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TEACHING MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

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TEACHING MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

by

Jordan K. Fleming

Submitted to the School of Honors Committee

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for University Honors Scholars

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Acknowledgments

To my parents, advisor, and professors—thank you. This thesis is a product of your lessons, guidance, and support.

Abstract

Due to a lack of research on the topic and events of 2020, this thesis aims to learn how professors teach multicultural literature to traditional undergraduate students and how students respond to these courses. I focus on pedagogical scholarship that notes the structure, challenges, and impact of teaching this genre in K-12 and higher education classrooms. My conclusions provide educators with a repertoire of teaching strategies, materials, and student feedback to help students critically respond to living in a multicultural nation and world. These conclusions also lessen a gap in research, as there is significantly less published information on teaching multicultural literature in higher education than in K-12 classrooms.

KEY WORDS: diversity literature, multicultural literature, college, English, secondary language arts

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A year ago, two-thirds of the way into my undergraduate thesis process, I had written half of my thesis on a different topic than the one you are reading now. My previous study focused on book-to-movie adaptations and how medium affects the interpretation of a story. At the center of it all was Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, a renowned novel about Chinese and Chinese-American experiences. Yet, I know very little about either culture. I began to worry about how I would discuss the text and film in depth without fully understanding the content. This highlighted a more pressing issue than how people interpret book-to-movie narratives: How does one teach diversity literature at the college-level? As an answer, I found a lack of research and 2020, a year emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness.

My current study examines how professors teach multicultural literature to traditional undergraduate students. Guided by the following research questions, I developed and distributed an 18-question survey to one university's English and education professors:

- How do educators come to teach multicultural literature courses?
- What materials and methods do educators use to teach multicultural literature?
- What obstacles or limitations do educators face when teaching diversity literature from students, parents, peers, or administration?
- What impact does multicultural literature have on teachers and students?

It is important to note that the purpose of my research is to determine characteristics of multicultural literature courses, not to evaluate each professor's teaching process.

The survey results help lessen a gap in research and provide educators with a collection of teaching strategies, materials, and feedback to implement diversity literature into their own classrooms. However, some factors affect the results' generalizability such as the study's time

span, location, and participation sample size. I conducted this study over a two-week period at a small Christian university. Limiting survey responses to two departments narrowed the participant sample even further. I hope that others will use my contribution to conduct further research in this area.

There are a few terms to be aware of as you read each chapter. In this context, *diversity* refers to the inclusion of ethnically marginalized individuals and communities into a space where they may be underrepresented. *Diversity literature* and *multicultural literature* are used synonymously to describe works created by ethnically marginalized individuals. The university where I performed this study also has a category of classes called *diversity literature courses*. These include Native American Literature, African American Literature, Latin American Literature (also referred to as Survey of Spanish-American Literature), Middle Eastern Literature, and Women's Literature. I specify diversity literature refers to this group of classes and when it refers to multicultural literature courses in general.

The next chapter discusses canonization, the use of and responses to multicultural literature in K-12 and higher education classrooms, and issues that impact diversity on college campuses. Chapter three details the methodology used to study this topic. Chapter four provides an analysis of the survey results. Chapter five offers conclusions, resources to help educators incorporate multicultural literature in their own classrooms, and highlights areas of further research.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Using the prior research, this chapter provides an overview of major ideas and events that have influenced multicultural literature education. The following sections describe the history of multiculturalism as a study as well as its place in literature and education. This chapter also acknowledges gaps in the research.

Multiculturalism as a Field of Study

Multiculturalism is the product of cultural pluralism in the early 1900s, the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, and numerous minority scholars. While there are many definitions for multiculturalism (Bryson; Morris), it generally refers to the study of marginalized groups and powers that impact them. This includes studies about ethnic minorities—Native Americans, Black or African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicano or Latin American—women, and the LGBTQ+ community (Gumport 228). Morris expands this list by including Whiteness, disability, and masculinity studies (229).

This concept can be broken down into five theoretical frameworks proposed by Steinberg in 1997 and Steinberg and Kincheloe in 2009: conservative monoculturalism, liberal multiculturalism, pluralist multiculturalism, left-essentialist multiculturalism, and critical multiculturalism (Morris 299). The first two frameworks strive to create sameness among diverse groups of people. Steinberg and Kincheloe note Conservative monoculturalists argue against multiculturalism and instead focus solely on the Western canon as a “‘universally civilizing influence’” (qtd. in Morris 299). Similarly, liberal multiculturalism advocates for the melting pot concept, in which all ethnic groups should assimilate “‘into the Anglo-Saxon norm in the United States’” (Morris 299). Proponents of diversity would counter these ideas by addressing how

unequal representation and power structures result in oppression (Stallworth et al., Delgado et al.)

The latter three frameworks all emphasize differences among people groups but for various reasons. For example, pluralist multiculturalism exoticizes characteristics that make groups unique, while left-essentialist multiculturalists believe race, class, and gender are fixed categories. Morris, in opposition to left-essentialists, points out how these categories are not static but historical and social constructions that change with the times (299-300). Lastly, critical multiculturalists study racial, class, and gender oppression and argue for people to resist oppressive figures. While not one of the original five frameworks, revolutionary multiculturalism is worth mentioning. Scholars of this field study Whiteness and White privilege. They also go a step further than critical multiculturalists by urging people not only to resist but to act as “revolutionary agents” who dismantle the oppression caused by Whiteness and White privilege (Morris 300).

Over the years, multiculturalism has inspired new fields of study. One such branch is the intergroup education movement of the 1940s, which focused on combating the anti-Semitism that arose from WWII. Interestingly, Morris points out, Jews are often excluded from multicultural literature despite being one of the U.S.’s ethnic minority groups (296). Critical Race Theory (CRT) also shares similarities with multiculturalism as they are both based on ideas rooted in the Civil Rights Movement and more recent efforts to address diversity.

Notable scholars who influenced this field include Horace Kallen, W.E.B Du Bois, Jack Forbes, James Banks, Carl Grant, Carlos E. Cortes, Derald W. Sue, and Nancy Larrick. Banks in the 1960s and Grant in the 1970s, in particular, led efforts for multicultural education; they strove to implement multicultural education into the curricula of elementary and secondary and

sustain multicultural departments within higher education institutions (Morris 297). Hughes-Hassell notes how “Larrick’s study, combined with the growing awareness of diversity issues spawned by the Civil Rights movement, led to the beginning of the multicultural publishing movement in youth literature” (211). Later sections describe how multicultural practices are still being incorporated across all levels of education and the importance of representation in literature.

Critical Race Theory

As previously mentioned, Critical Race Theory and multiculturalism share similar backgrounds and ideas. As progress made by the Civil Rights Movement slowed down in the 1970s, an increase in “subtler forms of racism” became apparent (Delgado and Stefancic 4). In response, Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado established Critical Race Theory. CRT is largely based on critical legal studies and radical feminism. However, scholars from numerous disciplines shaped the field such as the European philosopher Antonio, literary theorists Michel Foucault and Jaques Derrida, Sojourner Truth, and those who practice ethnic studies. Efforts during that time period like the Civil Rights, Chicano, and Black Power movements also helped shape CRT. Much like its interdisciplinary origins, Critical Race Theory has moved beyond the realm of law to the fields of education, political science, healthcare, women’s studies, sociology, theology, and philosophy (Delgado and Stefancic 5-6).

According to Delgado and Stefancic, CRT “tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it, setting out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies but to transform it for the better” (8). Four core beliefs guide theorists in their efforts to accomplish this goal: 1.) racism is the normal way society operates 2.) privileging “white-over-color...serves important purposes, both psychic and material, for the

dominant group” 3.) race is a social construct and 4.) the voice-of-color thesis, in which “because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, black, American Indian, Asian, and Latino writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know” (Delgado and Stefancic 8-11).

In addition to the scholars noted earlier, notable figures for CRT include Kimberlé Crenshaw, Charles Lawrence, Mitu Gulati, Eric Yamamoto, Robert Williams, Francisco Valdes, Margaret Montoya, Angela Onwuachi-Willig, Paul Butler, Jean Stefancic, and Nancy Levitt (Delgado and Stefancic 6).

Overview of Multicultural Literature

In his article “Multicultural Literature in the United States: Advent and Process,” John Lowe chronicles multicultural literature from its origins in the early 1800s to the early 2000s. In the early 1880s, African Americans commonly appeared as stereotypical characters in the works of White, Southern authors. They did not establish a clear voice until the works of authors such as Les Canelles, which gave rise to books like George Washington Cable’s *The Gransissimes* that questioned racial oppression and John Rollin Ridge’s (who published under the name Yellow Bird) *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit* in 1854. The latter was the first novel written in English by an Indigenous American author (Lowe para. 3-7). In the early 1900s, most multicultural literature was published in newspapers and magazines. Though, minority authors also published longer pieces during this time period such as the works of Mary Antin and Harlem Renaissance authors in the 1930s, Richard Wright’s *Native Son* in 1940, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin’s protest novels and Chester Himes’ mystery novels in the 1940s and 50s (Lowe para. 10).

While the Civil Rights Movement was underway, American Literature survey courses in the late 1960s featured very few ethnic writers. Lowe comments that this is largely due to writers of color being published less than their White counterparts. In order for both of these realities to change, the academic community had to prove multicultural literature had a place in college curricula, was high enough quality to publish, and should be a topic of discussion by national organizations like the Modern Language Association. During the 1970s, at one of the MLA's annual conferences, a group tried to convince the organization to hold a panel discussion on multicultural literature. While the MLA turned them down, the group later became the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States in 1973 (Lowe para 12-14; MELUS).

The MLA has become more inclusive since the 1970s. For example, Lowe notes their 1999 conference held sessions on various multicultural topics including ethnicity and hybridity (Lowe para 15). Following suit, the MLA's presidential theme for their 2022 convention is Multilingual US (Fuchs). In an online statement Barbara Fuchs, the second vice president of the organization, explains,

When I first considered a theme for my presidential year, I was motivated by the urgency of naming and recognizing our multilingual reality, in a political context that strove to deny it. In the face of a devastating global pandemic, which has shut physical borders, it is all the more important to argue for cultural exchange and openness, from the teaching of languages in universities to the fostering of them in our public life...

