

## **Inside IrD: The Story of the Interracial Dynamics Cluster**

The mission of any great university is to educate students to live in a democratic society. A decade ago, at a time when demographers predicted that multiculturalism would become the face not only of California but of America in the twenty-first century, UCLA's Academic Senate resolved it "important that all undergraduates study multicultural interactions, and develop the ability to analyze complex, multicultural issues from different perspectives." The "Interracial Dynamics" (IrD) freshman cluster contributes to a curriculum that understands pluralism and democracy as mutually reinforcing categories.

Behind almost everything we do is the question: How can a nation as ethnically diverse as the United States nurture its sense of unity and community? IrD's mission is not primarily to preach racial tolerance or even to advocate sympathy for "others" but to create a learning environment conducive to free speech and open-ended dialogue. This means, as one IrD instructor puts it, "diffusing the idea ... in students' minds ... that this is ... an issue that just is a person-of-color issue rather than something that affects people across ... the board." It also means helping students to feel empowered to affect personal and social change.

*Almost everyday I go back to the dorms, and a racial topic will come up. I say, "This is so my Interracial Dynamics class," and in turn, my hallmates end up saying, "This is so Interracial Dynamics." I learned more applicable information from this class than any other class. So much history, politics, social issues, and icons were covered in this course, and I believe I will hold it in my heart for at least the rest of my career @ UCLA. Hopefully, I will grow beyond that.*

## 1. How We Got Here

The story of the Interracial Dynamics cluster is inseparable from the longer history of multiculturalism across the United States and, more specifically, at UCLA.

Multiculturalism first made its appearance on college campuses in the late nineteen sixties and early nineteen seventies through the establishment of ethnic studies programs and centers. As early as 1969, UCLA responded to student demands by establishing the Center for Afro-American Studies. Soon after, other ethnic studies centers – American Indian Studies, Chicano Studies, and Asian American Studies – were established on campus. By the nineteen eighties, the so-called Canon Wars dominated academic debates over multiculturalism. At UCLA, faculty initiatives to expand multicultural content in curriculum began to take shape. The fight was not only over whether marginalized cultures should be mainstreamed into Western and American civilization courses but also over *how* to institute diversity. Would diversity be fulfilled once marginalized cultures were “added” to the mainstream curriculum? Or, would diversity function as a corrective to a history of racial (and sexual) oppression and exclusion? At UCLA, a state-sponsored university, the stakes were heightened by the fact that the student population increasingly reflected the changing demographics of California, where non-whites were becoming the majority.

In the early nineteen nineties, UCLA’s Academic Senate appointed a series of task forces to study the issue of creating a multicultural course requirement within the General Education curriculum. The Senate ultimately rejected calls for a “diversity requirement” and instead approved on May 18, 1993, three resolutions recommending that issues involving ethnic and gender diversity be merged into the existing curriculum. The resolutions on Multicultural Studies and Course Development read as follows.

- o Resolution 1: In our evolving, pluralist society it is important that all undergraduates study multicultural interactions, and develop the ability to analyze complex, multicultural issues from different perspectives.
- o Resolution 2: The Faculty and the Administration are encouraged to initiate and support the development new courses, the revision of existing courses, and other measures that develop the student’s ability to analyze multicultural issues from different perspectives.
- o Resolution 3: The Council on Undergraduate Education is requested to report annually to the Legislative Assembly on: 1) specific measures adapted by the Faculty and the Administration; 2) the success of achieving the objectives specified in the first two resolutions; and 3) the possible need for further efforts, including the need for curricular requirements to achieve these goals.

In response to Senate Resolution 2, a Joint Advisory Committee on Multicultural Studies was convened in the fall of 1993. Its task was to review and fund faculty proposals to develop new courses or modify existing ones. When three English Department faculty – King-Kok Cheung, Valerie Smith, and Richard Yarborough – responded to the Committee’s request for proposals under the rubric of “Interracial Encounters in American Fiction,” it marked the earliest articulation of what would become the Interracial Dynamics

cluster. In the spring of 1994, the Multicultural Studies committee awarded the “Interracial Encounters in American Fiction” proposal a grant to modify an existing English Department course (English 85: The American Novel) and to develop a new one (English 179: American Literature in Comparative Contexts).

