

## MEMORANDUM

Date: January 20, 1999

To: Departmental Faculty

From: Richard Hume *RH+1*

Subject: Departmental meeting of Monday, February 1, 1999-- concerns related to American Studies/American Cultural Studies "Redesign Proposal"

This packet contains four items --1) a November 12, 1998 proposal for redesigning the American Studies Program into an American Cultural Studies Program, 2) a November 28, 1998 document in which I brought my concerns regarding this redesign proposal to the Departmental Committee on Graduate Studies, 3) Tim Reed's (Director of American Studies) memorandum of December 5, 1998 responding to my memorandum of November 28, 1998, and 4) the January 20, 1999 document which is at the front of this packet. My hope is that, at the February 1 Departmental meeting, we can discuss the issues raised in these documents, pass the January 20 1999 draft document (or something like it) as an official History Department resolution voicing departmental concerns related to the redesigning of American Studies, and ask that Roger, in his capacity as departmental chair, then transmit these concerns officially to Dean Couture.

### DRAFT OF PROPOSED MEMORANDUM TO BE SENT FROM DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY TO DEAN COUTURE

The Department of History wishes to express its serious concerns regarding the "Proposal for the Formation of an American Cultural Studies Program at Washington State University," as outlined in the attached document dated November 12, 1998. The Department of History is particularly apprehensive over the November 12 proposal because of that measure's tone, which may implicitly misrepresent the department's commitments to and achievements regarding diversity. This misrepresentation is indeed troubling during a period of potentially shrinking university resources, especially if, as the memorandum of November 12 implies, History resources could be drained off to augment a graduate program in American Cultural Studies.

The proposal reads "Proposal; the Department of Comparative American Cultures, the Women's Studies Program, and the Program in American Studies, propose to redesign the existing American Studies graduate degree program into multidisciplinary American Cultural Studies Program." This proposal raises a number of concerns--including the following:

1. We in History, perhaps unfairly, detect an implicit assumption throughout the proposal that our department could improve its record on diversity. In this respect, for example, points 5 and 8 on page 1 assert that recruitment of minority and female



graduate students, and graduate-level work on issues of diversity, can best be served through creation of this new program. In fact, History wishes to point with pride to its record in this area. It has been much involved in recruiting and training minority and female graduate students for a number of years. To the degree that resources (FTE/s TA slots, etc.) would be drained from History to support the American Cultural Studies proposal, History's longstanding efforts in these areas would be jeopardized..

To document History's commitment to graduate-student diversity, we note the following graduate students enrolled, and or completing graduate degrees with our department in recent years (with those receiving departmental support noted):

African American	Asian/Asian-American	Hispanic
Rudy Pearson (TA)	Vanida Trongyounggoon (TA)	Gabriel Mendez (TA)
Howard Jones (TA)	Abdullah Abdul Jabbar	Claire Utgaard (TA)
Charles Ramsey (TA)	Peng Deng (TA)	Mercedes Arjona
John Engram (TA)	Yi Sun (TA)	Samuel Regalado (TA)
Gloria Melton (TA)	Alfred Tse (TA)	Jerry Garcia (TA)
Karen Tidwell (TA)	Peter Chu	Albert Ortiz (TA)
Stefan Bradley (TA)	Eddie Ng (TA)	M. Sanchez-Walker (TA)
Dwayne Mack (TA)	Norihito Mizuno	George Martinez
	Mee-Ae Kim (TA)	Gabriel Ibarra (TA)
	Baodi Zhou (TA)	Maria Chavez (TA)
Native American	Sam Lee (TA)	
	Tung-Sun Siu	
Ron Pond	Yuquan Liang (TA)	
Susan Schroeder (TA)	Shizhang Hu (TA)	
Pamela Parker (TA)	Daniel Lee	
Jeanne Eder (TA)	Ram Kalipan	
Joe McGeshick (TA)	Michael Brown (TA)	

2. In a similar vein, the Department of History has attracted and supported a number of female graduate students. This is especially true in our Public History Track, which has grown significantly in recent years. The following figures denote 1) departmentally supported TA's ( Fall 1998-Fall 1990), and the numbers of women among these students, and 2) the numbers of women among Public History graduate students (both columns including all Public History students, whether with or without TA support):

	Total TAs	Women	Public History Graduate Students Total/Women
Fall 1998	34	17	23/15
1997	38	16	20/12
1996	39	16	15/10



1995	37	15	17/10
1994	39	12	18/12
1993	28	13	18/15
1992	28	12	19/15
1991	30	15	19/13
1990	22	10	13/8

In this respect, too, it should be noted that the last six faculty hires in the Department of History have been women: Bridget Farley, Noriko Kawamura, Laurie Mercier, Sue Peabody, Janice Rutherford, and Heather Streets.

3. A large number of the History faculty have researched and written on diversity--racial, ethnic, and gender issues--both in the United States and throughout the world in general. As a small sample of such work not the following:

**Susan Armitage--So Much To Be Done** (1990)--an edited collection of primary materials by women in the American West--Alternate selection of Book of the Month Club, The History Book Club, and the Quality Paperback Book Club.

**LeRoy Ashby--Endangered Children: Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History**(1997)--Directed completed dissertations of Gloria Melton, Rudy Pearson, and Samuel Regalado. Gender and Race are central to his current research on the history of popular culture in the United States.

