

THE LAWS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND WITHIN ETHNIC STUDIES

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As ethnic studies courses become general education requirements, the Cultural and Women's Studies Department at Fresno City College is struggling to balance increased enrollment with the current amount of full-time faculty and misconceptions about the program at large.

This all began in 2020 when California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 1460, legislation requiring all California State University students to take at least one semester-long ethnic studies course to graduate.

This legislation became known as Area F, and now California community colleges are expected to provide the ethnic studies courses students need to prepare them for transfer to CSU.

Once this mandate became integrated, Department Chair Matthew Watson devised a new plan for the Cultural and Women's Studies Department.

To meet the core competencies of Area F, the ethnic studies classes were forced to change. American Pluralism was replaced with Introduction to Ethnic Studies, a class that covers the essentials of four racial-ethnic disciplines (Asian American Studies, Native American Studies, Chicano-Latino Studies, and African American Studies).

"The general ethnic studies is meant to be an intro into the four disciplines, but it's also important in understanding intersectionality at large and progresses the idea of relational ethnic studies over comparative," Chicano Latino studies instructor Rigoberta Garcia said.

Intro to Ethnic Studies is no longer team-taught the way American Pluralism was, as that would limit the



GENA GONG TEACHES A SECTION OF INTRO TO ETHNIC STUDIES ON APRIL 23 TO A LARGE CLASS OF STUDENTS IN AH 108, WHERE MANY OTHER ETHNIC STUDIES COURSES ARE TAUGHT. PHOTO BY LOGAN PAYNE.

number of available instructors. Instead, the seven full-time Cultural and Women's Studies faculty members on campus are expected to teach in-depth courses in one of the four disciplines as well as a section of Intro to Ethnic Studies.

In this spring semester, seven sections of Intro to Ethnic Studies were offered and four of them were taught by Garcia alone. During the upcoming summer, only one Intro course will be offered, and is already at full capacity.

Gena Lew Gong is the lead faculty and only full-time instructor of Asian American Studies. On top of teaching all three Asian American courses this semester, she also teaches at Fresno State and has managed to organize 12 of the 14 on-campus Asian American Month events.

"My head is exploding with all this. It's not so much organizing the events, which I truly like to do, it's dealing

with the bureaucracy of the campus." Gong said with a laugh.

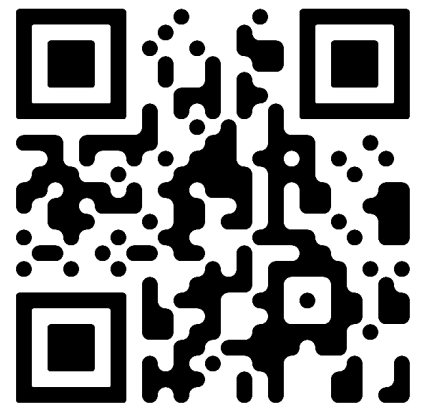
Now that students are required to take these ethnic studies courses, there is an added layer of skepticism and disinterest that surrounds their initial impressions. Auguste Kouadio has been teaching African American studies at FCC for 6 years. He said that students often have problematic misconceptions about these courses.

"Students think that we'll be talking about just critical race theory," Kouadio said. "But that's not true, these classes are relevant because they are tied to community engagement and acceptance rather than race issues"

Student Evan Trevino is currently enrolled in Gong's ethnic studies class, and his initial impressions mirror what Kouadio said.

"I had a jaded view, I thought it was going to be centered around teaching white fragility, white supremacy. Basically, that white people are the antithesis of ethnic experience. But the class isn't that at all," Trevino said.

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RESEARCHING THE PAST MAY NOT BE IN THE FUTURE FOR SOME FCC STUDENTS

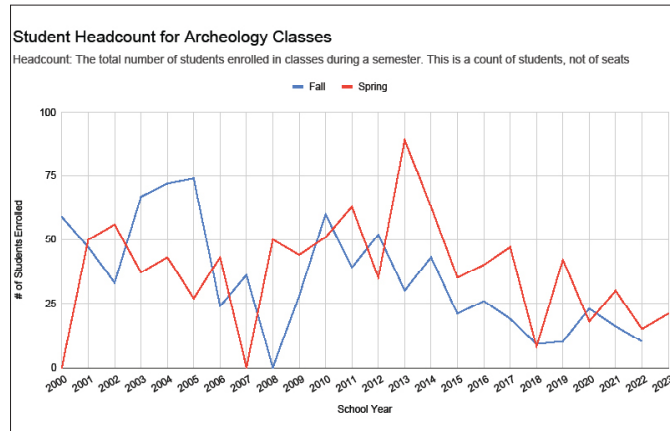
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Fresno City College will no longer offer all but one of its archaeology courses in the next academic year. This eliminates the ability for students to earn an archaeological technician certificate of achievement from the State Center Community College District.