Over the next few years, UCLA’s Provost appointed a faculty-student committee to study ways to reform the College of Letters and Science’s General Education curriculum. In 1997, the committee submitted “a proposal for change,” which had as its centerpiece the freshmen cluster course. Requests for proposals were solicited in early 1998 and, in an effort to extend the work done by the “Interracial Encounters in American Fiction” faculty, Professor King-Kok Cheung spearheaded an effort to garner approval for an interdisciplinary cluster course titled “Interracial Dynamics in American History, Literature, and Law.”

IrD’s origins extend beyond the gates of the university. The cluster has its beginnings as an optimistic response to a moment when our ethnic diversity and our democratic ideals and institutions were at odds. The 1993-94 Multicultural Studies grants were, according to Cheung, “designed to encourage comparative ethnic research in the wake of the [April 1992] L.A. riots.” Unlike the riots that took place in the nineteen sixties, which were widely perceived to be rooted in a conflict between blacks and whites, the events of 1992 were much more multiracial. In the immediate aftermath of the 1992 riots – and exactly one year to the day prior to the Senate resolutions on Multicultural Studies and Course Development – Cheung’s colleagues in UCLA’s Asian American Studies Center published an article in the English language edition of the Los Angeles-based *Korea Times* calling for universities to “take leadership by developing the needed multicultural/multiethnic curriculum materials.”<sup>1</sup> The 1992 L.A. riots “made me want to go beyond literature,” recalls Cheung, “and find an interdisciplinary approach to race relations.”

While, during the nineteen nineties, liberal curricular reforms were being instituted under the banner of “multiculturalism” on college campuses across the nation, Los Angeles became a flash point for racial conflict and California a political haven for conservative backlash. The year 1998 marked the passage of the last of four propositions that were placed on the ballot during the nineteen nineties. Prop. 227 – “English for the Children” – severely limited bilingual programs in schools. Two years earlier Prop. 209 – the California Civil Rights Initiative – was approved by voters with the intent of dismantling affirmative action. In 1994, voters passed two initiatives: Prop. 187 – “Save Our State” – designed to withhold education and medical care from undocumented immigrant children and their families, and Prop. 184 – “Three Strikes and You’re Out” – which had the effect of incarcerating greater numbers of poor Hispanic and African American young men. The California electorate was, of course, responding less to the rise of ivory tower multiculturalism than to anxiety about an economic recession and fears associated with demographic predictions that the combined populations of ethnic minorities in California would soon outgrow the English-speaking white population.

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<sup>1</sup> “Rebuilding Los Angeles: A Message of Hope from UCLA,” *Korea Times* (18 May 1992): 7.

## 2. Who We Are

These predictions were confirmed by the 2000 U.S. Census, which identified California as the first minority-majority state in the nation. The census also indicates that Latinos, for the first time, have replaced whites as the largest ethnic group in both the city and county of Los Angeles. Los Angeles is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the state in one of the most ethnically diverse states in the country. Likewise, the Interracial Dynamics cluster is one of the most ethnically diverse courses on one of the most ethnically diverse campuses in the nation. Even after Prop. 209 ended affirmative action in California higher education admissions, nonwhites comprise well over half the undergraduate student enrollment at UCLA.

The Interracial Dynamics cluster was launched in the same year – nineteen ninety-eight – that California law compelled UCLA to terminate its policy of using racial preferences in undergraduate admissions. Nevertheless, it comes as little surprise that a course on interracial dynamics typically enrolls a larger percentage of nonwhites than is reflected in their overall numbers on campus. “The majority of [IrD] students are minorities,” observes one student in the cluster evaluation, “so the subject matter is very relevant.”

**Table 6.2. Ethnic Composition of Freshmen Enrollment at UCLA:  
Average Over Five Years, 1998-2002**

	% of all freshman students (N=21,038)	% of all cluster students (N=4207)	% of students within IrD (N=592)
American Indian	0%	0%	0%
Asian	41%	39%	48%
Black	4%	3%	10%
Chicano/Latino	13%	12%	16%
White	32%	34%	19%
Other/ Prefer Not to State	10%	11%	7%

Source: College of Letters and Science, UCLA, 2003; Office of Academic Planning and Budget, UCLA, 2003

While Table 6.2 discloses the extent to which minority students are drawn to our cluster, it does not show the degree to which underrepresented minority (Black and Chicano/Latino, in particular) enrollment in IrD has steadily increased over the past five years. In 1998, the cluster’s inaugural year, the percentage of Black enrollment in IrD (3%) was less than the percentage of Black freshmen enrollment at UCLA (4%). By AY2001-02, IrD Black enrollment had tripled (to 15%) even as Black enrollment on campus fell to 3%. Likewise, in the cluster’s first few years (1998-2000), Chicano/Latino student enrollment in IrD stood at around 12%, which matched the percentage of Chicano/Latino freshmen on campus. Over the past two years, however, IrD Chicano/Latino student enrollment has doubled (to about 25%) while the percentage of Chicano/Latino freshmen at UCLA has shown only modest gains (to around 15%).