**David Coon--The Development of Market Agriculture in South Carolina, 1670-1785** (1989)--Deals with the development of slavery in South Carolina, the only British North American mainland colony with a black majority among its population.

Richard Hume--**God Made Man, Man Made the Slave: The Autobiography of George Teamoh** (1990)--The autobiography of a Virginia slave, a fugitive slave, and a black leader in Virginia's reconstruction following the Civil War.

Thomas Kennedy--**Testimony of a Confucian Woman: The Autobiography of Mrs. Nie Zen Jifen, 1852-1942** (1993). The daughter of Zeng Gofan, the Abraham Lincoln of China.

John E. Kicza--**The Native Peoples and the Civilizations of the Americas Before Contact**. American Historical Association Essays on Global and Comparative History, (1998).

Laurie Mercier--**"Smelter City: Labor, Gender, and Cultural Politics in Anaconda, Montana, 1934-1980"** (Ph.D. University of Oregon, 1995--forthcoming from Illinois Press).

Kathryn Meyer--**"Optima Mater, The Life of Agrippina the Younger"** (Ph.D.



Washington State University, 1992). A study of the life of a noble Roman woman, the mother of Nero.

Sue Peabody--**"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in Eighteenth Century France** (1996).

Jacqueline Peterson--**Sacred Encounters: Father De Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West** (1993). This was based on the "Sacred Encounters" Museum Exhibit (1989-1996), which was supported by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Orlan Svingen--**The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, 1877-1900** (1993); Lemhi (Sacajawea's People) Indian Community Recognition Project (\$23,000 Grant Support/ Administration for Native Americans--a Federal Agency located in Washington, DC).

Janice Rutherford--**"Only a Girl' Christine Frederick, Efficiency, Consumerism, and the Woman's Sphere"** (Ph.D. Louisiana State University, 1996-under consideration at Georgia Press). Frederick was, for years, a women's consumer affairs columnist with the Hearst newspapers.

Roger Schlesinger--**Portraits from the Age of Discovery: Selections from Andre Thevet's "Les Vais Pourtraits et Vies des Hommes Illustres."** Observations on selected Native American leaders as authored by a sixteenth-century Frenchman.

David Stratton, "The Snake River Massacre of Chinese Miners, 1887," Chapter in **A Taste of the West: Essays in Honor of Robert G. Athearn** (1983).

Marina Tolmacheva--**The Pate Chronicle** (1993). The editing and annotation of a medieval manuscript on the history of a key Islamic trading center on the east coast of Africa.

4. Virtually all History classes at WSU, both in American history and those focused on other societies at other times, deal with a number of "diversity" issues, including gender roles, class relationships, ethnicity, and race. For example of coverage of such issues in American surveys, note that Professor **Armitage** is a co-author of the much-used American history survey text---**Out of Many** (1998).

In this regard, too, some 21 sections of GenEd 110-111, are currently (Spring Semester 1999) offered by History faculty; these offerings deal with diversity issues, from a world perspective, from the beginnings of civilization to the present.

**Conclusion:** The Department of History does not accept the assumption-- implicit throughout the document of November 12, 1998--that the History graduate program is one that needs to improve or that it is "out-of-step" with current scholarship. As an



example of History's concerns, for instance, note that point 5 of that document indicates that the ACS proposal will improve "the quality and visibility of graduate level work on questions pertinent to American diversity." We take strong exception to this assumption. In regard to dealing with matters of "diversity"-- in undergraduate instruction, in upper division instruction, in graduate-level instruction, and in research-- History has long addressed such issues and continues to do so, in teaching, in research, and in publication.

In 1962, History, which has had a Ph.D. program since 1937, was the key founder of the American Studies Program, which was instituted, in part, to strengthen the case for the implementation (circa 1964) of a Ph.D. program in the Department of English. Given this fact, as well as the evidence outlined in the four above sections of this memorandum, History wishes to make clear 1) its commitment to diversity, 2) its concern that the Dean recognize and support that commitment, and 3) that History's views be considered seriously and specifically in any future restructuring of American Studies, a program, which, after all, History did much to originate and to support during its entire existence.

In a period of dwindling resources at WSU, arguments and proposals to create a new program in American Cultural Studies, that involve expanding the number of its faculty (point 4 of the November 12, 1998 memorandum), generate alarm. Are we to believe that we can retain our retiring FTEs and continue our hope of hiring minority history faculty members while the proposed ACS program expands the number of faculty in its proposed program? As we face 2.5% budget cuts, does "sharing resources" (point 10 of the November 12 memo) mean losing history TAs to other programs that "better serve" the College or University? The ACS Summary of Goals of the Proposal uses words such as "improve," "better reflect," "strengthen," and "expand," and it employs the phrase "better serve" four times. Reasonable people are prompted to ask: Improved over what? "Better served" than whom? Stronger than whom?

The History Department has a strong and longstanding commitment to the issues of class, gender, race, and ethnicity, but the spirit of the November 12 proposal suggests otherwise. The Department of History is nervous about possible misrepresentations that the November 12<sup>th</sup> document may leave, especially insofar as there is a clear inference that History needs to improve its record or is "out of step" with current scholarship.