

Development of a Course in Chicano/ Latino Psychology: An Academic Odyssey

Brian W. McNeill

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of a course in Chicano/Latino Psychology along with the objectives, content, and activities associated with the course. Objectives of the course include examination of the current psychosocial literature related to Chicano/Latino populations, issues of acculturation and ethnic identity, and the relationship of these variables to underutilization of psychological services. Culturally appropriate counseling models and strategies for intervention are also covered. Course content includes: the history of Chicano Psychology, including both Hispanic and Indigenous origins and practices; cultural characteristics and descriptors, including gender roles, Chicana Feminist theory, interpersonal/communication styles, family dynamics, religion/folk beliefs; applied and practice issues associated with the field of Chicano Psychology, including general health care issues, e.g., psychological wellbeing, and underutilization of services, including cultural, geographical, and language barriers; and research issues with Chicano/Latino populations in general, especially in regards to treatment outcome or preference for ethnically similar counselors. The author then describes his experience of encountering and negotiating the academic politics, resistances, and barriers that were placed before him in gaining university approval to teach this course. Based on personal experiences, the author concludes with recommendations for overcoming the maze of academic politics for others who wish to offer similar courses, as well as future trends in designing courses in Chicano/Latino Psychology.