The MLA can play a crucial role in imagining and supporting a linguistically diverse commons, to make language a tool of inclusion rather than exclusion. For those who care about the humanities, exploring and promoting multilingualism is one of the

most significant contributions we can make to a diverse public sphere. At the same time, reconstructing multilingual roots productively complicates the history of the nation-state—particularly for the United States but also for many other polities, especially settler nations whose indigenous and interimperial pasts have been occluded. Our theme for the year is thus both contemporary and historical—an invitation to highlight the importance of contemporary multilingualism, while attending to the complex histories and erasures that have led to our present condition. (para 1-2)

Her statement articulates the need for cultural exchange through language in today’s current tumultuous climate to both celebrate diverse peoples and address the oppression of their languages.

The 1980s and 90s saw an increase in scholarship about ethnic literature. Influenced by European criticism about “‘difference’ in literature,” American scholars began to look for the same thing within Western works (Lowe para 16). This led to contributions from literature professors Werner Sollars and Paul Lauter. While Sollars’s book *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (1986) inspired many to reevaluate the then-current canon, Lauter’s *Heath Anthology of American Literature* (1990) contains numerous works of ethnic literature. Following these publications are more representative American literature and culture-specific anthologies (e.g., an anthology solely dedicated to Native American literature) Lastly, Lowe highlights one challenge of studying or teaching multicultural literature in the early 2000s. Numerous works during that time were poorly translated (Lowe para 16-19).

Canonization

Teachers of all grade levels use canonical literature within their curriculum. This is due to multiple reasons. Canonical literature represents a collection of merited works about a topic

(Stallworth et al.). Using a class set of anthologies grants all students access to course materials and may be more cost-effective (Stallworth et al.). Since these works have greater popularity than noncanonical titles, they are also more accessible for students to purchase or borrow if need be. For instance, students can easily obtain a Shakespeare play or *The Scarlet Letter* from a local bookstore, but they may have trouble finding a work that is less popular.

Several factors determine if a work becomes a part of the Western canon, with the most powerful arguments about canonization appearing in the 1980s and 1990s and especially in response to Harold Bloom's 1994 *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. According to Bloom, the canon consists of books that were once popular due to their aesthetic value but are becoming outdated as time goes on. David Fishelov counters this argument in his book *Dialogues with/and Great Books: The Dynamics of Canon Formation*. He claims aesthetics alone should not determine canonicity. Rather, books that are worthy of a place in a canon are works that prompt dialogue among "readers, authors, translators, adapters, scholars and critics" (Pinto 1). Fishelov then uses case studies to establish a list of previous factors that increased a text's chances of canonization. He concludes that the greater a work performed in the following categories, the more likely it was to initiate dialogue; in turn, boosting its "reputation" and chances of becoming a part of the Western canon (Pinto 5):

- 1.) If the work is already a part of a canon
- 2.) Aesthetic value
- 3.) Response from readers, with scandals about the work increasing echo-dialogue (Echo-dialogue is what occurs when those in conversation solely restate the other's ideas instead of expanding or opposing what was said.)
- 4.) The types of echo-dialogue the work prompts

5.) Genre (i.e., novels outperform lyrical poetry)

6.) Topos, or “the evocation of universal human values readers can relate with will generate more dialogues)”

The Western canon is traditionally known to feature more titles by European or Euro-American male authors than any other group. As a result, marginalized groups tend to create their own canons to solidify the significance of their voice and demonstrate the type of works an American literary canon should include (Roemer 583; Jupp 41). Roemer comments on this in his article “Contemporary American Indian Literature: The Centrality of Canons on the Margins.”

Roemer recognizes marginalized demographics are often excluded from or have significantly fewer selections featured in American literature canons. Using a Native American literature anthology specifically should help educators veer away from only teaching what is “familiar and accessible” (Roemer 585), present major characteristics, issues, and the diversity within Native American literature and cultures; and encourage readers to invest in canonical *and* noncanonical works by Native authors since no selection of works can fully represent a community of people. According to the writer, “the quality of those collections will depend to a great extent on how well editors can explicitly (in introductions) and implicitly (in their selections) communicate fundamental critical, ethical, and aesthetic issues that will enable nonspecialists to analyze and teach American Indian literatures with intellectual rigor and with sensitivity” (Roemer 584). Introductions, in particular, inform readers of a work’s literary tradition. This information is fundamental to fully understanding and appreciating the text.

Both Roemer and Jupp, who discusses Mexican-American literature, cite the importance of reading and teaching multicultural literature in their original literary traditions. One way to learn these traditions is through a work’s introductions, bibliography, and other contextual

information. For instance, Roemer reviews a Native American anthology called *Lighting Within*. This anthology highlights works from then-current “must-read authors,” twenty years of Native American fiction, pan-Indianism, and multiethnicity (Roemer 591). However, the book lacks contextual information. Roemer believes author introductions and a brief history of Native American fiction would have aided readers in understanding each work and why their relevance to present literature (Roemer 592). Another book, *Talking Leaves*, does not include strong contextual information but it does highlight the importance of oral traditions and daily survival in Native American poetry and fiction (Roemer 595).

Likewise, Jupp proposes a reading list for teaching Mexican-American literature given its literary tradition, which is composed of oral traditions, various modern literature, and the Mexican Revolution. He argues that organizing multicultural literature into reading lists and then into a canon will help people recognize common values in the text and develop a new understanding of cultural identity (Jupp 39).

While culture-specific anthologies are purposeful, it is also important for the overall Western canon to reflect the nation and world’s diversity. After an analysis of works considered a part of the 1990s American canon, Pace found that the canon does not reflect the diversity of ethnicities, sex, or opinions in the U.S. It even used works written by or about people of color to perpetuate ethnic stereotypes, particularly of the Latinx and Black communities. Canons do not have to be anthologies. They can also be established by university reading lists. Stallworth et al. noticed a shift in reading lists while studying teacher perspectives on multicultural literature in 2006. They comment that a change in reading lists demonstrates a change in the canon and what is considered to be quality literature. Thus, quality literature now consists of works from the 1960s or later, which emphasize “diversity and cultural differences” (Stallworth et al. 484).

Multicultural Education in K-12 Classrooms

In the article “Multicultural Literature Education: A Story of Failure?” Youngsan Goo argues that teaching multicultural literature is an ineffective and problematic way to instill unbiased behaviors in students and to create social harmony outside of the classroom. Goo briefly discusses the goals of multicultural education from the 1960s to 2000s and the criterion set by The Anti-Defamation League and InTime (organizations with multiculturalist ideals) for selecting classroom literature. The author also examines methods educators use to teach multicultural literature to first and ninth graders.

Goo concludes the goal to “foster harmony in a diverse society” is commendable (327). However, in execution, “some of the values that multicultural educators seek to promote are actually controversial political and philosophical positions” (328). For example, Goo cites how teachers may advocate for post-truth ideas (philosophical) and authors to solely write stories about their own race/ethnicity (political). Next, multicultural education theorists claim racism has increased since the 60s. If racism continues to rise, despite the expansion of multicultural education to address issues regarding “race, language, and culture,” this pedagogy is not an effective way to develop social harmony nationwide (Goo 328). Brignall and Valey, citing Freire, would argue that there is no such thing as neutral teaching. Stallworth and Rude would also counter this.

In their article “It’s Not on the List: An Exploration of Teachers’ Perspectives on Using Multicultural Literature,” Stallworth et al. discuss their study why secondary English teachers do or do not include multicultural literature within their curricula. The researchers believe classrooms are small representations of a diverse United States and world. Therefore, classrooms should be used to teach and cultivate “interconnectedness,” “community,” “openmindedness,”

and “mutual respect” for each person’s differences, ethnic or otherwise (Stallworth et al. 478). Highlighting these attitudes in the classroom helps prepare students to respond similarly outside of school. Similarly, in her dissertation “(Re)Humanizing Literature Through Critical Literacy Pedagogy: A Case Study of Teachers Engaging with Multicultural Literature,” Renée V. Rude argues educators must teach multicultural literature critically if students are to increase self-awareness, become empathetic toward other cultures, and correct present societal and cultural problems. Yet, certain obstacles prevent teachers in K-12 classrooms from including multicultural literature in their curriculum.

K-12 educators rely on multiple aspects to develop curricula. For instance, they consider personal ideologies, intended outcomes for students to think critically and use their awareness to better their communities, canonical literature, standardized tests, Common Core standards, and student interests (Rude; Stallworth; Cooper). Common teaching practices for elementary and secondary classrooms include student-centered and led activities such as Socratic seminars, literature circles, and end-of-semester action projects. Educators also strived to connect the cultural context of the literature to students themselves and the present day and incorporate, reader-response theory, critical pedagogy, cultural studies, and counter-storytelling (Rude; Their et al.; Hughes-Hassell). Reader-response theory and counter-storytelling are described in detail below.

Extensively established by the ideas of theorists/critics Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser, reader-response theory (RRT) asserts that readers give a text meaning. RRT theorists and critics study *how* readers determine the meaning of a text rather than *what* the “correct” meaning of that work is. In this sense, the interpretation of a work goes beyond the intended meaning of the author. Instead, understandings are individualized to each reader as they bring to the narrative

different cultures, experiences, and breadths of knowledge. Thus, work becomes a text or a mental construct of the work.

According to Wolfgang Iser, readers use their repertoire of literary and experiential information to fill in elements of a story that are intentionally or unintentionally left “unwritten” (280; Berger 148). They sift through this collection, picking out which information best fits the context of the narrative, and creating personalized interpretations to explain characters’ motives and behaviors, symbolism, setting, and so on. Stanley Fish agrees that individuals develop unique readings of a story, though he also considers the reality of some readers forming similar interpretations. Fish believes these similarities to be the result of interpretive communities (religious, educational, etc.), where ways of understanding are taught (483-485; Berger 145). However, while readers may share interpretive communities, they each contribute elements specific to them that allow the work’s meaning to be similar but not identical.

For the latter, Hughes-Hassell describes how counter-storytelling within all spaces, but especially in young adult literature, does three things: 1.) it challenges the dominant, accepted stories or ideas of marginalized groups 2.) it helps teens of color with racial and ethnic identity formation and 3.) it “make[s] the oppression and victimization of people of color and indigenous peoples visible—visible to themselves and to the majority culture” and “helps teens understand racism as a system of advantage” (Hughes-Hassell 225-226).

