

**American Multicultural Studies  
Self-Study 2014-15**

**Fall 2014-Spring 2015**

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### **A. Program Introduction and History**

American Multicultural Studies (AMCS) formed as an Afro-American Studies Department in 1969, three years after SSU had moved to its current, permanent site, and only one year after the student strike at San Francisco State University which led to the first Ethnic Studies program in the country. Although the department shared a chair position with Mexican American and Native American Studies, each unit had its own curriculum, class listings, and major requirements.

In 1989, the department changed its name from Afro-American Studies to American Multicultural Studies, reflecting a decade-long trend toward multi-ethnic content that had developed in the department's courses. With this new identity came several permanent faculty hires and the painstaking rebuilding of a new curriculum, which finally took hold in AY 97-98. The new curriculum invested heavily in General Education (GE) courses. Department Student-to-Faculty Ratio (SFR) rose, as did class size, and the number of majors, from an average of about 15 majors a year in the early 1990s to an average of about 25 majors a year in the late 1990s.

Perhaps for a number of reasons, including faculty effectiveness, an intriguing new curriculum, significant GE representation, an active feeder program with Santa Rosa Junior College, and our teaching preparation tracks, the number of AMCS majors increased steeply after the turn of the century. The total leveled around 65 throughout the decade before declining dramatically beginning in 2009. AMCS had 86 majors in 2004. A decade later it could barely raise a dozen. The department's 2013-14 curriculum revision is its way of addressing this decline.

Fall 1997	18 majors	Fall 1998	31 majors	Fall 1999	35 majors
Fall 2000	37 majors	Fall 2001	49 majors	Fall 2002	66 majors
Fall 2003	67 majors	Fall 2004	86 majors	Fall 2005	77 majors
Fall 2006	77 majors	Fall 2007	68 majors	Fall 2008	55 majors
Fall 2009	32 majors	Fall 2010	28 majors	Fall 2011	20 majors
Fall 2012	9 majors	Fall 2013	11 majors	Fall 2014	13 majors

The number of minors remained the same throughout the late period:

Fall 2009: 15 minors, Fall 2010: 15 minors, Fall 2011: 9 minors,  
Fall 2012: 12 minors, Fall 2013: 14 minors, Fall 2014: 14 minors

The number of graduates, the most important one of all, has fallen during the late period:  
AY 08-09: 16 graduates, AY 09-10: 10 graduates, AY 10-11: 11 graduates,  
AY 11-12: 13 graduates, AY 12-13: 11 graduates, AY 13-14: 5 graduates

While AMCS believes that the curriculum revision will significantly increase the department's total of majors and minors, it also realizes that rapid growth would lead to a potentially negative impact on faculty output and quality. During the peak period 2004-07, AMCS had five full-time faculty (FTF) members, in addition to a full-time Native American Studies (NAMS) faculty member, since retired. We now have 3.5 FTF.

Adjuncts thus play a major role in delivering our almost-all-GE curriculum. Growth is not necessarily a priority for the department although we feel that a combined total of 60 majors/minors would be a good target. We have 27 as of FA14.

Currently there are three full-time AMCS professors. Michael Ezra and Elenita Strobel came to the department in 2003. Christina Baker joined the department in 2008. Kim Hester-Williams of the English Department also teaches three courses a year (50 percent) for the department. Thus we function as if we had 3.5 FTF. The teaching and research interests of all faculty members explore how race and ethnicity intersect with power and inequality.

Michael Ezra, the current department chair, specializes in post-World War II African American history and culture. He is the author of two books and the editor of another, in addition to editing the *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*, which is partly funded by the Sonoma State University (SSU) School of Arts and Humanities. Christina Baker is an associate professor and sociologist specializing in race and gender. Baker founded the Africana Studies Lecture Series, the Film Studies Minor, and serves on several important campus committees. Elenita Strobel specializes in transformative pedagogy and is the author of two books. She also serves as an advocate for transnational Filipinos. Strobel served as department chair from Fall 2008-Spring 2014. Kim Hester-Williams specializes in U.S. colonial literature, but has published in a wide range of areas pertaining to African American culture.