The current level of underrepresented minority enrollment in IrD is more impressive considering that these students are less likely than other UCLA freshmen to enroll in cluster courses, which carry honors designation and thus attract honors freshmen, whose ranks are drawn largely from white and Asian American students (see Table 3.2). Note that even when the IrD student cohort is added into the enrollment data for all cluster courses, the percentage of minorities taking clusters is below their percentages campus-wide (Table 6.2).

A number of factors contribute to the relatively high enrollment of underrepresented minorities in IrD today. One of the most important is the role played by the Academic Advancement Program (AAP). AAP’s mission is to guarantee access and opportunity to students who face the greatest social barriers to higher education. They do so by providing tutorial resources that boost AAP student retention and graduation rates and admission to graduate and professional schools. Since the passage of Prop. 209, AAP eligibility is no longer based on race but on personal and academic factors, such as family income and the level of parental education.

IrD students – regardless of their ethnic background – are more likely than other students at UCLA to be eligible for and participate in the services offered by AAP (Table 6.3). Over the past couple years, AAP enrollment in IrD is over 40%, twice the rate of their peers both in other cluster courses and across campus.

**Table 6.3. Academic Advancement Program (AAP)  
Freshmen Enrollment at UCLA: 1998-2002**

	% of all L&S freshman students (N=17,494)	% of all cluster students (N=4207)	% of students within IrD (N=592)
1998	13%	9%	16%
1999	18%	16%	24%
2000	17%	20%	31%
2001	14%	23%	42%
2002	20%	18%	41%
5-year Average	17%	17%	31%

Source: College of Letters and Science, UCLA 2003

Demand for AAP services has become so great among our students that AAP now assigns one of its tutors to work directly with IrD. The AAP tutor plays an active role in the cluster by attending every lecture and by being on hand to answer questions, particularly about how all freshmen at UCLA can take advantage of the array of counseling services available. The legacy of AAP in IrD was brought home to us this past academic year when the AAP-assigned tutor was for the first – and probably not the last – time an IrD cluster alumnus. Although attrition is typically high among the type of student targeted by AAP as well as among underrepresented minorities at universities throughout the nation, the intimate relationship between AAP and IrD is no doubt one reason why attrition in IrD is among the lowest across cluster courses (see Table 3.1).

The diversity of the IrD student body is mirrored in its instructional cohort – graduate student instructors (GSIs) and faculty alike – who, when compared to the overall instructional cohort at UCLA, are also drawn disproportionately from the ranks of minorities. For example, whereas minority graduate students comprise 40% of the aggregate number of graduate students on campus, all but one IrD GSI (out of a total of fifteen different GSIs) over the past five years has been a racial minority. During the same period, while minorities constituted 20% of faculty at UCLA, all but two of thirteen IrD faculty were nonwhite.<sup>2</sup> Students voice their appreciation of the multiracial composition of the IrD instructional team with comments such as: “the diversity among instructors is so much more interesting [and] makes the class better.”

Students use words such as “inspiring,” “provocative,” and (most frequently) “eye opening” to describe the cluster in their course evaluations. Occasionally white students – who comprise over 30% of all undergraduates at UCLA but usually less than 20% of IrD enrollment (Table 6.2) – feel the cluster unfairly marks them as “oppressors.” Some, however, find that being racially conspicuous for the first time in their lives is a productive learning experience.

*[The cluster] really forced me to think about somewhat uncomfortable revelations about myself and my role in racism and prejudice – this is the first class that has taken my out of my comfort zone – I think that shows that I have learned a lot, beyond just memorizing facts.*

We encourage all of our students to make “uncomfortable revelations” about their complicity with racism and prejudice even as we deploy a variety of pedagogical strategies to diffuse racial tensions associated with “identity politics” (i.e., privileging personal experience over critical thinking). One way is to address the issue of “whiteness” explicitly. We assign course readings and give lectures aimed both at making whiteness visible as a racial category and at recovering its constitutive histories. Examining how some European immigrants (e.g., Irish, Italians, and Jews) were initially perceived as nonwhite when they arrived in the United States provides white students self-definitions by which they are better able to recognize their own power and privilege in the context of interracial dynamics. Moreover, this lesson provides all students, nonwhite as well as white, with the means to better recognize the socially constructed nature of their own racial identities. It allows students to have informed opinions on, for example, whether Asian Americans – the most recent immigrants to wear the “model minority” label – will ever achieve “whiteness” and the privileges associated with it in the eyes of the majority of Americans.

