

Research Article

(Mixed) Asian American Studies across California State University Catalogs: Advancing AB 1460 through Multiracial-inclusive Courses

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ABSTRACT

Assembly Bill 1460 codified Ethnic Studies coursework as an undergraduate graduation requirement across the California State University (CSU) system. In its focus on *four historically defined racialized core groups*, the legislation is silent on the role of Critical Mixed Race Studies in advancing its mandate. Through Critical Content Analysis of CSU academic catalogs, we quantify a dearth of courses explicitly mentioning multiraciality across the system and highlight the unique contributions of, and opportunities for, Asian American Studies departments who have and continue to serve as vital partners in increasing curricular visibility of multiracial identities and experiences.

INTRODUCTION

In foundational writing on the emerging field of Critical Mixed Race Studies (CMRS), Daniel et al. (2014, 11) assert that the topic of multiracial identity has been “largely marginalized, if not ignored” in Ethnic Studies. However, Daniel et al. (2014, 11) position Asian American Studies (AAS) scholars as “comparatively more receptive” to the study of multiraciality given the growing mixed-Asian American population in the United States. With the passage of Assembly Bill 1460 (AB 1460) in 2020, California became the first state to require a

four-year public higher education system to establish an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement (California Faculty Association, 2020). AB 1460 highlights Ethnic Studies' "special focus" on Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latin*¹ Americans as "four historically defined racialized core groups" (Weber, 2020), but the legislation does not explicitly mention multiraciality—potentially reifying what Jessica Harris (2016) termed a monoracial-only paradigm of race. As campuses across the California State University (CSU) system work to implement AB 1460, it is timely to identify trends (and potential gaps) in course offerings related to this legislation. We ask: How is multiraciality represented in courses that meet the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement, and is there a unique relationship between CMRS and AAS across the CSU system? In exploring these questions, this article provides a foundation for better understanding the curricular landscape related to CMRS and further examines opportunities for AAS to advance multiracial-inclusive curriculum. We begin by providing some important historical context and outlining the specifics of AB 1460, then present the methods and findings of this study, and end with discussion and recommendations.

Legacy of SF State

In the 1960s, San Francisco State College, now San Francisco State University (SF State), was at the epicenter of a student-led movement demanding more representation of communities of color in curriculum, faculty, and admissions that ultimately led to the establishment of the School of Ethnic Studies (now College of Ethnic Studies) at SF State and one of the first AAS departments in the country (Jeung, 2019). In fall of 1969, the AAS department offered seventeen courses; a year later, that number rose to forty-four (Jeung, 2019). Many of these classes were intentionally designed to meet General Education (GE) requirements and centered distinct experiences of ethnic groups within the Asian American community (Collier and Gonzales, 2019; Jeung, 2019). AAS departments and courses have since developed across the CSU system and the nation, meeting an important need for many students who enter college with minimal education around the history and contributions of Asian Americans (Collier and Gonzales, 2019).

Nearly fifty years later, SF State was once again at the forefront of a student push for more inclusive curriculum—this time focused on the study of multiraciality. In 2015, Dr. Wei Ming Dariotis, a professor in the AAS department, was tasked with leading the College of Ethnic

Studies' response to this call, resulting in an academic minor in CMRS (Leopardo, Donnell, and Dariotis, 2021). While it would have been "relatively quick and easy" (Leopardo et al., 2021, 215) to situate the CMRS minor within the AAS department where the effort had broad faculty support, it was strategically positioned within the College of Ethnic Studies rather than housed in a single department. Despite tensions around the validity of multiracial identity or the legitimacy of CMRS as an academic field, Leopardo et al. (2021, 217) argued, "in order to move out of marginality within Ethnic Studies, people of mixed backgrounds need academic and intellectual spaces to explore and articulate their histories, lived experiences, and identities." On May 7, 2019, the minor was approved, making SF State the first degree-granting program in the field of CMRS (Leopardo et al., 2021). However, the landscape of CMRS courses and programs beyond SF State is underexplored.

Assembly Bill 1460

AB 1460 established a requirement for undergraduate students in the twenty-three-campus CSU system to complete at least one Ethnic Studies course prior to graduation as of the 2021-22 academic year. AB 1460 notes that the primary recommendation of the CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies was to make Ethnic Studies a GE requirement (Weber, 2020). As such, campuses must offer lower-division courses to meet this new requirement, commonly referred to as "Area F" (CSU, 2020). However, GE Area F *may* be fulfilled by an upper-division course (CSU, 2020). By law, CSU cannot increase the number of units required to graduate, so the units required in GE Area D (Social Sciences) were reduced to accommodate the addition of GE Area F (CSU, 2020). Though AB 1460 gives campuses discretion around faculty qualifications, GE Area F courses should be offered by or cross-listed with an Ethnic Studies department (e.g., *History of African Americans in the United States* offered by both the African American Studies and History departments) and must address at least three of five core competencies (see CSU, 2020). While we did not find a publicly available, comprehensive list of AB 1460-compliant courses across the CSU system, campus-level academic catalogs list course options that meet GE Area F.

