

Race requirement doesn't get it done

A committee of students, faculty and administrators will discuss narrowing the focus of the race/gender/non-European-American requirement at the University. Why? Because of complaints that the requirement — though well-intentioned — doesn't accomplish anything.

The race/gender/non-European-American requirement is the University's most obvious attempt to prove a multicultural commitment. Students are required to take one non-European-American course during their tenure at the University. The list of classes is broad, with about 175 classes fulfilling the requirement for winter term.

From the beginning, the point of the requirement was to teach a broader world perspective that reflects not only white America but other cultures as well. Students would learn the history and traditions of non-white societies, which would ideally help them adjust to and interact with a multiracial society in the future.

What has happened to the requirement? Instead of learning about the world, students skirt the requirement by taking broad, vague courses — most of which have little to do with cultural perspectives. Students then do just enough work to pass the course. They treat it like any other non-major class — another requirement to squeeze by.

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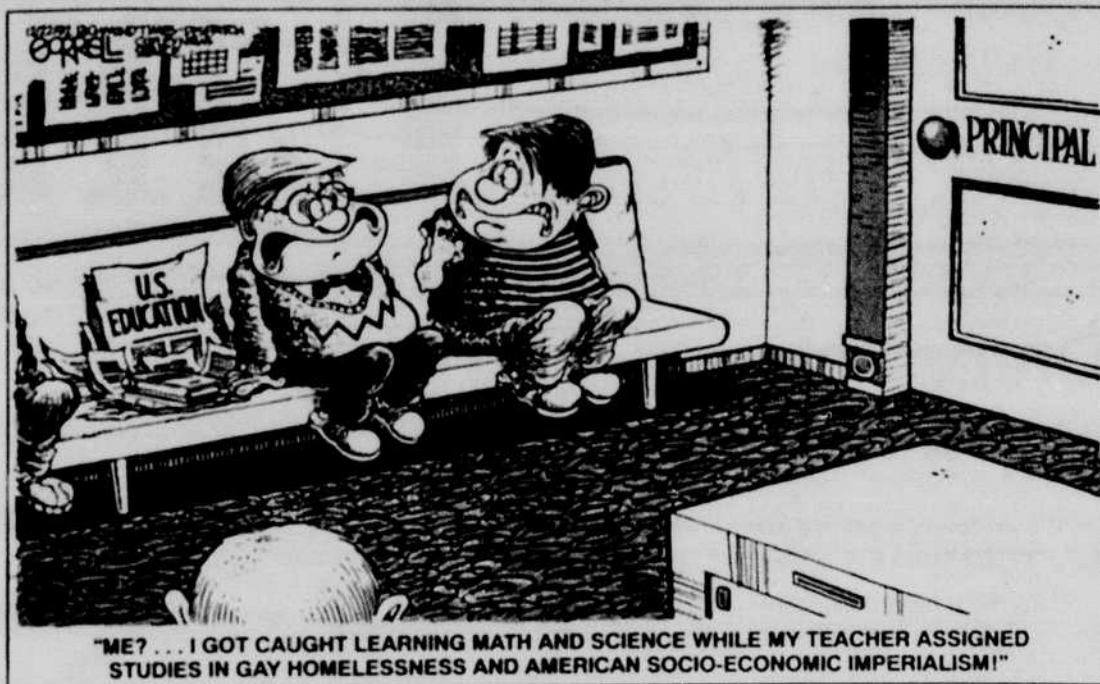
The intent of the University — to get people thinking about ethnocentricity — cannot be fulfilled in a 200-person lecture class about Asian dance. The course itself may be very interesting, but a lecture rarely gives students an increased perspective, nor will it discuss why white citizens sometimes see things differently than people of color.

If the University is going to make a change in the requirement, there are two options. One is to do away with the requirement entirely. It is doing little good as it stands now because students don't actually learn anything. Granted, it is the student's responsibility to study class material, but if the material doesn't actually provoke thought, few will benefit anyway.

The second option is to narrow the requirement — as the proposal says — so students study more than just culture. Professors should teach not only about the history of different racial and ethnic groups, but also about the perceptions of each group with respect to one another.

