

Proposal for Course Diversification in the MGPS Program

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Introduction

As America examines the systems and institutions that have plagued, antagonized, and oppressed people of color, the LGBTQA+, and women, the students of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs (LBJ) see an opportunity to critically examine our own institution and its shortcomings. In turning the critical lens on LBJ and analyzing our experiences as students, we have concerns regarding the lack of diversity in our curriculum. This dearth perpetuates the issues in our school and, in its own way, contributes to the issues we see in our country and in the world. As such, we wholeheartedly propose that professors of the LBJ School update and change the curriculum.

The Current State of GPS Program

The Masters of Global Policy Studies (MGPS) is a program at the LBJ School that aims to prepare students for careers in fields such as national security, intelligence and diplomacy, international development, global governance, and global environmental policy. However, as current MGPS students, we believe that the program does not adequately prepare us to address and critically analyze issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the international system. Specifically, we feel that the program does not provide students with enough preparation to:

- Work in multicultural workplaces;
- Understand how the historical context of colonialism and imperialism has shaped the current international system;
- Address and dismantle systemic biases, racism, and white supremacy that stem from the aforementioned historical context.

Currently, a student can go through their entire career at LBJ without really delving into works from differing perspectives. In most of the core classes, the authors are predominantly white, male and western. Due to these disparities, students are never challenged to talk about race, gender and sexuality or multifaceted identities unless the students themselves bring those topics into the classroom discussion. However, in the workplace students will surely be confronted by colleagues and contemporaries who have differing identities and ideologies. If the LBJ School wants to prepare students for a career in global policy, then it is imperative that the school provide students with a global education that teaches them to work alongside people who are different from them.

We understand that this is not just a problem at the LBJ, this is a problem in the field of international relations broadly. Dean Angela Evans signed the *Call to Action: Enhance*

*Diversity & Inclusion in International Affairs Education*¹ along with 220 other academics from around the country stating that there needs to be more diversity in international affairs education. However, there are many schools that are addressing these issues far better than LBJ. For example, public policy departments at Georgetown, American, the University of Michigan², Tufts³, and the University of Minnesota⁴ made commitments to diversify their curriculum and provide annual reports tied to their diversity and inclusion efforts.

The historical inflection point we find ourselves in today highlights the need for our program to change. Moving forward we know that it is paramount to prepare students to be anti-racist, internationally minded, and ready to work in dynamic workplaces. This aspect of our education is necessary for several reasons. First, the mishaps and tragedies of tomorrow will be rooted in today's public policy. Changing public policy education will directly affect and influence future outcomes for citizens. Second, the state and country are changing demographically, so it follows that the foreign service officers, diplomats, and ambassadors should increasingly come from diverse backgrounds. Teaching students how to work around a diverse cast of people may prevent them from saying and doing things that alienate their coworkers and international contemporaries. Third, the student body desperately wants this. Many of us thought that by enrolling in a *global* policy program we would be introduced to diverse international perspectives; unfortunately, this has not been the case. Lastly, the MPaff program is implementing a class that works to address these issues domestically. We feel that the MPGS program should create a similar course, adapted to suit the international aspect of our program. We recommend the program make efforts in the short term to diversify our syllabi and reexamine the core concepts of each course, while in the long term, working to create a core course that specifically addresses global thought, race, gender and sexuality.

Review of the Core Concepts for NIS and PGA

We have critically examined the core concepts for Nature of the International System (NIS) and Policy Making in a Global Age (PGA). In our review and through our personal experiences in these classes we found that they lacked candid conversations about the legacy of colonialism and imperialism, which carry on today in the international system, or perspectives of non-western peoples. While we have not seen “core concept” sheets for the other core courses, we hope that there is at least some consensus within the faculty of what topics *must* be covered to satisfactorily complete degree requirements.

¹<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/recommendations-to-enhance-diversity-and-inclusion-in-international-affairs/>

²<http://fordschool.umich.edu/dei>

³<https://sites.tufts.edu/decolonizeir/>

⁴<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15ocAgHizpjOvpihbphg-lygLDlyNe3ZC/view>

We also took the time to review the MGPS 2018 Self-Study Report, where we found short descriptions of what each MGPS course covers. Unfortunately, after reading these descriptions, reviewing the core concepts highlighted in the courses syllabi, and our own experiences in these courses, we found a lack of exposure to a diversity of thought, lack of consideration for marginalized actors and communities, and a lack of training on important cross-cutting realities such as implicit bias, systemic racism, and anti-colonial development.