K-12 educators may experience multiple barriers to teaching multicultural literature such as censorship, not having a class set of materials, time constraints, and student pushback to learning about race, language, sexuality, and intersectionality (Rude; Stallworth; Dunn et al.). Teachers also cited having a lack of support and funding for teaching works outside of district-approved reading lists, leading high school English educators to rely on multicultural literature in

anthologies rather than expanding their curricula to other works (Rude; Stallworth). More troubling obstacles occur when teachers misunderstand what multicultural literature is or lack expertise in the genre. This can lead to an aversion to teaching multicultural literature, deficit perspectives, and their own biases perpetuating oppressive systems (Rude; Caraballo and Martinez; Castagno; Stallworth; Cooper). Rude, citing a 1995 report from the American Association of Colleges, states “40 percent of the nation’s school-age population will be students of color” (6-7). Teachers must be prepared to teach multicultural literature and engage with an increasingly diverse group of students.

Multicultural Education in College and University Classrooms

Research about multicultural literature in higher education often addresses the connection between the diversity of faculty members and the campus’ openness to diversity (Park and Denson; Hubbard et al.; De la Colina and Davis; Griggs and Tidewell; Matthew et al.). Park and Denson state, “Faculty play a critical role in the life of the university. They design and teach the curriculum, conduct research that advances the existing knowledge base, and set guidelines that determine many of the standards for their campuses. They make up the body from which department heads, deans, and college presidents come from” (415). The researchers developed a survey to examine diversity advocacy among college and university faculty members. Diversity advocacy is the researchers’ term to describe faculty attitudes “towards diversity including their commitments to promoting racial understanding and their views on the role of diversity in undergraduate education” (Park and Denson 416). They conclude the following:

- Compared to non-Hispanic White or Euro-American faculty, Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Latino/a faculty were more likely to score high on the diversity advocacy scale.

- The humanities, English, social sciences, education, and fine arts departments were more likely to score high on the diversity advocacy scale. (The English department and women across all these fields were most likely to score high.) Male-dominated departments such as STEM, business, agriculture, forestry was least likely to score high on the diversity advocacy scale. (Engineering was the least likely to score high.)
- Compared to men, women were more likely to score high on the diversity advocacy scale.
- Compared to conservative faculty, faculty who had a liberal political orientation were more likely to score high on the diversity advocacy scale.
- Compared to four-year private institutions, four-year public institutions were more likely to score high on the diversity advocacy scale.
- Older faculty and faculty who performed multidisciplinary academic work and implemented more reading on race and gender in the classroom were more likely to score high on the diversity advocacy scale.
- Civic values were the strongest predictor of overall diversity advocacy, while views on citizenship were the least likely predictor of overall diversity advocacy.
- Faculty who identified as spiritual were more likely to score high on the diversity advocacy scale.

Professors were also found to practice mindfulness in order to improve their attitude toward multicultural education and diversity (Griggs and Tidewell).

While true, Park and Denson's statement about the influence of faculty becomes troublesome when there is a widespread lack of minority faculty members in certain fields.

Hubbard et al. are members of an Association of Departments of English (ADE) ad hoc

committee. The committee's research showed that there are low statistics for African Americans who complete a BA in English, then pursue a PhD in English, and then recruited as full-time professors and are on track for tenure.

Next, Matthew et al. study which elements contribute to a "positive climate for diversity at a large, public, predominantly White institution and to demonstrate how these factors predict this campus' success in achieving a positive climate for diversity" (390). The results that are most relevant to this thesis include conclusions about curriculum and courses that use materials about diversity. Matthew et al. found that "students are exposed to diversity they tend to develop a more critical perspective about the ways in which their campuses support and foster a positive climate for diversity, as opposed to simply accepting that their institutions have positive institutional climates" (408). Furthermore, Nicholas A. Bowman finds that students who take at least two diversity courses experience a higher degree of well-being, "are more comfortable with differences, have a greater appreciation of others' similarities and differences, and are more likely to interact and intend to interact with diverse others." Compared to students who did not complete any diversity courses, students who only completed one diversity course and did not experience higher levels of well-being, comfort, appreciation, and interactions (Bowman 556-557).

Literature concerning multicultural literature in higher education also emphasizes the use of multiple perspectives to study an ethnic or cultural group. Like Stallworth et al. and Adichie, Goldstein recognizes the significance of showing students the diversity of lifestyles and views within specific cultural groups. In his college-level course Ethnic American Literature, David S. Goldstein pairs four works written by authors of color with four films to highlight/introduce students to marginalized writers and demonstrate ethnic American lit is a vital part of American

literature, not outside of it (562). He teaches Toni Morrison's "Recitatif" (1983), Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* (1993) with the movie *Smoke Signals* (1998), John Edgar Wideman's *Sent for You Yesterday* (1997) with a documentary about the "evolution" of blues music and film *Once Upon a Time...When We Were Colored* (1995), and Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* (1991) with the documentary *Girls Like Us* (1997). He also has students read scholarship about "the ethnic American literary canon" (Goldstein 566). By mixing written works, film, and perspectives on the canon, Goldstein puts into practice Stallworth et al.'s recommendation to expose students to a range of experiences within an ethnic community so they can see distinctions between each ethnic group and grasp each demographic's complexity. By challenging his students in this way, Goldstein was able to broaden their perspective and restore the dignity and humanity single stories often steal from people groups like Adichie mentions in her TEDTalk "The Danger of a Single Story."

The literature in this chapter reviewed major themes, events, and arguments against multiculturalism as a study, in literature, and in education. The abundance of literature related to K-12 education allows readers to understand how teachers create curriculum, what teaching practices they use, and which obstacles they face when teaching multicultural literature. This section also described the importance of diverse works being included in the Western canon, in addition to people having access to culture-specific anthologies. The research on higher education more often examined the relationships between teacher and climate (i.e., faculty and the cultural climate of an institution) and diversity literature course and climate. It also highlighted the need for people to encounter multiple perspectives about a demographic in order to understand the group's complexity and challenge stereotypes and other preconceptions.

In regard to research for K-12 classrooms, there is significantly less literature about how professors develop curricula (how they decide which materials to use and why) and the pedagogy they practice. For example, only one of the sources mentioned the criteria for and difficulty of finding a textbook appropriate for a college-level course that involved multicultural literature (Brignall III and Valley). This may imply that professors employ similar teaching strategies as K-12 educators; however, the study presented in the following section seeks to determine this information.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Due to a lack of research on the topic and events of 2020 (as explained in chapter one), the purpose of this study is to learn how professors teach multicultural literature to traditional undergraduate students and how students respond to these courses. This chapter explains the methods used to determine this information. Conclusions from this data will hopefully provide educators with a repertoire of teaching strategies, materials, and feedback to implement diversity literature into their own classrooms. These conclusions will also lessen a gap in research, as there is significantly less published information on teaching multicultural literature in higher education than in K-12 classrooms.

Overview

Over a two-week period from February 1 to February 15, 2021, four humanities and education professors at a private Christian university participated in a quantitative study by completing an 18-question survey on teaching multicultural literature. The purpose of this research was to establish a range of course materials, pedagogy, obstacles, professor experiences, and student responses to multicultural literature over the past decade at this institution. The remainder of this chapter discusses the research context, participants, survey, and procedures in detail.

The Research Context

This study took place at a private, Christian university in Florida between February 1 and February 15, 2021. Over the past few years and especially in response to 2020, the university has increased efforts to address the beauty and challenges of having a multicultural student body and world. For example, it is not uncommon for speakers to talk about diversity in chapel services and campus organizations host events throughout the year to celebrate marginalized

communities. The institution also launched a Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Task Force in July 2020 and has designated diversity literature courses within their English department. These classes include African American, Native American, Middle Eastern, and Latin American, and Women's Literature. More information about them can be found in chapter five.

This is a predominantly White institution (PWI). According to the university's 2020-2021 Fact Book, 58.1% of the student population identifies as Hispanic and non-Hispanic White or Euro-American. Forty-one point nine percent identify as a part of an ethnic minority group. During that same period, 79.5% of instructional faculty (professors, instructors, and lecturers) identify as Hispanic/non-Hispanic White or Euro-American. Twenty point five percent of instructional faculty are members of an ethnic minority group. Research in the literature review suggests the demographic-makeup of the university is a factor that will likely impact the demographics of survey participants and their responses.

Participants

Participants of this study were former and current humanities and education professors. Since this university is religious-affiliated, most professors identify as Christians and hold to a set of core beliefs. Individual upbringings and other experiences will shape how each person expresses their faith and addresses diversity in the classroom. Spirituality, the recent COVID-19 pandemic, and widespread attention to systematic racism are more factors that may influence their survey responses. To protect anonymity in chapters four and five, respondents are referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and so on.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The focus of this research is to establish characteristics of certain courses, not to evaluate each professor's teaching process. It was also important to be mindful of COVID-19 safety

precautions. Therefore, it was most fitting to use a quantitative descriptive research approach for this study. This method relies on interacting with a population directly through surveys, observations, and interviews to pinpoint and describe a set of qualities (Joyner et al. 93). Using findings from the literature review and my own experiences in three of the university's diversity literature courses — Native American, African American, and Latin American Literature — I developed an 18-question electronic survey through the website SurveyMonkey. The survey questions (located below and in Appendix B) inquire about course materials, pedagogy, challenges, personal experiences, and student responses to multicultural literature. Question four, which records participants' racial or ethnic heritage, was adapted from Dr. William Somerville's master's thesis survey (Somerville).

