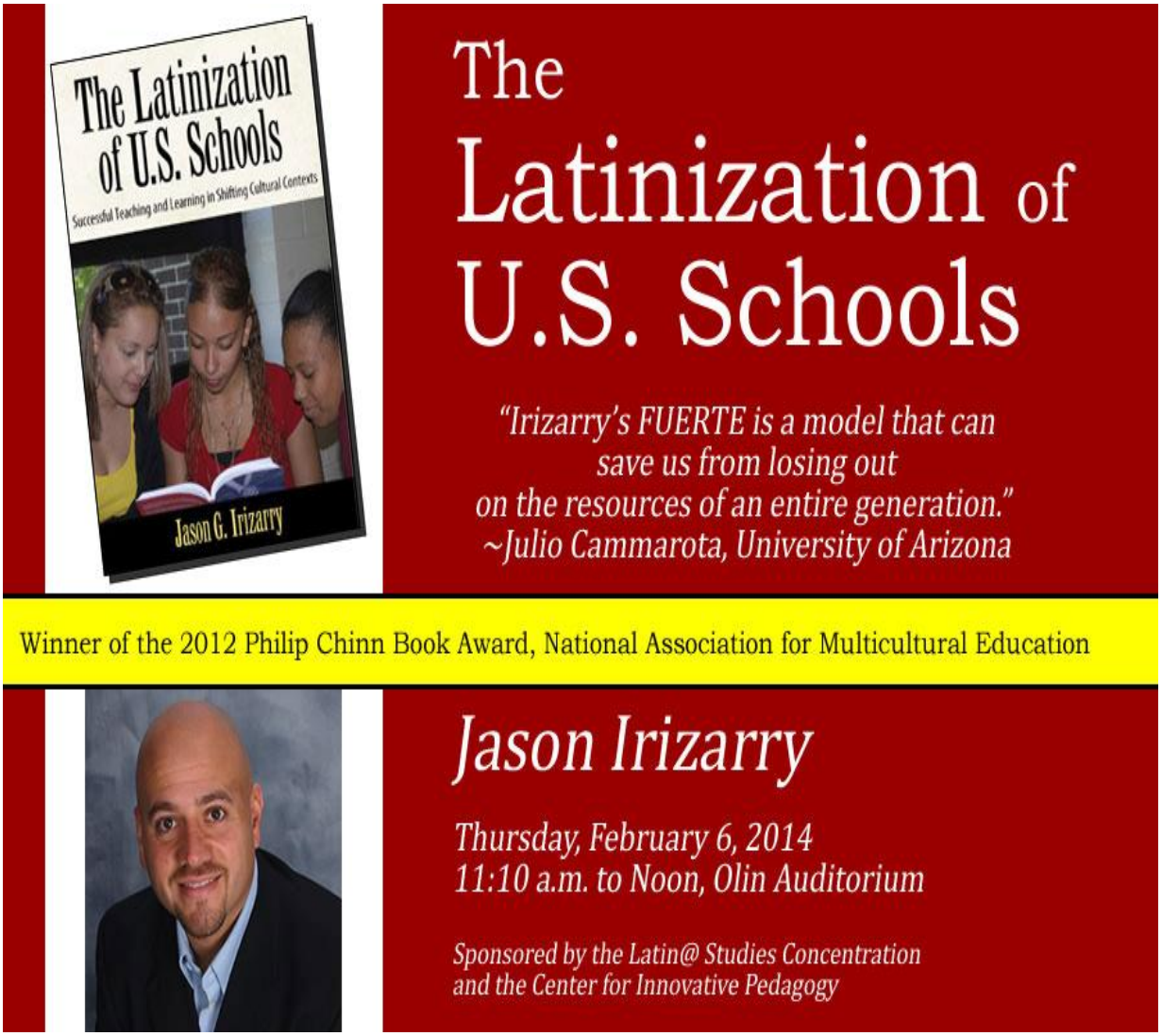
REPORT ON CIP GRANT:
Culturally Response Pedagogy:
Common Hour and Workshop
by Dr. Jason G. Irizarry



Recently, Kenyon embarked on a campus wide initiative to "reimagine" its general education requirements, and as part of that call, a report was commissioned by one of the Working Groups on Curricular Essentials. In this report, by the committee on Language and Cultural Engagement, one of the first recommendations made was that the college needed to develop better support mechanisms for our minority students. Indeed, research has shown that minority students, defined on the basis of country of origin, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, often report feelings of loneliness, marginalization, and isolation when arriving to predominantly White campuses. In turn, feelings and experiences can affect their academic performance, level of academic satisfaction, and even their retention.

