



TUMBLING THE CREATING THE RACE REQUIREMENT AT UC BERKELEY IVORY TOWER

30 YEARS
AMERICAN CULTURES
AT UC BERKELEY

Fought for throughout the latter half of the 1980s, agreed upon by campus faculty in 1989, and launched with its first courses in 1991, the American Cultures (AC) Requirement was a milestone in higher education. According to Ling-chi Wang, emeritus professor of Asian American Studies and one of the requirement's strongest advocates, the AC program was *"one of the most important curriculum-reform projects in the history of this campus..."* Beyond bringing new information and perspectives to students, *"... American Cultures challenges each discipline to raise questions that they had never raised before, and in the process, they have uncovered unknown aspects of their disciplines."*

The American Cultures Requirement remains unique in the nation in its approach. The courses students must pass to fulfill a one-class graduation requirement cover all instructional fields, as adaptations of existing courses or newly designed ones. All incorporate in the curriculum a comparative analysis of the experiences of US racial and ethnic groups, drawn from at least three of the following: African Americans, Indigenous peoples of the United States, Asian Americans, Chicano/Latino Americans, and European Americans. For many UC Berkeley departments, this framework offers a new approach to course design that responds directly to a problem encountered in numerous disciplines: how better to present the diversity of American experience to the diversity of students now enrolled at the university.



Political uprisings and the demographic transformation of higher education

“While civil rights leaders pressed colleges to admit more black students, the big push came after the assassination of Dr. King on April 4, 1968, followed by uprisings in more than 100 cities and student strikes. I don’t see how you can understand it apart from the upheavals on campus, racial upheavals in the larger society, the general upheavals around the world.”

**Professor Jerome Karabel,
50 Years of Affirmative Action: What Went Right and What It Got Wrong,
NYT, 3/30/2019.**

In the 1960s, institutions of higher education saw a rapid influx of students of color at what were traditionally white colleges and universities in the US. Before 1965, the majority of Black students in the country were enrolled at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The increase in enrollment was primarily due to several landmark legislations, including the 1965 Higher Education Act (HEA) and the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

The HEA greatly expanded financial aid to college students, allowing more students of color to attend more colleges and universities. The INA increased the possibility of immigration from Asian-origin countries to the United States, enabling more students of Asian descent to enroll in institutions of higher learning. Traditionally white colleges and universities also began accepting more African American students in response to political activism, especially following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



The ‘Opening of the American Mind’: Curricular insurgencies

“As the more diverse student body demanded a more diverse education, the nearly all-white faculties at US universities fiercely guarded the notion that a proper education emerged from studying the whitewashed canon of Great Books and viewed anything that might question the objectivity of that premise as an unwarranted political intrusion. The faculty attitude around the country was, “We let you in here. Come in, sit down, and enjoy the show.”

Professor Troy Duster, *Changing the Culture of the Academy*, 2007

As the number of enrolled undergraduate students of color increased at UC Berkeley, so did a demand for a curriculum reflective of “a people’s history” of resistance and social movements. “[The] American university no longer is and never again will be homogeneous, and much of what we have seen recently in terms of speech codes and the like are a stumbling attempt to adapt to this new heterogeneity. The major consequence of the new heterogeneity on campuses, however, has not been repression but the very opposite—a flowering of ideas and scholarly innovation unmatched in our history,” Professor Lawrence Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture and History*, 1996.

In 1968, UC Berkeley students formed the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF). Building on the imagination, skills, and tools of radical liberation and collective study, TWLF created a list of demands, including the development of a Third World Studies College of African American, Asian American, Native American, and Chicano/Latinx American academic departments. TWLF was critical to the eventual creation of the UC Berkeley Department of Ethnic Studies. At the heart of the insurgent movement, coalitions were being formed, coalitional politics and analytics that would foreground the eventual structure of the American Cultures requirement.

THE DAILY CALIFORNIAN

Berkeley's
Independent Daily;
Established 1871

VOLUME XXIV, NO. 67

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 1989

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

AMERICAN CULTURES PASSES



These students gathered yesterday to celebrate the Academic Senate's passage of the American cultures requirement.