The new curriculum became official in the 2014-15 catalog year. We designed the new curriculum to be as convenient as possible—to go with the structural flow, if you will—for potential majors and minors. The new curriculum, for example, added several lower-division GE courses to meet the needs of the growing numbers of first- and second-year students at SSU, whereas older versions of the AMCS major stressed upper-division courses. Additionally, we formally incorporated the courses of other departments into our various major tracks (known as ‘concentrations’ or ‘pathways’). With 3.5 FTF we cannot possibly teach on our own a full range of ethnic studies classes the way a department at a research university might. By offering some of our curriculum, but not the core, to our colleagues in other departments whose courses accomplish our required learning objectives, we are able to increase the scope of our offerings without stretching ourselves too thin. What we did with the new curriculum was design a program that would fit into the existing structure in ways that set reasonable demands on our faculty while addressing our students’ needs, all based on what we could expect to accomplish with the resources granted to us.

In addition to the strategic elements of our new curriculum, any introduction to it should address its academic and intellectual aspects as well. AMCS takes an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to teaching students about the importance of race and ethnicity to people living in the United States. Our courses provide students with the theoretical foundation to understand the complexities of these issues while training them to develop cultural competence, critical thinking, and leadership skills that will empower them to navigate their communities and the world. Particularly our courses focus on the histories

and cultures of African Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, so that students may understand more deeply America's multicultural heritage and future. We also address the diasporic and transnational aspects of these peoples' experiences.

AMCS is committed to graduating students who have the knowledge and skills to live and work productively and competently in an increasingly diverse world. The faculty is committed to shaping students into culturally informed citizens who can make positive impacts on their communities. Students who complete our major or minor program will have the tools to adapt to a rapidly changing multicultural environment. At the core of our mission is the hope that our work will lead to a better world.

Toward these goals, AMCS created a new major program that conceived the curriculum more broadly. Students must take five core courses, four pathway/concentration courses, and two elective courses, for a total of eleven AMCS courses (44 units). Students specialize in any of the following nine pathways/concentrations: Africana Studies, Hemispheric Studies, Comparative Ethnic Studies, Film Studies, Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Native American Studies, Jewish Studies (JWST), Literature and Art, or Multicultural Education. Students can also take five courses (three core, two elective) to minor in AMCS.

Students who have graduated with an AMCS degree now work in the fields of education, personnel administration, business, law, human resources, public health, public relations, social services, and environmental planning. AMCS provides a sound foundation for graduate work in many traditional disciplines and emerging multidisciplinary fields of inquiry.

AMCS fills a number of important roles on campus:

- It spans a huge range of existing curricula and bridges many departments.
- It provides the majority of courses that fulfill the GE Ethnic Studies requirement.
- Its AY 11-12, 12-13, 13-14 SFR is over 30, often the school leader.
- It provides GE courses in categories A3, C1, C2, C3, D1—more if you include cross-lists.
- It houses Native American Studies, Jewish Studies, and Film Studies.
- Its faculty is more racially diverse than other departments'.

AMCS attributes its decline in majors in the last five years to a structurally outdated curriculum that did not take into account the new realities of the SSU student body, rather than any defect in the curriculum content, any decline in academic quality, or any on-campus marginalization of our department. The bullet-pointed-above list addresses AMCS's long-term sustainability on campus, regardless of its number of majors, although we would like for our department to raise the totals.

Over the last couple years, when the number of majors dried up, several people felt it might be wise for the department to merge with Chicano/Latino Studies (CALS) or Women and Gender Studies (WGS) or both. The departments talked about such a plan,

with AMCS unsuccessfully leading the way toward a merger. Talks between the departments about how to collaborate continue to this day.

But AMCS now feels it is in a different position than it was a year ago. With the new curriculum in place, AMCS has already begun to attract an increasing number of minors and majors during FA14. AMCS and its corresponding programs provide a large proportion of the school's GE menu, and at a big SFR. The CSU Chancellor's Office has also put a moratorium on any organizational changes toward ethnic studies programs, which insulates AMCS from any top-down restructuring. AMCS feels like it is on sturdier ground than a year ago, in terms of its curriculum, its number of majors, and its political standing.

