October 23, 2019

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: John A. Elliott, Ph.D.
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: New Master of Arts Degree in Race, Ethnicity, and Politics

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees approve a new Master of Arts Degree in Race, Ethnicity, and Politics.

BACKGROUND:

As the continued prominence of white nationalists in political life make clear, we are living in a period of heightened and divisive public debate over questions of race and ethnicity. Whether in polarizing conflicts over immigration and border control, the rights and proper treatment of refugees, or violent encounters between law enforcement and racialized and colonized communities, countries throughout the globe are riven with opposed opinions of how to respond to dramatic social and economic changes that are rapidly transforming them. Although what scholars termed a “liberal consensus” view suggested that divisions along ethnic and racial lines would diminish over time through increasingly inclusive policies and sheer good will, recent political events suggest otherwise. As has been true in previous similar periods, many are responding to radical global restructuring by seeking a supposed return to their countries’ pasts. This position often entails the celebration of laws and customs forthright in their commitment to fundamental inequalities along racial, ethnic, and gender lines. By contrast, those who think that we need new approaches to the challenges of new times argue that this will require innovative ways of relating across lines of difference that can only come through better understanding their past and present. In either direction, the centrality of race and ethnicity to contemporary politics is affirmed. Historically, it has been under the framework of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics (REP) that scholars in Political Science have explored the relationship among salient social identities, persistent, structuring inequalities, and the nature of domestic and international politics. UCONN’s faculty includes a critical mass of such scholars among the (American, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Theory, and Public Law) subfields of Political Science and beyond the department in and outside of CLAS.

The MREP seeks to offer interested students, especially working public sector professionals, opportunities to learn how critically to explore the relationships among race, ethnicity, and politics in ways that can inform their work and practice.

As this is an entrepreneurial MA program, the department of political science will receive a proportion of tuition and fees from enrolled students. Once established, therefore, the program will be self-sustaining in financial terms.
Request for New UConn Academic Degree Program

General Information
Name of degree program: Master's in Race, Ethnicity, and Politics (REP)
Name of sponsoring Department: Political Science
Name of sponsoring College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Campuses: Hartford, Storrs
Contact persons: Associate Prof. Jane Gordon
Type of Proposal: New
Type of Program: MA (Master of Arts)
Anticipated Initiation Date: Fall 2020
Anticipated Date of First Graduation: Spring 2022
Entrepreneurial program, approved by Provost’s Office: Yes
CIP Code: 05.0299 (Ethnic, Cultural Minority, and Gender Studies, Other)

Justification for the New Program
As the continued prominence of white nationalists in political life make clear, we are living in a period of heightened and divisive public debate over questions of race and ethnicity. Whether in polarizing conflicts over immigration and border control, the rights and proper treatment of refugees, or violent encounters between law enforcement and racialized and colonized communities, countries throughout the globe are riven with opposed opinions of how to respond to dramatic social and economic changes that are rapidly transforming them. Although what scholars termed a “liberal consensus” view suggested that divisions along ethnic and racial lines would diminish over time through increasingly inclusive policies and sheer good will, recent political events suggest otherwise. As has been true in previous similar periods, many are responding to radical global restructuring by seeking a supposed return to their countries’ pasts. This position often entails the celebration of laws and customs forthright in their commitment to fundamental inequalities along racial, ethnic, and gender lines. By contrast, those who think that we need new approaches to the challenges of new times argue that this will require innovative ways of relating across lines of difference that can only come through better understanding their past and present. In either direction, the centrality of race and ethnicity to contemporary politics is affirmed.

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Politics, International Relations, Political Theory, and Public Law) subfields of Political Science and beyond the department in and outside of CLAS.

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The MREP aims to address a few new economic, political, and social currents creatively and simultaneously.