To address these concerns, the Latino/a Studies Concentration, which is composed of faculty members from various departments and divisions, requested funds for the implementation of a college wide initiative on Culturally Response Pedagogy (CRT). CRT is a student-centered pedagogy that explicitly uses cultural knowledge of diverse students in order to make teaching more appropriate and effective (Gay, 2000). Used across various academic disciplines, it is an empirically validated teaching technique, which has been shown to increase student engagement, academic performance, and further foster feelings of belonging (Martin & McGhee, 2009).

This report documents the outcome of 1) a campus wide common hour talk on CRT and 2) a smaller workshop run by Dr. Jason G. Irizarry, an Associate Professor of Multicultural Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the NEAG School of Education, and noted expert in the field of CRT.

APPRAISAL OF COMMON HOUR TALK & WORK WITH STUDENTS

The common hour talk was widely attended and we were very appreciative of President Decatur's presence (see end of file for flyer). During the Common Hour, Dr. Irizarry presented an overview of the Latinization of U.S. Schools and documented the extent of the problems in our high school systems. This talk was engaging, lively, and very informative.

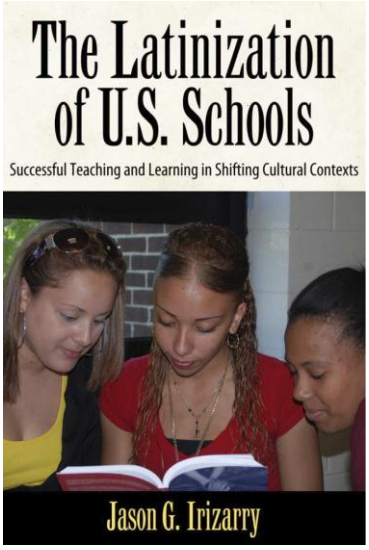
Colleagues commented that "*Jason's common hour talk was one of the best I have attended at Kenyon. Thank you for organizing such an enriching event*" and "*I found Jason's visit to be wonderfully motivating for myself and my students.*"

Following the talk, Dr. Irizarry went to lunch with a large group of students and then presented a class for Prof. Lopez's Latino Psychology class.

APPRAISAL OF WORKSHOP

Following the Common Hour, Dr. Irizarry conducted a smaller workshop for interested faculty. Dr. Irizarry has published extensively in this area, and has particular expertise on how teachers can modify their classrooms and techniques to enhance student learning and growth.

As part of this workshop, faculty were given a copy of Dr. Irizarry's book, *The Latinization of U.S. Schools,* and were assigned the following chapters:



1: The Latinization of U.S. Schools
3: How Can You Teach US if You Don't Really Know Us?
6: Making Dreams Reality for Undocumented Latino Students
8: Why Aren't More Latinos In College Prep Courses?

Additionally, they were given his article, *Beginning With El Barrio: Learning From Exemplary Teachers of Latino Students* (2011).

The following faculty were in attendance:

1. Ivonne Garcia
2. Jennifer Johnson
3. Travis Landry
4. Irene Lopez
5. Theodore Mason
6. Nancy Power
7. Clara Roman-Odio
8. Peter Rudkoff
9. Jene Schoenfeld
10. Ric Sheffield
11. Paula Turner

The workshop began with an exploration on the differences between race and ethnicity, which given the level of expertise of the faculty present, felt a bit elementary. However, it did lead to an interesting experiential exercise in which faculty were asked to rank different aspects of their identity on index cards. Following this ranking, faculty were then presented with various scenarios in which they had to slowly give up one, and consequently almost all, of their identities. While this exercise was in some regards problematic because it did not consider the intersection of various identities, it did lead to a helpful discussion of how academic can be a very isolating and foreign place for many of our ethnic minority students. We then discussed how Kenyon, in particular,

contributed to this sense of isolation and, conversely, what Kenyon, and Kenyon professors, could do ameliorate this situation.

Following the seminar, participants were emailed the following questions.

- Given what was discussed in the seminar, please discuss at least ONE insight that you gained regarding the Latinization of U.S. schools.

- Given what was discussed in the seminar, please list at least ONE specific institutional change that you think would be helpful for Kenyon to consider.

The actual responses to these questions are italicized.

Question 1: Given what was discussed in the seminar, please discuss at least ONE insight that you gained regarding the Latinization of U.S. schools.

Theme 1. An awareness of the difficulties Latino students face prior to getting to Kenyon.

- *I wasn't aware of how Latin@ students are so blatantly "**tracked**" in high schools, pushed away from college-required courses, such as Algebra I and II, so that four-year colleges are not within their reach.*

- *When you consider all that these students have to get through to get here (tracking, limited academic and financial resources), it really is a small miracle that they come and that some even stay. And yet, I still here from my colleagues that some of these students may not have the "native" ability to be in college.*

Theme 2. Once students get to Kenyon, it is an isolating place for Latino students.