(Mixed) Asian American College Students

Samuel Museus (2014, 132) positions multiracial Asian American students as a "virtually invisible" population in higher education

research. However, building on foundational and evolving scholarship centering multiracial students in higher education (e.g., Harris, 2017; Johnston-Guerrero, Combs, and Malaney-Brown, 2022; Johnston-Guerrero and Wijeyesinghe, 2021; Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004), scholarly attention to the experiences of multiracial Asian American college students is increasing (e.g., Law et al., 2021; Litterte, 2009; Pedraza, 2023; Smith and Maton, 2015; Viager, 2011). Kristen Renn (2003) describes how required diversity courses and academic exposure to mixed race topics influences identity development among multiracial college students, and Williams et al. (1996) notes that multiracial-inclusive courses such as *The World of Amerasians*—a first-of-its-kind class on multiracial Asian Americans established in 1992 by the AAS program at the University of California, Santa Barbara—can catalyze multiracial-affirming co-curricular spaces (e.g., multiracial student organizations). Multiracial Asian American students represented three of the top five multiracial subgroups with the most growth in Common App college applications since 2013 (Kim et al., 2022). Given this rise, there may be an increased student demand for courses that examine multiraciality broadly, and mixed-Asian American topics specifically.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This project examined undergraduate course details in academic catalogs using Critical Content Analysis (CCA), which Kathy Short (2016, 6) describes as “bringing a critical lens to an analysis of a text or group of texts in an effort to explore the possible underlying messages within those texts, particularly as related to issues of power.” Our analysis was primarily grounded in Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit; Harris, 2016). An extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as applied in higher education (e.g., Patton, 2016; Torres et al., 1998), MultiCrit is a framework for examining the racialized experiences of multiracial college students (Harris, 2016). In addition to racism and colorism, a key tenet of MultiCrit contends that multiracial college students navigate monoracism, which Johnston and Nadal (2010, 125) define as a system of oppression rooted in “assumptions and beliefs in singular, discrete racial categories.”

Key to this article is our assertion that monoracism can be operationalized as a monoracial-only paradigm of race in both policy and practice. That is, in legislating a focus on four “historically defined” (mono)racialized groups, AB 1460 might reinforce rigid racial boundaries that contribute to multiracial erasure in required coursework across

the CSU system. Further, MultiCrit pushes us to problematize and contextualize the ways in which multiracial people have historically been counted, categorized, and camouflaged. Though we focus our analysis on review of academic catalogs, we suggest that these artifacts have material consequences in the lives of multiracial college students who, while utilizing these texts to make decisions about academic coursework, might internalize messages about the value and validity of their own lived experiences.

Given our focus on the relationship between AAS and CMRS within higher education, we also draw from Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit) which similarly extends and expands tenets of CRT to consider the racialized experiences of Asian American students in U.S. educational contexts (Iftikar and Museus, 2018; Museus, 2014). An (2017, 134) argues AsianCrit is a theoretical and methodological framework that “troubles and transforms the curricular treatment of Asian Americans” towards more socially-just curriculum. Key tenets we employed are (re)constructive history, which “[transcends] invisibility and silence to construct a collective Asian American historical narrative” (Museus, 2014, 25), and strategic (anti)essentialism, which examines the power and potential of racial categorization and leverages (dis)aggregation to disrupt monolithic narratives about the Asian American community (Museus, 2014). We propose that an expansive reading of AB 1460 invites AAS to intentionally counter the curricular invisibility of multiracial perspectives, which can advance more nuanced, inclusive Asian American narratives while also building solidarity with CMRS.

In CCA, researchers make explicit their political stance related to issues of inequity and power (Short, 2016). As such, we acknowledge how our individual and intersecting identities inform our approach to this project. Jacob is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Higher Education and Student Affairs and identifies as a multiracial (Filipino/Chinese/White), cisgender man with professional experience as an academic advisor at a CSU campus. He draws on this background of supporting undergraduate students in navigating complex academic catalogs and graduation requirements to underscore the tangible impacts of legislation like AB 1460. Marc is an associate dean and professor in a college of education who identifies as a multiracial (Filipino/White), cisgender man who spent some time working and studying at University of California, Los Angeles, though he is not originally from nor currently working in the state. He draws on his research expertise

related to multiraciality, as well as recent administrative work focused on curricular development and innovation. We do not enter this project questioning the dearth of courses centering multiraciality; rather, we seek to make visible the extent to which said courses are under-represented, challenge the systemic forces (e.g., monoracism) that contribute to this reality, and propose solutions that lie at the nexus of AAS and CMRS.