AMCS has a very important place on campus and a long history, thus it sees its future brightly. It always had a departmental mission beyond that of service to its majors. It always has been committed to educating the wider campus community. AMCS courses are often the primary exposure a student may have to issues of race and ethnicity in a college setting. AMCS provides a forum for students to explore issues surrounding race and ethnicity and to understand their own place within U.S. racial paradigms. We provide curricular diversity and breadth to students in the Arts and Humanities, while other departments with larger numbers of majors provide more specialized curricula.

AMCS Curriculum—Core Classes (20 units)

The five-course, 20-unit core consists of three lower-division GE courses, an upper-division GE course, and a methods class. The core provides early breadth for new students and serves as a feeder for the major and minor, and then follows up with more advanced curricula.

Students choose any three of the following (12 units):

- AMCS 160A/B Learning Community (C3)
- AMCS 210 Ethnic Groups in America (D1)
- AMCS 225 How Racism Works (C2)
- AMCS 260 Ethnicity in the Arts, Culture, and Media (C1)

Students must also take (8 units):

- AMCS 350 Ethics, Values, and Multiculturalism (C3)
- AMCS 480 Research and Methodology (no GE)

AMCS Curriculum—Pathways/Concentrations (16 units)

Students then choose any of the following 16-unit (4-course) pathways, of which at least 8 units (2 courses) must be upper-division:

- Africana Studies
- Hemispheric Studies
- Comparative Ethnic Studies
- Film Studies
- Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- Native American Studies

- Jewish Studies
- Literature and Art
- Multicultural Education

AMCS Curriculum—Upper-Division Electives

Students must also take two upper-division elective courses (8 units).

AMCS Curriculum—Minor

The AMCS minor consists of five (5) four-unit courses.

Students select three courses from the following: (AMCS 160A/B, 210, 225, 260).

Students must also take AMCS 350.

Students also take one upper-division elective.

Appropriate substitutions are allowed with advisor and department chair approval.

**B. Explanation and Description of Learning Goals**

Our courses produce innumerable possible learning goals, but for the sake of the self-study we will narrow them to three categories: knowledge, values, and skills. We will then provide a list of AMCS courses. The numbers next to each course indicate the learning goals most relevant to it. Courses that have not been taught in the last five years are not listed. We would need fresh syllabi to assess these classes.

Knowledge

- 1) Study the roles of race and ethnicity in U.S. society, both historically and today.
- 2) Analyze how economic and political forces intersect with race and ethnicity in the United States.
- 3) Understand the aesthetic and creative contributions of U.S. non-whites.
- 4) Address the representation of racial and ethnic minorities in American culture, history, and politics.
- 5) Understand the relationships between ideology and power.
- 6) Study the intersectional natures of race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, region, nationality, and other factors.

Values

- 7) Develop an understanding of how race and ethnicity are tied to personal values.
- 8) Gain an appreciation for the role non-whites have played in building America.
- 9) Foster a moral and political commitment to multiculturalism.
- 10) Understand the connections between individual achievement and community involvement.

Skills

- 11) Complete a research or creative project in ethnic studies.
- 12) Build critical thinking abilities and apply them to real-life issues.
- 13) Develop oral and written communication skills.

AMCS Courses and Corresponding Learning Goals and GE Categories

AMCS 160A/B	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	A3/C3
AMCS 210	1, 6, 8, 12, 13	D1

AMCS 225	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12	C2
AMCS 260	1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	C1
AMCS 273	1, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13	C2
AMCS 339	1, 2, 4, 5, 12	D1
AMCS 350	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12	C2
AMCS 355	1, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13	C3
AMCS 360	1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12	C2
AMCS 370	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12	no GE
AMCS 374	1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13	no GE
AMCS 392	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12	C1
AMCS 395	1, 5, 10, 12	no GE
AMCS 420	1, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13	no GE
AMCS 475	1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13	no GE
AMCS 480	1, 11, 13	no GE
AMCS 481	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	no GE

AMCS course descriptions can be found at: [http://www.sonoma.edu/catalog/14-15/%202014-2015\\_ssucatalog\\_final.pdf](http://www.sonoma.edu/catalog/14-15/%202014-2015_ssucatalog_final.pdf)

SSU GE Learning Objectives can be found at:  
[http://www.sonoma.edu/senate/committees/ge/LGOs\\_new.html](http://www.sonoma.edu/senate/committees/ge/LGOs_new.html)

Our learning goals broadly conceive the discipline of ethnic studies in ways that allow our faculty to teach their specialties within larger contexts. Our courses increasingly put the United States into global context, as well as acknowledging the multiracial nature of the American landscape.