Faculty votes 227-194 to add racial diversity requirement

By Heather Jones
Staff Writer

UC Berkeley faculty members approved the American cultures requirement yesterday in a decision that was hailed as an important step in fostering understanding among people of different colors.

By a vote of 227 to 194, the Academic Senate narrowly passed a proposal that requires all undergraduates to study the contributions of ethnic groups to American history.

Ethnic studies Professor Ron Takaki said the 33-vote margin was a positive sign.

"It's significant that we had such a large turnout," Takaki said. "More faculty became informed on the issue."

Beginning in 1991, students entering UC Berkeley will be required to pass a course focusing on three out of five ethnic groups — African American, Asian American, Chicano/Latino, European American, and Native American. The course may be taken in a variety of departments, and can

ovation when the votes were counted. Political science Professor William Muir argued against the proposal during the meeting.

"We have a disaster looming ahead of us," Muir said at the meeting. The university does not have the faculty, teaching assistants, or classrooms to accommodate the 6,000 students who will need to fulfill the requirement each year, he said.

Executive Vice Chancellor Roderic Park disagreed, saying that the university plans to allocate sufficient funds to implement the requirement, and by 1994 the campus will add 15 classrooms the size of 145 Dwinelle Hall.

Park also said that the Academic Senate should view the American cultures requirement as "more of an educational issue than a resource issue."

Physics Professor Gilbert Shapiro expressed reservations about the proposal, saying, "It is a naive point of view to say that the way to learn something is to take a course in it."

Shapiro proposed an amendment to the American cultures proposal that would provide alternative ways to

STAFF PHOTO BY DAN KATZ

ACSE to hold strike May 2-4

An Ethnic Studies Requirement

CREATED BY MARK MIN
UNDERGRADUATE, UC BERKELEY, 1987
(PRE) AMERICAN CULTURES CENTER



What is the Ethnic Studies requirement?

For several years, students and faculty on the Berkeley campus (and on many other campuses) have been working to establish an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement. If passed, all undergraduates would be required to take a course (from an approved list) that studies the history and culture of People of Color in the United States. Ethnic Studies would not be an additional requirement; rather it would serve to satisfy one of the existing Social Science or Humanities breadth requirements.



Why do we need an Ethnic Studies requirement?

By the year 2000, over half of California's population will be comprised of People of Color. As UC graduates, we will increasingly be expected to live and work in a society which demands racial understanding, sensitivity, and respect.

Students at UCB need to develop the ability to understand each others' histories and cultures. Ignorance is often used as an excuse for racism; education however, can be a powerful tool for overcoming our ignorance. Requiring Ethnic Studies is a first step toward combating the stereotypes and misconceptions that are fed to us by our history books and the media.

Unfortunately, most UCB students graduate with little or no understanding of People of Color. Within the mainstream disciplines, Anglo-American scholarship is heavily emphasized. Some syllabi list all white authors and create the illusion that minority history does not exist, or is not relevant to our education. Over 90% of UCB's permanent faculty are white. In turn, students

Questions most commonly raised about the requirement:

1. *How can one class be enough to replace what has traditionally been excluded from our education?*

While one semester is obviously not enough time to learn everything we need to learn, even taking one class helps to open people's eyes to issues which are not touched on in other classes. Many people who take Ethnic Studies are inspired to continue taking related classes.

2. *Doesn't focusing on racial minority groups exclude the experiences of other minority groups who have had to struggle in this country?*

The white ethnic experience is usually covered in Ethnic Studies classes. In order to understand racial oppression, it is essential for us to understand the

What is the present status of the requirement?

Educational decisions on our campus are usually made by the Academic Senate—the faculty decision making body. As a result of student support and student initiated proposals, the Academic Senate has established a committee to specifically study the requirement.

This committee, the Ad-Hoc Committee on Education and Ethnicity, is presently assessing the need for a requirement and considering possible plans for its implementation. The final recommendations of the committee will be brought before the full Senate for approval. Students feel, however, that this process should be completed within the semester.

We need a requirement now!

What can students do to help win the requirement?

