethnic Studies undergraduate program. Your commitment to creating a community of scholars is truly commendable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stefan Llewellyn Smith".

Stefan Llewellyn Smith, Chair  
Committee on Educational Policy and Courses

cc: D. Hamann  
W. Hodgkiss  
F. Powell