Everyday our students witness the collaboration between white and nonwhite faculty, all of whom possess the knowledge and expertise to lecture on a variety of racial experiences. If, by assembling a multiethnic instructional cast, antagonisms associated with identity politics are less likely to emerge within the cluster, it’s also not uncommon for students of

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<sup>2</sup> Between AY1998-99 and AY2002-03, underrepresented minorities constituted 8% of all UCLA faculty, 12% of all cluster faculty (see Table 5.1), and 50% of IrD faculty.

color to remark on the rareness and the significance of seeing and listening to lectures by UCLA faculty who look and sound like them. Having a multiracial teaching team, remarks one student, “provided us with different views, backgrounds, and experiences, which is the core of the class – interracial dynamics.”

### 3. What We Do

#### *Faculty Recruitment*

Bringing together an ethnically diverse teaching faculty presents considerable challenges for the Cluster Program. An obvious obstacle is the fact that, at UCLA, almost 80% of the faculty are white while only 8% are from the ranks of underrepresented minorities. As a result, faculty of color tend to be overextended in their professional commitments. One IrD coordinator states it plainly: “[A] lot of the ethnic faculty, a lot of the faculty of color are involved in a lot of different things.” Institutionally speaking, although the Institute of American Cultures provides support to the four ethnic studies *research* centers, there is no comparable university mechanism for building bridges between the ethnic studies Interdepartmental Degree Programs (IDPs), which bear the largest responsibility for ethnic studies *teaching* at UCLA. Over the past five years, the Interracial Dynamics cluster has become a tacit instrument for creating the conditions under which the ethnic studies IDPs can work together. To further this pedagogical objective, the Cluster Program is seeking ways to formalize the relationship between IrD and the ethnic studies IDPs (see “4. Where We’re Going” below).

To date, the most effective IrD faculty recruiting strategy has probably been personal bonds among prospective faculty. Many IrD faculty offer the refrain: “I did it because the coordinator, a friend of mine, asked me to do it.” Another important factor is that faculty recognize the unique opportunity to teach the topic of interracial dynamics in an interdisciplinary context. “[T]here was not a lot of opportunity at UCLA to put that that into practice,” remarks one IrD faculty member, “and this was the perfect kind of class to do that.”

Despite the challenges of interdisciplinary team teaching, for some IrD faculty it has had the unanticipated benefit of enabling research.

*It would have been much easier for me to teach my own class. Even if teaching a whole course of my own, it would take less energy than a cluster. It was worth it ... because of the reward of learning stuff and interacting, it was more of a research type of program in my mind in the sense that ... I came up with new kinds of questions for ... my own research [by] teaching this cluster.... I learned a lot that I probably could not have and there is no other research venue [at UCLA] that would have brought us together in a weekly interaction for that long, so it changed the way I thought about things.*

At a large university – where there’s an emphasis on research and where departments tend to be isolated from one another – cluster teaching is one of the few venues that allow faculty to engage in sustained interdisciplinary work of any kind. Moreover, when students and teachers share a scholarly pursuit, the faculty are likely to make a greater commitment to the students’ process of discovery and the students are rewarded with a greater sense of intellectual purpose and community.

### *Tag-Team Teaching*

IrD faculty have sought ways to take advantage of the interdisciplinary team opportunity afforded by the Cluster Program. In particular, the 2000-2002 IrD instructional team experimented with a radically interactive model of interdisciplinary teaching. All clusters draw faculty from different disciplines and most involve the entire faculty team in end-of-lecture Q&A sessions or the occasional panel discussion. The IrD faculty who participated between 2000 and 2002 decided to implement an everyday lecture mode that became affectionately known as “tag-team teaching.”<sup>3</sup>

