

Undergraduate Program Review Third World Studies

June 13, 2012

Program Review Committee
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Ideally, a review should be future oriented, helping faculty, students, staff, and administrators imagine where they want their program to go and how to make that happen. We can imagine several possible futures for Third World Studies, and the Review Committee feels that it might best serve its function by briefly outlining a number of different outcomes. Our goal, however, is to underline the importance of conversations between faculty, staff, and students, not to attempt to channel or limit these discussions.

The Third World Studies Program at UCSD launched in 1970. The purpose of the instructional program emphasized the historically inequitable relationships between the United States and Latin America, Africa and Asia.

The number of majors has leveled off at close to a dozen even as a gradual rise in minors is apparent; enrollments in the lower-division courses are robust and stable.

Students have often designated the major at the time of admission or transfer. Those students who have selected the major found the Program highly rewarding, flexible, and influential in their intellectual development and training. The meetings we had with the undergraduate student majors were truly inspirational. The students had developed a clear focus of the major's intellectual mission, found that the pathways of training had fostered their development and also reinforced career paths in education, health and justice with vision to address social disparities and inequities in Latin America, Africa, Asia and impoverished communities of the United States. Their approach was intensely curious and humble to understand the manifold perspectives, ideas and historical, cultural and sociological experiences of people in societies that faced tremendous challenges in terms of the distributions of wealth, opportunity, and life chances. However, the Program could enhance its visibility and attract additional interest from faculty outside of the Literature Department and from new student majors and minors.

The Program has a highly successful lower-division sequence that focuses by region on cultural production in socioeconomic and historical contexts of literatures of Africa, China, the Indian Subcontinent, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Latin America. Students are very enthusiastic about the experience of learning from ladder-rank faculty who are passionate about their region of expertise, and they found their involvement a very rewarding educational experience.

The intellectual perspective and approach of the Program did not come to view in the self-study. However with careful evaluation of the syllabi for the core lower division courses and our discussion with the faculty, the Review Committee was able to develop a more rigorous understanding of the "Third World Studies" perspective as an intellectual and training project.

We offer this summary of the project as a call to the faculty for a robust discussion of the programs current intellectual goals:

The history of the Program employs "Third World" as a rubric to engage the study of shifting historical and economic frames over the last seventy years, and earlier. The term has its origins in the Non-Aligned Movement of the 1950s and focuses on regions that had been beset by the forces of colonialism and imperialism. The initial focus of the Third World Studies Program was to situate these relevant world areas in the geopolitical environment of the early 1970s, that is, as they related to the former colonial Western powers and the socialist nations that were pitted against each other during the Cold War Era. Over the years these international relationships have become

dramatically more complex, and the boundaries of what used to encompass the "Third World" have substantially shifted

We see three elements that distinguish the Third World Studies Program from other programs such as International Studies and the Global Health Minor that have developed since 2001. The first is a focus on cultural production. Socio-economic and political changes are examined through cultural texts (literature, film, music, etc.) and as inextricably linked to regional cultural traditions rather than as autonomous quasi-natural forces. The second is its non-U.S.-centric perspective. The world, including the United States' role in it, is examined from a variety of regional perspectives through the works of primarily non-U.S. authors. Third, is its focus on not only international relations, but on inequality and unequal power relations generally. That is, the concern is not only with nation-state relations to the United States or to each other, but also with unequal power relationships that both manifest and are analyzed through the categories of gender, class, sexuality, race, religion, ethnicity and regions within societies.

