

## **Addressing Oppression Across the Curriculum EPR Workshop, 8 August 2006**

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### **Questions: Did your program make an effort to address racism, sexism, classism, or other forms of oppression? If yes, what strategies or activities did you use?**

Many more programs addressed these issues than readers expected; of 202 answering this question, 147 reported a major or minor effort to address oppression (73%).

The planning groups with the highest proportions of programs reporting effort toward addressing oppression were Tribal, Reservation and Community-Based Programs 100% (of 3); Native American World Indigenous Peoples 100% (of 1); and Society, Politics, Behavior and Change 87% (of 23). The two groups with the lowest proportions were Environmental Studies 21% (of 24) and Scientific Inquiry 41% (of 22).

The tally of oppressive issues addressed should be interpreted with caution; if an issue was mentioned in the “strategy” section of the end of program review sheets it was counted, but many responses listed more than one issue, and many others did not list particular issues at all. Specific mentions of race appeared more often than those of other individual issues, a total of 38 times across the reviews. Additional repeatedly-addressed axes of oppression included gender (25), class (18), sexual orientation/transgender (9) and ethnicity/culture (8).<sup>1</sup> Seventeen issues in all were identified; in addition to those already listed, faculty mentioned (in no particular order) labor issues, disability and health, “first world-ism”, sexual orientation, language, military, rationality (as contrasted with other ways of knowing), age, secularism, political identity, immigration and oppression by human species of not-human species.

The wording of this question solicited information about a range of approaches. Most responses were couched in terms of intellectual work, as when a faculty wrote of a three-night program stay at a migrant farm labor camp that “The camp director talked with the students about current issues in migrant labor.” It was rarely possible to determine from the data the actual learning emphasis of program efforts, though; for example, “Examined cross-cultural perspectives of health and disease” may have referred to a focus on personal reflection, on factual information about specific cultures, on interpersonal relationships within the program, or on theory-based critical analysis (among other possibilities). The most common broad types of pedagogical activities faculty mentioned were discourse analysis, analysis of representations, and field trips or other experiences such as work with incarcerated youth or attendance at related EWS forums. (See lists below for more.) Faculty most often mentioned history and cross-cultural work as the vectors through which they approached the subject of oppression.

Some faculty included statements about what they intended students to gain from this work. Several faculty specifically expected students to dismantle stereotypes and to recognize privilege. Other programs focused on increasing students' awareness of inequality and marginalization; for example, teaching them to understand how dialects and ways of speaking can lead to assumptions about the speaker; how bodies of different shapes, abilities, and colors

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<sup>1</sup> Ten responses referred to “all of the above” – the “above” presumably referring to the “racism, sexism, classism, or other forms of oppression” in the question; so race, gender and class may be undercounted here.

may be marginalized; or how language, law, and dominant ideologies create rules about who gets to be citizens and who does not. Faculty also mentioned wanting students to learn to empathize across difference, break down barriers with cross-cultural communities, challenge U.S. dominant norms through the study of another culture, be aware of Western implications in oppressive global policies, and be conscious of the influence that culture has upon one's worldview, values, and assumptions. In one program, students learned to decode oppression suggested in texts. Another program expected students to recognize racism as a social system, not simply in terms of identity politics at an individual level; this faculty member elaborated that awareness of structural racism helped students point it out, resist, and be allies.

We noticed that explicit mentions of theory were infrequent, appearing in perhaps 15 of 90 reviews that identified their program emphasis on oppression as “major”. (We interpreted references to theory as broadly as possible, counting “analysis of privilege” here, for example.) Theories mentioned that we recognized as deriving from oppression-related work included feminism, critical race theory, and post-colonial theory. Other theories identified came from the fields of philosophy, psychology, and organizational development. Just five faculty mentioned that their programs addressed oppression from a system/institutional/structural perspective.

Faculty commitment to addressing issues of oppression in the context of their programs is strongly evident in the results of this survey. In most planning groups, 80-100% of the responding programs make an effort to address such issues. Of the 202 responses to this question that have been collected during the past two years, only five programs mention having any difficulty or challenges associated with this work in their programs. Three faculty identified challenges with oppression-related discussions and material, and two others described student dissatisfaction with Day of Absence/Day of Presence forums. If five programs included such comments in their responses, undoubtedly other faculty and students have also faced challenges when addressing issues of oppression in their programs. We recommend interviewing faculty who have made an effort to address oppression, to explore what worked well and what didn't while engaging with these issues; how they handled difficult situations and conversations; whether they used specific practices or approaches that enhanced student engagement and learning; and what additional support, tools, skills, or training they need to support their work. Would some programs that are not currently addressing issues of oppression related to their themes be more likely to do so if the faculty felt more confident or knew about new techniques? These questions are beyond the scope and purpose of the current End-of-Program Review instrument, but follow-up interviews (in this and other domains) could contribute much to the College's understanding of program dynamics and faculty practice, contextualization of the overview data collected through the basic survey, and recommendations for action.