- 1. First and last name** (short answer)
- 2. Preferred email address** (short answer)
- 3. Select your gender.**
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Prefer not to answer
- 4. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage? Select all that apply.**
 - a. Latino or Hispanic American
 - b. Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American
 - c. Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
 - d. Native American or Alaska Native
 - e. Middle Eastern or Arab American
 - f. Pacific Islander
 - g. East Asian or Asian American
 - h. South Asian or Indian American
 - i. Prefer not to answer
 - j. Unlisted ethnicity (please specify): (Short answer)

- 5. Which diversity literature course(s) have you taught? Select all that apply.**
- a. African American Literature
 - b. Native American Literature
 - c. Middle Eastern Literature
 - d. Latin American Literature
 - e. Korean Literature and Teaching Abroad
 - f. World Literature
 - g. Unlisted course that includes diversity/multicultural literature (please specify):
(Short answer)
- 6. How did you come to teach that course? Select all that apply.**
- a. Given or instructed to teach the course
 - b. Created the course yourself and decided to teach it
 - c. Volunteered to teach the course
 - d. Unlisted option (please specify): (Short answer)
- 7. What is your experience with the ethnic/cultural group the course is based on?**
(short answer)
- 8. What sources did you use to teach the course(s)? Select all that apply.**
- a. Written (books, essays, articles, etc.)
 - b. Visual (shows, films, paintings, etc.)
 - c. Performance art (dance, theater productions, etc.)
 - d. Handcrafts (beadmaking, etc.)
 - e. Guest speakers
 - f. Field trips
 - g. Unlisted option (please specify): (Short answer)
- 9. How did you choose these works? Select all that apply.**
- a. They are featured in an anthology
 - b. The works are included in a former professor's curriculum for the course
 - c. A recommendation
 - d. Personal preference
 - e. Unlisted option (please specify): (Short answer)

10. Why did you choose these works? (Questions nine and 10 overlap. Still, select all that apply.)

- a. I believe the anthology used is a credible source to depict *past* ideas
- b. I believe the anthology used is a credible source to depict *present* ideas
- c. A former professor successfully taught the course and used these materials
- d. A recommendation
- e. Personal preference
- f. Positive response from previous students
- g. Out of curiosity to see how effective the materials would be in the classroom
- h. Personal research
- i. Unlisted option (please specify): (Short answer)

11. List some assignments you believe to be the most meaningful for your course? For example, action projects, informal writing assignments, dialoguing with the class so students understand the sources critically, etc. (short answer)

12. What is the general response your class receives from students who identify as the ethnic group being studied? (short answer)

13. What is the general response your class receives from students who do not identify as the ethnic group being studied? (short answer)

14. What obstacles do you encounter when developing a curriculum for this course? Select all that apply.

- a. The time restrictions of a four-month semester limit the use of nontraditional activities/assignments for that course (e.g., students must complete a specific type of essay for the course, so newer activities may not make it into the curriculum)
- b. Preferred course materials are too difficult for the average undergraduate student to understand
- c. Preferred course materials are unavailable
- d. Preferred course materials are too expensive for the average undergraduate student to afford
- e. It is difficult to find English translations for certain works
- f. There is little or no collaboration among professors

- g. Finding works that can be taught in a way that is engaging and effective over a hybrid or online class format
- h. Unlisted option (please specify): (Short answer)

15. What obstacles do you encounter when teaching this course? Select all the apply.

- a. Being unprepared for student responses
- b. Not knowing enough information about the studied demographic to teach students about this group of people
- c. Unfavorable response from your peers, department, or establishment
- d. Low enrollment, resulting in the course not being offered that semester
- e. Online learning inhibits lessons, discussion, and other class activities
- f. None
- g. Unlisted option (please specify): (Short answer)

16. How has teaching diversity literature impacted you? (short answer)

17. Is there a diversity literature class you recommend Southeastern add to their catalog or you would like to teach?

- a. Yes (please specify): (Short answer)
- b. No
- c. Prefer not to answer

Procedures

To assemble a sample group, I informed all humanities and education professors at the institution of the study via email. This email contained my contact information, the purpose of the study, and a link to the electronic consent form and survey. Those who decided to participate had two weeks to answer a collection of 18 short answer and multiple-choice questions on their teaching process, curricula, and how multicultural literature has impacted themselves and their students. SurveyMonkey, the platform used to collect responses, then partially analyzed this data. I analyzed the remaining information.

Data Analysis

Data were reduced using two main strategies: SurveyMonkey's analysis tools and coding. SurveyMonkey first condensed multiple-choice responses into percentages and graphs. Second, I coded participants' short answers based on keywords and recurring themes. Coded answers were then broken down further into percentages. The next two chapters present and evaluate the results obtained with this methodology to establish conclusions, acknowledge gaps, and suggest areas of future research.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

The survey described in chapter three asked participants about their demographics, how they teach multicultural literature, and student responses to these lessons. This chapter displays the survey's results by placing them in one of the following categories: total responses, demographics, courses taught, and experience; course materials, pedagogy, challenges, student impact, professor impact, and recommendations for a future diversity literature course.

Total Responses

Of the 19 surveys sent out, eight were returned and only four were usable. One reason for this is the study being inapplicable to certain professors (e.g., the study questions were less relevant to education professors who teach math or science than professors who teach literature in English). Another potential reason is a concern for confidentiality and a culture of fear (Stallworth et al.). Private institutions often have a smaller population size compared to public colleges and universities. Once this size is narrowed down to two departments, it can be easier to recognize participants and their answers. While this is a legitimate concern, there were measures in place to protect confidentiality as much as possible. See Appendix A to view these measures on the Survey Consent Form.

Demographics, Courses Taught, and Experience

This section corresponds to survey questions three through seven on gender, ethnicity, which courses the participants taught that included multicultural literature, course assignment, and professors' exposure to the studied ethnic or cultural group. Three of the participants (75%) were female and one was male (25%). Of this group, three of the professors identified as non-Hispanic White or Euro-American. Only one participant identified as Latino or Hispanic American. No other minority or ethnic groups were reported (i.e., Black, Afro Caribbean, or

African American; Native American or Alaska Native, Middle Eastern or Arab American, Pacific Islander, East Asian or Asian American, South Asian, or Indian American, etc.).

Participants were given the option to select or list the multicultural literature classes they had taught. The four professors responded with a total of 11 courses, with none of them having taught the same class. Two of the university's five designated diversity literature classes were selected. One professor had taught African American Literature and another taught Native American Literature. One participant stated they had taught the course Latina/o Literature in the U.S. (While this class appears to be the same as Latin American Literature, the participant differentiated the two by stating the name of the course and not selecting Latin American Literature. Statistically, I will not count this class as Latin American Literature.) Other courses mentioned were World Literature, Introduction to Literature (which focused on Southern literature), Children's Literature and Development, Contemporary Literature, Contemporary World Poetry, Women's Literature, Dialogue and Diversity, and Empowering ESOL Teachers.

Professors then noted how they acquired these courses. The answer choices were 1.) given or instructed to teach the course 2.) created the course yourself and decided to teach it 3.) volunteered to teach the course and 4.) a space to explain an unlisted option. They could choose multiple answers. Three of the four professors (75%) were given or instructed to teach one of some of the courses above. Two of the four (50%) created one or some of the courses themselves and decided to teach it/them. One participant (25%) volunteered to teach one or some of the above courses.

When asked about their personal experience with the ethnic or cultural group the course was based on, half of the participants stated they read literature about the studied demographic, had family members within the studied demographic, and had lived in or traveled to a region the

course focused on. Other answers included learning about the ethnic/cultural group through research, friends, colleagues, or students. Only one professor was a member of the ethnic group the course was based on and had grown up in the culture.

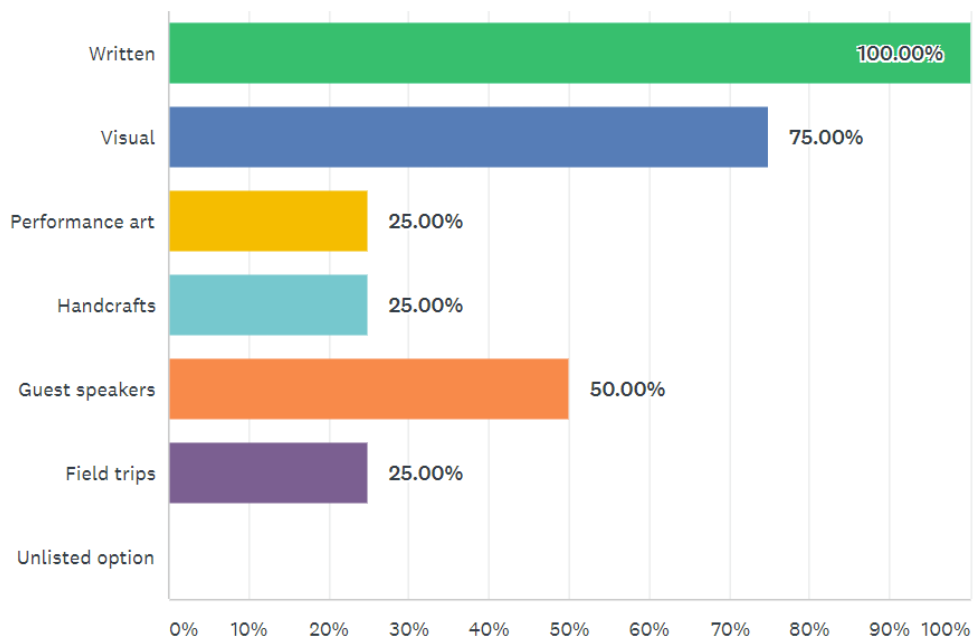
Course Materials

Survey questions eight through 10 discussed the type of materials professors used in their courses, how they selected these materials, and why they selected them. Participants could choose multiple items and reasons.

Figure 1: Responses to Question Eight

What sources did you use to teach the course(s)?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



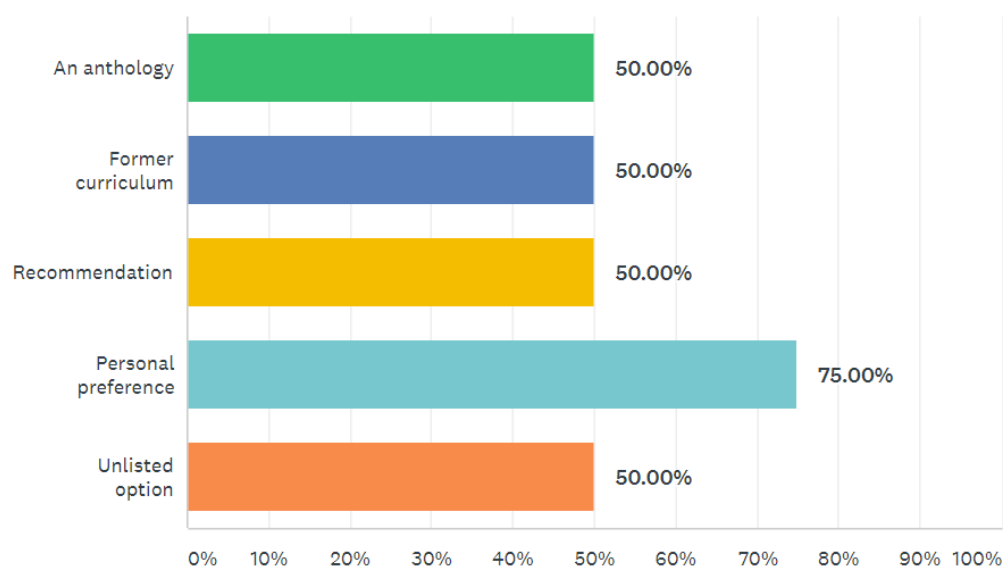
Of the options provided in figure 1, the professors used written and visual sources most often and performance art, field trips, and handicrafts least often. All the teachers incorporated written sources into their curricula such as books, essays, and articles. Three of the participants

(75%) incorporated visual sources. Visual sources include shows, films, paintings, and other types of fine art. Half of the participants brought in guest speakers. Performance art (dance, theater productions, etc.), handicrafts (such as bead making), and field trips were each selected once.