*One of the things we found as a strength ... is that none of us lectured for a whole class.... [T]here would be anywhere from two to four of us presenting stuff ... [O]n any given day ... we'd ... be responsible for different texts and obviously what we did with them and the way we did them. And in many respects, it was kind of impromptu, it's almost like improv comedy, except we weren't very funny [laughs], in that ... you don't know what your colleague's gonna say about X text until they get up there and say it and then the challenge is to build continuity.... I thought for the faculty it was pretty stimulating.... You just don't sit there and go to sleep [laughs], you got to really pay attention.*

There are practical reasons why most cluster teaching teams don't employ this method. First, it doesn't conform to the solitary lecture format with which most faculty are familiar. Second, it demands an extraordinary amount of preparation time. Faculty cannot rely on well-worn lecture habits or notes and are compelled to be active listeners during a colleague's lecture. And it essentially forecloses the team's ability to incorporate “guest lectures,” a practice common to many GE clusters (for better or worse, guest lecturers were never invited to participate in IrD between 2000 and 2002).

Another reason faculty don't gravitate toward the tag-team model might be that it doesn't guarantee a better learning environment for students. Tag-team teaching is a mixed blessing. Some students find this instructional choreography stimulating: “I like the way they would do ‘tag-team’ lectures – it kept the presentations on a good pace.” Others complain that the impromptu mode is over-stimulating, making them feel “disoriented” and “exhausted” rather than enlightened and energized. When the tag-team format fails, it's not clear whether the fault lies with faculty (a lack of organization) or students (an unwillingness to engage an unconventional lecture format). If nothing else, openly interactive lectures make students more aware that methodological and ideological differences exist between the disciplines and the faculty. One student, who puts a positive spin on tag-team teaching, states that while professors have “varying, and sometimes contradictory views, [this is] interesting and a great aspect of the class.”

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<sup>3</sup> The “tag-team teaching” concept is inspired by the world of professional wrestling, where one team-member cannot enter the ring until the other tags or touches hands with him/her on leaving it. This form of team teaching should be distinguished from a panel discussion arrangement as well as the conventional lecture format, where one faculty lectures for an entire class. Tag-team teaching can be differentiated from professional wrestling by the fact that the former relies heavily on improvisation whereas the latter has a reputation for being essentially contrived.

### *Student Dialogue and Debate*

We also strive to find the best strategies for promoting dialogue and debate among our students. From the start, the instructional goal of IrD has been to teach students to be culturally fluent in the new multi-ethnic complexities that have displaced the old black-white paradigm of U.S. race relations. Simply put, how do we define diversity? One way we address this question is to devote an entire lecture to stage a student debate on affirmative action. This is an obvious topic for a class of this kind but it's always surprising to find out how little students know about an issue that directly affects their lives. The debate is made up of a dozen student volunteers who break into two teams – one for and one against affirmative action as an effective strategy for resolving racial discrimination – and they research and prepare their positions one week prior to the debate. During the debate, students in the audience (who have been assigned readings on affirmative action just prior to the debate) are given the opportunity to ask questions to either team and finally vote on a winner. The outcome is that students rigorously engage not only the efficacy of “preferential treatment” in addressing disadvantage but also the relative merits of different types of preference – based on gender and income, as well as race – in higher education admissions and elsewhere.

A much less structured but no less vital example of student dialogue and debate can be found on the “Discussion Board” of the IrD website. Postings on the discussion board were especially prolific during winter 2000, when students logged approximately 330 postings (totaling 263 pages of printed text). One GSI, who mentored the conversation by occasionally providing follow-up questions and relevant internet links, locates the motivation for the extensive use of the discussion board as the combination of “great students and unfortunate racial incidents in the media.” In fact, most postings discuss materials related to but not directly covered by course content. Topics for discussion included TV, movies, music, politics, stereotypes, employment, romance, and campus news (Figure 6.1). The discussion board is, as one GSI concludes, “a great testament to how the students were able to make connections in ‘real life.’” An IrD faculty remarks, “the material ... isn't just ... an abstract intellectual exercise [but] something that [students] experience.”