First, the Master’s degree is the fastest growing post-high school credential sought in the United States, with as many as 8% of the national population having earned one in 2015 and many calling the MA “the new BA.” According to the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, regardless of one’s undergraduate major, an MA translates into an immediate boost in earning power. Second, the changing demographics of the United States is increasingly reflected not only in the composition of students at every level of the education system, including those pursuing graduate degrees, but also in the workplace. This rapid shift has translated not only into the exponential demand for Diversity and Inclusion Officers, often with graduate-level training, but also for an increasingly diverse faculty and curriculum and programming that addresses racial and ethnic questions explicitly from elementary school onward. (Indeed, ads recruiting international students to pursue Political Science in the United States often stress that it offers opportunities to study the relationship of race (and gender) to politics.) Third, in the last two years, the number of graduate programs in and beyond Political Science that have emphasized their addition of race, ethnicity, and politics as research areas, concentrations, or graduate certificates suggests a growing effort to respond to these trends.

When POLS surveyed a combination of 381 current students and alumnae/i in spring 2018, those who had not already earned an MA expressed overwhelming interest in pursuing a graduate degree for both career and intellectual reasons. Most suggested that the relative cost of the program, combined with the content and nature of the offerings, would determine where they would choose. The overwhelming majority also stated that they would prefer hybrid course offering models that would combine in-person with online delivery.

Graduates of our program could certainly use their coursework to prepare them to apply for a PhD in the social sciences or the humanities. Their methods training would enable them to move at an accelerated pace through Political Science programs. Many university faculty from historically underrepresented groups describe the impact that their presence has on students of color. More specifically, such students say that they want to do what the faculty do. In other words, access to faculty of color as well as course content focused on questions of race, ethnicity, and politics is likely to contribute to the diversification of those teaching and what is taught in the university of the future. In addition, as previously mentioned, the demand for Officers of Diversity and Inclusion has not only skyrocketed in the United States, but also abroad. While some positions will hire candidates with only a BA, most prefer, if they don’t require, graduate-level work that has exposed eligible candidates to questions of race and inequality, ethnic relations, disability, studies, and concerns with social justice. The MREP is
also especially interested in targeting public sector employees, prioritizing working with Neag to enroll public school teachers. This is because we can offer a course sequence of particular value to public schools teachers who must now pursue MA degrees not in the field of Education but in research areas directly relevant to what they teach. While the MRE would be of most direct benefit to Social Studies and History teachers, course material could also inform English and Human Rights classes. Our hope is that some enrolled students might devote their Master’s Project to the crafting and certifying of new middle and high school courses that could better equip current CT students to grapple with and positively intervene in the challenges that characterize race, ethnicity, and politics. Finally, we envision that the skills and content of the MREP would equip students working in or hoping to enter careers in public policy, community development, non-profit work, lobbying and advocacy, law, think tanks, social work, and counseling, with a degree that could increase their competitiveness, potential earnings, and likelihood for leadership at their jobs.

Given the strong core of faculty doing REP work both within and beyond Political Science at UCONN, we are well-equipped to encourage and mentor students seeking to pursue REP questions. Enabling them to be part of a coherent community of interlocutors, including peers and faculty, would nurture the meaningful cross-pollination of ideas and the networks necessary to support the completion and advancement of this kind of inquiry.

In order to solidify and strengthen what had been a latent community of scholars within UCONN, we created and launched the Race, Ethnicity, and Politics Graduate Certificate in spring 2018. Our first group of applicants included nine graduate students from Political Science, Philosophy, Language, Culture, and Literatures, Neag, the School of Business, and Sports Management. Three of those students have completed the graduate certificate and been employed in academic positions. Four students enrolled in the second year. Recent inquiries with our Certificate Coordinator suggest that the third year will be equally successful and diverse in disciplinary terms.

**Are there similar programs in CT or elsewhere?**

This would be the first Master’s degree specifically focused on Race, Ethnicity, and Politics in the United States. There are currently no graduate-level degrees nor certificates on this topic in Connecticut. While there are a few graduate degree programs and opportunities to concentrate on Race, Ethnicity, and Politics in other graduate degree programs, our program would hold a unique place in the country.