The Third World Studies Program has made important contributions to UCSD's undergraduate pedagogy for over four decades. Through its lower-division sequence, the Third World Studies Program offers a distinct perspective and methodological approach that could be more effectively adjusted to the curricular development of upper-division offerings, including a capstone experience. The teaching assistant training program is highly effective for doctoral students and also meets the needs and expectations of undergraduates who benefit from more intensive instruction in discussion sections. The methodology of analysis that is the basis of instruction and learning outcomes is to help students grasp how literature, film, and cultural production have a critical historical and contemporary role in illuminating social problems, reflect processes of human development and collective experience, and, provide grounds for analyzing everyday material life and imagination, cultural memory, and sensuous experience. The lower division courses emphasize the regional and geographic contexts and specific formation of language and culture, and emphasis that should feed into upper division courses. The term "Third World" locates the complex flux of forces of globalization, mass communication, immigration, world culture (in the form of music, cinema, literature and so forth), struggles over resources (such as oil and vital minerals), and the many disciplinary paradigms that have been employed to explain them. In practical terms, this means examining the ways in which "liberalized" economies and governments have proliferated since the end of the Cold War, how politics of health and development have been framed by these forces, and how, more generally, power relations have shifted among countries and regions. The internal dynamics of individual Third World nations and regions have taken on much clearer agency than in earlier decades, and those dynamics are inextricably linked to global interactions.

The Program Self-Study suggests that a number of discussions among the faculty have debated possible name changes – such as *Postcolonial Studies*, *Subaltern Studies*, *Global South Studies*, and *Globalization Studies* – as well as the possibility of generating a cap-stone course. We might suggest that it would be better to start with a broader and deeper intellectual discussion of the approaches that are currently embraced by the faculty and directions that the Program might take and then to address such issues as the Program's name and a possible capstone course at the end of that process.

Summary and Recommendations

The main strengths of the existing program are its well-integrated and connected offerings, serving other majors and college requirements, and demonstrated in the high enrollments in the program's lower division classes, a bonus in terms of the sought after diversity on campus; its strong links to the education abroad program; its highly important classes in a rapidly changing and inter-connected world; and its impact on undergraduate students, who perceive them as life-changing learning experiences.

Members of the Review Committee envision three future scenarios.

One scenario is, essentially, to do nothing, to remain the small program run on virtually no funding that is sustained by intellectually-committed faculty members working with students who are passionate about the major and the

lower-division classes. This course of action would entail solving the issue of recruiting a director and re-thinking the changing range of issues and fields that currently draw undergraduates to majors and minors.

A second scenario would require removing structural impediments to recruit faculty members from other departments in the humanities and particularly in the social sciences and exploring innovative ways to align lower division, upper division, and capstone offerings. The major strength of the Program lies in the lower-division, TWS-dedicated courses, all of which are taught by Literature faculty. Upper-division courses, consisting entirely of those offered in other departments and programs, do not involve direct Program involvement and do not offer faculty members substantive engagement in the Program. If the faculty and administration wish to build a stronger base for the Third World Studies Program and increase the number of majors—and particularly to draw more social scientists into the Program—it would be valuable to consider the possibility of creating one or more additional Third World Studies Program core courses that lie outside the literature/cultural production focus.¹

A third scenario would involve deep reflection on how the basic principles of Third World Studies—articulated by Misha Kokotovic as including perspectives developed outside of the United States and Europe and a focus on power and inequality—in terms of how they could provide a distinct and valuable perspective on some of the subject areas that are proving to be particularly compelling for UCSD undergraduates. Here we would suggest that global health, media studies, the environment, and issues of poverty, globalization, gender/LGBT studies, and global political economy would be particularly fruitful areas to explore. It seems clear to us that starting from critical, Third World-based perspectives that take issues of power and inequality as a starting point would yield distinct approaches that complement existing programs; focusing on these areas might draw in additional majors and minors.