Outline GPS Core Courses

We have taken the time to pull and analyze the syllabi for the core courses of the MGPS program.⁵ Some data was not able to be confirmed, which is why some of the charts and graphs include a missing category.

- Figure 1 shows the breakdown between male and female representation on core course syllabi. In NIS courses, over 88% of authors are male. Writing appears to be the most diverse, with 73% of authors being male.
- Figure 2 shows that the MGPS core courses syllabi are made up of mostly white authors. The average percentage of white authors across the core classes is 83%, with International Economics being the most diverse with white authors making up 71%. Development Economics is included as an International Economics course, which significantly increases the diversity. In NIS courses, 89% of authors assigned are white.
- Figure 3 shows the percentage of authors who are US nationals. For most of the core courses, over 70% of the authors assigned are US nationals. International Economics only has 50% of authors who are US nationals, but Development Economics is a large reason for this.
- Figure 4 shows the nationality distribution of authors categorized as Western. The USA, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand were all counted as Western. On average, 87% or more of authors assigned are from Western countries.

⁵ A team of MGPS students collected the syllabi for the core MGPS courses and recorded the gender, race, nationality, and education of each author. This data has been compiled with assistance from RGK fellow Megha Joshi and presented in this document and included attachments. The raw data is also available.

Figure 1. Gender Distribution of Authors in Syllabi

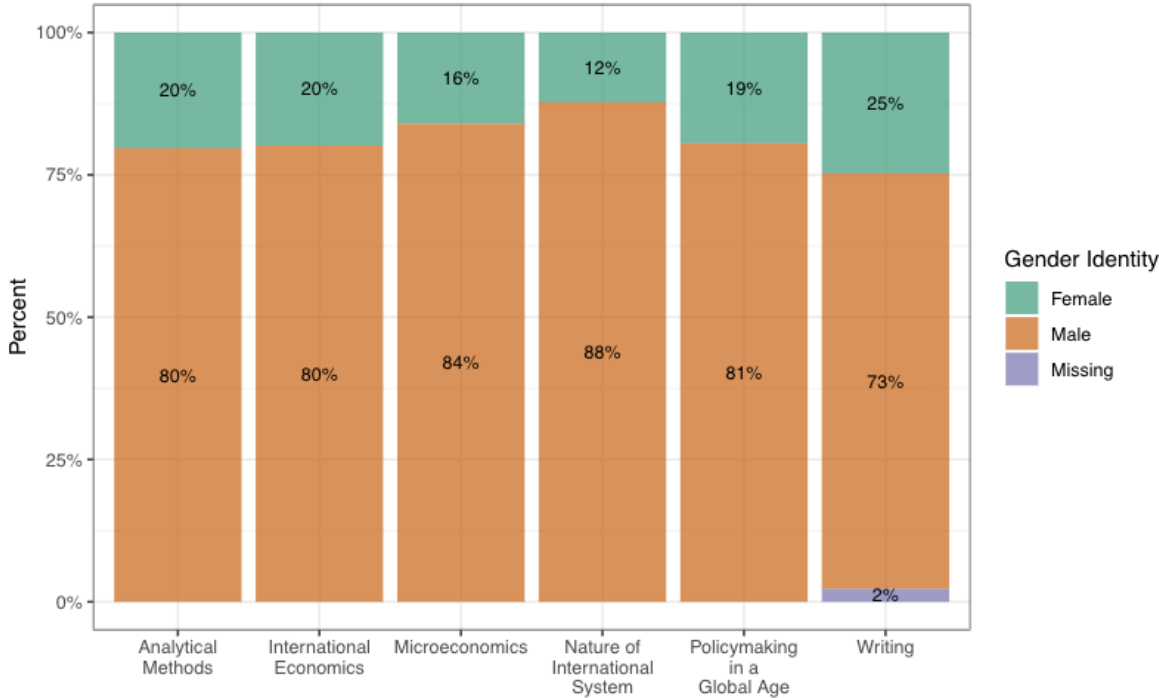


Figure 2. Race and Ethnicity Distribution of Authors in Syllabi

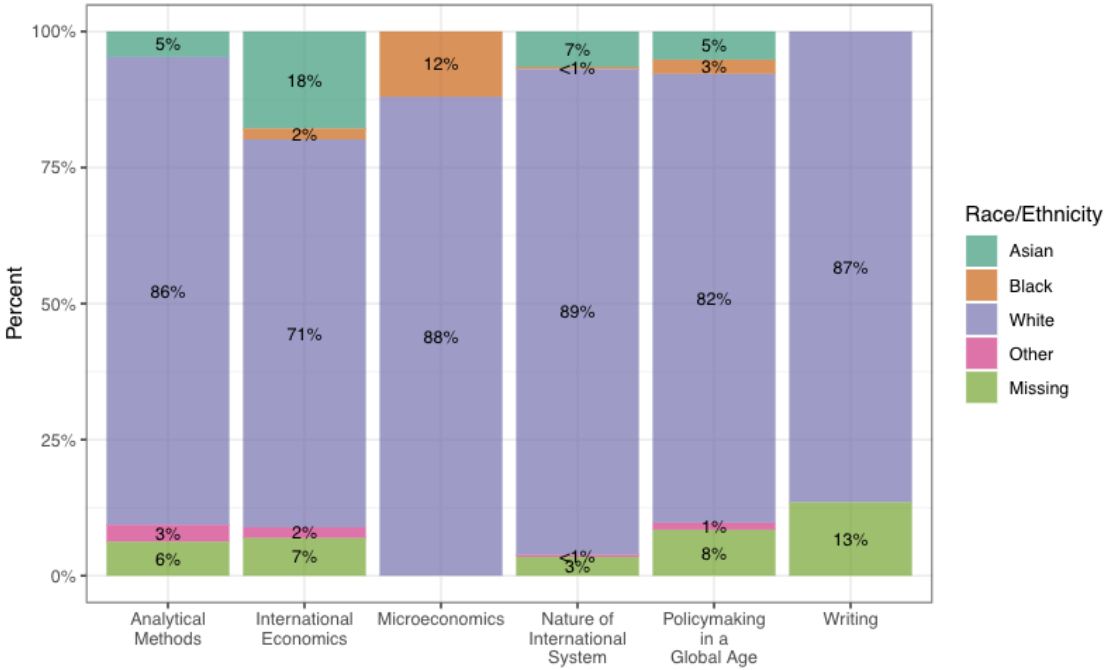


Figure 3. Nationality Distribution of Authors in Syllabi: US

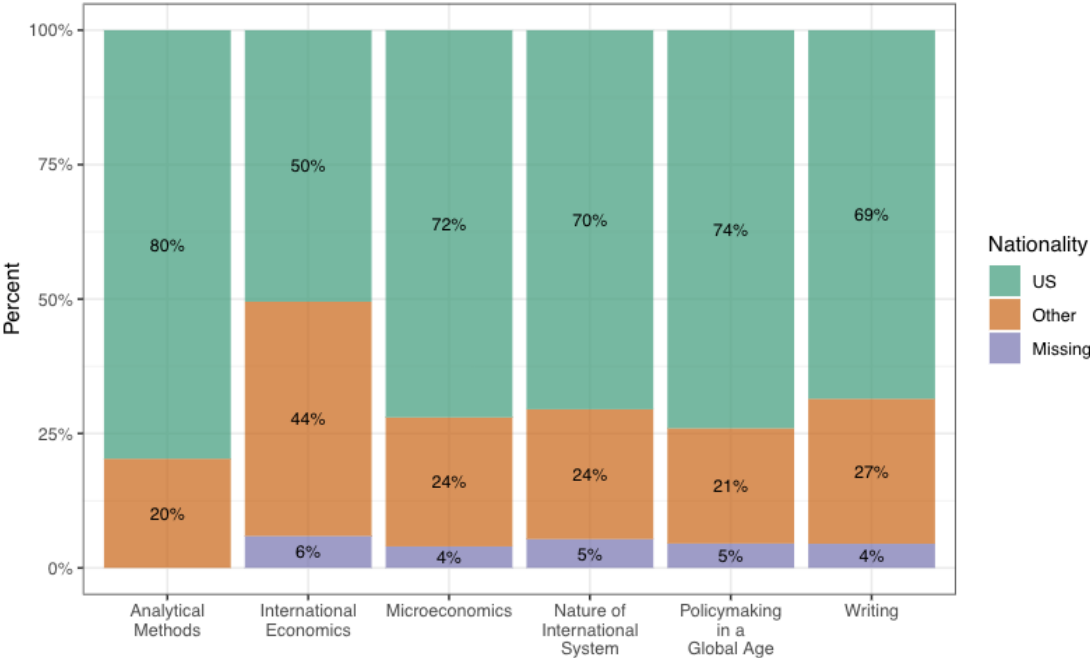
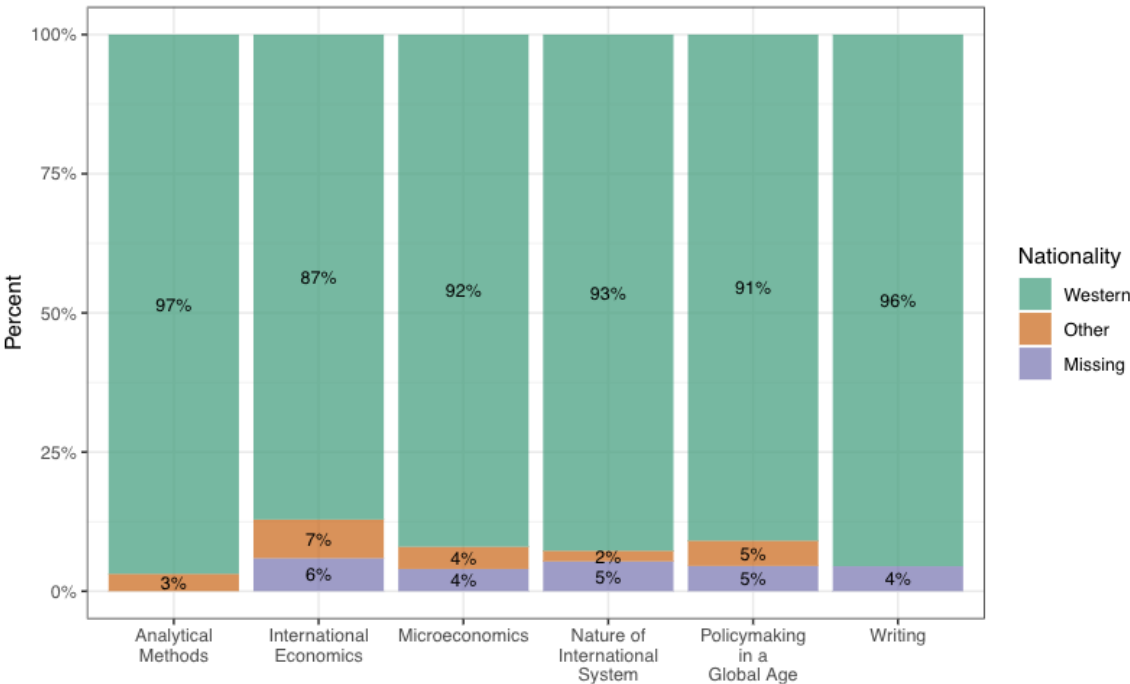


Figure 4. Nationality Distribution of Authors in Syllabi: Western



Recommendations

Short Term: Adapting Core Concepts

We believe that an immediate way to address our concerns is to rethink and standardize the core concepts in the GPS curriculum. While we understand that each professor has academic freedom to determine what and how they choose to teach their course, we believe that it is imperative that there be at least a minimal level of standardization in content and instruction of these courses as they are requirements for completion of our program. For example, we recommend that the NIS course should explicitly explore the colonial historical foundations of the international system and discuss how these foundations have directly been a factor in the inequality seen in the international system today. We also urge faculty members to expand the core concepts of NIS to examine alternative non-western schools of thought on international relations. In the PGA course, we believe that it would be a natural fit to include training on: implicit bias in leadership, tools for participatory development, and multicultural literacy. In economics courses, students should be exposed to alternative economic systems. In analytical methods courses, it is vitally important to discuss the ethical use of statistics and biases in hypothesis-testing.

These are only a few suggestions of core concepts to add and are by no means exhaustive. We would encourage faculty to seriously consider the topics that they include in their courses and ask themselves:

- Whose voices and ideas am I not including?
- What schools of thought are my philosophical biases leading me to exclude?
- What topics are missing in order to educate thoughtful, empowered students who will enact the changes that our global society desperately needs?

