

Existing Curriculum Study

Diversity and Equity Committee
Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design
5 December 2018

Study Goals

This document presents research undertaken by the Diversity and Equity Committee to document and analyze the scope of our current course offerings. Knowing where we are now seems essential to thinking about how to move forward in a good way, and the information we present here is meant to be a basis for discussion among all of our colleagues about our shared values and evolving culture with respect to teaching. We understand that diversity and equity issues take many forms and that they are more relevant in some courses than in others. Our aim has been to find out what topics faculty members are addressing at present, through what means this content is delivered, and where in the curriculum it appears.

Process

Following the example of other University of Toronto divisions working to assess course content with respect to diversity and equity, the Committee undertook a survey of Daniels full-time and sessional faculty members in the winter of 2017-2018. Faculty members were invited to provide their own definitions of diversity-related content and to submit information about their courses in their own words. From those submissions, the Committee distilled and tabulated a list of topics and delivery methods that it circulated to faculty members for comment in the summer of 2018. This report on our research comprises a thematically organized summary of the all the contributions we received.

The statistical and written information that follows is a snapshot of last year's course offerings. Our goal is to continue the survey over the next three to five years as a way to support discussion about current practices and curriculum development.

Response Rates

Information for individual 2017-18 courses was provided to the Committee by faculty members (and, in some cases, program directors).

Total Reporting: 59 / 158 (37%) of courses reported

By Program:

BAAS: 24/33 (73%) of courses reported

BA-VS: 8/29 (26%) of courses reported

MVS: 1/13 (8%) of courses reported

MLA: 9/27 (33%) of courses reported

MArch: 14/42 (33%) of courses reported

MUD: 6/14 (43%) of courses reported

By Level:

Undergraduate courses: 32/62 (52%) reported

Graduate courses: 27/96 (28%) reported

By Faculty:

25/66 (38%) of core Daniels faculty members responded.

4 sessional Daniels faculty members responded.

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Subjects of Diversity and Equity Content as Defined by Faculty Members

NB: we received too many comments to include in this brief summary. The comments quoted below were selected because of the clarity with which they explained topics and methods. We would be glad to provide a full set of the contributions we received upon request.

73% of reported courses include content related to racism, ethnicity, and culture.

- “The lecture on the Renaissance “invention” of perspective features many cross-cultural comparisons, especially with East Asian representational techniques in order to demonstrate that perspective is a cultural construct (i.e., we look at Chinese and Japanese paintings)”
- “The course includes two weeks on problematizing the ‘export’ of European ideals in other contexts (Team X in Kuwait, Candilis Josic and Woods in Morocco, Fry and Drew in Ghana, etc.)”
- “Discusses the exchange between western and non-western architecture and planning in the modern era.”

42% of reported courses include content related to gender.

- “I deliver a full lecture, “Glass Houses” on the history of women architects in Canada (most students don’t know the story of Esther Marjorie Hill, the first woman to graduate in architecture at U of T, nor that of Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, who served as dean of our faculty), and the experience of women living in modern houses (especially Edith Farnsworth). We read Annmarie Adams’ wonderful essay on the Eichler Home.”
- “An introduction to the notion of mass media and mass production fosters a discussion about how these two phenomena transformed the private interiors of modern homes through readings such as Dorothy Hobson’s “Housewives and Mass Media” and Joan Ockman’s excellent essay on the representation of gender in post-WWII architecture. Similarly, in a later session devoted to the production of social space in the early 20th century leads to the production of gendered spaces, third spaces, and heterotopias.”

24% of reported courses include content related to sexual orientation.

- “A discussion about utopia covers the perceived failures of modernism and issues of race and class around the construction and ultimate demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, and a session on precedent discusses the relationship between Philip Johnson’s House in New Canaan and Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House but, also, the issues of domesticity, gender, and sexuality inherent in both”
- “The speaker series has been developed with clear objectives to incorporate diverse viewpoints and perspectives. The speakers both represent and will address viewpoints, contexts and considerations re. race, gender, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation, and will directly address social inclusion, equity and diversity issues.”

16% of reported courses include content related to age.

- “The way I teach, and what I teach is definitely a reflection of my who I am [...] I find that my age is an aspect of who I am that challenges peoples’ perceptions, as well I have an extensive background (pre-university) in working with and teaching people who are have learning differences, are not neurotypical, have mental health concerns, etc.”

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63% of reported courses include content related to geography.

- “Students explore different global cities (i.e. Sinan, Istanbul, Beijing, Isfahan, Agra, Rome)”
- “Introduces notions of site and the construction of nature through case studies drawn from North America, Europe, Asia, and Latin America, providing students with an opportunity to understand the idea of landscape in a global context”
- “This will include the examination of the preindustrial metropolis, the cultivation of rice, sacred spaces, the notion of the oasis, the forest, and other sites as the embodiment of different histories, cultures, ontologies, and ecologies.”
- “During our visit to the CCA in Montréal, students were required to present a photograph from the CCA collection. I made sure the list of possible photographs to be presented included a wide geographic range (India, Japan, China, etc.) and many works by women, such as Clara Gutsche, Berenic Abbott, etc.”

34% of reported courses include content related to ideology.

- “This course examines the history of urbanization and urbanism as a way of life through the lens of political economy and culture.”
- “The seminar emerges from concerns of diversity and equity across issues of culture, politics, economies, and human societies.”