METHOD

While CCA is often applied to research on children's literature, we propose that its attention to the power of language in shaping representations and perceptions of specific groups of people is well-suited to our inquiry (Short, 2016). Just as AsianCrit and MultiCrit privilege often-silenced voices and stories, CCA questions "who gets to speak, whose story is told, and in what ways" (Short, 2016, 5). CCA contends that research begins with a tension and that specific research questions only emerge after immersion in both text and theory (Short, 2016). At tension in this present project is the contested nature of multiracial identities and experiences (Johnston-Guerrero and Wijeyesinghe, 2021) and disagreement around the positioning of this population as a distinct group that warrants focused study/curriculum. This debate extends to policy and legislation. For example, rather than add a stand-alone "Multiracial" category to the U.S. Census as some advocates have proposed, federal guidance as of 1997 relies on existing monoracial categories alongside a "select all that apply" option (DaCosta, 2007), and legal barriers persist to "proving" discrimination based on multiracial status (Leong, 2010). AB 1460 continues to question notions of groupness and multiraciality. Through critical engagement with the source texts of this project, our research questions became clear:

1. To what extent do AB 1460-compliant courses explicitly name the study of multiraciality?
2. What role do/can Asian American Studies departments play in advancing courses on mixed race topics across the CSU system?

To create the data corpus from which to explore these questions, we reviewed publicly available online academic catalogs from each of the twenty-three CSU campuses. The 2022-23 catalog or equivalent (e.g., 2022-26) was analyzed at a majority of CSU campuses, though one campus listed approved GE Area F courses as of Fall 2021 and another only posted this information for 2023-24. For each designated GE Area F class, the course department, number, title, and description

were added to a database. Duplicate courses cross-listed by multiple departments were counted once. The final list had 301 unique courses.

CCA invokes Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) argument that, without theory, coding qualitative data can fail to "capture or critique the complexities of social life" (Short, 2016, 9). As such, tenets of both AsianCrit and MultiCrit guided our development of a ten-factor coding structure. First, we determined whether or not a specific racialized group was mentioned in the course title or description (thinking critically about how groups have been (a)historically (re)constructed). For example, a course that focused on race and racism broadly was coded as "No," while a course that explored the experiences of Asian Americans was coded as "Yes." In general, courses that focused on a broad region (e.g., Asia) rather than a racialized group (e.g., Asian Americans) were coded as "No." However, we acknowledge that geographic boundaries carry distinct racialized meanings, particularly for those categorized as Latin*. As such, we focused on latent rather than manifest meanings throughout the coding process.

For courses focusing on at least one racialized group, we proceeded to review for mentions of any of the four racialized groups explicitly named in AB 1460 and accounted for variations in racialized group labels (e.g., mentions of "Black Americans" within the African American category). Next, we applied a similar approach to mentions of racialized groups not named in AB 1460, specifically Pacific Islander and multiracial—two groups that gained distinct federal reporting categories in 2010 as a result of updated Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System standards (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Thus, a course that examined the experiences of "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders" would be coded as "Yes" in both the Asian American and Pacific Islander categories. Courses received a "Yes" in the Multiracial category only if a multiracial term (e.g., biracial) was utilized. For any course coded "Yes" in at least one racialized group, we noted any specific subgroups (e.g., Hmong) that were mentioned. Finally, we noted whether a course was cross-listed between multiple departments and if it was offered at the upper- or lower-division level. Graduate-level courses were not included in this analysis as AB 1460 established only an undergraduate graduation requirement.

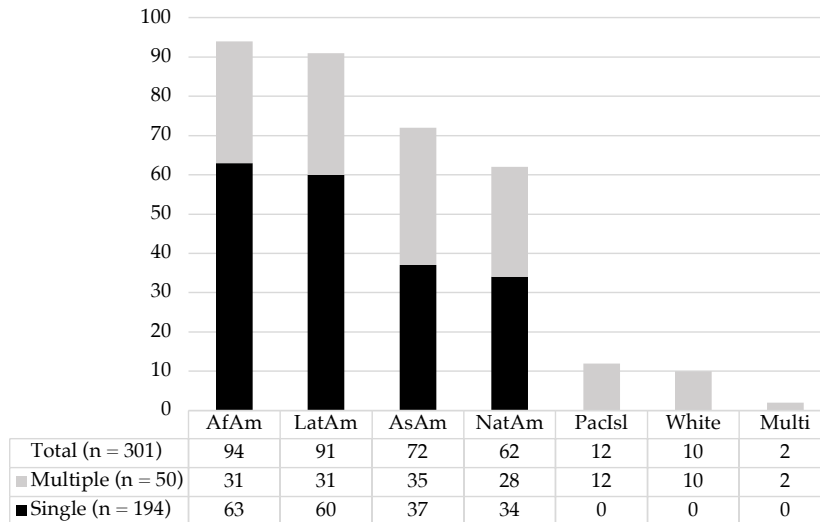
To test the reliability of our coding structure, we utilized Excel to randomly select thirty courses (ten percent of the full sample) that were then independently coded by each author. Using Krippendorff's (2004) α_{binary} , we calculated 97.3% agreement across our nine binary

variables, well above the 58.1% agreement that could be attributed to chance. After coming to consensus around areas of disagreement, the first author coded the remaining 271 courses in the dataset, flagging courses for review by the second author as necessary. During this phase of coding, we determined a need to include an additional category for mentions of “White” as a racialized group. For example, mentions of “White supremacy” (an ideology) were coded as “No,” while references to “European Americans” (a group) were coded as “Yes.” Ultimately, we coded 301 unique courses across eleven factors resulting in 3,311 distinct codes.