Partnered Struggles: Global uprisings against South African apartheid and desegregating the UC Berkeley curriculum

The political momentum created by TWLF, the creation of the Department of Ethnic Studies, and the increasingly diverse student bodies, faculties, and curricula, built the foundations of political education for a new movement.

"There is a direct connection between the anti-apartheid movement and the birth of American Cultures. There were these sparks ignited in South Africa ...and political repression brought South Africa into the news, which led to longshore workers in San Francisco refusing to take South African cargo off ships ... and led to a movement across the country that particularly took hold on college campuses, and Berkeley especially. To be associated with a movement that actually succeeded was really unusual but highly significant, and because of the momentum that we had built, we were really feeling our oats, and we thought if we could do that, we could do more. We can begin to dismantle some of the racial barriers here on campus, so we started thinking about the curriculum. And looking at the faculty, and the fact was that although Berkeley had been one of the first campuses to create an Ethnic Studies program because of student protests, it had become a place where Ethnic Studies had become completely marginalized, and there were very few faculty of color



anywhere else at the university. And we said that this has to be our issue, that we desegregate the campus, desegregate the curriculum." Professor Pedro Noguera, Dean, USC School of Education, UC Berkeley Student Body President, 1985.

In 1976, halfway across the world in Soweto South Africa, Black schoolchildren brought years of unrest and civil disobedience to the apartheid state. The vibrations were felt in California and in the ports of San Francisco and Oakland, and an anti-apartheid boycott, inspired by the Soweto schoolchildren grew. In 1986, UC Berkeley students joined the SF and Oakland Longshore and Warehouse workers to organize against South African goods being disembarked and for divestment of the UC Regent pension investments from South African apartheid businesses. The movement was successful, pushing UC to divest more than \$4 billion in South African investments, and in the process, inspiring the beginning of the American Cultures curriculum.

The evolution of a requirement

Faculty and librarians cooperate in producing new courses

AMERICAN CULTURES: A history of confrontation



1969: Third World Strike leads to establishment of the Ethnic Studies Department. First time call for an Ethnic Studies requirement is heard.



Spring 1985: Student movement for UC to divest its holdings in South Africa begins.

1986: Incidents of racism and cultural insensitivity on campus spur strong revival of call for Ethnic Studies requirement.

Spring 1987: United People of Color holds first rally devoted solely to call for Ethnic Studies requirement.

Spring 1987: Academic Senate forms Special Committee on Education and Ethnicity; student protests continue.



Fall 1988: Academic Senate votes to recommit the Special Committee; students lobby faculty, hold forums on requirement.

April 25, 1989: Berkeley Division of Academic Senate approves requirement by vote of 227 to 194; establishes Center for Teaching and Study of American Cultures.



Spring 1990: American Cultures Center opens.

Fall 1991: First American Cultures courses offered; Asian students largest group of entering class.

AMERICAN CULTURES PASSES



These students gathered yesterday to celebrate the Academic Senate's passage of the American cultures requirement.

Faculty votes 227-194 to add racial diversity requirement

By Heather Jones
 Staff Writer

UC Berkeley faculty members approved the American cultures requirement yesterday in a decision that was hailed as an important step in fostering understanding among people of different colors.

By a vote of 227 to 194, the Academic Senate narrowly passed a proposal that requires all undergraduates to study the contributions of ethnic groups to American history.

Ethnic studies Professor Ron Takaki said the 33-vote margin was a positive sign.

"It's significant that we had such a large turnout," Takaki said. "More faculty became informed on the issue."

Beginning in 1991, students entering UC Berkeley will be required to pass a course focusing on three out of five ethnic groups — African American, Asian American, Chicano/Latino, European American, and Native American. The course may be taken in a variety of departments, and can overlap with existing breadth requirements.

Supporters have maintained that an American cultures course is necessary

ovation when the votes were counted. Political science Professor William Muir argued against the proposal during the meeting.

"We have a disaster looming ahead of us," Muir said at the meeting. The university does not have the faculty, teaching assistants, or classrooms to accommodate the 6,000 students who will need to fulfill the requirement each year, he said.

Executive Vice Chancellor Roderic Park disagreed, saying that the university plans to allocate sufficient funds to implement the requirement, and by 1994 the campus will add 15 classrooms the size of 145 Dwinelle Hall.

