

PROMOTING AWARENESS OF MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY

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Abstract As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, it is important for students to develop a multicultural understanding of interiors and interior design. This report identifies a term paper as one means of emphasizing multicultural diversity within a survey course on historical interiors.

Rationale The racial and ethnic composition of the United States is rapidly changing. According to demographer Leon Bouvier, by 2060 the country will inhabit a minority majority (Edmondson, 1991). With this changing population, universities are recognizing the need to address diversity from an historic, current and future sense, and to incorporate a multicultural perspective in the classroom. Research indicates the inclusion of cultural diversity into the classroom enhances the education of all students and increases understanding among groups (Davidman, 1990; Schnell, 1990; Woolbright, 1989). In addition, learning about other cultures "can give us a renewed sense of public life, of being responsible for ourselves, our environment, our communities and institutions" (Fisher, 1992, p. 8).

The work force with which students will interact upon graduation also is in transformation. A cursory reading of professional magazines such as Interiors. Interior Design and Progressive Architecture indicates the tremendous variety and cultural complexity of interior design work students will face in the immediate future. A culturally diverse education is necessary for those employed in a pluralistic society (Hughes, 1990).

In order to successfully bring a multicultural perspective to students, 17 professors from various disciplines agreed to participate in a project with each faculty member targeting a course to focus a multicultural component. The project was funded by a USDA Challenge Grant and university diversity monies (Oltjenbruns and Baez,

1990). History of American Interiors, a junior level course, was identified as the course targeted for this project

During project training it was stressed that one or two lectures on topics deemed multicultural would not be sufficient; instead, the entire course should focus toward a better understanding of ethnic diversity. The premise was students should be aided in perceiving themselves within a culturally diverse society (Hollins, 1990). To promote this, two major revisions were made to the original course outline: 1) a new course objective emphasizing insight into various cultures was added, resulting in revision of lecture materials, visuals, and supporting guest lecturers, and changes were made in student activities/projects to enhance awareness of various cultures. One of those activities is the historical term paper reported here.

Criteria The following parameters were provided to students for their term papers:
Read the Term Paper (Cooper & Robins, 1967), especially if you are not familiar with term paper writing. Chapters I and II were of particular help.

Choose a topic related to interior design in the United States (historical or contemporary). Some ideas to consider are: 1) a person (an interior designer or architect who practices interior design; 2) a regional style; or one of the specific styles/periods shown on the weekly topical outline.

Thoroughly research this topic and develop an original paper that includes the specific information requested below.

Section One. This section must include information on the: 1) political; 2) social; 3) economic; 4) geographical conditions, as well as information about the 5) people themselves.

Section Two. This section must indicate how-these specific cultural attributes influenced the topic, i.e., how did these influence the person and his work, or how did these influence the development of the style/period. Provide identifying characteristics of the individual's work or the style/period, both visually and in written format. Illustrations should be original drawings, "designer quality", and not photocopies. Section Three. This is the analysis of the individual's work or the style/period. It should be based upon design fundamentals.

Conclusion. This section of the paper should be a brief series of statements indicating what you have learned about cultural diversity in a general sense and what, if any effect this has had on your view of other cultures/peoples. Where appropriate, indicate concepts you have experienced-seen, felt, observed, etc. - that relate to, or are a result of, your research for this paper. The information in Sections I and II must be factual and documented, requiring reference citations. A minimum of five major sources is required.

Process An explanation of the purpose of the term paper is given early in the semester along with information about the initial faculty grant and training program. Once a

week, a brief amount of time (three to five minutes) is used reiterating the intent of the paper, answering common questions, and discussing typical problems encountered with the research.

Students are encouraged to utilize the instructor's office hours for specific or individual challenges they face with the paper.

- Presentation** An appropriate length suggested for the paper is five to 10 pages of text plus illustrations and reference list Students are expected to develop their paper with the following sequential parts: 1) Introduction, 2) Section L 3) Section IT, 4) Section ill, 5) Conclusion and 6) Reference List The paper must be typewritten and use a recognized form of documentation, i.e., APA, MLA. All papers are retained by the Interior Design program and students are encouraged to make their own copies before submitting the original.
- Evaluation** Evaluation is based upon:
- Content50%
(Cultural information. 25%;
Individual or style/period information, 25%)
 - Illustrations..... 10%
 - Form.....25%
(Including grammar, composition, spelling reference citations. etc.)
 - Sources..... 15%
- Resources** A large number of historical design books are available in the library at the university, and print sources are accessible through inter-library loan. In addition, students are encouraged to make use of the following:
- The Term Paper* by C. Cooper & E. Robins. Stanford University Press (1967).
(This includes information on how to select a topic, search a library, compile information and write an original term paper.)
- Curriculum Enhancement Bibliography* by B. Titley (ed.). Colorado State University, College of Applied Human Sciences. (1992).
(This source is an annotated bibliography of research articles and books compiled by the faculty members participating in the project, covering a wide range of subject matter disciplines including general as well as specific multicultural aspects.)
- Multicultural Diversity in Housing and Interiors: An Annotated Bibliography* by K. Tremblay & C.Birdsong. Vance Bibliographies (submitted).
(The 68 annotations provide information on the multicultural diversity found in housing and interior design.)
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