Figure 2: Responses to Question Nine

How did you choose these works?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



**Terms on the y-axis are abbreviations of the answer choices for question nine. See the survey in Appendix B for full answer choices.*

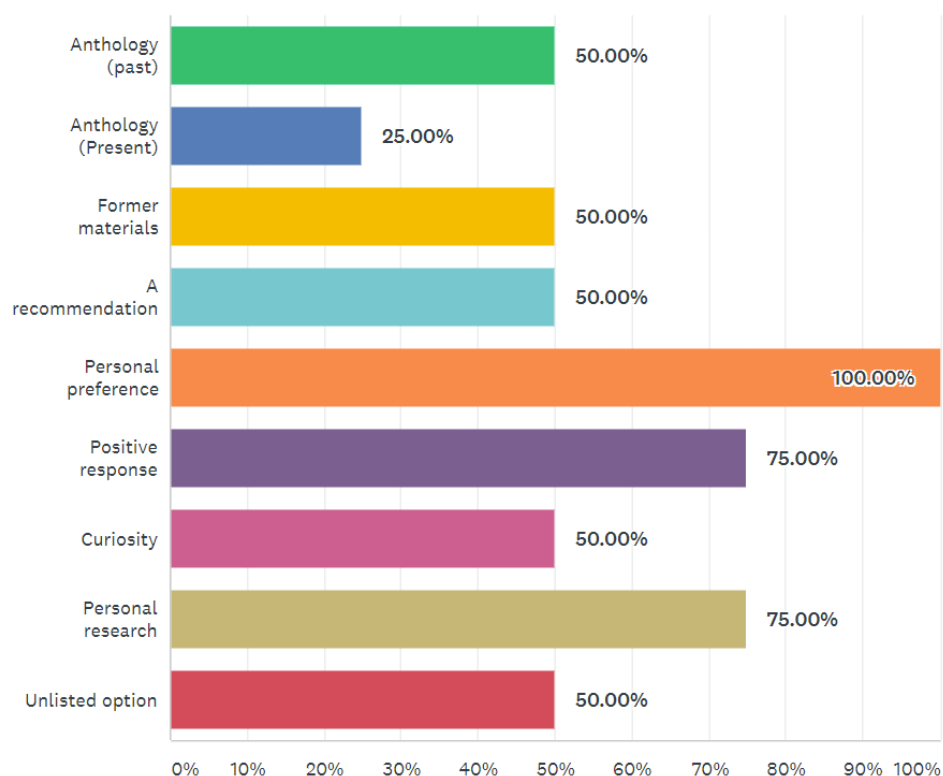
In response to *how* they picked their course materials, most of the participants (75%) relied on personal preference as shown in figure 2. Fifty percent of participants chose materials because they were recommended, featured in an anthology, or included in a former professor's curriculum. Fifty percent of participants (two professors) also stated they made curricula decisions based on an unlisted answer choice. The first professor explained he or she uses

research to decide what materials to teach, while the second professor chose certain works because he or she was “required to include different genres and open access materials” in the class.

Figure 3: Responses to Question 10

Why did you choose these works?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



**Note: Terms on the y-axis are abbreviations of the answer choices for question 10. See the survey in Appendix B for full answer choices.*

Participants also cited personal preference as the main reason *why* they chose their course materials. All of them selected this option. Figure 3 also shows that three participants (75%) chose course materials because of personal research or because the sources received a positive response from previous students. Half of the professors selected sources because of a

recommendation, a former professor successfully taught the course with these materials, out of curiosity to see how effective the materials would be in the classroom, or because they believe the anthology, they used is a credible source to depict past ideas. One professor (25%) picked works because he or she believes the anthology used is a credible source to depict present ideas. The unlisted option was chosen twice, with one professor explaining that he or she picked materials due to them being open access (i.e., the sources are free and accessible for online students). The other professor stated they decided on their materials because “I read a lot of research concerning high-quality sources of diverse literature.” This comment suggests the participant chose sources because research reiterates the importance of implementing quality multicultural literature in the classroom.

Pedagogy

Question 11 asked participants to list assignments they believed to be the most meaningful in their course. A majority (75%) of their short answers stated reflective writing exercises were the most meaningful. Participants also noted other assignments such as collaborative projects, class dialogues, interviews with members of a minority population, and having students choose their own topic or text to complete a project on.

Challenges

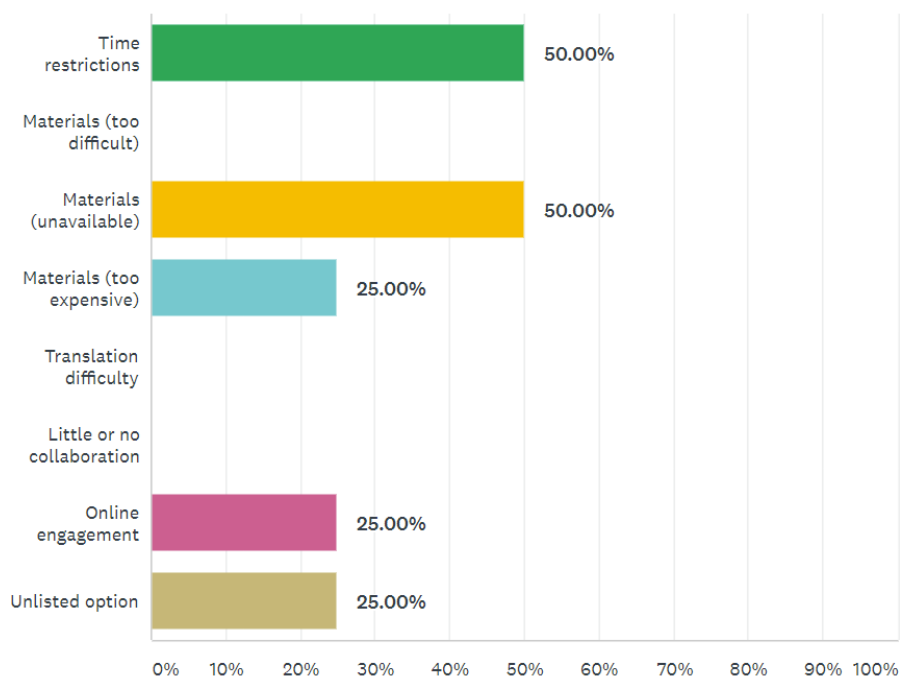
Survey questions 14 and 15 dealt with obstacles or challenges professors encounter when developing curricula and teaching a course with multicultural literature. Of the options shown in figure 4, the most common obstacles were *the time restrictions of a four-month semester limit the use of nontraditional activities/assignments for the course* and their *preferred course materials being unavailable*. Fifty percent of participants chose these two options. Twenty-five percent of participants noted other obstacles such as their *preferred course materials being too expensive*

for the average undergraduate student, trouble finding works that can be taught in a way that is engaging and effective over a hybrid or online class format, and an unlisted option. The professor who selected the *unlisted option* explained that it is tricky to teach literature courses, especially World Literature because there is always so much to learn and read. This professor also sometimes found it difficult to find “texts that are just the right level of challenge” for students—an issue that occurs in all courses “and perhaps less so with diverse literatures which, in my experience, students tend to connect with far more than with many canonical literatures.” None of the professors thought the options *difficulty finding English translations*, *little or no collaboration among professors*, and *preferred course materials being too difficult for the average undergraduate student to understand* were barriers to developing curricula.

Figure 4: Responses to Question 14

What obstacles do you encounter when developing a curriculum for this course?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



**Terms on the y-axis are abbreviations of the answer choices for question 14. See the survey in Appendix B for full answer choices.*

Question 15 addressed possible obstacles to teaching multicultural literature. Participants were given the following answer options to choose: 1.) Being unprepared for student responses 2.) not knowing enough information about the studied demographic to teach students about this group of people 3.) unfavorable responses from your peers, department, or establishment 4.) low enrollment, resulting in the course not being offered that semester 5.) online learning inhibits lessons, discussion, and other class activities 6.) none and 7.) a space to explain an unlisted option. Half of the participants believed there are no challenges to teaching multicultural literature. Twenty-five percent selected the barriers *being unprepared for student responses* and *unfavorable responses from your peers, department, or establishment*. None of the professors chose the obstacle *not knowing enough information about the studied demographic to teach students about this group of people*. They also did not select the options *low enrollment, resulting in the course not being offered that semester* and *online learning inhibits lessons, discussion, and other class activities*.

Impact on Students

Questions 12 and 13 asked participants to describe the general response from students who do and do not ethnically identify with the demographic being studied in their courses. Based on their short answers, on average, students who do identify with this demographic had a positive, enthusiastic response to these courses. For example, one participant commented on students in African American Literature, Latina/o Literature in the U.S., and Native American Literature. This professor stated, the “dynamic varied significantly by class.” Black students typically make up at least half of the class population in African American Literature.

Oftentimes, these students help lead discussions and activities. Students described the course as a “relief,” “joy,” “liberating,” “affirming” and they (A different professor commented Black students were “appreciative” of certain materials like hymns and slave narratives.) Latina/o Literature in the U.S. was taught as a Directed Study (meaning there was only one student). However, the student still took on a principal role to “guide and design the direction of the course, as an opportunity to learn about herself and her people.” Students who were reserved or made up a minority of the class population usually had a more subdued response to these courses. This was especially evident in Native American Literature, where the Indigenous student population was outnumbered by students of other ethnic groups.

On average, students who do not ethnically identify with the demographic studied also had a positive reaction to multicultural literature courses. Participants’ short answers characterized this group as “responsive” and “open to learning.” Most of the students in this group found these courses “transformative” and were “willing to challenge injustices” by the end of the semester. One professor mentioned very few students left these classes “unchanged.”