All AMCS syllabi conform to SSU standard, including the listing of all learning objectives on course syllabi. Professors provide course-specific renditions of the above-listed learning goals on their syllabi, depending on which course is being taught. Because our curriculum is so clearly aligned with so many GE categories, our faculty must take into account the GE learning objectives in order to create intersections between GE goals and AMCS goals. We also review the syllabi of cross-listed courses to insure their continued relevance to the latest developments in ethnic studies.

### **C. Diversity**

The major provider of ethnic studies curricula on campus, AMCS also infuses the university with faculty racial diversity missing from most other departments. AMCS—in partnership with CALS, NAMS, WGS, and campus providers like The Hub—also works with various student groups like Black Students United and Students for Quality Education to support extra-curricular functions. While this section could easily become the longest one of the self-study, we find it best to keep it short and focus on our areas of weakness rather than strength. AMCS is one of SSU’s most important purveyors of faculty and curricular diversity.



### **D. Student Body**

Because of its diversity of offerings, AMCS and its subsidiaries appeal to a wide range of students, although in recent years we have not converted that interest into large numbers of majors and minors. In the past, with our top-heavy, upper-division-based curriculum, many faculty heard students say, “I wish I had taken an AMCS course earlier in my career. I would have become an AMCS major.” In its recruitment efforts, AMCS has targeted several student populations that might be most likely to become majors and minors, and has identified strategies to follow through on potential student interest.

1) *Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) students*-AMCS has committed to offering at least one EOP-only course per semester. AMCS has always enjoyed a strong relationship with EOP on a number of levels, and by targeting lower-division EOP students through exclusive EOP lower-division GE courses, we feel that we will make an early intervention that gives students the chance to incorporate the AMCS major and minor into their futures before they have chosen something else.

2) *AMCS 165A/B students*-AMCS has committed to offering at least one AMCS 165A/B per academic year. The early-intervention strategy detailed above is at work in this case as well. Students who take a year-long course, where they build a close mentoring relationship with multiple AMCS faculty, are going to get the chance to consider the AMCS major or minor early in their career.

3) *Students of color, particularly African Americans, particularly women*-AMCS has taken definitive steps to define Africana Studies as a major part of its function. During its curricular revision, AMCS created a specialized Africana Studies Concentration—different from the rest of the ‘pathways’ in that it will actually show up on student degrees and diplomas. AMCS created an Africana Lecture Series. Two-and-a-half of our three-and-a-half faculty specialize in Africana Studies. Two-and-a-half of our three-and-a-half faculty are women of color. Our Africana Studies Lecture series has become a space where women of color have the opportunity to express themselves in a supportive environment and to network with their on-campus peers as well as the incoming lecturers.

AMCS is obviously open to everyone, and the great deal of students who take our courses are white, per the SSU population. We take seriously our role in providing for many students the only exposure in their college careers to questions of race and power.

### **E. Faculty**

All of our faculty teach GE courses, both lower- and upper-division. The only non-GE course we teach regularly is AMCS 480, our core methodology course taught once a year by Dr. Baker, whose sociological training makes her the best choice. The department chair gets a one-course release per semester. Therefore, our full-time faculty offers approximately nineteen courses, about seventeen of them GE, per year. All of our JWST and NAMS courses are also GE. GE classes have 40 or more students in them and even the upper-division courses have an introductory nature. The ability to teach to an audience of non-majors is something that our faculty needs in order to succeed at Sonoma State. We almost never teach to an audience of AMCS majors and minors.