Recommendations:

- We recommend that the Graduate Studies Committee and individual professors develop or revisit core concept documents for each MGPS Core Course with a consideration of the topics discussed above.
- We recommend that these documents be revisited and published before the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester.
- We recommend that professors attend trainings on how to discuss this material and learn how to approach it correctly.

Short Term: Syllabi Diversification

In addition to adapting and creating the core concepts in each of our core courses, it is imperative to diversify the syllabi in these courses as well. As demonstrated in our graphs, it is clear that the majority of required readings in core courses are by white men from western countries. Based on our analysis, in the NIS courses the most diverse syllabus is composed of 81% male authors, 85% white authors, and 94% authors from the US or another Western country. Data on the three PGA courses reveal similar trends. The distribution of authors in PGA courses ranges from 71% - 88% male, 81% - 87% white, and 89% - 97% Western.

Creating and navigating global policy requires an understanding of diverse perspectives in international affairs. Currently, MGPS students at the LBJ School are exposed to authors that are overwhelmingly male, white, and Western in nationality, which is not representative of the diverse actors and voices present in the international system. Students need diversity in course readings to gain a complex and nuanced understanding of international affairs. To update the core concepts for core courses in the MGPS program, professors should start by diversifying their syllabi to increase students' exposure to the diversity of perspectives in global policymaking.

Due to our country's history of denying women and people of color access to positions of power, there is a large disparity in who is published and who is considered an "expert" in academia. While this disparity in expertise is real and problematic, it does not justify the lack of diversity in course syllabi. Without a concerted effort to uplift diverse voices in our coursework, these disparities are only reinforced. Professors must hold themselves accountable to the ways that these disparities are maintained, including who they choose to include in their syllabi. There are many resources available for professors to diversify their syllabi, especially within the international relations field. While not exhaustive, below is a short-list of resources professors can consult to increase representation in course readings (see appendix for an expanded list):

- Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security: University Leadership Council on Diversity and Inclusion in International Affairs
 - <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/recommendations-to-enhance-diversity-and-inclusion-in-international-affairs/>
- Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation
 - <https://www.wcaps.org/>
- Decolonizing the University: The African Politics Reading List
 - <http://democracyin africa.org/decolonizing-the-university-the-african-politics-reading-list/>

- Five Reads on Race Relations and Public Diplomacy
 - <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/story/five-reads-race-relations-public-diplomacy>
- IR and Diversity: 17 ways to find more diverse experts
 - <https://medium.com/international-affairs-blog/ir-and-diversity-17-ways-to-find-more-diverse-experts-b9b5a922cbde>

Recommendations for Syllabi Diversification:

We recommend professors set goals and work to achieve the following demographic breakdown in their course syllabi by Fall 2021.

- 70% Male to 30% Non-Male
- 70% Western to 30% Non-Western
- 70% White to 30% Non-White

Our hope is that in the future, the course syllabi will accurately reflect the global population. We support publishing syllabi data each year for accountability purposes. This is one small way that LBJ faculty can support DEI work. The upcoming fall is a perfect opportunity for professors to start diversifying their syllabi.

Long term: Addition of a Core Course

Outside of these short-term initiatives, we believe that the MGPS program must also develop a core course that critically examines the dominant approaches to American foreign policy, intelligence, and international development. This course should encourage students to analyze and critique the policies America used to inform its engagement with other countries, especially those within the Global South, and understand how the legacy of these decisions impacts foreign affairs today. Furthermore, it should examine perspectives on international relations from those countries and should also touch on race, gender, and sexuality.

It is imperative that the course exposes students to scholarship outside of the traditional western framework so that their grasp of the international system is multifaceted and nuanced. It is also recommended that students understand the power dynamics and historical dimensions of different aspects of development and globalization so that they can contribute, as future policy makers, government employees, or development staff, to the ongoing debates about what America's role in the world should be.

This course should be added during the two-year course review that faculty are conducting and should include sections on Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African political thought and international relations. We have included sample syllabi from different professors mostly from UT that touch on these subjects in the footnotes⁶. Students should leave this course with a small sample of what other regions of the world think and believe.