Impact on Professors

Question 16 asked participants how teaching diversity literature has impacted them. All the short answers were positive, with each of the professors reflecting on personal growth or the importance of training future educators to use diversity literature. Their specific comments are below.

“It has been a very enriching experience” (Participant 1).

“I identify the South as home, so teaching the course has made me even more invested in celebrating its wealth of literature and also wrestling with its horrific past” (Participant 2).

“I think it's important to train teachers about the variety of diverse literature out there. Books are windows and mirrors, and students need to see themselves reflected in the literature in the classroom” (Participant 3).

“It has been a profound joy. Not only has the deep engagement with powerful texts enriched my life and challenged me, but the opportunity to work with students on texts that they so often found powerfully personally meaningful was also the highlight of my teaching career” (Participant 4).

Recommendations for a Future Diversity Literature Course

The final survey question, question 18, asked participants if there was a diversity literature course they recommend the university add to the course catalog or that they would like to teach. They could select yes, no, or prefer not to answer. Half of the professors responded that they would prefer not to answer. One participant responded that they did not have a diversity literature class to recommend or that they wanted to teach. One participant selected that they did have a diversity literature class in mind: LGBTQ+ Literature.

The data above demonstrate clear patterns for how participants acquired their respective courses, the types of course materials used, the methods to and reasons for using these materials, challenges to developing curricula for courses that include multicultural literature, student responses, and the impact multicultural literature classes have on the professors themselves. Some results were less consistent such as how participants felt about obstacles to teaching multicultural literature and whether or not the university should offer other diversity literature courses. The next chapter discusses the implications of these results and reviews the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of this study. It also suggests areas of future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Discussion

As previously mentioned, this study was conducted to examine the teaching process and impact of multicultural literature on professors and traditional undergraduate students. This final chapter reiterates the research problem and explains the study's methodology, in addition to providing a summary and implications of the data. It then reflects on the study's strengths, weaknesses, and limitations and suggests areas of future research.

Research Problem and Methodology

As explained in chapters one and two, the purpose of this study is to learn how professors teach multicultural literature to traditional undergraduate students and how students respond to these courses due to a lack of research on the topic and events of 2020. The survey questions were used to determine the characteristics of multicultural literature courses at a specific university, not to evaluate each professor's teaching process. Given this goal, I performed a quantitative descriptive research study, in which I obtained results by developing and distributing an online questionnaire to participants.

Over a two-week period in February 2021, four humanities and education professors at a private Christian university completed an 18-question survey about teaching multicultural literature. The survey questions went over course materials, pedagogy, obstacles, professor experiences, and student responses to multicultural literature over the past decade at this institution. SurveyMonkey, the platform used to collect responses, then analyzed multiple choice answers while I analyzed the remaining short answer responses with a coding system.

Summary of Results

The results from the survey show most of the participants identified as non-Hispanic White or Euro-American female professors who taught various English and education courses

with multicultural literature. Only one professor was a member of the ethnic group his or her class focused on. The remaining 75% of professors commented that they learned about minority communities through literature, family members who are a part of the demographic, and living in or visiting a region their course is based on. In addition, the majority of participants stated they were given or instructed to teach their specific multicultural literature class(es), rather than volunteering to teach or creating the course(s) themselves.

The professors were mainly in agreement when it comes to establishing curricula and their reasons for selecting certain sources. Professors incorporated written and visual course materials most often, with reflective writing activities being the most meaningful assignments of the semester. Most determined what to teach using personal preference, but also relied on anthologies, a former professor's curriculum for the course, and recommendations. When asked why they chose specific course materials, participants cited reasons such as personal preference (again), personal research, and the materials receiving a positive response from previous students.

Every participant expressed there are obstacles or challenges to *developing curricula* for multicultural literature courses. However, only half agreed there are obstacles to *teaching* these classes. Challenges for forming curricula include the time restrictions of a four-month semester, preferred course materials being unavailable, picking texts that provide just the right amount of challenge from an abundance of literature, and instructors continuing to learn about a demographic as they teach their class. The participants who did experience obstacles when teaching a multicultural literature course mentioned they were unprepared for student responses or received unfavorable reactions from their peers, department, or establishment.

Students who do and do not identify with the ethnic group being studied had a positive experience in classes that use multicultural literature. Those who are a member of the studied demographic tend to be leaders, engaged in the classroom, and find these courses affirming and liberating. Those who are not a member of the studied demographic are responsive and open to learning about the literature and cultures of minority groups. The participants (professors) expressed having a positive experience in these courses as well. These classes left them enriched, challenged, and determined to instruct future educators on the importance of using diversity literature in their classrooms.

When asked if the university should add, or if the participant would like to teach, a specific diversity literature class, only one professor replied with a “Yes.” This participant recommended the course LGBTQ+ Literature. Half of the participants opted not to answer, and one replied with a “No.” The next section discusses the implications of the results above.

Implications of Data

In chapter three, I commented that the university’s demographics may influence the study’s sample group. The study’s participants did reflect the university’s racial/ethnic demographics, though the group was not representative of the institution’s gender makeup. The university’s factbook states 79.5% of instructional faculty are Euro-American and 5.5% are Hispanic of any race. The survey sample consisted of three (75%) non-Hispanic White or Euro-American professors and one (25%) Latino or Hispanic American professor. The latter professor is the only one in the group who has taught a multicultural literature course about the demographic he or she was born into. This participant did not elaborate on this in their responses, so it is unclear from the data how a professor’s ethnicity influences multicultural literature courses. However, he or she has the opportunity to bring to the course first-hand experience

about the studied ethnic group, which is something the other professors must contribute through course materials, students, research, family, friends or colleagues, and literature. It is important to note the range of experiences within any group of people. This professor holds one perspective and incorporates other perspectives through course materials and students. Also, while some professors do not identify as part of a minority community, they do have first-hand experience in other areas such as living in or visiting a region their course focuses on. In regard to the gender makeup of the study, Park and Denson provides a possible explanation for this. Despite the majority of instructional staff identifying as male, English and education are female-dominated fields. None of the participants mentioned gender in their responses, so it is unclear from the data if and how more male responses would affect the survey results.

Chapter three notes other factors that may have impacted participants' answers such as spirituality, COVID-19, and widespread attention to systemic racism in 2020. None of the survey questions asked about these matters. However, responses about teaching online could be due to the pandemic demanding increased online class options. The participants did mention racism-related issues, though not in reference to 2020. No one explicitly mentioned anything about Christianity. This is interesting considering the participants work at a religious institution and are required to implement Christianity into their classes.

Much like how the survey results correspond to Park and Denson's data, all the survey findings on curricula are consistent with prior research. First, researchers often cite the use of written (books, essays, articles, etc.) and visual (films, shows, paintings, etc.) course materials and some kind of reflective writing assignment when teaching multicultural literature. This is expected considering these materials are for literature- and literacy-based courses.

Second, much of my research discussed the use of anthologies to learn about cultural groups in the classroom. Participants of my survey did also use anthologies; though, they mainly relied on personal preference to decide what belongs in their curriculum. Personal preference was the main deciding factor for why participants chose certain materials as well. Furthermore, the surveyed professors have years of experience teaching these courses, all of them being hired before 2017. It is very likely the participants understand which materials are the most appropriate for a multicultural literature course using personal and professional judgment instead of strictly relying on anthologies, prior curricula, and recommendations (though those options are also welcome).

Lastly, each professor encountered obstacles or challenges when creating curricula such as time restrictions and preferred materials being unavailable. Previous research from the literature review discusses which course materials to use, update, or avoid to ensure students can meet certain standards and become exposed to numerous diverse voices and the challenges that come with this task. For example, Rude, Stallworth et al., and Dunn et al. also found teachers struggled to teach multicultural literature due to time constraints and unavailable materials. Based on these studies, it is surprising to learn only half of the participants experienced obstacles when teaching a multicultural literature course. Although, those who did encounter obstacles (i.e., being unprepared for student responses or receiving unfavorable reactions from their peers, department, or establishment) correspond to the findings of Dunn et al. If I were to replicate this study, a good follow-up question would be to ask participants to name the specific responses they were unprepared for and why their peers or place of work was opposed to their course.

Positive responses to these courses from students who do and do not identify as the studied demographic is also consistent with previous research. In both the studies and my results,

many students were appreciative of multicultural literature and showed an increased awareness of the issues that marginalized communities face. Bowman notes students who took one diversity literature course experienced disequilibrium or decreased emotions in physical well-being after completing the course compared to students who do not take these classes. Yet, students who attended two or more diversity literature courses experienced higher emotional and physical well-being than students who did not complete these courses. In a follow-up or revised version of this study, it would be interesting to see if Bowman's findings apply to the university studied in this thesis. If the university contradicts Bowman's findings, why? For instance, English majors are required to complete two of the university's designated diversity literature courses. Could the positive response rate for multicultural literature classes be higher at the university because they consist of English majors?

Finally, when asked if the university should add, or if the participant would like to teach, a specific diversity literature class, one professor replied with a "Yes," one replied with a "No," and the last two preferred not to answer the question. While more classes that feature multicultural literature have been added to the course catalog, such as Dialogue and Diversity, the institution's designated diversity literature classes have remained consistent for the past decade.

Within the context of college-level English courses, the institution's definition of diversity refers to literature written by authors who belong to an ethnic minority group. According to its course catalogs, between the 2010-2011 and 2020-2021 academic years the school distinguished five courses as diversity literature classes: African American, Native American, Middle Eastern, and Latin American, and Women's Literature. African American and Native American Lit were available to take every school year. Latin American Lit occurred less

frequently (possibly every other year). Over the last four years (2017-2021), I have not seen Middle Eastern Literature listed as available for registration. During this 10-year time period, the university has also offered courses like Korean Literature and Teaching Abroad once, which was taught as an independent study, World Literature, and Dialogue and Diversity.

Some non-English courses incorporate diversity literature in their curricula as well, in which professors highlight and teach materials by minority authors. The survey results imply one professor is satisfied with the current multicultural literature options offered at the university, while one professor recommended LBGTQ+ Literature. Given this is a Christian university, the addition of LBGTQ+ Literature to the course catalog would likely cause much controversy. Controversy may be one of several reasons this course is not available for students to take. In a follow-up or revised version of this survey, it would be interesting to ask participants why they opted not to answer.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Limitations of the Study

The results of my research did indicate clear strengths and weaknesses of the study. One strength is the survey itself. Much research went into developing this collection of questions and answer choices. The survey addresses both major and minor issues educators in the classroom or from their establishment, in addition to having questions that are catered to this specific university. One participant even shared positive feedback about the study's questions.