In the process of reviewing GE courses in Area F, we found that some campuses also listed non-GE Area F courses. That is, courses that fulfill the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement but are counted towards a different GE area (e.g., Area C: Arts & Humanities), or as a mandatory/elective course within a particular major or minor. This informed the creation of a secondary dataset of undergraduate-level courses outside GE Area F that include at least one of the following keywords in the title or description: multiracial, mixed race, mixed-race, biracial, and/or mixed heritage. We acknowledge that this approach may have excluded courses that focus on a particular racial makeup (e.g., Blasian). Most online catalogs had a built-in keyword search function, otherwise we used the “find” function to scan webpages for the appropriate keywords. Additionally, some campuses offered downloadable PDF versions of the catalog, and we used the “find” function in a PDF reader to conduct the keyword search. This generated a list of twenty courses. To confirm accuracy, the keyword search process was repeated three months later and yielded the same sample of courses. Four courses were excluded from the sample that used the word multiracial to describe multiple monoracial groups rather than a group identity or experience itself. Thus, the final secondary sample included sixteen courses.

FINDINGS

We begin with a general overview of our quantitative findings before elaborating on trends and nuances found within the courses most relevant to our focus on AAS and CMRS. Of the 301 GE Area F courses analyzed, 244 (81.1%) explicitly mentioned at least one racialized group while the remaining 57 (18.9%) focused on broader ideas (e.g., race and racism) or aggregate groupings (e.g., people of color) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. GE Area F Courses by Racialized Group(s) of Focus

Note: The remaining fifty-seven courses did not mention any specific racialized group(s).

Sources: 2022-23 academic catalogs (or nearest equivalent) from each of the twenty-three CSU campuses. Tabulated by the authors.

Of the 244 courses that named a racialized group or groups, 194 (79.5%) focused on a single group while fifty (20.5%) mentioned multiple groups. African American- and Latin* American-focused courses were most represented in courses with a singular group focus ($n = 194$), with sixty-three (32.5%) and sixty (30.9%) unique courses respectively. The number of Asian American- and Native American-focused courses with a singular group focus were similarly represented at thirty-seven (19.1%) and thirty-four (17.5%) respectively. Pacific Islander-, White-, and multiracial-focused courses were only found among those that named multiple racialized groups. All twelve Pacific Islander-focused courses also mentioned Asian Americans, while half of the ten courses coded in the White category were found in combination with a focus on Native Americans. Across racialized groups, the split between lower-division (two-thirds) and upper-division (one-third) courses was relatively even. However, more variation was found among cross-listed courses. The highest proportion of cross-listing between two or more departments was found among courses that mentioned Asian Americans (34.7%), nearly nine percentage points above the nearest group, Native Americans (25.8%).

Only two out of 301 courses (less than 1%) were counted in the multiracial category. This includes mention of “biracialism” in a course titled *Pan-African Studies 4000: Psychology and African Americans* (Los Angeles), and “Mestizo peoples” in *Chicana and Chicano Studies 100: Chicana and Chicano Heritage* (San Diego). We did not count one course that mentioned “Asian Black Americans” because it appeared to be a typing error, and another mentioning “Black Latinx Identity” because Afro-Latinidad and multiraciality overlap but are not synonymous (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). To contextualize our findings, we examined the distribution of these courses across the CSU system (see Table 1).

The number of GE Area F courses offered by each campus ranged from two to fifty-six, and only one campus (San Diego) offered at least one course that mentioned each of the seven racialized groups we coded for. There was no group that was mentioned in at least one course across all twenty-three campuses, though African American- and Latin* American-focused courses were present at all but one and two campuses respectively. Given the scant number of classes that mentioned multiraciality, it is not surprising that this group was also the least represented across individual campuses. For perspective, across the CSU system, which enrolled over four hundred thousand undergraduates in Fall 2022 (CSU, 2023), there are only two campuses—each with a single course—in which there is explicit mention of multiraciality within a designated GE Area F course. Neither of these courses are offered by an AAS department; however, courses housed within AAS were present in our secondary dataset of multiracial-focused courses outside of GE Area F (see Table 2).