## Evergreen Programs Address Oppression: Teaching Tools, Materials, Practices

Tool	Examples from the Responses
Discourse Analysis	Literature (including drama), <i>New York Times</i> articles, dialects, expository texts, ethnographies, sociolinguistics
Analysis of Representations	Art, literature (including drama), cartoons, photography, images of gods and goddesses, stereotypical representations of Arab and Muslim women, films
Learning Activities (Active student involvement)	Stay in migrant farm labor camp, arts therapy labs, attending Day of Presence/Day of Absence activities, participating in Procession of the Species, Starpower game, work with incarcerated youth, teaching acting as a way to teach empathy, yoga, seminars and discussions, EWS forum on race, fieldwork on “sexism and heterosexism in the real world,” art, attending off-campus performances, making decisions democratically, strong student-generated covenant, Beyond Talk: Placing Race at the Center of Education diversity series
Making Knowledge (Includes assignments)	Seminars, discussions, individual projects, program projects (examples: a production in a performing arts program, a collaborative “proposal for reparations for Blacks in America”), case studies, anthology project, decoding, conflicting interests
Personal Reflection	Personal experience and insights, “Students finding the questions within themselves”
Group Reflection	Reflecting and discussing occurrences in the program (“gender splits in some aspects of class work,” values differences, terminology use)
Pedagogy	Universal Design for Learning

## Evergreen Programs Address Oppression: Topics of Analysis / Study

Subject Category	Examples from the Responses (List not exhaustive)
History	Science, slavery, labor, Native American, Western, American, racism, “fishing wars”
Resistance to oppression	Practices of resistance, using art as resistance
Laws, policies, legal cases	Supreme Court cases, 14 <sup>th</sup> Amendment, language ideology and power in language, rights and equality, indigenous rights, Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, anti-Chinese laws in Indonesia
Stereotypical representations	Chronically ill and disabled people, Arab and Muslim women, gender
Cross cultural perspectives	Health and disease; education; concepts of “love;” experiences of courtship, marriage and sexuality; experiences of growing up; differences between U.S. and Japanese education; 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Britain (Victoria) and 21 <sup>st</sup> Century U.S.; Indigenous worldview and dominant society; celebrations; Islamic and European cultures during Middle Ages; physics in several cultures; cultural relativism
Social problems and inequities	Inequities in K – 12 education, health disparities, nationalism in Mexico and Brazil, disability accommodations in classroom, digital divide
Positionality in research	
Privilege	
Economic issues	Economic development, health disparities, financial inequities
Systemic nature of oppression	Who belongs and who doesn’t belong in relation to political entities
Russia	Arts as resistance to Soviet oppression of individuals; mix of diverse peoples; classism
“Reparations for Blacks in America”	
Oppression of other species by human species	
Language and dialect	Language ideology, power in language
Visions of desirable society	
War and militarism	Weapons of mass destruction, comparison of two world wars
Work	
First wave of U.S. Feminism	Limits, struggle for suffrage
Psychotherapy as tool of oppression	
Buddhism as critique of oppression	
Cultural landscapes	Native American efforts to protect natural environments, garden design
Scientific ethics	
Occurrences in the program	“Gender splits in some aspects of class work,” values differences, terminology use, “called students on assumptions and moments when they were speaking for others vs. self,” “stopped the program and addressed student comments”
Nonviolent communication	

**Evergreen Programs Address Oppression: Faculty Estimate of the Emphasis Given to the Work**

<b>Planning Group</b>	<b>Total Responding</b>	<b>Oppression a Major Emphasis</b>	<b>Oppression a Minor Emphasis</b>	<b>No Oppression Emphasis</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>% of Programs Reporting a Major or Minor Emphasis</b>
Core	14	9	2	2	1	79%
Culture, Text and Language	29	20	5	4	--	86
Expressive Arts	19	7	9	2	1	84
Environmental Studies	24	2	3	17	2	21
Evening/Weekend Studies	37	19	13	5	--	86
Inter-Area	27	16	6	5	--	81
Native American World Indigenous Peoples	1	1	--	--	--	100
Society, Politics, Behavior and Change	23	13	7	3	--	87
Tribal, Reservation-Based/Community-Determined	6	3	3	--	--	100
Scientific Inquiry	22	--	9	13	--	41
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>73</b>