

**Joint Committee: Review of the Multicultural Requirement
April 21, 2016**

Members:	Undergraduate Council	University of Oregon Curriculum Committee
	Alison Schmitke (Chair) Education Studies	Frances White (Chair) Anthropology
	Ocean Howell Honors College	Gordon Hall Psychology
	Loren Kajikawa Music	Mike Jefferis Office of the Registrar
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Lisa Freinkel, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Studies, established a work group to address the demand from the Black Student Task Force to have Ethnic Studies 101 as a graduation requirement. After initial meetings, this group determined that a faculty review of the current multicultural requirement would be informative. Consequently, the above members from the Undergraduate Council and the University of Oregon Curriculum Committee were called together to form a Joint Committee to review the multicultural requirement. The purpose of this memo is to summarize the discussion of the Joint Committee.

Members of the Joint Committee agree that a review of existing courses is necessary and overdue. The last review was conducted in 2007. Members of the 2007 Undergraduate Council reviewed a sample of 200 courses fulfilling the multicultural requirement. The following questions were used to evaluate syllabi:

1. Does the course meet the criteria of the category in which it is offered?
2. Does the syllabus for the course effectively state how the course meets the criteria for the category in which it is offered?
3. Does the course require specialized prior knowledge (pre-requisite course work)?
4. Is the course content appropriate for the level at which the course is offered (LD or UD)

It was determined that 153 courses met the category criteria, 14 courses did not, more information was needed for 19 courses, and the category delineation for 14 courses was changed as a result of the process. The 2007 review did not include a discussion of the purpose and structure of the multicultural requirement.

In 2016, there are 1219 courses to sample for a review. It is determined that the UOCC is the committee charged with the responsibility to review courses. During the academic year, the review docket for the UOCC is full and there is no time to conduct a sample study of 1219 courses. Summer support extended to faculty is necessary to complete this task. Members of the Joint Committee acknowledge a contributing factor to the delay in conducting a review is a general sense of dissatisfaction with the current categories and structure of the multicultural requirement. Before investing the time to initiate a study of the courses used to fulfill the multicultural requirement, the Joint Committee recommends discussion and action addressing the requirement itself.

To fulfill the current multicultural education requirement, students take one course in two of the following categories: American Cultures; Identity, Pluralism, and Tolerance; and International Cultures. Members of the Joint Committee representing the UOCC noted the category descriptions are inadequate when determining the designation for a new course. There is shared concern within the Joint Committee for the titles of the categories. For example, “tolerance” suggests that there is something distasteful about a group of people or a culture and the best we can do is to put up with it – to tolerate it. “Tolerance” is a dated term. The Joint Committee recommends an update to the category titles and descriptions to reflect current scholarship in the field of critical multicultural education.

Sue Eveland, University Registrar, provided the Joint Committee with a summary of information of a two year sample of students awarded degrees between Fall 2013 and Spring 2014. There were 9,247 students in this sample. Below is a list of the top 20 courses used to fulfill the multicultural requirement:

Course	Number of Students Completing Course	Category Designations
SOC 207	1947	SSC, IP
ANTH 161	1837	SSC, IC
AAD 250	1330	AL, IP
AAD 251	1272	AL, IP
ANTH 173	1122	SSC, IP
AAD 252	1108	AL, IP
GEOG 142	1050	SSC, IC
J 320	895	IP
WGS 101	878	SS, IP
WS 101	852	SS, AC
PHIL 110	643	AL, IP
PHIL 170	618	AL, IP
COLT 211	612	AL, IC
MUJ 350	587	AL, AC
HIST 105	555	SS, IC
COLT 360	527	AL, IP
MUS 270	526	AL, AC
HIST 106	512	SS, IC
INTL 260	450	SS, IC
INTL 240	441	SS, IC

It is possible for students to fulfill the requirement out of convenience as courses meet multiple category designations. The Office of the University Registrar reports requests for courses with multicultural status have increased. During the 2014-2015 academic year, 25 new course fulfilling the multicultural requirement were added. As the date of the memo, 17 new courses were approved in 2015-2016. The Joint Committee is concerned that the number of courses and the opportunity for multiple requirements to be fulfilled has led to the diluting of the purpose and coherence of the requirement.

There is an imbalance in the categories. The American Cultures category consists of 179 courses (14%); Identity, Pluralism, and Tolerance consists of 362 courses (30%); and International Cultures consists of 678 courses (56%). Most students are fulfilling the requirement through IP and IC courses and are not exposed to the critical conversations occurring in AC courses addressing a critical analysis of students’ cultural context and assumptions.

As currently in practice, “students can meet their International Cultures requirement just by participating in a UO-sponsored study abroad programs that are ten weeks or longer, and selected programs between five and nine weeks” (<https://registrar.uoregon.edu/current-students/group-satisfying-and-multicultural-courses>). Members of the Joint Committee are concerned with using study abroad as a means to fulfill this requirement and in particular are concerned with the language “just by participating.” It is possible for students to complete study abroad and enroll in an online course with multicultural status and complete the requirement entirely off campus.

In summary, the Joint Committee recommends the initiation of a robust discussion related to the purpose, structure, and curricular coherency of the multicultural requirement.