There are graduate certificates in Gender, Race, and Identity at the University of Nevada, Reno, the Ethnic Studies Graduate Certificate at Northern Arizona University (NAU), and the Ethnic Studies Graduate Certificate at Bowling Green State University, with the program at Reno potentially culminating in a Master of Arts degree more like the one being proposed here. In addition to being offered in different regions of the country, these are different kinds of programs. Reno’s program includes an explicit focus on gender, is more focused on the Humanities, and is not connected with a Political Science program. In addition, at present it is
granting more certificates than MA degrees. As such, it and the certificate at NAU and Bowling State are more comparable to the existing UCONN REP Graduate Certificate, each requiring 15 credits. Unlike ours, however, they require a mandatory Ethnic Studies course. Like this proposal, NAU’s certificate requires a U.S. and a global component in students’ course work.

The University of Chicago’s Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture allows students enrolled in the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities to select it as a potential research area. Additionally, UCLA, Duke University, Northwestern University, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and the University of Washington offer Race, Ethnicity, and Politics as either a Political Science PhD field (UCLA), a secondary PhD field (Duke), or PhD Research Cluster (UMASS). Over the last three years, there has been a marked increase in Political Science Departments highlighting Race, Ethnicity, and Politics as an area of interest and strength. For instance, since the UCONN REP Graduate Certificate was approved, Brown University, Northwestern, University of California at Santa Cruz, and University of Washington have all added this emphasis to their online information.

What are the desired learning outcomes of the program?

Upon successful completion of the MREP, recipients will be better prepared to think, write, teach, and engage in ways that center and critically illuminate the relationships among race, ethnicity, and politics.

More generally, the capacity to undertake independent research is increasingly a requirement of all skilled, professional work and of productive citizens. This broad-based skill set honed by thematically REP-driven concerns is one that they may not have developed fully as undergraduates.

Program Description

The MREP Plan of Study requires a minimum of 30 credits. Our aim is for all students in the program to develop strong research and critical analysis skills so that they will know how they can approach questions regarding the relationship among race, ethnicity, and politics. As such, the skeleton of the program includes a methods sequence of five three-credit 5000-level courses: POLS 5600: Nature of Political Inquiry, POLS 5605: Quantitative Methods, POLS 5610: Qualitative Methods, and a two-semester POLS 5620: Master’s Project course. In addition, all students are required to take the three-credit Proseminar POLS/ANTH/PHIL/LLAS 5800: Race in the Formation of the Human Sciences and four elective three-credit 5000/6000-level courses with significant REP content. At least two, but no more than three, of the REP electives must be taken in POLS. At least one of the four elective courses must have a U.S. focus while at least one must be global in scope.

We envision students who are enrolled full-time completing the program over four semesters or two years in a Plan of Study resembling this one. To create offerings that are more amenable to the schedules of working professionals, we plan to offer some hybrid (online and in-person) and evening courses and some that meet in Hartford rather than in Storrs.
Semester 1
a) POLS 5600: Nature of Political Inquiry (to be offered by POLS faculty in a rotation of three)
b) POLS/PHIL/ANTH/LLAS 5800: Proseminar on Race and Human Sciences (to be offered by either PHIL or POLS faculty in a three-person rotation)

Semester 2
a) POLS 5605: Quantitative Methods (to be offered by POLS faculty in a rotation of two)
b) First REP Elective (for instance, POLS 5515: Critical Race Theory, Fred Lee or POLS 5410: Black Feminist Thought, Evelyn Simien)
c) Second REP Elective (for instance, POLS 5409: American Race, Gender, and Ethnic Politics, Shayla Nunnally or POLS 5117: Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Thought and Practice, Jane Gordon)

Semester 3
a) POLS 5615: Qualitative methods (to be offered by POLS faculty in a rotation of two)
b) Third REP Elective (for instance, GERM 6480, Germany-African: Dialogic Constructions of Self and Other in German Literature, Katharina Von Hammerstein or LLAS 5610, Comparative Transnational Latin@ American History or PSYCH 5170, Cross-Cultural Psychology, Narian Ramirez-Esparza)
c) POLS 5620: Master’s Project I (to be offered by POLS faculty in a four-person rotation)