Park also said that the Academic Senate should view the American cultures requirement as "more of an educational issue than a resource issue."

Physics Professor Gilbert Shapiro expressed reservations about the proposal, saying, "It is a naive point of view to say that the way to learn something is to take a course in it."

Shapiro proposed an amendment to the American cultures proposal that would provide alternative ways to fulfilling the requirement, such as a term paper. The amendment was voted on and rejected by the senate.

Emeka Ezera, a student represen-

What could be so important? Building the AC Requirement

"This requirement was not about changing what classes students take; it was about changing what the faculty teach, which is much, much harder to do. It was about curricular reform."

Ron Choy, Assistant Director of the AC Center, 1991-2004

Passed by the UC Berkeley Senate in 1989, the AC requirement was the first and only campus-wide graduation requirement for all undergraduate students. When the requirement was first created, there was not one course on campus that could meet the comparative parameters of the requirement. A massive feat, the curriculum had to be built within two years to ensure that incoming students in 1991 had the necessary courses to prepare for graduation, catalyzing the most dramatic ideological effort in the university's history.

"The AC requirement requires faculty who aren't specialists in this fraught topic of racial formation to acquire a certain proficiency. Where are they going to acquire that if they're focused on their own specialized research in their specific fields of expertise?" Brian Powers, UC Berkeley Sociology Faculty, *Tumbling the Ivory Tower*, East Bay Express, 9/23/2015

On a college campus renowned for its research excellence, the AC Summer seminars for UC Berkeley and community college faculty offered through the newly created and administratively supported 'Center for the Teaching and Study of American Cultures' were the first across-campus effort to bring faculty together to talk about teaching.

"The Chancellor gave us a room, a blue carpet, and a little furniture. Then we had to figure out how to make this thing (courses that would meet the AC Requirement) happen. In the first summer seminar, we had 30-odd faculty, tenured faculty, faculty who had (mostly, not all) been in the trenches fighting for AC. And faculty that we had never heard of before ... And we wondered why someone who researches Hegel is interested in this? Whilst I was worried about the seats needed for graduation, making sure that there wasn't a bottleneck/float holding up graduation, the seminars for six weeks during the summer, two hours a day, were arguing about things such as 'truth'. But it wasn't just about seats — it was about departments. Remember that the faculty had required that students pass something that did not exist. There were no AC classes. No one knew how to do this thing. The senate had made up the requirement, codified it into regulation 300, and no one (except perhaps Ron Takaki) knew how to do it. And the fact is that our faculty here, they may be the world's expert of whatever they are the expert on, but in this particular area, if they were interested in it at all, race was White and Black, at best. But everyone else hardly existed. And this requirement needed three, comparative, substantial, theoretical groups, at least. It was very clear what the rules were. No one knew anything about this. And that was the purpose of the seminars. For faculty who wanted to teach a course to learn the material, to learn from each other." Ron Choy, Assistant Director of the AC Center, 1991-2004.

Within two years, there were enough courses to meet the new AC requirement to ensure that each student would graduate on time. By 1994, when the first students were graduating who needed the AC requirement, there were at least 6,000 seats available annually, and UC Berkeley faculty had fundamentally changed the way that they taught.

AGSE to hold strike May 3, 4

Zakim said he did not know the member Eric Zakim said.



Who We Are!: Multiculturalism, the war on diversity, and the growth of colorblindness

As multiculturalism became the byword for the state of California and the UC system reached a “minority-majority” demographic status just a few years into the creation of the AC curriculum, the state of California became the bellwether of “the culture wars.” By the mid-1990s, the political ideology of colorblindness, explaining racial matters as the outcome of nonracial dynamics (Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, 2017), shaped the national discourse, and attacks against demographic diversity and race-centered public policies coalesced in 1994 in Prop 187 (barring undocumented people from access to education, health care and social services), in 1996 in Prop 209 (barring affirmative action or hiring decisions, contracting decisions, or academic admission decisions based on race, ethnicity, and gender in all state programs) and in 1998 in Prop 227 (banning most forms of bilingual education and mandating English language-only instruction).