The main weakness of the study was sample size. Distributing the survey to professors at this specific university allows me to observe the impact of multicultural literature and cultural awareness on campus. However, due to the small population size, I am only able to observe a snapshot of what teachers and students at the specific university experience in courses that use multicultural literature and the impact this has on them. By only distributing the survey to two

departments at a smaller religious university, I was not able to generalize the results. My conclusions were limited to the perspective of four Christian professors working at a predominantly White institution in Central Florida. If I were to replicate this study, I would have to open it to a larger, more diverse (state, gender, ethnicity, etc.) audience so my results are more representative of colleges and universities nationwide.

Suggestions for Future Research

I recommend four areas of future research. First, to replicate this study at the initial university to gain a better understanding of how teachers and students are impacted by multicultural literature and any influence that has on the campus. Second, researchers should replicate this study or use a different method and continue to establish how colleges from around the U.S. teach multicultural literature to generalize data and conclusions. Third, researchers should study how students view the use of multicultural literature more in-depth than what is covered here. Lastly, it would also be beneficial to look into the most effective ways to cope with difficult, complex emotions in the classroom that arise from discussing (or not discussing) diversity. Having a teacher who knows how these coping mechanisms or other resources would have helped me greatly during my own time in African American, Native, and Latin American Literature. These classes changed my life, partly because of how emotionally heavy they were. There were many days I left class heartbroken, confused, furious and feeling things I may never have the words for. But there were also days that I left hopeful. Perhaps hope is one more aspect of multicultural education.

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Appendix A: Survey Consent Form

You are invited to participate in an online survey for the undergraduate thesis project “Teaching Diversity Literature in the North American College Classroom.” This research is being conducted by Jordan Fleming, a student at Southeastern University (SEU). The survey will be available from February 1, 2021 to February 15, 2021.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study analyzes how former and current professors at Southeastern University teach diversity literature courses, or teach diversity literature in non-English courses, to traditional undergraduate students. Your response will help determine the range of pedagogy, professors’ experiences with the cultures they teach, course materials, and student responses for these classes over the past 10 years. Your answers will also provide a repertoire of teaching strategies and student feedback to help college professors at SEU and elsewhere structure lessons about diversity/multicultural lit.

PROCEDURES OF STUDY

Using a list gathered during my research, I (Jordan Fleming) informed previous and current SEU professors of this study via email. Those interested in participating had the option to follow the SurveyMonkey link included in the email to access this electronic consent form and the survey questions. Participants have two weeks (from February 1, 2021 to February 15, 2021 at 11:59 p.m.) to submit a combination of multiple choice and short answer responses.

After the study closes, SurveyMonkey will condense multiple choice answers into percentages. I will review the short answers in-depth to identify and code consistencies and differences within them. Conclusions will be based on data from this survey and previous research on the topic.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer for any reason. Simply choose “Prefer not to answer.” You may also select the “Unlisted” option and type “I do not wish to respond to this question” in the comment box.

BENEFITS

There are personal benefits for participating in this study. Your responses aid in the development of current and future diversity literature courses at SEU and the cultural climate of the university. There are also indirect benefits, such as your responses lessening a current gap in research.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

CONFIDENTIALITY

You will complete this survey through SurveyMonkey.com, where your data will be stored in a password-protected electronic format. Questions ask for essential demographic information, such as your name, email address, gender, and ethnicity. This is to determine patterns between the courses taught and the professors who teach them. Like other online survey platforms, SurveyMonkey will collect and then delete IP addresses after 13 months. Published data will include coded names (Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on). No one aside from the student researcher or research supervisor will be able to identify you or your answers unless you choose to share that information on your own.

CONTACT

If you have questions or concerns at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the research supervisor, Professor Marlon Dempster, via email at mmdempster@seu.edu or the student researcher, Jordan Fleming, at jkfleming@seu.edu.

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or that your rights as a participant in research have not been honored during the course of this project, or you have any questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator, you may contact the Southeastern University Institutional Review Board by email at irb@seu.edu.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Do you agree with the terms stated above? Select an option below. By clicking "Agree," you indicate that

- You have read the above information.
- You are 18 years of age or older.
- You have taught a diversity literature course at SEU **OR** you have taught a non-English course at SEU that incorporates diversity literature.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.

Agree

Disagree

Appendix B: Thesis Survey Questionnaire

Note: While diversity can refer to many things, this survey uses the term diversity in reference to ethnically marginalized individuals and communities.

1. First and last name

- a. Short answer

2. Preferred email address

- a. Short answer

3. Select your gender.

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Prefer not to answer

4. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage? Select all that apply.

- a. Latino or Hispanic American
- b. Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American
- c. Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
- d. Native American or Alaska Native
- e. Middle Eastern or Arab American
- f. Pacific Islander
- g. East Asian or Asian American
- h. South Asian or Indian American
- i. Prefer not to answer
- j. Unlisted ethnicity (please specify):

5. Which diversity literature course(s) have you taught? Select all that apply.

- a. African American Literature
- b. Native American Literature
- c. Middle Eastern Literature
- d. Latin American Literature
- e. Korean Literature and Teaching Abroad
- f. World Literature

- g. Unlisted course that includes diversity/multicultural literature (please specify):
- 6. How did you come to teach that course? Select all that apply.**
- Given or instructed to teach the course
 - Created the course yourself and decided to teach it
 - Volunteered to teach the course
 - Unlisted option (please specify):
- 7. What is your experience with the ethnic/cultural group the course is based on?**
- Short answer
- 8. What sources did you use to teach the course(s)? Select all that apply.**
- Written (books, essays, articles, etc.)
 - Visual (shows, films, paintings, etc.)
 - Performance art (dance, theater productions, etc.)
 - Handcrafts (beadmaking, etc.)
 - Guest speakers
 - Field trips
 - Unlisted option (please specify):
- 9. How did you choose these works? Select all that apply.**
- They are featured in an anthology
 - The works are included in a former professor's curriculum for the course
 - A recommendation
 - Personal preference
 - Unlisted option (please specify):
- 10. Why did you choose these works? (Questions nine and 10 overlap. Still, select all that apply.)**
- I believe the anthology used is a credible source to depict *past* ideas
 - I believe the anthology used is a credible source to depict *present* ideas
 - A former professor successfully taught the course and used these materials
 - A recommendation
 - Personal preference
 - Positive response from previous students
 - Out of curiosity to see how effective the materials would be in the classroom

- h. Personal research
 - i. Unlisted option (please specify):
- 11. List some assignments you believe to be the most meaningful for your course? For example, action projects, informal writing assignments, dialoguing with the class so students understand the sources critically, etc.**
- a. Short answer
- 12. What is the general response your class receives from students who identify as the ethnic group being studied?**
- a. Short answer
- 13. What is the general response your class receives from students who do not identify as the ethnic group being studied?**
- a. Short answer
- 14. What obstacles do you encounter when developing a curriculum for this course? Select all that apply.**
- a. The time restrictions of a four-month semester limit the use of nontraditional activities/assignments for that course (e.g., students must complete a specific type of essay for the course, so newer activities may not make it into the curriculum)
 - b. Preferred course materials are too difficult for the average undergraduate student to understand
 - c. Preferred course materials are unavailable
 - d. Preferred course materials are too expensive for the average undergraduate student to afford
 - e. It is difficult to find English translations for certain works
 - f. There is little or no collaboration among professors
 - g. Finding works that can be taught in a way that is engaging and effective over a hybrid or online class format
 - h. Unlisted option (please specify):
- 15. What obstacles do you encounter when teaching this course? Select all the apply.**
- a. Being unprepared for student responses
 - b. Not knowing enough information about the studied demographic to teach students about this group of people

- c. Unfavorable response from your peers, department, or establishment
- d. Low enrollment, resulting in the course not being offered that semester
- e. Online learning inhibits lessons, discussion, and other class activities
- f. None
- g. Unlisted option (please specify):

16. How has teaching diversity literature impacted you?

- a. Short answer

17. Is there a diversity literature class you recommend Southeastern add to their catalog or you would like to teach?

- a. Yes (please specify):
- b. No
- c. Prefer not to answer

Appendix C: Data Figures

Figure 1 - Responses to Question 9

What sources did you use to teach the course(s)?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0

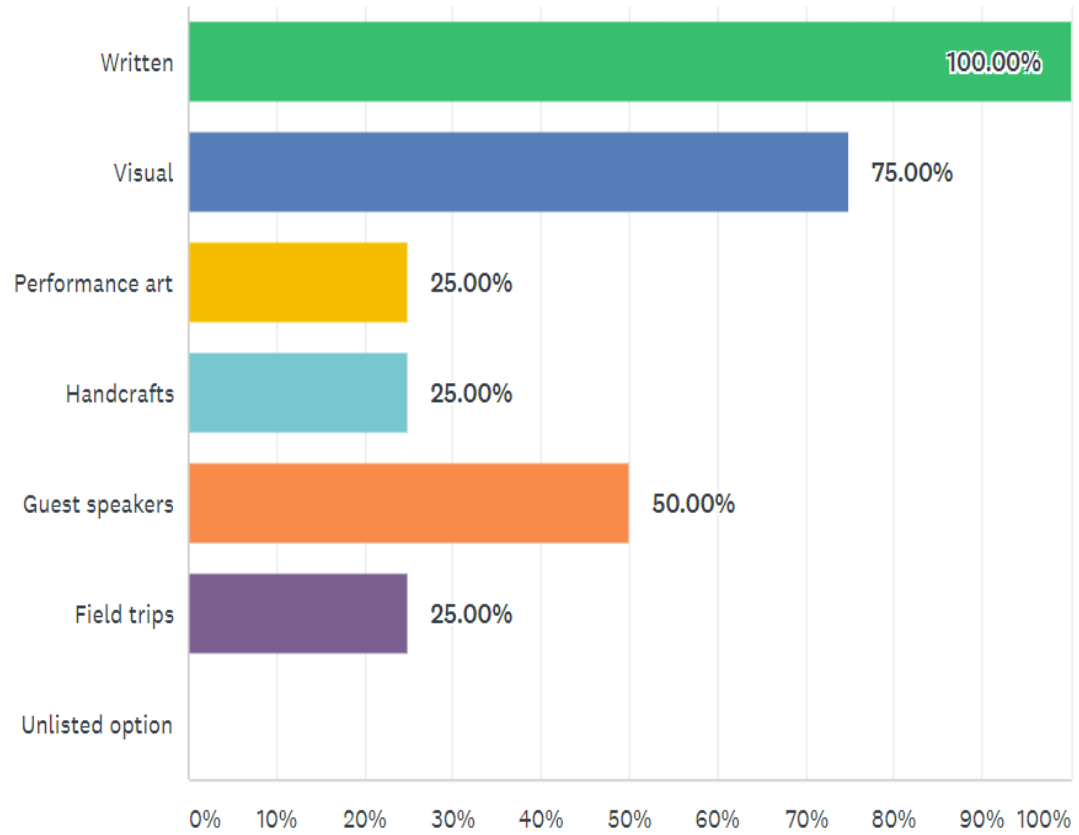


Figure 2: Responses to Question 10

How did you choose these works?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0