Semester 4
a) Fourth REP Elective (for instance, POLS 5407, Politics of Inequality, Thomas Hayes or POLS 5505, Race and the Critical Traditions of U.S. Law in Latin America, Charles Venator)
b) POLS 5620: Master’s Project II (to be offered by POLS faculty in a four-person rotation)

The MA program coordinator may approve additional classes, however, the following 3-credit courses have been pre-approved for the REP MA: AMST 6000, ANTH 5035, EDCI 5875, EDCI 5830, ENGL 5530, ENGL 6400, ENGL 6450, ENGL 6540, GEO 5840, GERM 6480, HIST 5235, HIST 5525, HIST 5543, HIST 5565, HIST 5610, HIST 5622, HIST 5630, LAW 7529, LAW 7655, LAW 7703, LAW 7810, LLAS 5105, LLAS 5610, PHIL 5310, POLS 5105, POLS 5409, POLS 5410, PSYCH 6750, PSYCH 5170, PSYC 5370, SOCI 5501, SOCI/WGSS 5613, SOCI 6505, SWEL 5377, SWEL 5385.

Students are required to maintain an overall GPA of B or higher.
Finally, in each year that they are enrolled (in most cases this will be two years) all students enrolled in the MREP must participate in one reading group session in which all core POLS faculty, REP Graduate Certificate and enrolled MA students read and discuss one non-course book of relevance to REP. This would take place in the evening or over a weekend so as to accommodate everyone’s schedules.

MREP students must also participate in one UConn-based graduate student conference, sharing research undertaken in their Master’s Project I and II courses. Although MA students can elect to undertake a traditional research paper in Master’s Project I and II, we are hoping that most will instead elect to do projects. In the case of public school teachers, we hope that this would include the development and certification of new middle school and high school courses.

Proposed Graduate Catalogue Copy

The MA in Race, Ethnicity, and Politics (MREP) seeks to offer interested students, especially UCONN undergraduates seeking a 4+1 or 3+1 BA/MA and working public sector professionals seeking an independent MA, opportunities to learn how critically to explore the relationships among race, ethnicity, and politics in ways that can inform their work and practice.

The MREP Plan of Study requires a minimum of 30 credits, including POLS 5600, POLS 5605, POLS 5610, POLS/ANTH/LLAS 5800, the two-semester POLS 5620 Master’s Project course, and four elective three-credit 5000/6000-level courses with significant REP content. At least two, but no more than three, of the REP electives must be taken in POLS. At least one of the four elective courses must have a U.S. focus while at least one must be global in scope.

Students are required to maintain an overall GPA of B or higher.

In each year that they are enrolled, all students in the MREP must participate in one reading group session in which all core POLS faculty, REP Graduate Certificate and enrolled MA students read and discuss one non-course book of relevance to REP.

MREP students must also participate in one UConn-based graduate student conference, sharing research undertaken in their Master’s Project I and II courses. MA students can elect to undertake a traditional research paper in Master’s Project I and II or projects related to their larger career goals and trajectory.

Faculty Involvement

The core faculty for the MREP are Alexander Anievas, Jane Gordon, Thomas Hayes, Fred Lee, Shayla Nunnally, Evelyn Simien, and Charles Venator from POLS, Lewis Gordon from Philosophy, Bhakti Shringarpure from English, and David Embrick from Sociology.

