

**Report on the Major in Ethnicity, Race and Migration
Committee on Majors
January 20, 2012**

This review was triggered by a proposal from the program in Ethnicity, Race and Migration (ER&M) to change its status from a second major to a stand-alone major. Approval of the proposal would allow students to pursue the ER&M major alone, without simultaneously fulfilling the requirements of another major. The request to convert the status of the major was joined with a curricular proposal to add a Junior Seminar as a new requirement. In response to these proposals, the Committee met on October 21 with four current undergraduates majoring in ER&M, and on November 4 with ER&M faculty Stephen Pitti (Director), Patricia Pessar (DUS), and Mary Lui.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend (a) that the Yale College Faculty convert the Ethnicity, Race, and Migration program to stand-alone status, and (b) that the curriculum revision be approved.

Ethnicity, Race, and Migration was constituted conditionally as a second major in 1997. Like many other majors at Yale, ER&M is not affiliated with a single department and has lacked formal power to appoint faculty. It lists thirty-seven ladder faculty and eight lecturers, with primary appointments in nineteen departments. American Studies and History have the greatest numerical representation, and also seem to house the faculty with the strongest programmatic commitment to sustaining the major. The major was initially reviewed in 2002, and again in 2007, after which the College granted it status as a permanent major. The January 2008 COM report noted that a significant number of new faculty had been hired in the time since the major was initially instituted, and recommended that "the question of converting the major to primary major status be reviewed again in five years."

Since that time, the program has been significantly strengthened by the recent promotions to tenure of Mary Lui (Asian-American history) and Alicia Schmidt Camacho (Latina/o Studies), and the hiring of Ned Blackhawk (to tenure in Native American History) and Birgit Brander Rasmussen (untenured, in Native American and Chicana/o literatures). The program is currently searching for an assistant professor of Latina/o literature who would arrive in July 2012. This faculty line, joint with American Studies, will be the first to be partly lodged within the ER&M program. Other positive developments include the recent move of program offices to a dedicated and integral space at 35 Broadway, and the allocation of new resources for a full-time program administrator.

As in the 2007 review, ER&M students voiced unanimous praise for the excellent teaching and advising they have received in their second major. They appreciate the freedom that the curriculum affords them to design their own projects and explore their own regions of interest. The students identified two weaknesses: a dearth of courses focusing on core ER&M issues, and an absence of community and sense of converging intellectual pursuit. They noted that, after the introductory course (ER&M 200), the only course specifically required of ER&M majors is the senior colloquium (ER&M 491). Both weaknesses seem to be addressed by the proposed Junior Seminar, which would be required of all ER&M majors. Program faculty emphasized that this

new course would introduce students to fundamental theoretical work, methodologies of inquiry and analysis, and cutting edge work in ethnicity, identity, and international migration. In addition, the proposed new course will encourage students to form a cohort at a more appropriate stage of their studies.

In evaluating the proposal, the committee's primary focus has been to assess the internal coherence of the proposed curricular distribution and to evaluate how the changes could be implemented in a way that optimizes the benefit to potential majors. Mindful of the challenge of sustaining a major whose faculty have primary appointments in other academic departments, the committee was deeply impressed by the engagement, commitment, and articulate advocacy projected by its faculty representatives. The Committee on Majors concurs with the ER&M program coordinators that the addition of new faculty members, the tenuring of existing ER&M faculty members, and the presence of administrative support will provide the critical infrastructure necessary to sustain a thriving stand-alone ER&M major.

Committee on Majors

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