According to FCC Public Information Officer Kathy Bonilla, these changes were made this semester due to low enrollment in the archaeology program. She said that enrollment was particularly low in Laboratory Methods in Archaeology (ANTHRO-15) and Field Archaeology (ANTHRO-16).

"It has become clear to Fresno City College that the future of archaeology classes needs to be thoroughly assessed," Bonilla said in an email to The Rampage.

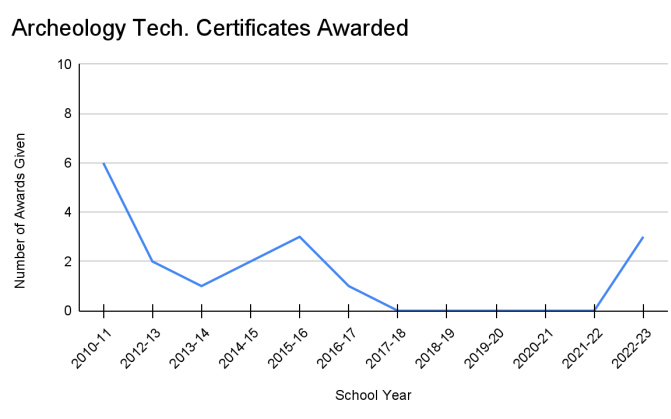
Archaeology is part of the anthropology department in the social sciences division at FCC. Statistics from the college's department of institutional research show that enrollment numbers have been decreasing since around 2013-14.



The chart above shows the dashboard's enrollment numbers for each archeology class offered during the fall and spring semesters. These numbers can count the same student multiple times if they take multiple archeology classes during the same semester. No stats have been released for the fall 2023 semester during the time of writing.

These enrollment trends are reflected in the number of archaeological technician certificates awarded.

During the 2022-23 academic year, the college awarded



three archaeological technician certificates, breaking a nearly five-year hiatus since the last awards in 2016-17, where only one student received the certification.

Currently, FCC has no plans to reopen the certificate or offer additional archaeology classes for students in the future.

"These courses are mirrored at transfer institutions and are available to students there," Bonilla said.

Mohit Narr, a cultural anthropology major at FCC, disagrees with this decision.

"It feels like a business decision rather than a student decision," Narr said.

He also believes that this will reduce interest in the study as a whole. The closest options for a similar certificate are hours away in areas like Los Angeles and San Francisco.

An anthropology student at FCC, who wished to be unnamed, said the certificate enables students to start working in the industry, much like other trade certificates in fields like automotive and welding technology.

"Imagine being a 20-year-old kid getting your archaeology certificate, and then being able to go work in New York for a summer, fully paid and housing funded," the student said.

Bonilla also cited staff changes as a contributing factor to this decision. German Loffler, the only

professor of archaeology at Fresno City College, will not be returning in the fall.

His departure impacts more than what classes are available. He also oversees both the archaeological collections and anthropology museum on campus.

Bonilla said staffing and programming plans are underway to reopen the FCC Museum of Anthropology to the public, but no date has been set.

"These efforts, which also included the artifacts in the college's care, were undertaken in collaboration with local tribal groups," Bonilla said.

The uncertainty around the program has left both students and Loffler confused and disappointed for the future.

"I've had several students ask me if they can get the archaeological certificate program. And I told them that I don't know the future of that program because I don't," Loffler said.

The Rampage reached out to Dean of Social Sciences Cherylyn Crill-Hornsby for comment but did not receive a reply.

Self-Service shows that Intro to Archaeology (ANTHRO-4) will be the only archaeology course offered in the fall. Two sessions will be offered, one in-person at FCC and one online at Clovis Community College.



FRESNO CITY COLLEGE ANTHROPOLOGY MUSEUM HOLDS MANY ARTIFACTS AND ART PIECES USED TO DISPLAY A WIDE RANGE OF CULTURES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD. AS OF APRIL 29, 2024, THE MUSEUM IS STILL CLOSED FOR PUBLIC VISITS. PHOTO BY JESUS HERRERA.