WINTER QUARTER 2000

GE CLST 20B Discussion Board

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- [the novelty of being a busboy](#) - **DE LA TORRE, CHRISTINA DENISE**  
23:43:30 2/28/2000 (3)
  - [Re: the novelty of being a busboy](#) - **HOANG, VICTORIA DIEMMY**  
01:27:53 3/04/2000 (0)
    - [Re: Re: the novelty of being a busboy - it's even deeper than you think](#) - **LUKE, PRISCILLA KATHERINE** 00:30:21 3/06/2000 (0)
- [Teaching Thinking as a Cure for Racism](#) - **WILSON, RACHEL ANNE**  
23:18:29 2/28/2000 (1)
  - [Re: Teaching Thinking as a Cure for Racism](#) - **MORI, BRANDT**  
**ULISSES** 01:35:09 2/29/2000 (0)
- [Malcolm X and gender issues](#) - **SUPNET, MEDALYNJUDE O** 23:06:40  
2/28/2000 (0)
- [Dominating: China Men or Women?](#) - **CHEN, JULIE** 23:01:59 2/28/2000 (1)
  - [Re: Dominating: China Men or Women?](#) - **PHAM, CAROLINE**  
**DIEMTRANG** 03:19:37 3/01/2000 (0)
- [assimilation](#) - **ZYMAN, CAROL** 22:53:07 2/28/2000 (1)
  - [Re: assimilation](#) - **HOANG, VICTORIA DIEMMY** 01:42:33  
3/04/2000 (0)
- [Asian American Female Qualities](#) - **LEE, KAREN M** 21:41:26 2/28/2000 (1)
  - [Re: Asian American Female Qualities](#) - **PAVLICEK, EVA**  
**ALEXANDRA** 23:12:22 2/28/2000 (0)
- [I intend to marry a white man.](#) - **IREY, ROBIN COLLEEN** 21:25:32  
2/28/2000 (0)
- [Margaret Cho: What happens to Asian American women on tv?](#) - **Ho, Tammy**  
21:25:17 2/28/2000 (0)
- [No on Prop. 22](#) - **KLEINBERG, RACHEL** 21:04:44 2/28/2000 (3)
  - [Re: No on Prop. 22](#) - **SUNG, KARIN PEGGY** 08:51:45 2/29/2000 (0)
- [RALLY!!!](#) - **KLEINBERG, RACHEL** 21:19:29 2/28/2000 (1)
  - [Re: RALLY!!!](#) - **HANSEN-WEAVER, JESSICA** 02:25:47 2/29/2000  
(0)

Figure 6.1. Sample from IrD discussion board

### *Media Literacy*

Most of us get our information about racially divisive issues, such as affirmative action and hate crimes, from the news media. To provide students with the critical skills not only to comprehend but critique the news as a source of information, we've created an ambitious "media literacy" winter quarter research project. The assignment focuses on the Los Angeles race riots of 1965 and 1992 (a topic introduced to students through prior course readings and lectures) and has two parts: a workgroup annotated bibliography and an independent research paper.

We give students access to a wide variety of newspapers – including those characterized as local, national, and international, mainstream and alternative, English language and non-English language, liberal and conservative – to allow them to take measure of the range of meanings given to the 1965 and 1992 riots by print journalism. In order to develop this assignment, the instructional team worked with five different libraries from across campus. The librarians helped us bring together twenty-four different newspapers from 1965 and 1992 on microfilm, placed them all on reserve in the Young Research Library's Microform and Media Services reading room, and provided students with a "Microfilm Guide" specially tailored to the assignment. Next, we worked with Social Sciences Computing to create a web-based "Bibliography Board" where students could post their preliminary research findings.

During step one of the assignment, we managed the prospect of unleashing over one hundred and sixty students on Microform and Media Services over a four-week period by placing students in small workgroups and assigning them specific newspapers dates (all newspapers and dates had been previewed by the instructional team). Student workgroups completed step one of the assignment by posting annotated and non-annotated entries on the Bibliography Board. These postings totaled upwards of 1500 bibliographic entries (over 300 which were annotated) and more than 700 pages of printed text.

Step two asked students to write an independent research paper on either riot coverage of two or more different newspapers from the same year (either 1965 or 1992) or riot coverage from one or more newspapers across different years (both 1965 and 1992). Students began phase two of the assignment by examining data collected by workgroups in step one. This presented another logistical hurdle. How do we make the huge annotated bibliography database user-friendly for independent student research? Working closely with technicians at Social Sciences Computing, we developed two strategies for handling the information overload. First, Social Sciences Computing provided a search engine capable of sorting entries on the Bibliography Board by key word or phrases. Second, we asked librarians at the Southern Regional Library Facility to digitize microfilm images of the front page of first day riot coverage for every newspaper under consideration (Figure 6.2). These web-based devices make independent research more efficient by allowing students to familiarize themselves with the archive before returning to the newspaper microfilm on their own. The independent research paper culminated in a "peer editing" workshop (held during discussion section) where students read drafts of each other's papers. The workshop allowed students to continue

