

# The right to choose applies to everyone

A woman needs the fundamental right to choose what to do with her body.

She should be allowed to act and think for herself and to make important decisions without unnecessary criticism from others. She should be able to get an abortion if she so chooses — a right women have championed for years.

She should also have the right to pose nude for money without scorn. It is her body, and she needs to be respected enough to make her own decision. If a person over 18 is allowed to vote and thereby influence the direction of this country, that same person should be able to pose nude whenever she wants.

The argument arises from *Playboy's* visit to the University this past week. From March 30 to April 1, representatives from the magazine interviewed University women for a fall pictorial called "Girls of the Pac-10 Conference." Every year the magazine features a different college conference, and the Pac-10's number was called for the first time since 1985.

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Opponents of the magazine have raised the traditional pornography objections. They claim pornography is largely responsible for sexual abuse and disrespect toward women. They say it exploits women for profit.

The argument is partially true — women in the magazines are rarely respected for more than their bodies. *Playboy* representatives may claim they "like to know (their) people," but in reality, looks and a nice body will get you in the magazine, not a 1,400 on your SATs.

However, claiming that pornography and sexual abuse are connected is stretching the truth. No credible study has ever proven a direct causal link. Ed Meese's commission came down heavily against pornographers, but the data was largely insubstantial. Meese is a conservative who dislikes anything not on the Family Channel.

Reducing a complex psychological disorder to one cause is irresponsible. A rapist is a deeply disturbed individual with violent tendencies. Pornography doesn't cause a person to become disturbed. At its worst, pornography may trigger a sexual crime, but so can almost any movie and virtually any television show.

A woman who wants to pose nude for *Playboy* should have every right to make that decision without undue criticism. Many women say they would pose nude for a photographer provided that the pictures were used for an artistic purpose. But one person's filth is another's art. If a woman admires the pictures in *Playboy*, she shouldn't be attacked for choosing to pose.

It all comes down to making adult decisions. A woman has a right to choose, whether the topic is abortion or posing nude.



## COMMENTARY

# Courses will foster understanding

By Sumi Cho and Quintard Taylor

The Multicultural Curriculum Committee's motion going before the University Assembly April 7 to revise the existing Race, Gender and Non-European requirement is an attempt to get our students to understand their contemporary world. We believe such discussions prepare students for the increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural societies both here and abroad.

We in Oregon are not isolated from these global changes. We at the University have the obligation not only to respond to these changes, but to provide leadership — to generate a model — for others in the state who are grappling with the realities of societal transformation.

Although most on campus agree that the original requirement was set up with good intentions, we found few defenders of the requirement as it is currently written.

In order to correct the existing deficiencies we are proposing a two course requirement instead of the present single course. One course will focus on contemporary race issues in the United States. The other course seeks to provide an understanding of the variety of factors — gender, ethnicity, class and race — that impact on social identity globally.

Racial oppression is a foundational feature of American society. For example, for several decades following the ratification of the Constitution, only landowning white males could vote. People of color were systematically prevented from equal participation in American social, political and economic life through race-based exclusionary laws and practices.

Closer to home, Oregon voters approved a state constitution in 1857 containing a clause excluding people of color from the entire state. Vigorous Klan activity in the state enforced the constitutional exclusion. Klan-sponsored legislation, aimed originally at Catholics and prevented the wearing of religious garments by teachers, was used as recently as 1984 to dismiss a South Asian Sikh teacher in

Eugene. The University maintained a whites only policy in its housing from 1929 until well into the 1940s, refusing to allow African-American women to live in the dorms. Today, the percentage of tenure and tenure-track faculty of color at the University is lower than even that of the state's 7 percent people-of-color population. There are only eight tenured/tenure-track black faculty and two Native Americans out of over 1,000. There is exactly one Latino and one Asian-American woman in the entire social sciences at the University.

The creation of a course on contemporary race issues is a recognition of student concerns that under the existing requirement, a person could graduate from the University without ever having learned anything about the history and culture of 25 percent of the U.S. population. The Committee recognized that race has historically been, and continues to be, a great divider in our nation and is the most obvious line of social demarcation. If we are ever to confront contemporary issues such as those relating to crime and justice, poverty, public education, health care, immigration and welfare reform, then we cannot avoid an examination of race.

The second course to satisfy the revised requirement can focus on gender, race, ethnicity and/or class as these shape identity, social relations or creative expression in either the United States or Europe, or in any non-European society. It is designed to augment and complement the first course.

We believe a grounded understanding of our own country's problems is prerequisite to a credible treatment of the international situation. And, similarly, we think the domestic U.S. situation can only be accurately assessed within an international context. Our students are woefully uninformed about the world outside our borders. They also generally lack the tools, concepts and bodies of information with which they could approach the complexities of social identities that form along the multiple axes of gender, ethnicity and class, and in conjunc-

tion with other social determinants.

To fulfill the second course requirement, students will have a wide variety of courses from which to choose in grappling with the complex issues of cultural diversity: inter-ethnic cross-cultural relations; gender and the challenges of changing constructs of gender and gender roles; and the varied social relations that are the foundations of the many different cultures that form our global community.

We believe the 210 possible courses we have identified to date allow our students to examine these issues from the differing perspectives of anthropologists, sociologists, economists, biologists and psychologists. The point of this requirement is not to get the students to think in one particular way about race, gender, ethnicity or class. Rather, our goal is to get them to think critically and from an informed position about these subjects.

We know some will say it is naive to assume that two courses at the University could help students solve the world's race, gender, ethnicity and class problems. However, it may be equally naive to assume that just because we cannot unilaterally resolve these issues that we should not bother addressing them in our curriculum. We view this requirement as a start, just like our other general education requirements — a start, not a solution.

We propose this revised requirement because we feel a sense of urgency, compelled by events as far away as Somalia and the former Yugoslavia and as close to us as Los Angeles and Kincaid Street. We must begin an honest, constructive dialogue on race, gender, ethnicity and international issues not because we want to divide our campus or our community or to inflame passions. Our role should be to provide for dialogue in the calm, deliberative atmosphere of the classroom as a first step toward bridging those divides and easing tensions.

*Sumi Cho and Quintard Taylor, members of the President's Multicultural Curriculum Committee, submitted this on behalf of the committee.*

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