When we looked beyond designated GE Area F courses, we found that ten out of the twenty-three CSU campuses listed at least one multiracial-focused course. Six campuses listed a single course, three listed two courses, and one campus (SF State) listed a total of four courses. Thirteen out of sixteen courses (81.3%) were at the upper-division level, and over half were GE courses in Area D (Social Sciences). Of the sixteen multiracial-focused courses analyzed, five (31.3%) were offered by an AAS department. This matches the number of courses offered under a more general Ethnic Studies or comparable prefix (e.g., American Multicultural Studies). African American Studies, Native American Studies, and Latin* Studies were each represented once via a single course cross-listed between the three departments. The remaining five courses were evenly distributed between non-Ethnic Studies departments (e.g., English, History). This suggests that AAS

Table 1. GE Area F Courses by Racialized Group(s) of Focus & CSU Campus

| Campus | AfAm | LatAm | AsAm | NatAm | Paclsl | White | Multi | Total |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Bakersfield | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | – | – | 3 |
| Channel Islands | 1 | 3 | – | – | – | – | – | 4 |
| Chico | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | – | – | – | 13 |
| Dominguez Hills | 3 | 2 | 2 | – | 1 | – | – | 5 |
| East Bay | 1 | – | 1 | – | – | – | – | 5 |
| Fresno | 3 | 5 | 8 | 3 | – | – | – | 21 |
| Fullerton | 6 | 3 | 2 | – | – | – | – | 11 |
| Humboldt | 5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | – | 2 | – | 13 |
| Long Beach | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | – | – | – | 2 |
| Los Angeles | 15 | 17 | 13 | 4 | 5 | – | 1 | 56 |
| Maritime | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | – | 2 | – | 2 |
| Monterey Bay | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | – | – | – | 19 |
| Northridge | 6 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | – | 19 |
| Pomona | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | – | – | – | 16 |
| Sacramento | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | – | – | – | 6 |
| San Bernardino | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | – | – | – | 2 |
| San Diego | 8 | 10 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 26 |
| San Francisco | 11 | 4 | 4 | 6 | – | 2 | – | 30 |
| San Jose | 5 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | – | 9 |
| San Luis Obispo | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | – | – | – | 8 |
| San Marcos | 1 | – | – | 6 | – | – | – | 15 |
| Sonoma | – | 2 | – | 3 | – | 1 | – | 8 |
| Stanislaus | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | – | – | 8 |
| Total | 94 | 91 | 72 | 62 | 12 | 10 | 2 | 301 |

Sources: 2022-23 academic catalogs (or nearest equivalent) from each of the twenty-three CSU campuses. Tabulated by the authors.

Note: Courses that referenced more than one group were counted in each applicable category. As such, the sum of row values may not equal row total.

Table 2. Multiracial-focused Courses Outside of GE Area F by CSU Campus

| Campus | Course Number | Course Title | GE Area | Level |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|---------|-------|
| East Bay (1) | ES 244 | Mixed Race Identities in the US | D | LD |
| Fresno (1) | ASAM 7 | Biracial and Multiracial Asian American Identity | D | LD |
| Fullerton (2) | ASAM 360 | Multiple Heritage Asian American and Pacific Islanders | D | UD |
| | HIST 477A | The Multiracial History of America | - | UD |
| Monterey Bay (2) | HDFS 321 | Diverse Families | D | UD |
| | HCOM 328 | Latina Life Stories | - | UD |
| Northridge (1) | AAS 355 | Biracial and Multiracial Identity | - | UD |
| Pomona (1) | EWS 4500 | Multiracial and Hybrid Identities | C/D | UD |
| Sacramento (1) | ETHN 115 | Biracial and Multiracial Identity in the US | E | LD |
| San Francisco (4) | AA S 301 | Asian Americans of Mixed Heritages | D | UD |
| | AA S 330 | Nikkei in the United States | D | UD |
| | AFRS/AIS/LTNS 350 | Black Indians in the Americas | D | UD |
| | RRS 625 | Mixed Race Studies: A Comparative Focus | D | UD |
| San Luis Obispo (1) | ENGL 449 | Topics in American Literature (Mixed-Race Subjects in the US Literary Imagination) | - | UD |
| Sonoma (2) | AMCS 374 | The Multiracial Experience | - | UD |
| | THAR 375/WGS 360 | Race, Gender, and Performance | - | UD |

Sources: 2022-23 academic catalogs (or nearest equivalent) from each of the twenty-three CSU campuses. Tabulated by the authors.

Notes: LD = lower-division, UD = upper-division. C = Arts & Humanities, D = Social Sciences, E = Lifelong Learning & Self-Development. No courses that met our inclusion criteria were found at the remaining thirteen unlisted CSU campuses.

departments are vital partners in advancing the study of multiraciality within the CSU system. Thus, we focus the remainder of our findings in alignment with our interest in potential synergies between AAS and CMRS.