# First Day/Front Page Riot Newspaper Coverage

You will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to view the image links below

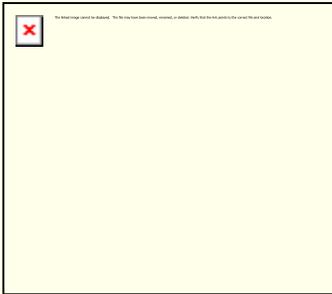
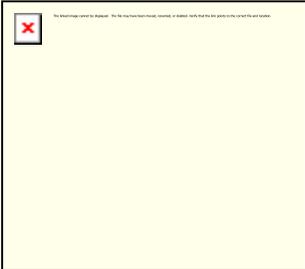
<i>1965 Newspapers</i>	<i>1992 Newspapers</i>
	
<p><a href="#"><u><i>La Opinion (Los Angeles, Calif.)</i></u></a> <i>August 13, 1965</i></p>	<p><a href="#"><u><i>Daily Bruin</i></u></a> <i>April 30, 1992</i></p>
	
<p><a href="#"><u><i>L.A. Free Press</i></u></a> <i>August 20, 1965</i></p>	<p><a href="#"><u><i>Korea Times (English language edition)</i></u></a> <i>May 4, 1992</i></p>
	
<p><a href="#"><u><i>L.A. Sentinel</i></u></a> <i>August 19, 1965</i></p>	<p><a href="#"><u><i>L.A. Times</i></u></a> <i>April 30, 1992</i></p>
	
<p><a href="#"><u><i>S.F. Chronicle</i></u></a> <i>August 12, 1965</i></p>	<p><a href="#"><u><i>London Times</i></u></a> <i>May 1, 1992</i></p>

Figure 6.2. Sample from IrD media literacy assignment.

to learn from one another, in this case by evaluating the writing and research of others as a means to reflect on their own scholarship.

### *Winter Break Bridge Assignments*

Interracial dynamics is a profoundly lived experience, one that touches our students at the most basic level and one that can be effectively studied outside the library or the classroom. To this end, we've exploited the unique twenty-week lecture/discussion design of the cluster courses by asking students to participate in an off-campus assignment, which is partly completed between the fall and winter quarters. The winter break "bridge" assignment is an annual feature of IrD. While the specific topic has changed over the years, the assignment has consistently been rooted in ethnographic fieldwork (a methodology particularly common to Social Science disciplines). One year, a political science faculty took the lead in generating a "U.S. Census and Your Neighborhood" assignment, where students interviewed people in their home or on their street about their perceptions of the racial and class profile of their neighborhood. After returning from the holiday, students were instructed to visit the U.S. Census website and gather data on the racial and income composition of their neighborhood. Students were then asked to compare their interview data to the census information in order to measure not only the empirical accuracy of people's subjective perception but also to consider how assumptions about race and class filter our understanding of people and social interaction.

Other winter break "bridge" assignments have been more rigorously ethnographic. One, developed by a faculty from Sociology, involves students as "native informants" who observe and record the presence or absence of ethnic "codings" in the performance of holiday family rituals. Another, created by an Anthropologist on the faculty team, asks students to become "participant-observers" by, instead of studying others, studying themselves. This assignment has the added benefit of forcing students to become conscious instruments of their own learning. More specifically, students are instructed to spend time (an evening, or a couple of hours in an afternoon) observing and participating in the activities of a place (a sports event, a club, a store, mall, restaurant, etc.) where they are ethnically and/or racially conspicuous. We want students to consider the relation between place and consciousness or, more specifically, how feeling conspicuous in a particular setting affects behavior. Students are urged to pair with someone who is not conspicuous in the chosen setting. The primary role of the inconspicuous "buddy" is to note the participant-observer's and other people's responses and share that information with the participant-observer once the activity is over. This assignment prods students to not merely examine but also exercise their own agency by doing more than uncritically accepting their prescribed social location.

### *Spring Seminars*

Student academic performance in spring seminars is particularly advanced because teachers can exploit the knowledge students acquire from the cluster during the prior two quarters. One instructor, who teaches a seminar on Latino culture and politics, noticed the development of his students' critical thinking skills over the course of the year. As early as "the beginning of spring quarter ... you could really see the way in which [students] were looking at the world around them in a different way."