“When the University of California Board of Regents voted to ban affirmative action on July 20th 1995 (the vote became the precursor to Proposition 209), a new wave of activists rose up to fight this blatant display of partisan politics.” Professor Ula Taylor, Proposition 209 and the Affirmative Action Debate on the University of California Campuses, Feminist Studies, Spring 1999.

Public schools became the principal targets of attacks with court cases leveled at higher education policies, especially admissions to public universities. Prop 209 dramatically shifted enrollment profiles in the UC system and in 1998, in the first class assembled under the new ban, only 191 Black students were admitted (compared to 562 in 1997) and 600 Latina/Chicana students (compared to 1,266 in 1997). The AC curriculum weathered the war on diversity, and rebounding from the attacks, there was determined resistance on campus and the first Division of Equity and Inclusion was created. With it a number of campus-wide initiatives, including the American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) program, were designed, leading to campus engagement with antiracism and inclusion initiatives in the diverse communities of the Bay Area.

“ACES doesn’t work to completely dismantle, but at least erodes, the wall that gets created between this ivory tower — the university — and the community. I think the university doesn’t know how to handle this type of radical academic work that is bringing the community in. ...We’ve been beating this drum about how cool ACES is for at least four years.” Austin Pritzkat, ACES Fellow, UC Berkeley, 2015.

A partnership of the Public Service Center and the AC Center, ACES fosters the creation of community-university partnerships with local organizations. Supporting faculty and community partners in forming their co-constructed projects, students have the opportunity not only to deepen and apply their AC classroom learning but often to bridge the gap between campus and their own lives and knowledge in communities they call home.

“Institutional neglect of racism and injustice is the exercise of power, the kind of power that refuses to notice and refuses to speak.”

Jeff Chang, *Who We Be: the Colorization of America*, 2014

EAST BAY EXPRESS

SEPTEMBER

DEPENDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1978

EASTBAYEXPRESS.COM



TUMBLING THE IVORY TOWER

At UC Berkeley, one radically engaged academic program could finally force the school to own up to its mission as a public university – if the administration agrees to fund it.

By Sarah Burke

Old and New Battlegrounds: On beyond 30

“This expanded student body and faculty have brought the outside world within the walls of the university and have radically altered the curriculum, according to the critics.”

Lawrence W. Levine, *Through the Looking Glass, in The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture and History, 1996.*

Everything is the same and nothing is the same. Entering its third decade, the AC curriculum is the site of new energy and rebuilding, responding to the global conversation on state-violence and anti-Black racism. Beginning with the uprisings at the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, to the murder of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, KY, and George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN, conversations on and off campus forge a link between antiracism and political education, with an urgency that had been lost in the previous decade.

“I am glad to see that structural critiques of racism are finally gaining some traction in university curricula and professional training in the United States. It’s been a long wait.” Tony Platt, Distinguished Affiliated Scholar at the Center for the Study of Law & Society, 7/21/2021.

Like in its early years, creating pedagogical spaces for faculty to exchange ideas in this most intellectually demanding, often emotionally exhausting and politically busy space, AC programs have been created at the apex of research, teaching, learning, and racial justice. In recent years, Teaching in Troubled Times, Data Justice, and the Creative Discovery Fellows (CDF) programs, have been formed to create new framings and build new ideas to meet the historical juncture of these complex political times.

And so it continues “What could be so important?” Bill Simmons, Inaugural Director, The AC Center, 1989

TEACHING IN 'EVER CHANGING'
TROUBLED TIMES

Community Reflections During COVID-19

Thursday, April 2, 2020
10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. PST

UNDOCUMENTED
IMMIGRANTS

THE 'TEACHING IN TROUBLED TIME SERIES' PRESENTS

WHAT TO DO IF ICE COMES TO CAMPUS:

RIGHTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND RESOURCES

February 26, 2018

Co-sponsored by

*The American Cultures Center, Berkeley Law,
The Center for Race and Gender, The Division of
Equity & Inclusion, The Undocumented Student Program,
Student Equity and Success, and The University of California
Immigrant Legal Services Center*

THE 'TEACHING IN TROUBLED TIME SERIES' PRESENTS

MORE THAN WORDS:

IN CONVERSATION WITH THE LANGUAGE OF RACIAL
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE-MAKING

November 2, 2021

Co-sponsored by

*The American Cultures Center,
The Centers for Educational Justice and Community Engagement,
The Center for Teaching and Learning,
The Division of Equity and Inclusion, and
The Multicultural Community Center*

Teaching in Troubled Times Series

The Teaching in Troubled Times series began in 2017 as a series of timely dialogues elevating some of the most pressing social and political questions that enter our lives and our classrooms. The series has fermented vibrant discussion and delivered 'on-the-ground' tools to support our students' complex lives.



americancultures.berkeley.edu/ttt



The Creative Discovery Fellows (CDF) Program

Launched in 2018, the UC Berkeley Creative Discovery Fellows Program (formerly Adobe Fellows) supports instructors incorporating creative assignments into American Cultures courses. The CDF program has been built to respond to a core question of social justice education: "How do we design support for faculty and students in ways that are adaptive, equity-oriented, and foster antiracism?"





Engineering, Environment, and Society

Since the 1980s academic researchers studying environmental pollution have repeatedly demonstrated what many communities of color and low-income communities have long asserted: poor people and people of color are systematically and disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards.

Why is this the case? What does it mean to be a technical actor - whether an engineer, economist, planner, or scientist - trying to rectify environmental degradation given this context?

In partnerships with multiple community-based organizations, we will engage at the intersection of environmental justice, social justice, and engineering to demonstrate how problems that are commonly defined in technical terms are at their roots deeply socially embedded. Topics covered will include environmental engineering as it relates to air, water, and soil contamination; race, class, and privilege; expertise and knowledge production; ethics; and engaged citizenship.

This course is supported by the College of Engineering, the (ES)2 program (Engineering Scholars=Engaged Scholars), the American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) program, and the Blum Center for Developing Economies. For more information visit:

<http://blumcenter.berkeley.edu/gppminor>.

Course: E 157AC or IAS 157AC
Prof. Khalid Kadir
4 units

Poster designed by Alishea Gibson, Blum Center for Developing Economies

The American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) Program

Launched in January 2010, the American Cultures Engaged Scholarship Program developed as a partnership between the American Cultures Center and the Public Service Center. This program aims to transform how faculty's community-engaged scholarship is valued, to enhance learning for students through a combination of teaching and practice, and to create new knowledge that has an impact both in the community and the academy.



THE AMERICAN CULTURES CENTER presents:

EXPLORING AN UNTOLD CALIFORNIA WATER STORY

MORRISON READING ROOM
DOE LIBRARY



Given that California currently faces one of its most severe droughts on record, it is especially important to learn more about a period and place where conscious engineering of water use allowed a culture to flourish over hundreds of years, the Paiute Tribe of Owens Valley. The Paiute developed a sophisticated system of irrigation canals that made the valley bloom.

For a long time, this history was absent from the popular narrative of the California 'water wars.' Through an ongoing community partnership in the ACES class, *Researching Water in the West* (CW 50/150AC), this fascinating history will be presented by a Paiute tribal member, Berkeley faculty, the Bancroft curator and a former AC student, whose lives have been changed by unearthing and exploring this story.

americancultures.berkeley.edu/aces

American Cultures Student Prize



Since 2008, the American Cultures (AC) Student Prize has recognized and celebrated undergraduate achievements within AC courses. The Prize is awarded annually to undergraduates for projects they develop in an AC course that promotes understanding of U.S. race, ethnicity, and culture and exemplifies a standard of excellence in scholarship. Prior award-winning submissions have included essays, poetry, films, reflection statements on live performances, among other work produced for American Cultures courses. Learn More at: <https://americancultures.berkeley.edu/sp>



AC Student Prize

AC Excellence in TEACHING AWARD



Since 2009, the American Cultures (AC) Excellence in Teaching Award has recognized individual faculty members' exemplary teaching in the American Cultures curriculum. Instructors are recognized for their inspiring and sustained commitment to creating a learning space able to hold the multiple challenges and opportunities that teaching AC content requires. Learn more at: <https://americancultures.berkeley.edu/ata>



AC Teaching Award



americancultures.berkeley.edu