Asian American Studies

While courses mentioning Asian Americans represented 19.1% of the 194 single group-focused GE Area F courses, Asian Americans were the most mentioned (70.0%) among the fifty courses that focused on multiple groups. This is likely driven in part by our decision to count mentions of “Pacific Islander” as a separate category. Asian American-focused courses in GE Area F frequently focused on specific subgroups. While this was not unique to Asian American-focused courses, we observed greater breadth in comparison to other categories examined. Attention to particular subgroups was limited in African American-focused (e.g., Afro-Caribbean) and Native American-focused (e.g., First Nations) courses. Though more common within Latin* American-focused courses, there was an almost exclusive focus on Chicano/a/x experiences, and in some cases these terms were used in tandem (e.g., Chicax/Latinx experiences). Conversely, courses in the Asian American category focused on a range of individual groups (e.g., Filipino/a/x, Hmong, Japanese) as well as listed out multiple subgroups of focus within a single course. For example, *Ethnic Studies 1308: Introduction to Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies* (Bakersfield) stated:

It will provide a brief history and selected issues of Americans of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Southeast Asians (e.g., Vietnamese, Hmong, Mien), South Asian (e.g., Sikh, Pakistani), and Pacific Islander (e.g., Hawaiian, Samoan) ancestry (CSU Bakersfield, 2023).

Foregrounding the AsianCrit tenet of strategic (anti)essentialism, we noted the intentional use of naming and group definition throughout Asian American-focused GE Area F courses.

Beyond GE Area F, nearly one-third of the sixteen multiracial-focused courses across the CSU system were offered by an AAS department. All but one of these five courses centered multiracial Asian Americans, including one course that specifically examined mixed race as a population “not usually included in dominant Japanese American narratives” (SF State, 2023). The remaining course, *Asian American*

Studies 355: Biracial and Multiracial Identity (Northridge), examined multiraciality more broadly, but still made reference to specific racial mixes (e.g., Eurasians, Afroasians). While this course explicitly “meets the Ethnic Studies requirement,” it is “not available for General Education credit” (CSU Northridge, 2023b). It seems that if a student used this course to satisfy the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement only, they would still need to take a separate course to fulfill GE Area F. In other words, what would prompt a student to use two courses to satisfy a requirement that can be completed with a single course? Further, this course does not appear to have been offered during the 2022-23 academic year, which underscores the gap between the *existence* of a course in an academic catalog and the *opportunity* for students to enroll in said class. While this dynamic is beyond the scope of the current study, we contend that it is an important area of future inquiry.

Critical Mixed Race Studies

This project quantifies the lack of representation of multiraciality in published course titles and descriptions across the CSU system. Though explicit references to multiraciality were sparse, we noted that some courses more implicitly engaged with a key tenet of MultiCrit: a monoracial-only paradigm of race (Harris, 2016). For example, one course title, *American Multicultural Studies 225: How Racism Works: America in Black and White* (Sonoma), employed figurative language to underscore racial rigidity in the U.S. context. Alternatively, *Interdisciplinary General Education 2600/Ethnic and Women’s Studies 2600: Digital Culture, Race, and Ethnicity* (Pomona) unsettled the fixedness of socially constructed categories in examining “how digital media serves to complicate, change, erase, and/or recreate ethnic and racial boundaries” (Cal Poly Pomona, 2023).

While only two courses in our sample of GE Area F courses mentioned a multiracial term, ten (62.5%) of the sixteen courses in our broader secondary sample were located in a different GE area (most commonly Area D). Additionally, thirteen (81.3%) of these sixteen courses were offered at the upper-division level which suggests that these courses may be less accessible to students early in their college career—a potentially influential time with regards to multiracial identity development (Renn, 2003). Counter to our expectations and despite the interdisciplinarity of the CMRS field, only two of the multiracial-focused courses outside of GE Area F were cross-listed between multiple departments. Conversely, it was unsurprising to see the most

multiracial-focused courses offered at a single campus were found at SF State. We attribute this to SF State's formalized minor program in CMRS and suggest that there may be structural advantages (e.g., budgetary, curricular approval processes) afforded to a standalone Ethnic Studies college rather than a department within a larger college.

DISCUSSION

Russell Jeung (2019, 22) posits that Asian American Studies "continues to experience growing pains as the field strives to expand the tent to be more inclusive of the diversity reflected in our populations." Given the growing multiracial Asian American population, Nakashima (2005, 113) asserts that AAS must incorporate a focus on mixed race topics "not to be on the cutting edge but simply to remain relevant in the twenty-first century." While we found some AAS courses outside of GE Area F with a focus on multiracial Asian Americans, explicit language regarding multiraciality more broadly was largely absent across AB 1460-compliant courses. The consequences of this absence relate to Williams et al.'s (1996, 364) powerful warning on the exclusion of multiraciality from curriculum:

[T]he multiracial person disappears into a monoracial projection fostered by teachers, fellow students, or both. Unless interracial themes, histories, and concepts are presented as part of the course . . . the credibility of the multiracial individual as a person of color is questioned and resisted. . . . The dynamics of modern racism, which creates invisible minorities and then discounts the racism that produced their realities, are again repeated with multiracial students.