- *Some Latin@ students at Kenyon feel very alone and like outsiders. Core parts of their identities are hidden or invisible on campus. We pride ourselves on our tight-knit community, and yet it is one in which students we recruit to this idyllic place may find they have to discard essential parts of their selves in order to try to "fit in." Instead of fitting people in the dominant mold, we need to build an environment that makes it easier to contribute one's difference rather than submerge it.*

- *This is really not something gained so much as something confirmed -- that is, the complexity of dealing with the challenge of diversity in terms of geographical, ethnic, and linguistic markers, et. al.*

- *I've lost count on the number of minority students who come to my office saying they want to leave.*

Theme 3. Kenyon's location further exacerbates the sense of isolation and we need to consider how we can address this. Kenyon may not be the right place for all students.

- *I think the questions about whether this college (or even any college) is for everyone are also provocative and useful.*

- *What institutional policies ought to be adopted requires us to think about the specific location where we find ourselves. I am not discouraged by the proliferation of complexity and difficulty. I more or less expect them, just as a philosophical and political matter. So Jason's visit helped frame, again, the* ***multiple challenges*** *ahead.*

- *When we recruit minority students to such a homogenous place, it should not be surprising that they then feel isolated. The balance has to shift or otherwise we may be doing more harm than good.*

Theme 4. Kenyon faculties have to find ways to connect to these students.

- *An insight that was helpful that emerged from our discussion was the need to reflect on whether* ***code-switching*** *(our own or our students) is a beneficial and necessary skill to encourage and model or an unfair expectation that students bracket a fundamental part of themselves. (I tend to think the former, but I plan to think more about it.)*

- *Often the responsibility to connect with these students falls on the shoulders of minority faculty who are already overworked. We are in effect asking them to do not only the scholarly work but the emotional labor as well.*

QUESTION 2: Given what was discussed in the seminar, please list at least ONE specific institutional change that you think would be helpful for Kenyon to consider.

Theme 1. We need counselors from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, or trained in cross-cultural awareness and therapy.

- *We need counselors from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, or trained in cross-cultural awareness and therapy if we are going to work more fully with "diverse" students to help US. ALL adapt to a more diverse campus.*
- *I was struck by the absence of anyone of color in the counseling center. That's one change that seems important to implement and something that might be*

done more immediately and more readily than something huge like changing the financial aid budget, et. al. I'm not suggesting by any means that students of whatever color should necessarily or must gravitate toward counselors with similar experiences, they might not. But then, again, they might. At the very least, they should be afforded the opportunity to do so.

- *I like the idea of trying to make the Counseling Center more minority-friendly. I'm not sure if that will mean trying to hire a counselor of color or finding ways to train or advertise the training of the staff, but I do think it's important.*

- *My minority students are often very reluctant to go to the counseling center – in part because of stigma, but also because they just don't feel that there is anyone there that looks like them.*

- *We should consider running support groups for students of color.*

Theme 2. We need further exposure to culturally responsive pedagogy.

- *Toward the same goal, we could ask for 15 minutes of a Monday* ***faculty meeting*** *to give an overview of the problem of "invisibility" for students of color at Kenyon, the "tax" on faculty who are always the go-to mentors, and ways that all faculty might become more aware and more inclusive, in and outside of the classroom. Frame this not in terms of increasing multiculturalism or diversity (which would make for a very long faculty meeting), but simply as good pedagogy--a response to research that shows what's necessary to maximize success of the talented students (of all backgrounds) whom we recruit to Kenyon.*

- *there is a pedagogy out there that speaks to creating cultural vocabularies that can allow more intentional boundary crossing but altered consciousness in terms of prioritization of importance would be much more powerful institutionally than any single strategy. Only when Kenyon embraces the full meaning of diversity and makes it a central institutional priority will any programmatic innovation become both possible and sustainable.*

Theme 3. We need to (re)evaluate our course offerings.

- *Kenyon should evaluate its curricular offerings to see how much "diversity" of perspectives and approaches actually exist in classes and across departments. Kenyon should incentivize diversity in the curriculum by providing extra research funds (or another type of reward) to departments that excel in their offerings in this area.*

- *I really do think Kenyon should have a diversity requirement in its curriculum.*

- *I enjoyed the discussion about ethnicity/race /identity but wanted more specifically in curricular guidance. For example, I've been frustrated by bureaucratic inflexibility when I asked to include a course from the Latino Studies Concentration as part of the American studies major.*

- *I was impressed by how the students themselves were empowered by Irizarry's ideas to evaluate their curriculum and suggest changes, something we should consider doing here.*

Theme 4. We need to have places to (re)evaluate our syllabi.