No matter which scenario is pursued there are a number of *programmatic adjustments* that need to be made:

- 1) As soon as possible, a new interim or permanent director needs to be nominated; this step implies a close collaboration between faculty in the program and the staff during the time of transition.
- 2) There needs to be a more vigorous outreach to potential majors and minors on campus and through admissions of transfer students; we urge the faculty and staff to organize regular recruitment meetings. We also want to encourage regularizing the occasional informal dinners off-campus that would involve informal discussions between several faculty and majors about research concerns or development and social justice issues that arise in particular areas of faculty expertise and/or student study abroad research involvement. The majors talked about how exciting these opportunities to learn about faculty research experiences or a particular crisis and solutions developed by local communities. The intimate exchange and knowledge-sharing were invaluable to student planning of their own careers and a unique, unparalleled experience in a large university setting.
- 3) We encourage faculty to consider tying freshman seminar, senior seminar and other opportunities to connect research interests with a Third World Studies perspective as a recruitment tool to gather majors from freshman admits and transfer admits and sustain majors.
- 4) We encourage creative thinking regarding admissions recruitment of majors to get the word out to students about what Third World Studies is and what students have done with the major. The idea of a postcard with a digital link to the website would be great.

¹ We noted with interest TWS 198: The Political and Cultural Aspects of Global Health, taught by Professor Ivan Evans (who, oddly, does not seem to be Program affiliated). Director Cancel explained that the course was student initiated and that students also helped shape the readings. In other words, students appear to have identified a curricular gap and proposed a means of addressing it. Given the tremendous interest in global health, a course focusing on critical perspectives on health issues developed by scholars and practitioners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and robust new experiments in those areas to create new types of health policies and practices might attract large enrollments. Another model would be to have courses, apparently like TWS 198, that would be offered on a limited basis.

5) Improve and update the website. We encourage the Program to use their majors and alumni as their best ambassadors for outreach both in person and also through testimonials and descriptions of their experiences and career paths. Make greater use of current students and alumni in recruitment, both in meetings with potential majors and minors and more visibly on the website.

6) We note that the web-blasts sent by the staff member to the majors and minors have been helpful in informing students of the courses that are available to the major and minor each quarter and during the summer. The students, however, did need some more help in advising learning about what courses to take, how to develop their plans for study abroad, and how to avoid duplication of prerequisite courses. Several students identified ways in which the system of advising could be improved.

7) Historically, a strong relationship existed between Thurgood Marshall College and the Program. However it appears that the majority of majors are now ERC students and also increasingly Sixth College Students. It would be worthwhile for the staff member and faculty director to coordinate and target information to students in these colleges.

Conclusion:

We greatly enjoyed learning more about Third World Studies and meeting with the faculty who are deeply committed to the program, the staff person, and with the very engaged students. We were impressed with the uniqueness of the major, its appeal to dedicated students, and depth of the intellectual engagement that is already evident in the lower-division sequence. At its very best, the Program is a model of student-centered learning, with intensive faculty-student contact and providing a unique perspective and framework for the study of diverse and underrepresented regions in the curriculum and making our students engaged and informed participants of societies across the globe. We would encourage the faculty and administration to commit greater attention to efforts to sustain this program, to galvanize and improve on its intellectual mission and vision and curricular program, and the delivery of information about its value to prospective majors. With this renewed attention, we believe it would be possible for a small unique program to make a greater and more effective impact on the undergraduate educational opportunities of the study of Africa, Latin America and Asia, and to the UCSD undergraduate curriculum as a whole.

October 4, 2013

PROFESSOR BABAK RAHIMI, Director
Third World Studies

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for the Third World Studies Program

The Undergraduate Council considered the report of the subcommittee charged with reviewing the undergraduate program of the Third World Studies (TWS) Program at its November 9, 2012 meeting. The Council is pleased to see that the faculty of the Program have accepted the recommendations of the review subcommittee, but more importantly, have used the review process to initiate a discussion on the place of TWS in the University and to review the curriculum. In its response, the TWS proposes changing its name to *Global South Studies* and to restructure its curriculum around the interdisciplinary study of world regions and the diaspora. Both changes appear sound in concept. Regarding the proposed name change, Council members found it difficult to understand immediately what was intended by the title *Global South*. Our concern is that undergraduates, particularly prospective majors, will be less familiar with the term. We defer to the faculty of the Program on this decision, but caution whether more universally understood terms might be better suited for the title of the Program and its majors/minors.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Todd, Chair
2012-13 Undergraduate Council

cc: G. Boss R. Rodriguez
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