This phenomenon was similarly described by Hamako (2014) as *curricular monoracism* and connected to systemic factors.

Systemically, just as demographic data representations on university websites that normalize monoracial categories are reflective of federal reporting standards (Ford, Patterson, and Johnston-Guerrero, 2019), we contend that AB 1460 may exert legislative pressure on CSU campuses to describe courses in relation to discrete, racialized groups. Given the finite resources available to public universities, it is reasonable to imagine that administrators will prioritize developing and offering courses that meet a system-wide graduation requirement above those that are only degree applicable for a narrower subset of students. In the absence of standalone CMRS departments, coursework

on multiraciality relies on cross-departmental collaboration that may run counter to siloed campus cultures. Williams et al. (1996) suggested that multiracial-focused courses would ideally be cross-listed between various Ethnic Studies departments but noted that budgetary reductions/restrictions likely contribute to a desire to preserve monoracially-framed courses. Rather than maintain the monoracist assertion that studying multiraciality pulls focus (and funding) from “real” racial groups, MultiCrit reframes this competition for scarce resources in university contexts as a symptom of White supremacy (Harris, 2016).

Student enrollment data can support the expansion of academic programs like SF State’s CMRS minor (Leopardo et al., 2021), but this assumes that approved courses on multiracial topics exist and qualified faculty are available to teach them. Ethnic Studies programs tend to be monoracially organized, which may disincentivize recruitment of faculty with the expertise to develop and teach courses focused on mixed race topics (Johnston-Guerrero and Combs, 2022). For instance, in a review of eighty-two dissertations related to multiraciality published between 2010-2015, only seven were in the field of Ethnic Studies, and less than half (42.7%) of the authors (in any field) held tenure-track faculty positions in the 2021-2 academic year (Combs, Ferreras, and Johnston-Guerrero, 2023). Strengthening the pipeline of Ethnic Studies faculty with expertise in CMRS may yield an increase in courses exploring multiraciality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While some CSU courses explicitly mention multiraciality, nearly all of these courses do not currently satisfy the graduation requirements set forth by AB 1460. We recommend five strategies for Ethnic Studies departments broadly, and AAS departments specifically, to advance a more multiracial-inclusive implementation of the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement:

1. Increase student agency by listing courses that overlap GE areas in all applicable categories. CSU (2020) guidance suggests that a single course meeting the requirements of Area D and Area F could be counted as either (but not both) according to a student’s preference. This study identified nine multiracial-focused courses in Area D (four of which are offered by an AAS department, see Table 2), and we encourage campuses to review these for compliance with the core competencies of GE Area F. Assuming some of these courses could

apply to Area D or Area F, we encourage faculty, academic advisors, and degree evaluators to work collaboratively to educate students on their right to choose which GE area they would like these courses to satisfy. A potential model of this practice is *Ethnic and Women's Studies 4500: Multiracial and Hybrid Identities* (Pomona), which is listed in both GE Areas C and D.

2. Consider including multiracial terms in existing subgroup lists. Asian American-focused courses frequently listed out specific subgroups. Where applicable, we encourage explicit mention of multiraciality in these descriptions. For example, *Asian American Studies 100: Introduction to Asian American Studies* (Northridge) currently emphasizes “research on Americans of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Island ancestry” (CSU Northridge, 2023a). A small but meaningful addition to the listed subgroups could read: Americans of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Southeast Asian, South Asian, Pacific Island, and *multiracial* ancestry. This, of course, should only be included if the course engages multiracial topics, and we echo Nakashima’s (2005) call for an integrative rather than “tacked on” approach to the inclusion of mixed race perspectives.

3. Increase cross-listing between Ethnic Studies departments. While cross-listing between Ethnic Studies and non-Ethnic Studies departments is an AB 1460-compliant strategy to expand the disciplinary reach of GE Area F courses, we encourage the development of collaborative courses within Ethnic Studies areas. Asian American-focused courses were found to have the highest percentage (34.7%) of cross-listing within GE Area F. However, among AAS courses with a focus on multiraciality outside of GE Area F, no cross-listing was found. Expanding multiracial-focused courses in partnership with multiple Ethnic Studies departments could disrupt claims that CMRS dilutes the experiences of monoracial communities of color. These could involve two departments centering a specific racial makeup (e.g., mixed Asian/ Native American identity) or all departments could rotate through a variable topics course (e.g., a repeatable course on multiraciality through the lens of AAS one semester and African American Studies the next). The variable topics strategy may be of particular use to Ethnic Studies programs that offer courses under a singular prefix—rotating based on faculty expertise rather than discrete departmental foci. Further, multi-discipline departmental structures (e.g., Ethnic and Women’s Studies at Cal Poly Pomona) may catalyze intersectional

approaches to multiracial topics (e.g., gender and multiraciality) that meet the requirements of AB 1460. Cross-listed and variable topics courses that examine multiraciality through multiple perspectives have the potential to build strong(er) coalitions and highlight identity interconnections (see Ashlee and Combs, 2022) across racialized groups.