The affiliate faculty include Mohamad Alkadry (Public Policy), Edith Barrett (Public Policy), Bethany Berger (Law), S. Megan Berthold (Social Work), Lloyd Blanchard (Public Policy), Katharine Capshaw (English), Kristen Cooksey Stowers (Public Policy), Kenneth Couch (Economics), Thomas Craemer (Public Policy), Martha Cutter (English/ASI), Manisha Desai (Sociology), Anna Mae Duane (English), Erica Fernandez (Neag), Davita Silfen Glasberg (Sociology), Preston Green III (Neag), Linda Halgunseth (HDFS), Mark Healey (History), Erik
Hines (Neag), Matthew Hughey (Sociology), Mark Kohan (Neag), Kathry Libal (Social Work/HRI), Glenn Mitoma (Dodd/Neag), Nancy Naples (Sociology/WGSS), Kenny Neinhusser (Neag), Mark Overmyer-Velazquez (History/ELIN), Sachin Pandya (Law), Grace Player (Neag), Nairán Ramírez-Esparza (Psychological Sciences), Shawn Salvant (English/ASI), Cathy Schlund-Vials (English/AASI), Peter Siegelman (Law), Louise Simmons (Social Work), Christopher Vials (English), Katharina von Hammerstein (LCL), Sarah Willen (Anthropology/HRI), and Robert Wilson (Public Policy).

**Enrollment and graduate projections**

We anticipate a class size of 3-10+ and aim to accept our first round of applications in late spring 2020. In addition to recruiting among existing UCONN undergrads looking for a 4+1 or 3+1 option, since we also plan to recruit heavily from the CT public schools as well as with CT NGO’s, social work and counseling associations, and lobbyists, we will offer hybrid (online and in-person) and evening courses and those that meet in Hartford during the fall and spring semester. We believe that the availability of these will make a difference to how quickly working professionals can complete this 30-credit MA. For students who could take two to three classes a semester, they could graduate in four semesters or, if admitted in fall 2020 by spring 2022. For students who could begin in their fourth year, they could easily complete the degree in a fifth year.

**Program Evaluation**

Assessment of students would be based on their ten course grades, participation in the reading group meetings, and presentation of their Master’s Project research.

Program assessment would be based on placement writ large and in-job promotion of program graduates. We would collect information on their whereabouts 6 months, 1 year, and 3 years after their graduation, relying heavily on major advisors to help the DGS and MREP program coordinator facilitate this communication.

**Program Administration**

Administration will be the responsibility of the MREP program coordinator, with support from Christine Lounsbury, the Graduate Coordinator in Political Science and the Director of Graduate Studies. Staffing for all courses is provided by faculty in departments.

The POLS Graduate Affairs Committee will read admissions files and determine who is admitted. The logistics of preparing files and corresponding with interested and accepted students will be handled by the POLS Graduate Coordinator, Christine Lounsbury, with the assistance of the department’s Director of Graduate Studies.
**Funding and Financial Resources Needed**

As this is an entrepreneurial MA program, the department of political science will receive a proportion of tuition and fees from enrolled students. Once established, therefore, the program will be self-sustaining in financial terms.

**Other Resource Needs**

No additional or unique resources are necessary for program success. The MREP program's coordinator will not receive a stipend or course release for administrative duties.

**Consultation with other potentially affected units**

In order to receive the approval that we were granted by Interim CLAS Dean Davita Silfen Glasberg, the proposal to create the MREP was evaluated and approved by the Graduate Affairs committee in the Sociology Department and in a meeting called by CLAS Associate Dean Cathy Schlund-Vials with the heads of Asian and Asian American Studies, Africana Studies, El Instituto, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

**Internal and external applicants can apply to this program.**

**Anticipated term and year of first enrollment**

Fall 2020

**Admission Requirements**

Applicants would be required to submit (1) an official transcript, demonstrating a GPA of 3.5 or higher in courses relevant to the MREP (2) two letters of recommendation that speak specifically to the applicant’s research potential and interest in/commitment to REP, (3) a personal statement outlining the applicant’s aims for seeking admission in the program, and (4) a writing sample. Potential applications would be urged to meet with the MREP Program Coordinator to assure that their interests can be well met by the program. Students would not be required to take the GRE.

**Students will be admitted for the Fall semester; the application deadline will be May 15th**

**Initiator**

Jane Gordon, jane.gordon@uconn.edu, 401-258-9204

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