Small, discussion-oriented courses will encourage wider participation for students. And in this format, professors can actually dissect the meaning of "white perspective" or "multicultural."

This should be the requirement's intent — make students think about their place in the world. Otherwise, students will treat the requirement like any other requirement. They'll ignore it.



LETTERS

Hall hype

A month ago, you printed a letter in which the writer complained about the treatment of students and the level of service at Oregon Hall (ODE, Dec. 4). While I am sure experiences in dealing with bureaucracy do differ on a case-by-case basis, I am compelled to speak out from a positive viewpoint.

I have been at the University for six terms, each term requiring at least three or four visits to Oregon Hall. In very few instances have I experienced a person who was not sincerely attempting to provide assistance, whether it dealt with accounting or financial aid or whatever.

To be honest, I was rather surprised at the level of personal service available in a system that deals with 17,000 students. In particular, I think of Suzanne von Kleist, who has repeatedly helped to smooth bureaucratic details for me, while at the same time being friendly and patient.

The University system is, no doubt, a bureaucracy. But if you've had other experiences with bureaucracies (there are a myriad of those in this world), you realize that Oregon Hall doesn't do all that bad of a job on the whole. In many cases, there are good people behind the counter who are just as inhibited as we are by having to deal with the system.

Hopefully, the University will ferret out those who don't care about doing their jobs and will make it easier for employees who do their best to serve students by continually improving the "system."

**Kelita Morris
Industrial Relations**

Lane Democrats

The Lane County Democratic Party has reorganized and elected officers for a new two-year term. As the newly elected chairwoman, I would like to welcome Lane County citizens to participate in the Democratic process. Our Central Committee meets the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. in Harris Hall, and anyone is welcome. Our office is located at 239 W. 13th Ave. #F in Eugene; the phone is 484-5099.

We have many plans for the next two years and hope to begin by offering valuable seminars in such topics as volunteer recruitment, phone banking, leadership training, public policy education, campaign organization and issue forums.

We'd like to increase our visibility in the community and take an active role in helping President-elect Clinton's "New America" become reality. Together we can forge ahead with hope and prosperity. Please join us as a precinct person today; you can and do make a difference.

**Vicki L. Walker
LCDCC Chairwoman**

Created God

I've been pondering religion again. It seems that many religions believe there is only one true God. People of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths believe this is so. It also seems there are religions that hold there are many gods, from the ancient Greeks to many tribal religions to some of the Asian religions today.

I am not exactly sure of the specifics surrounding each of these religions, as I have not studied theology. It does seem there is a fundamental difference in many of the religions. That is, either there is or isn't one God. Given that if one group is right and the other is wrong, I've come to the conclusion that neither is right, and therefore religion is just another manifestation of culture, like art or social hierarchy.

Each religion is unique to the culture that bore it. God did not create humans; we created God.

**James Rogers
Geology**

Dead Week

In response to the editorial "Make Dead Week a truly dead week." (ODE, Dec. 10), I would like to say that the existing policy is usually appropriate, and only procrastination makes Dead Week "hell week." Although occasionally we all might get a professor who has unreasonable expectations and acts as if he or she was never a student, most of the professors at the University follow the etiquette of Dead Week.

If you choose to do an assignment that is due during Dead Week at the last minute, then you choose to reduce the time you have to study for finals. I do, however, agree with the editorial's proposal that no exams should be given during Dead Week, but I would amend it to add "unless the final is going to be optional."

I do think classes during Dead Week should be slanted toward an overview and review of the material covered during the term, but I also think we should have classes during Dead Week. University students pay a lot of money for these classes to be taught, and for the chance to learn from them. I represent students and support giving students a chance to learn.

I do think Dead Week could use some minor adjustments, but I won't support a major overhaul. College is supposed to be difficult, and I think we all know it is (that's what makes a college degree valuable). As far as making classes optional during Dead Week, this is college, all classes are optional.

**Braden D. Kelley
Executive Secretary, Student Senate**

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Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.