



Mass Communicating: The Forum on Media Diversity

Media diversity syllabi survey highlights:

About the study:

The Forum on Media Diversity at LSU conducted this survey in March, 2008, through SurveyMonkey and received 102 responses from journalism and mass communication schools at U.S. universities. The response rate was 39 percent.

The purpose of this project is to examine the status of media diversity education in journalism/mass communication programs at U.S. universities. The study examined not only the content focus of media diversity courses but also the nature of the offerings to students.

Presence/absence of diversity-related courses:

- About 60 percent of journalism/mass communication school¹ respondents to the survey² indicated they offer at least one course on diversity issues.
- These schools offer a total of 120 courses on diversity issues in media and communication.
- About 30 percent of the journalism schools not offering a course on diversity have plans to introduce such courses in the future.

Details about 120 diversity-related courses:

Table 1: Course Content³

Culture ⁴	Gender	Race/Ethnicity/Minority	Class	Diversity in General ⁵
31	38	49	6	18

- 69 percent of the diversity-related courses are focused on both historical and contemporary trends of a diversity issue.
- 25 percent of the diversity-related courses are focused on only contemporary trends of a diversity issue.
- 6 percent are focused only on historical trends.
- 63 percent of these schools offer their diversity-related courses at the undergraduate level, 11 percent at the graduate level, and 26 percent at both graduate and undergraduate levels.
- 72 percent of the diversity-related courses are electives and thus optional for the students, 20 percent are for selected majors and only 8 percent are listed as a requirement for all majors.
- These courses enroll 5,502 students per year (on an average 54 students per course).

¹ Journalism and mass communication schools in U.S. universities.

² A total of 102 journalism and mass communication schools responded to this survey.

³ Contents overlap among categories.

⁴ Courses that cover intercultural, multicultural and international communication issues.

⁵ Courses broadly cover diversity issues in media, e.g., "media and diversity," "managing diversity," "contemporary issues in diversity" and "media, diversity and social change," and courses that cover diversity issues, e.g., media ethics, media law, advanced journalism, broadcast writing, introduction to mass media, freelance writing.

Findings of the forum's previous study (Lieber, 2004):

- “Only slightly more than one-third of the [U.S.] universities studied are actively engaged in teaching and research about diversity.”
- Schools were offering 90 diversity-related media courses.
- Only three schools had mandatory diversity course requirements.

A thought: Do we really need specific courses on diversity issues in media?

“The way you seem to have this structured, the study appears to define diversity as a yes/no question . . . In the digital age and the 21st century, I think that teaching meaningful diversity in a journalism school can -- and should -- come from many efforts that would be limited by a course. . . .(O)ur undergraduates study audiences in three tough, incredibly diverse . . . neighborhoods. Then, after studying all of the quantitative study, they go into the neighborhoods and do in-depth qualitative interviews before they begin to report. . . . (I)sn't driving diversity into our DNA a more holistic, more engaging, and a stronger way to learn about diversity than any separate, too easily forgotten course?” (Email received from one respondent)

Survey conducted by Masudul Biswas, Ralph Izard and Lyle Perkins, Forum on Media Diversity, Louisiana State University. For additional information, see www.masscommunicating.lsu.edu