4. Share documentation related to multiracial-focused courses as a model for other campuses. While the process and players involved in curricular review may vary from campus to campus, we contend that there is value in documenting and making public the logistics of successfully offering courses on multiraciality. This could include, but is not limited to: course proposals, approval processes and timelines, syllabi, enrollment trends and demand data, and student feedback/evaluations. Ideally, these materials would be available in a central hub hosted by a group invested in advancing multiracial-focused courses in higher education, such as SF State’s CMRS minor faculty or the CMRS Association. Leopardo et al. (2021) provided a detailed outline of their strategic approach to building buy-in around and navigating the approval process for the CMRS minor at SF State, and we encourage review of their “lessons learned” in advance of course and/or program development centering multiraciality. It is critical to acknowledge that AB 1460 does not provide additional funding to sustainably increase the number of Ethnic Studies course offerings, and fiscal concerns may undergird reservations around establishing courses that complicate budgetary boundaries. We invite an approach to these material challenges that foregrounds CMRS as an opportunity to *pool* rather than *pull* limited resources. In the face of potential resistance to creating such courses, models of practice and possibility from peer institutions are powerful.

5. Engage monoracism as a system of power regardless of course focus. Monoracism can be perpetuated *vertically* by White communities and *horizontally* by communities of color (Harris, Johnston-Guerrero, and Pereyra, 2021). Further, monoracism reaches beyond those who *identify* as multiracial and impacts individuals who blur the boundaries of existing monoracial categories (e.g., transracial adoptees) (Johnston and Nadal, 2010). As such, we urge that critical examination of this system of power not be relegated solely to multiracial-focused courses. For example, the text of AB 1460 could be examined as a case study in *any* compliant course to prompt discussion on the unique utilities of enforcing strict racial boundaries in different communities of color,

and call attention to overlooked or omitted perspectives the legislation obscures. Additionally, we recommend expanding this activity to a larger discussion of monoracism in law and policy by examining the differential impacts of anti-miscegenation laws across communities of color. Within AAS, this could include focus on the War Brides Act of 1945 that allowed Chinese spouses of American servicemen to skirt immigration quotas or the quickly overturned 1933 decision in *Roldan v. Los Angeles County* allowing interracial Filipino/White marriage in California. These are small, but meaningful, curricular additions to ensure that monoracism is interrogated in existing AB 1460-compliant courses alongside development of new multiracial-focused courses.

We acknowledge that without attending the classes examined in this article or reviewing associated syllabi, it is challenging to approximate the extent to which course content upholds or disrupts monoracism. However, courses titles and descriptions in an academic catalog are one of the primary tools a student has to determine its relevance to their interests. Experiential knowledge, another key tenet of MultiCrit, centers the voices and lived experiences of multiracial students (Harris, 2016). To contextualize the current study, we recommend future research that explores how multiracial college students experience the presence/absence of multiracial topics in their academic coursework, from the registration process through course completion. As our findings suggest, access to courses on multiraciality are few and far between across the CSU system, which amplifies the value of programming on mixed race topics in co-curricular spaces (e.g., multicultural centers, student clubs and organizations). The push for continued investment in multiracial-inclusive curriculum is vital across both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

CONCLUSION

We contend that legislative silence on multiraciality within AB 1460 is not a wholesale rejection of Critical Mixed Race Studies. Instead, we borrow the title of the late G. Reginald Daniel's longest-running course on multiracial experiences (see National Public Radio, 2012) to encourage campuses to think "betwixt and between" the letter of the law. Though not listed as a historically defined racialized group, multiraciality undoubtedly exists across the named (and unnamed) groups in AB 1460. Given the recency of AB 1460 implementation, campuses likely focused on transitioning existing courses to GE Area F rather than developing new ones. As new course proposals are

developed in this area, we urge campuses to invite and support those that explicitly engage the study of multiraciality. Further, we believe AAS departments who have successfully approved such courses can be a model for campuses across the CSU system (and beyond). In an era of state-level legislation that is increasingly hostile to discussions of race and racism in educational contexts (see Chronicle Staff, 2023; Schwartz, 2023), AB 1460 meaningfully codifies the value of Ethnic Studies in higher education. In implicitly calling attention to how (and by whom) racialized groups are “historically defined,” we position the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement as an opportunity to mitigate rather than maintain curricular monoracism within the CSU system by encouraging race-centered courses crossing disciplinary / departmental boundaries and leveraging the text of AB 1460 as a pedagogical tool to critique the utility and permeability of racial categories.

NOTES

1. Unless directly referencing the language of source material (e.g., AB 1460), we utilize the term Latin*. To account for evolving terminology and linguistic markers of gender, Salinas (2020, 164) proposed Latin* as “a deliberate intervention – a pause for readers to consider the various ways in which people from Latin American origin and diaspora in the United States may identify.”

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