19% of reported courses include content related to ability.

- “Students are asked to understand the building code as it relates to accessibility. They are then asked to creatively implement universal design principals – spatially, environmentally, and tectonically.”
- “This course examines the history of urbanization and urbanism as a way of life through the lens of political economy and culture. It looks at inequality and the uneven access to the benefits of urbanization within the discourse of community and citizenship. Through on-site analysis and archival research of local Toronto sites, students challenge the mainstream or dominant discourse on city building by asking basic questions about stakeholders.”

49% of reported courses include content related to colonization.

- “Patrick Stewart will deliver a guest lecture on Indigenous knowledge in architecture. Dr. Stewart is one of Canada’s few indigenous architects, and his PhD at UBC raised controversy when he refused to use western punctuation.”
- “Topics include the projection of national and ethnic identity in expositions buildings and planning; colonial projects in British New Delhi and French Indochina; the global exchange and codification of CIAM urbanism; the export of design education in a global context; self-help housing and the role of vernacular building in modernist discourse; the tourist industry; and the role of the architect and designer in settings with socioeconomic and political inequalities”
- “Course addresses the displacement of indigenous people in the formation of new monuments and mythologies by the European settlers of Canada and the US”
- “The course ends with an analysis of the relationships between Western media and purported concepts of the vernacular, peripheral, and “savage” in so-called postcolonial contexts.”

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5% of reported courses include content related to slavery.

- “An entire lecture is given on the links between classicism and slavery, through Pliny’s villas, the Palladian villas of the Veneto, and especially the case of Thomas Jefferson’s Montecello.”

39% of reported courses include content related to class.

- “Urban design tools such as participatory planning, heritage preservation and environmental sustainability are viewed in terms of race, gender, class, and cultural identity.”

19% of reported courses include content related to religion.

- “This course challenges the concept of centre and periphery by contextualizing the development of architectural and urban modernism within global networks of design knowledge and expertise. Race, gender, class, religion, culture, and human rights are concepts that frame our discussion of well-known architectural projects and architects as well as lesser-known episodes in the history of architecture.”

Means of Exposure as Reported by Faculty Members

49% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through reading authors.

- “This course focuses upon secondary source readings, so I have made sure that the majority are written by women.”
- “I don’t include work or readings simply because they typify a specific stance driven by identity issues, but because I value the insight, the critical thinking, the artistry, the writing - and when I talk about who the author, artist is, I include personal information and/or highlight where they are located theoretically.”

63% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through reading topics.

- “Relies heavily on *A Global History of Architecture* (2007) by Francis Ching, Mark Jarzombek, and Vikramaditya”
- “Readings on First Nations ideas about ecology, habitat, and experience of the landscape”

53% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through assignments.

- “The course assignments, a comparison analysis of two buildings in vastly different places, require students to challenge their own assumptions about universal norms of modernism, modernity, and modernization.”

12% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through tests.

- “These ideas are introduced in lecture and then reinforced through problem sets and quizzes during the tutorials.”

27% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through visiting lecturers.

- “This course (and its affiliated Midday Lecture Series) invites practitioners from all design allied fields (art, architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, etc) for a public lecture followed by a subsequent “behind the scenes” practice discussion with students. Made a conscious effort to invite a diversity of speakers that cover a range of topics.”

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16% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through review juries.

- “I never have all male juries (in fact, most of my juries have majority women), and make sure to invite both women architects, and also women students to review work”

19% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through field trips.

- “We will have lectures from indigenous community members, First Nations Leaders provide insights on field trips, and we have included four readings to introduce students to indigenous issues specific to our studio agenda”

69% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through group discussions.

- “Discussion of ways in which different languages (i.e. indigenous vs. western) frame understandings of the landscape”
- “Discussion of the revitalization of Lawrence Heights (LH), a low-income and largely minority newcomer community.”

73% of reported courses expose students to diversity and equity content through lectures.

- “The lecture may introduce perspective drawing and its connection to European colonization and Cartesian reality, for example, while the tutorial section will collectively read Hao Dazheng’s excellent chapter on Chinese visual representation in painting and cinema.”

Recommendations and Next Steps

The Committee recommends the consideration of diversity and equity issues at several levels: by the program directors, the curriculum committee and individual faculty members. The goal is to raise consciousness in ways that respect intellectual freedom in the development and framing of curricula and courses.

- The Committee recognizes that questions related to diversity and equity will likely take different form in different kinds of courses. Our research suggests that at present, these subjects are most likely to come up in history and theory courses. We hope that this ongoing study will foster conversation about how they might find appropriate—and unique—expression in courses concerned with design, construction and technology.
- The Committee plans to continue its study using the terms that have already emerged as a framework for eliciting additional information about course content—and additional definitions of diversity and equity. In addition to seeking information about content and methods, the survey will also ask faculty members how they define expertise and what resources they use to expand their knowledge of subjects related to diversity and equity.
- The Committee recognizes the importance of a diverse cohort among guests invited to contribute to course work (for instance, at studio reviews or in guest lectures).
- To support its recommendations, the Committee plans to develop a resource list for teaching beyond the limits of an instructor’s individual experience with respect to diversity and equity. This will require support for the Chair and Secretary; the committee respectfully requests the assignment of a work-study student to this task in the summer of 2019.