- *Jason Irizarry's article suggested that non-Latino teachers can reach out to help students feel more included and valued in a school community by building the teacher's own knowledge and experience, but also by* ***building a syllabus*** *and using course materials that fully include Latin@ literature, culture, history, and experiences (and not merely as a side-note). So, how could we do a better job of that at Kenyon?*

- *The orientation presenter or panel could urge faculty to be more conscious in building* ***syllabi*** *to include Latin@ (and African American) authors, history, examples, films, etc. and the binder new faculty receive (with syllabus examples) could highlight a syllabus that isn't from the Latino Studies concentration but that intentionally weaves Latin@ experience, themes, and authors throughout the syllabus of a core disciplinary course.*

- *In departmental meetings, across campus, we should integrate each other on our syllabi – is this syllabus alienating or welcoming to our students?*

Theme 5: We should address these issues during the faculty orientation.

- *I don't recall much discussion of diversity when I went through* ***new faculty orientatio****n. (Perhaps I failed to pay attention, as there's a lot covered.) … but I don't recall discussion of the student-of-color's feelings of loneliness or isolation that were described in the workshop today. The faculty-orientation presentation could describe that loss-of-self and loneliness and the students' needs for mentors and for communicative encouragement inside and outside of the classroom. Orientation might even incorporate a brief version of the exercise Jason did with us.*

- *During faculty orientation, we should present the information on tracking, we should alert them about the research on isolation and minority students.*

In sum, the workshop was very productive and easily could have been extended to at least a half-day or longer. We generated many good ideas which we hope can be followed up on. However, we still felt as if we wanted more specific instruction with regards to CRT and wished that we had an opportunity to 1) specifically review the research on its effectiveness and 2) had a dedicated time to revise and revamp our own syllabi in this manner.

Ideas for Follow Up

Thanks to the generous support of CIP, we are still left with a small amount of money in our grant. We are, therefore, hoping that we can get an extension on our timeline and use these remaining funds to institute a Phase II of this grant. Specifically, some our ideas include

- Organizing a lunch with students to review research on CRT
- Creating a campus wide survey to document the needs of Latino students
- Organizing a lunch with the counseling center to review the concerns of Latino/minority studies
- Having Kenyon Latino students create a photo ethnography, *Yo Soy Kenyon*, that documents their time here at Kenyon
- Creating a portfolio of research on Latinos in liberal arts schools
- Working with Public Affairs to create video vignettes of our Latino students and faculty for the Kenyon website
- Have portions of the Kenyon website translated into Spanish – so that it can be more user friendly for our students and their parents

It is our intention to discuss these ideas at our next Latin@ studies meeting in September and to use the remaining funds by that time.

In closing, thank you for generously for believing in this mission and for your support.

Submitted by
Irene Lopez, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology

Final Schedule for Dr. Jason Irizarry
jirizarry@educ.umass.edu

Feb 12th (Wed)		Arrives in Columbus at 6:25 pm Kenyon shuttle to pick up and to take to Gambier House.
~~Feb 13" (TH)~~	~~8:30~~	~~Breakfast scheduled at Kenyon Inn with Prof. Roman-Odio. Prof. Roman-Odio will take speaker to Prof. Garcia's class.~~
	9:40-11	Guest Lecturer at Dr. Ivonne Garcia's class Class: Latin@ Literature & Film Class Location: Lentz 104
	11:00-12:00	Common Hour Talk at Olin Auditorium (All Campus Wide Event) Location: Olin Auditorium Dr. Garcia will take Dr. Irizarry there "The Latinization of U.S. Schools" 12:00-1:30 Lunch with students at Pierce Dining. Location: Marriot Society Dining Room Reserved (L25): The first private dining room on the right, as you enter the Alumni Dining, Lower Lounge
	1:00-2:30	Free Time. Prof. Roman-Odio will pick him up at Gambier House and take to Sam Mather 306
	2:40-4:00	Guest Lecturer at class of Dr. Irene Lopez Class: Latino Psychology Location: Sam Mather, 306
	4:10-5:30	Workshop for Faculty Location: Horwitz Seminar Room Prof. Lopez will take him there

	Workshop. Coffee/Tea & Cookies will be served.
6:00-8:00	Dinner at Village Inn with, Irene López, Nancy Powers and Peter Rudkoff
Feb 14th a.m.	Departure – departs Columbus at 10:20
	Breakfast provided at Gambier House Kenyon Transportation to take back to
Airport	

*Please save any meal receipts and forward them to Prof. López – No receipts were ever forwarded.