

Overview and Essential Questions

Between 2006 and 2011, the percentage of programs offering instruction in the learning activity known as “Oppression, Privilege & Difference” (OPD) decreased slightly, from 83% to 78%. The distribution of programs addressing OPD “extensively” “moderately” and “a little” was consistent across the five-year span (roughly a third in each category). The planning unit breakdown was also consistent. SPBC, CTL and EA programs tended to address OPD “extensively” and/or “moderately.” Programs in SI and ES (as well as IA programs) showed greater variability and were on the whole less likely to address OPD more than “a little”.

An initial review of this highly narrative data led us to the following questions:

1. What patterns in the data (in both the kinds of strategies/activities reported and the way in which they are described) might help us better define extensive, moderate and minimal approaches to OPD?
2. How might we refine our understanding of the strategies/activities used in programs by asking faculty to categorize them, perhaps on a continuum (e.g. active vs. passive or high-risk vs. low-risk)?
3. How might we refine our understanding of the strategies/activities used in programs by asking faculty to distinguish pedagogical forms (workshops, guest speakers, etc.) from content covered (particular authors, historical moments)?

Interpretative Analysis

We chose to address these questions by close reading a few exemplary responses in each category, and deriving from them some possible language for future survey question rubrics.

Typical elements of an “extensive” response:

- rich level of detail around both process and content, learning activities and outcomes
- some account of pedagogical framing or theory
- demonstrable connections and/or scaffolding between learning activities
- movement from tourist-type activities around OPD issues to deeper analysis, reflection and action/praxis
- integration of OPD content across program curricula and/or disciplines

Note: Participation in Day of Absence/Day of Presence did not necessarily connote “extensive” engagement, unless it was linked to other program activities.

Typical elements of a “moderate” response:

- reference to multiple texts and activities without connecting or integrating them with broader theories, program themes and goals
- integration of a variety of pedagogical approaches to help ground or scaffold OPD content, although not directly connected to application or practice
- OPD content is offered within programs, but opportunities for reflection or synthesis are often not reported or elaborated upon

Typical elements of a “minimal” response:

- References to individual texts and activities without connecting or integrating them to broader theories, program themes and goals.
- OPD only emerged in student project work, as opposed to a planned part of the program

Table 1. Frequency and Extent of OPD Taught by Planning Unit (2006-2011)

Planning Unit	Percent of programs offering OPD 06-07	Percent of programs offering OPD 08-09	Percent of programs offering advanced and extensive OPD 10-11
Society, Politics, Behavior, Change	100%	87.6%	80.9%
Evening Weekend Studies	88%	88.6%	No longer a planning unit
Culture Text and Language	93%	86.3%	95.2%
Inter Area	80%	100%	73.9%
Core	100%	83.4%	66.6%
Expressive Arts	100%	90%	85.8%
Scientific Inquiry	44%	46.2%	33.3%
Environmental Studies	73%	58.4%	70%
Tribal	100%	100%	100%
Consciousness Studies			100%
Tacoma			100%

Discussion

As with so many open ended questions on the survey, there was tremendous variety in the activities/strategies that were identified as “extensive,” “moderate,” etc. (in many cases we disagreed with the faculty’s evaluation of their work, though we may have been misreading the narratives). Therefore we recommend adding detail to the OPD question on the survey, either by offering faculty additional checkboxes (along the lines suggested by questions 2 and 3) or by providing sample answers (along the lines of the “typical elements” listed above). We are aware that adding checkboxes may result in a loss of narrative richness and/or may feel prescriptive. We disregarded responses that simply listed learning activities used to address OPD (e.g. “seminar, lecture, workshop” without additional detail) and would recommend building questions that preempt such responses.

Given how new this work is in academia, it makes sense that there is little consensus around what it means to teach OPD concepts and methodologies. Ideally, we would be assessing this teaching through multiple lenses, not just self-reporting (e.g. interviews, transcript reviews, syllabi analyses, faculty development, etc.)

We are glad to see that OPD is relatively widely diffused within the curriculum, and would recommend that the College incentivize development opportunities for faculty who wish to at least include OPD “minimally” in their programs. This might mean greater support for Day of Absence/Day of Presence type events throughout the year, including tools for faculty to do pre-reflection and follow up activities, and ideas for how to integrate this work into the rest of the program work. In other words, we want to help faculty move beyond the touristic practice of having students attend a single event.

In addition, we believe it is important to recognize OPD as a set of academic content and methods that can be studied at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels, and to make that work visible within the catalog.