

Class: Williams hopes course will continue to be part of curriculum

■ Continued from Page 1A
some very intense conversations, Williams said.

"We'll talk about the book, but it usually leads to another conversation involving sexuality, religion and class oppression as defined by the power structure of our society," she said. "But mostly it's about racism."

The effectiveness of a class studying the plight of minorities in America by a group of all-white women from the suburbs has raised some questions among student groups.

"If they really haven't been there, I think it would be hard to understand our situation," said Ebony Slone, a member of the Black Student Union. "I don't think they can really relate to what we go through without someone from the different racial groups there to explain each perspective."

Slone's opinion was echoed by Asian/Pacific American Student

Union secretary Virginia Ng.

"Since they grew up in the suburbs where there are not many minorities, I don't know how they can see what we've gone through living in a white-dominant society," Ng said. "The only way for them to get an idea of what it's like for different ethnic groups is to have direct contact with them or to have a minority member facilitate the group."

Both Slone and Ng agree that it is a good first step for the University to open such a course but worry that the topics and perspectives in the books are not presenting the full story.

The fact that a group of white women from the suburbs took the initiative to discuss racism is, in some ways, one of the most useful things these women could do as white people, said University English professor Dr. Ajuan Mance.

"It's important for white people

to make racism present in their minds," said Mance, an African-American. "I think the books they are reading are a good selection for understanding these minority groups, but it is important for the race discussions not to perpetuate white perspectives."

Mance does not think it is necessary for a member of a minority group to facilitate the class because University courses emphasize gender as an aspect of race.

"If it is their goal to familiarize themselves with a specific author's perspective, they can do it in any environment," Mance said. "The only danger is when and if they begin to extrapolate all of the author's experiences to cover all of the perspectives of one ethnic group."

One group member is a student at Lane Community College and is involved in the discussions so she can articulate her

concerns about racism and society in a casual atmosphere.

"I believe other people should take this class because it is presented in a comfortable and secure environment," said Anjie Woolwine, who receives no class credit through Lane for her participation.

"It's hard to find people who can talk about sensitive issues without arguing," she said. "I really like coming together with women and talking without having any prejudice toward people."

Williams will graduate after this term and hopes the class will continue to be a part of the women's studies curriculum in the future.

"I really hope other people will become interested in the group and someone will take the initiative to continue it after I am gone," Williams said.

The Women Studies Program provides a statement on its web-

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Dr. Ajuan Mance
University English Professor

site saying the purpose of the program is to "offer students an opportunity to learn about the past and present achievements and experiences of women and to understand more clearly the decisive role that gender has played and continues to play in all human societies." Reading Group 405, and all Women's Studies classes, are available to all University students.

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