Recommendations for Core Course:

- The course should cover race, gender and sexuality through a global lens by incorporating diverse authors;
- Syllabi should be evaluated based on similar metrics to what has been outlined in this document. Demographic ratios, although not indicative of quality, are indicative of racial and gender inclusion. We hope that professors will start including demographic breakdowns of the authors on their syllabi as a method of accountability and evaluation;
- We recommend a two-year timeline for implementation of the core course and;
- We recommend that LBJ either bring in specialists from the respective departments or have a professor like Dr. Joseph, Dr. De Francesco Soto, or Jeremy Suri teach the class.

Conclusion

As current students in the MGPS program, we encourage the faculty to take a critical look at the information provided and to work with the students cited here to implement these recommendations. We understand that these recommendations will take time and effort, as this proposal has, and we want to maintain an open dialogue with professors and leadership to see them through. To prepare students to address the issues of the present and future, equity must be taught and experienced at LBJ. If added, these recommendations will help make current and future LBJ students true global policy professionals.

⁶ <http://sites.utexas.edu/pacclbj/sample-syllabi/>

Appendix

Curriculum Resources

1. Tufts has an annual conference on “Decolonizing International Relations” - it looks like it is going to be virtual this Fall, which could be a good opportunity for faculty/students to participate. It is also worth checking out the past 2 or 3 conferences they have had to see who presented, themes, etc. The conference speaks to two things – first, exploring the roots of the decolonization movement and its journey over the past few decades, and second, tackling the question of how the decolonization movement can be directed towards representing marginalized voices in an impactful manner.
 - a. <https://sites.tufts.edu/decolonizeir/>.
 - b. **The 2020 conference is online and free. We recommend all MGPS professors attend.**
2. Five Reads on Race Relations and Public Diplomacy
 - a. <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/story/five-reads-race-relations-public-diplomacy>
3. Boston Universities Antiracist Center.
 - a. <https://www.bu.edu/antiracist-center/>
4. American University Anti-racist Research and Policy Center
 - a. The Center supports six teams focused on six key policy areas: justice, economy, education, environment, health, and politics.
 - b. <https://www.american.edu/centers/antiracism/>
5. Women in IR Syllabus
 - a. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fqIQ4XFjdwKfxvfpfn9i_nK0dW4iMpypIk4SOyRNac/edit?usp=sharing
6. Decolonizing the curriculum
 - a. <https://www.keele.ac.uk/equalitydiversity/equalityawards/raceequalitycharter/keeledecolonisingthecurriculumnetwork/#keele-manifesto-for-decolonising-the-curriculum>
7. Decolonize all the things
 - a. <https://decolonizeallthethings.com/>

8. Academic Women in Public Administration: Diversity Literature Reference Tool
 - a. <https://awparocks.weebly.com/resources.html>
9. Michigan's Ford School DEI Strategic Plan - started in 2016; includes annual reports on progress
 - a. <http://fordschool.umich.edu/dei>
10. JPSE: The Inclusive Classroom Reading List
 - a. <https://educate.apsanet.org/jpse-educate-the-inclusive-classroom-reading-list>
11. It's time to decolonize the syllabus
 - a. <https://www.latimes.com/books/la-et-jc-decolonize-syllabus-20181008-story.html>
12. Why colleges need to reform International Affairs Education
 - a. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2019/08/20/colleges-need-reform-international-affairs-educat+ion-consider-issues-diversity-and>
13. San Diego State University's merging international affairs education and DEI
 - a. <https://education.sdsu.edu/about/dei-ia>
14. Georgetown's Robertson Foundations including DEI in international relations education
 - a. <https://rfg.org/impact-story/advancing-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-international-relations-education>
15. Penn State School of International Affairs Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
 - a. <https://sia.psu.edu/diversity-equity-inclusion>
16. Princeton School of Public and International Affairs DEI Plan
 - a. <https://spia.princeton.edu/diversity-equity-inclusion>

Graphs and Sample Syllabi

- 1) The GPS Proposal's extended graphs and raw data. Please see for expanded quantitative data and charts.
 - b. <http://sites.utexas.edu/pacclbj/link-to-lbj-curriculum-graphs/>
- 2) Diverse Sample Syllabi for IR courses from UT professors.
 - c. <http://sites.utexas.edu/pacclbj/sample-syllabi/>

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