Our faculty participate in a wide-range of campus committees on the university and school levels. Dr. Baker in particular takes on the most service, having been on rigorous committees such as the GE subcommittee and the Educational Practices Committee. Our faculty has produced a great deal of scholarship, particularly Dr. Ezra, who is editor of the *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*, and a well-published author. We are also dedicated to innovative pedagogy as evidenced by Dr. Strobel's courses on religion, globalization, and multiracial identity, in keeping with the latest disciplinary developments in ethnic studies.

## **F. Institutional Support and Resources**

### *Library*

Our library's collection of books is out of date, so students who want to do serious undergraduate research have to rely upon LINK+ or interlibrary loan services. The library is generally excellent about ordering what we want. Their collection of videos is strong. Overall, the library and its associated services gives AMCS students and faculty access to more or less everything they need to have a completely satisfying experience.

### *Computer Technology*

Almost all of our professors use smart classrooms, and almost all of our professors have problems at some point with the technology. AMCS would like to see the number of tech classrooms increased dramatically and the existing tech rooms refurbished. None of our professors report any problems with their work computers. AMCS could use a new printer in the department office, which we share with CALS, NAMS, JWST, etc.

### *Student Support Services*

None of our faculty or students reports any problems with open access or delivery of curricula.

### *Faculty Development and Support*

The *Journal of Civil and Human Rights* is supported by the School of Arts and Humanities. The Africana Lecture Series is supported by a SSU grant.

### *Resources—Physical, Financial, Human*

AMCS is satisfied with the physical condition of its facilities, the amount of money budgeted to operation and expenses, and with its amount of office coverage. All full-time faculty have individual offices, the department has a full-time office manager that it shares with CALS. It also has a part-time student assistant. Faculty in AMCS would like higher salaries and are at the low-end of the scale, even for SSU.

## **G. Assessment and Findings**

The AMCS department has no formal assessment mechanism in place to monitor classroom quality besides collecting the syllabuses from various classes and the student teaching evaluations (SETEs). AMCS recognizes the importance of assessment in fostering the continued excellence of its curriculum. Over the next decade, AMCS would like to incorporate two particular areas of assessment: 1) assessment of adjunct faculty

teaching; 2) assessment of cross-listed courses from other departments. The long-term plan is for AMCS to:

- Collect syllabuses from all AMCS-eligible courses every semester for the department chair to review.
- At least once a year the AMCS department chair (or AMCS tenured faculty) should peer review part-time faculty for all courses where AMCS hires the instructor (i.e. JWST, NAMS, AMCS courses). For every two courses an instructor teaches in a given academic year, approximately one class session should be observed.
- Peer reviewers should file written reports of their observations and findings.
- SETEs for all part-time faculty should be reviewed annually by the AMCS department chair.

With so much of the AMCS curriculum outside the hands of the three core tenured faculty, the need for assessment and quality control should be concentrated most heartily in the above areas.

#### **H. Action Plan**

- AMCS has done much of the hard work already, in the sense that it just last year completed a major curriculum revision, with its program retailored to meet the demands of SSU's increasingly lower-division student body. What the department now needs to do is recruit majors and establish an identity that connects with its new recruits and the larger campus community. As a bridge between a wide range of campus interests, and with a broad range of representation in the GE curriculum, AMCS reaches a lot of people. It would be good for that interest to coalesce in the form of an increased number of majors. Once there was an AMCS student club, perhaps that could be reactivated. The AMCS student club could tie into the Black Students United around the Africana Studies concentration and lecture series. We also want to encourage AMCS students to do community service through the Arts and Humanities internship office.

In order to recruit new majors, AMCS has an action plan that includes:

- More frequent invitations to students in lower-division GE classes to join the AMCS major and minor, especially around registration time.
- Advertising (brochures, papers) that indicates to students the flexibility of the AMCS major and highlights the unique curriculum.
- Increased understanding of how the AMCS department can offer career advice to students.
- Increased understanding of how the AMCS department can recruit from student populations whose experience corresponds with our curriculum.

AMCS would also be a good candidate for a new faculty hire, because its SFR is high and its classes reach a lot of students.