The Ethnic Studies Department prepares students for careers and graduate education by providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to navigate social contexts marked by racial, gender, economic, and national diversity and complexity. We aim to equip students with the confidence and experience they need to identify their own visions for social change, and to become leaders and change agents in their chosen field. Our graduates are thoughtful, responsible individuals who engage capably with communities beyond the campus, are comfortable with collaborative work, and maintain a high standard of ethics in their relationships with others.

The department’s curriculum promotes critical thinking and creative analysis through comparative study of the social, economic, cultural, and environmental concerns and contributions of American Indians and other indigenous peoples, African Americans, Latinx/as/os and Chicanx/as/os, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and Arab Americans. At Mills, we examine racial dynamics as they intersect with gender, sexuality, class, and nation, and many of our courses focus on the unique experiences of women of color. Our curriculum also explores the transnational and diasporic dimensions of racial identities.

The Ethnic Studies Department recognizes that much invaluable learning occurs outside of the classroom, and creates opportunities for students to bridge theory and action. Our faculty enable students to become involved in research and activism in local communities of color, thus making exciting connections with the vibrant diversity of the Bay Area. Recent student research interests include a PhotoVoice project on Fruitvale residents’ understandings of “safety,” action research on food access for low-income African American mothers, explorations of the emerging Latino vote, multiracial Filipinas/os, and race and disability in fantasy fiction. Students can also gain credit by conducting directed research on a faculty member’s research project. In addition, some of our courses include a community engagement component that allows students to get involved with local organizations. Courses with a community engagement component include ETHS 039, ETHS 40, ETHS 140, ETHS 157, ETHS 158, ETHS 159, ETHS 165, ETHS 166 and ETHS 172. These courses offer one semester-hour credit for completing a community engagement placement with reflection.

Students also help organize a variety of activities that showcase and celebrate the contributions of people of color, including Latina/o Heritage Month; Native American Heritage Month; Black History Month; South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander Awareness Now! Month; and the Mills College Pow Wow. Ethnic studies students and faculty also participate in delegations to local and international conferences.

The ethnic studies major at Mills combines academic excellence with a commitment to social justice. The degree provides a strong foundation for a career in city and urban planning, communications, community arts, community development, education policy, environmental justice, film, media and artistic performance, human resources, immigrant rights advocacy, K-12 and higher education, journalism, legal advocacy, marketing, museum curating, non-profit management, public health, policy analysis, union organizing and youth work, as well as graduate school in a number of disciplines.

What can I do with an ethnic studies degree? (https://www.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/eths/esdegree.php)

Program Goals:

- Students will demonstrate knowledge and critical analysis of Ethnic Studies perspectives and themes.
- Students will develop knowledge of the cultural and intellectual contributions of people of color.
- Students will be familiar with anti-oppressive methodologies and will develop research techniques for participatory research with communities of color.

Majors & Minors

Major
Ethnic Studies Major—BA (https://catalog.mills.edu/undergraduate/majors-minors/ethnic-studies/ethnic-studies-ba)

Minor
Ethnic Studies Minor (https://catalog.mills.edu/undergraduate/majors-minors/ethnic-studies/ethnic-studies-minor)

Resources

- Diversity and Social Justice at Mills (https://inside.mills.edu/diversity)
- Events (https://inside.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/eths/calendar-)