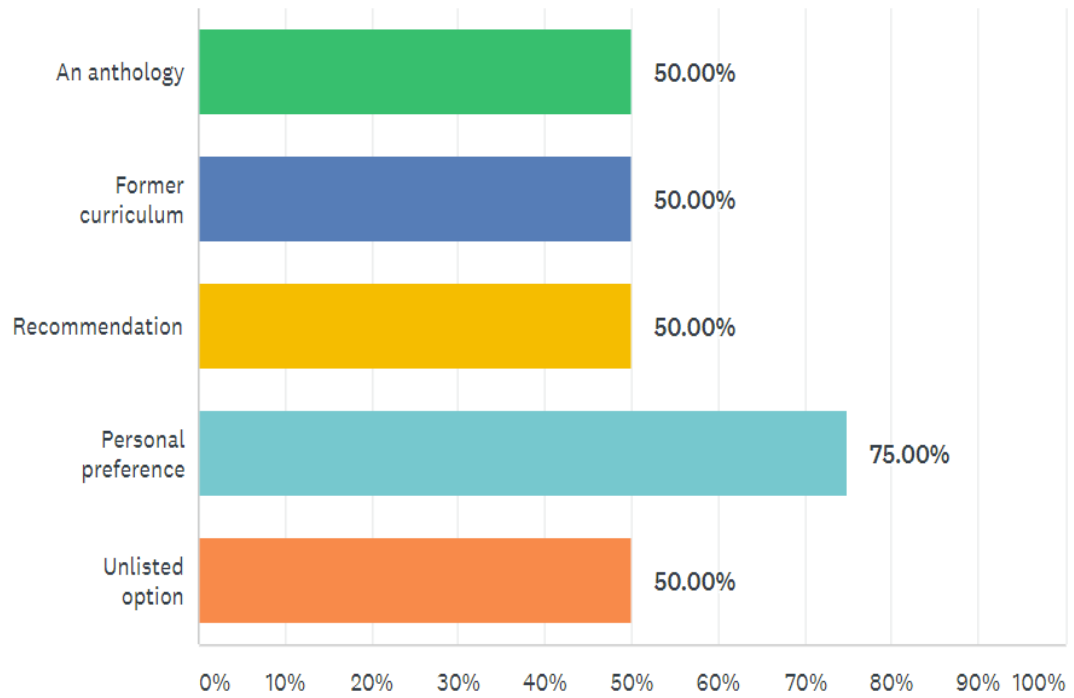


Figure 3: Responses to Question 11

Why did you choose these works?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0

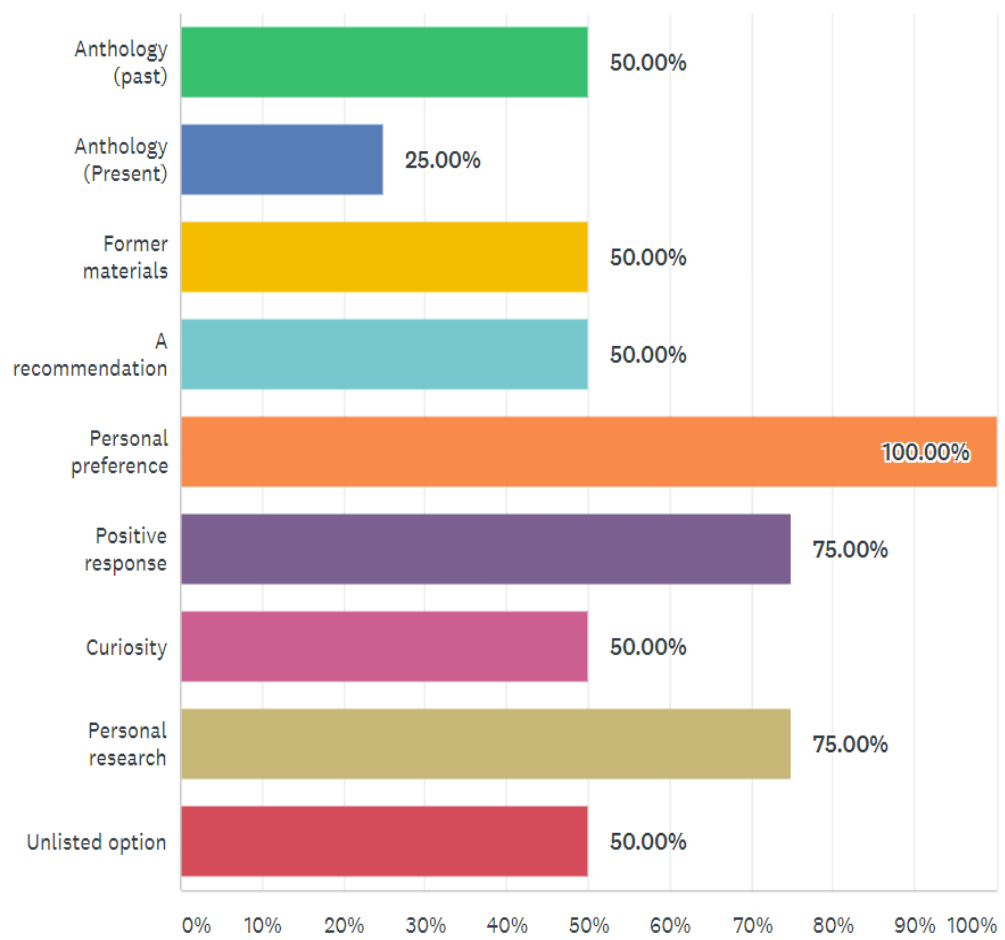
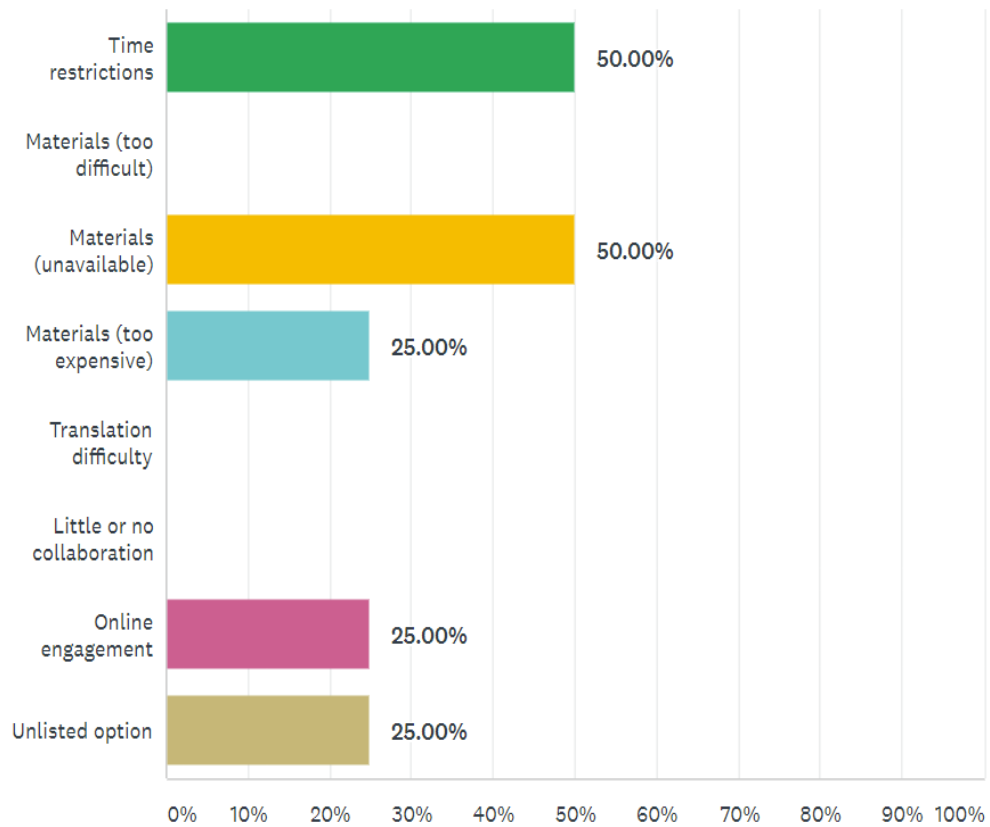


Figure 4: Responses to Question 15

What obstacles do you encounter when developing a curriculum for this course?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



Appendix D: IRB Approval Form

**SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY**



NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: January 27, 2021
TO: Marlon Dempster, Jordan Fleming
FROM: SEU IRB
PROTOCOL TITLE: Teaching Diversity Literature in the North American College Classroom
FUNDING SOURCE: NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 20 ED 11
APPROVAL PERIOD: Approval Date: January 27, 2021 Expiration Date: January 26, 2022

Dear Investigator(s),

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled, Teaching Diversity Literature in the North American College Classroom. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol modification.

Any changes require approval before they can be implemented as part of your study. If your study requires any changes, the proposed modifications will need to be submitted in the form of an amendment request to the IRB to include the following:

- Description of proposed revisions;
- *If applicable*, any new or revised materials;
- *If applicable*, updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions

If there are any adverse events and/or any unanticipated problems during your study, you must notify the IRB within 24 hours of the event or problem.

At present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB.

This approval is issued under Southeastern University's Federal Wide Assurance 00006943 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under the IRB's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Rustin Lloyd
 Chair, Institutional Review Board
 irb@seu.edu