

**University of Florida Levin College of Law
Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations (CSRRR)**

WEBINAR: Should UF Mandate a Race/Anti-Racism Course?

Discussion Themes and Overview

On June 25, 2020, the CSRRR hosted a webinar discussion on whether UF should mandate a course on race/anti-racism. Panelists, Prof. Christopher Busey (College of Education), Prof. Lance Gravlee (Anthropology), Diedre Houchen, Postdoctoral Associate (CSRRR), Prof. Aida Hozic (Political Science), Prof. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn (African American Studies), and Prof. Katheryn Russell-Brown (Law & CSRRR Director). There were approximately 300 participants.

This document synthesizes the perspectives presented by the scholars. It is our hope that professors, educators, administrators, other groups, and members of the general public can utilize this information. We believe the issues raised in this discussion will be valuable to institutions and individuals who are considering how to teach and talk about race, racism, and race relations, in light of the social protests that have taken place around the world following George Floyd's killing.

In preparation for the discussion, panelists were asked to consider six broad question areas. One: Do you think UF (or universities in general), should require a course on race/anti-racism? Why or why not? Would it be better to "strongly encourage" students to take a race/anti-racism course? Two: Should there be a single course that every student takes or a group of courses that students could select from? Three: What foundational material should students be exposed to in a required or strongly encouraged course on race? Four: Share some of your experiences teaching race/race-related courses. What course(s) have you taught? How have students responded to courses where they have delved into difficult racial issues? Five: What support do faculty need from the administration to implement and sustain race courses? Six: What types of support do students need once a race course is required or strongly encouraged?

Here are the discussion points and themes identified by panel members in response to the questions:

Should Colleges Mandate a Race Course?

There is a vast educational gap related to students' engagement on race in classrooms, both in K-12 schooling and in higher education. It is our responsibility as a public university to ensure that our students are prepared to engage with issues of race and racism in the larger society and post-graduation within their professions. We should listen to our students who are asking for rigorous learning by meeting their curiosity with coursework on race, racism, and anti-racism.

However, a single course is a problematic solution. As important as this topic is, requiring a single course is not likely to yield the depth of knowledge acquisition and societal change for which we hope. Compulsory course enrollment on what may be

perceived as a controversial topic is not the best learning environment for students and teachers. In fact, this format could foster negative engagement. Further, a one semester-long course can only cover a small number of race and race-related topics.

Infusing Race and Racism across the Disciplines

Concerning coursework, UF should instead infuse race, racism, and racial literacy within the general education program, specifically the new [Quest program](#) at UF and within the coursework of all academic disciplines. We should explore the creation of a university-wide requirement for students to take at least one such course before graduation.

This social moment challenges universities to investigate the nexus of racialized histories and oppression—especially that of its institution.

The UF community—faculty, students, staff and the local community, is also asking questions related to surveillance, gendered racism, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, neocolonialism, and the prison industrial complex. New curriculum should be broad enough to engage these issues as well.

Supporting Faculty Engagement on Race, Racism, and Anti-Racism

Professional Development

Offering coursework focused on race and infusing racial analyses within academic disciplines requires universities to invest in professional development for faculty.

We look to the University's administration to create a structure for faculty professional development related to race, racism, pedagogy, and curriculum.

Developing this structure should be done in collaboration with the Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations and other units focused on Ethnic Studies such as the African American Studies Program and the Centers for Latin American Studies and African Studies and departments that already have faculty engaged in this work.

Incentives and Service Allocations

Three steps UF should take: (a) Provide incentives for faculty to develop new courses on race in their departments and colleges, such as the CSRRR Course Development Grants; (b) Decrease the service allocations for faculty members who engage with race in teaching and mentoring with race coursework and race/racism based professional development for the University and (c) Recognize and reward the scholarly and emotional labor invested in teaching and researching on issues of race, racism, and anti-racism. For instance, allow sabbaticals for this work, provide research assistance, such as RAs and make funds available from professional development accounts and other

resources for networking (travel, lecture series, conferences) that could benefit the entire UF community.

Hiring, Tenure, and Promotion

In addition to professional development and coursework, faculty need institutional structures that attend to racial inequity for personnel. In particular, we ask for an investigation to understand how the University of Florida's pay system and the allocation of service obligations are distributed along racial lines.

What initiatives will the University undertake to recruit hire and retain Black and Indigenous faculty, with specific focus on Critical Race Studies (across disciplines and in departments focused on the study of race/racial inequalities/racism)?

Our University must also recognize the existence of a deep racial divide between our staff members, faculty and administrators and acknowledge the often invisible essential labor of Black and Indigenous people of color workers who maintain our campus

Investing in Broad Structural Change at UF

Curriculum Transformation

- Engage with faculty working on race, racial inequalities, and racism in the review and approval of Quest courses focusing on those issues to prevent sanitization and address/redress discomforts of surveillance in the process.
- Create "anti-racist curricula" and advocate for the development of an undergraduate minor or certificate program in anti-racist studies.
- Advocate for revisions of the Civics Requirement (Florida requirement) to incorporate race/racial inequalities/racism in the courses required for its satisfaction and the test.

Institutional Transformation

- Create an African American Studies Department
- Create Departments of Ethnic and Racial Studies
- Invest in community outreach, program development, and foster deep connections with the City of Gainesville, which remains segregated and reward faculty, programs and departments which engage in such activities

- Create institutional channels for students, staff, and faculty to address and redress racial discrimination
- Invest in mental health and counseling professionals and resources trained to work with faculty, staff, and students who are victims of discrimination and microaggressions.
- Address the role of Black athletes in the University of Florida's complex.

The above provides an overview of the panel discussion. For more detail, we invite you to listen to the discussion in its entirety. Here is the link: <https://www.law.ufl.edu/csrrr-events/should-colleges-mandate-a-course-on-race-anti-racism>