Another instructor, who focuses her seminar on sports and identity, asks her students to utilize concepts learned in fall quarter. For example, she directs her students to recall how they came to understand the idea of the “cult of true womanhood” as it applied to slave women. She then asks them to think about how the same concept “play[s] out in terms of black women running track” today. “I would bring back the term,” she explains, “but within a different context.”

The same instructor, perhaps taking her cue from the winter break bridge assignment, found that the best way keep things fresh was to not only get outside the classroom but to leave Westwood altogether.

*[B]y the spring I was really thinking in terms of regeneration and rebirth.... We took a great field trip to Little Tokyo [near downtown L.A.]. It just so happens that Japanese-American national museum had an exhibit on Japanese-Americans in sports. So we caught a shuttle over there, and we went to the exhibit ... [A]fter that, we just hung out in Little Tokyo ... [I]t was just a great bonding experience. [Another time we] met on a basketball court, and talked about this novel that had to do with basketball players. It was really great.*

#### *Media Events*

Outside classroom experiences, such as field trips, are one way IrD faculty facilitate a “living-learning” environment for our students. It is also not uncommon for IrD instructors to return to the dorms to dine with students. These meals are often coupled with required evening screenings of movies, which range from director D.W. Griffith’s cinematic classic *Birth of a Nation* to comedian Margaret Cho’s irreverent *I’m the One That I Want*. We invite directors and performers who are particularly interested in questions of identity to participate in the screening and discuss their work. For instance, *Luminarias* director Jose Luis Valenzuela and *Punks* director Patrik-Ian Polk joined IrD for a screening of their films (both of which, at the time, were only in theatrical release) and participate in Q&A sessions. Our most widely publicized event took place when Margaret Cho spoke in class after students had screened her film *I’m the One That I Want* (also in theatrical release at the time). The event was featured in the local media, including in the “Living” section of the *Los Angeles Times*. A camera crew captured Cho’s IrD classroom performance on tape and transferred it to the “Special Features” section of the DVD version of the film.

#### 4. Where We're Going

##### *Textbook*

The teaching teams have worked on ways to ensure that IrD's legacy endures in an academic context as well. Given that "interracial dynamics" is a fresh approach to teaching race relations in the university, the first teaching team proposed generating a classroom textbook for publication. The original prospectus states that the textbook is meant to provide undergraduate readers with the primary materials, synthetic analysis, and the overall historical narrative necessary to understand the conflicts and coalitions resulting from interracial dynamics in America today.

*The readings [are] chosen for their accessibility, and the analyses, although reflecting the latest insights of scholarly research, [are] also deliberately communicated in as clear and understandable manner as possible. This textbook has therefore been field tested, and incorporates the feedback of students and faculty alike. It is utterly unique in higher education, and answers a strong demand for multicultural texts that go beyond the individual analysis of different ethnic and racial groups. By focussing on the interracial dynamics, and the ways in which racial formations have operated in parallel or interdependent ways, this textbook goes beyond the binary black/white dichotomies that have dominated both race relations research and college teaching.*

Although a prominent publisher received the prospectus enthusiastically, the project stalled once the initial instructional cohort disbanded. Current IrD faculty have revived the textbook project in light of the lessons learned by successive generations of instructional teams.

##### *Gateway Cluster*

As the IrD textbook prospectus states, state-of-the-art multicultural education "goes beyond the individual analysis of different ethnic and racial groups." This is as true of curriculum as it is of course content. Traditional departments tend to isolate the experiences of different ethnic groups by offering standard courses on "race relations" rather than interracial dynamics. The newer ethnic studies Interdepartmental Degree Programs (IDPs), where most courses on race at UCLA are concentrated, devote their resources to examining the unique experiences of specific ethnic groups (i.e., black Americans, American Indians, Chicanos, and Asian Americans).

Some IrD faculty, most of whom have an ethnic studies IDP affiliation, have begun thinking about how the cluster could be used to address these kinds of institutional constraints. More specifically, some have proposed transforming IrD into a class that not only teaches freshmen but also serves as a "gateway" course for undergraduate majors in one or more of the ethnic studies IDPs. The proposed gateway cluster would leave the freshmen cluster experience essentially unchanged but would offer additional discussion sections for ethnic studies majors who didn't take IrD as freshmen. For ethnic studies majors, the gateway cluster offers an opportunity both to take a class whose focus is interracial dynamics and to learn along side majors from the other ethnic studies IDPs. For faculty affiliated with the ethnic studies IDPs, the gateway cluster guarantees them an

opportunity to teach in a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and multiracial ethnic studies venue unlike any other at UCLA.