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Gender and ethnic studies majors face programming changes at CSU

Ella Dorpinghaus, Staff Reporter

March 13, 2025



Collegian | Trin Bonner

Editor's note: This article has been updated to reflect an additional statement from CSU regarding the course EDUC 265 not being offered for the fall 2025 academic term.

The class EDUC 265: A Culture of Care in Schools has been offered at Colorado State University since 2014. Taught by Fulbright scholar, nonprofit owner and CSU Professor Tom Cavanagh, this class provides a variety of techniques for up-and-coming teachers to make their classes more welcoming for all students.

During class on Tuesday, however, Cavanagh announced that his class will not be offered next semester. The class, although it is housed within the **race, gender and ethnic studies department**, attracts students from a variety of majors and backgrounds.

Cavanagh's work occupies a unique place in academia at CSU. As the founder of Restorative Justice Education, a nonprofit that aims to bring restorative justice to classrooms in the United States, Cavanagh brings a unique perspective regarding education.

"I have a very unique niche, and my work actually travels between both education and ethnic studies," Cavanagh said. "It's not unusual in ethnic studies. ... Mine is all about asking, 'How do we create a culture of care in schools?'"

When asked about his work, Cavanagh was quick to note that teaching restorative justice in the classroom is not a political issue. By teaching various techniques that promote collaboration, communities are encouraged to be stronger and more supportive. Cavanagh cares deeply for the students within his own classes.

The students sat in a circle and spent the first few minutes of class checking in with each other. During the check-in, multiple students, especially those majoring in ethnic studies, expressed fear and concern for the future of their major. Facing recent changes like those detailed in the **Dear Collegue letter**, the race, gender and ethnic studies department may have to adhere to new policies.

"We didn't know what we'd be teaching in the fall in the department until this week, which is pretty darn late," Cavanagh said.

Cavanagh did not provide a specific reason for the class no longer being offered, though the university later provided *The Collegian* with a statement regarding the change.

"This class is not being offered in fall 2025 due to low enrollment," university spokesperson Tiana Kennedy said. "CSU has made no changes to academic programs due to shifting federal DEI guidance."

For ethnic studies students like Alexis Sixtos Mejia, the upcoming semester is largely up in the air. Sixtos Mejia said that even his professors are unaware of what is going to happen in the near future.

"The department itself is, like, facing so many changes, ... and it's just really sad that it has to go away," Sixtos Mejia said.

As a student with many semesters ahead of him, Sixtos Mejia, like many race, gender and ethnic studies students, is unsure if the classes needed for the major will be offered next semester.

For other students at CSU like Jose Gutierrez, who is majoring in both ethnic studies and political science, significant alterations to the race, ethnic and gender studies major may cause students to switch their courses of study.

"I'm an incoming freshman and, moving to my sophomore year, I might have to change my major because there's not going to be many courses offered," Gutierrez said.

For students whose college plans hinged on earning a degree in race, gender and ethnic studies, their plans may have to change quickly as fewer and fewer of the courses are being offered at CSU.

"Classes are going to be taken away, so that's really what sucks," Gutierrez said. "I was really passionate about ethnic studies."

As for Cavanagh, he said he hopes to provide his students with as much reassurance and information as possible. When asked what he would tell students who are nervous about upcoming changes at CSU, he said, "Just as you are, you're good enough."

Reach Ella Dorpinghaus at life@collegian.com or on Twitter [@CSUCollegian](https://twitter.com/CSUCollegian).

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About the Contributor



Trin Bonner, Illustration Director & Assistant Print Editor

Trin Bonner is the illustration editor for *The Collegian* newspaper. This will be her fourth year in the position, and she loves being a part of the creative and amazing design team of *The Collegian*. As the illustration editor, Bonner provides creative insight and ideas that bring the newspaper the best graphics and illustrations possible. She loves working with artists to develop fun and unique weekly illustrations for readers. She enjoys helping the illustrators on her desk explore and expand their artistic abilities as well as challenge their skills with every edition. Bonner is a senior studying graphic design and electronic art and is also a community coordinator for Aggie Village Apartments on Colorado State University's campus. She finds immense joy in illustration and comic creation. She hopes to explore more in the realm of graphic design and video game design as she approaches the end of her undergraduate experience. Trin spends her free time crocheting, doing beadwork and playing guitar when she's not working on illustrations or acting as community coordinator, though she spends much of her free time sketching and brainstorming her next webcomic. Bonner finds that making people laugh and smile through her art is incredibly fulfilling and is excited to continue to bring her love for illustration and art to *The Collegian*.

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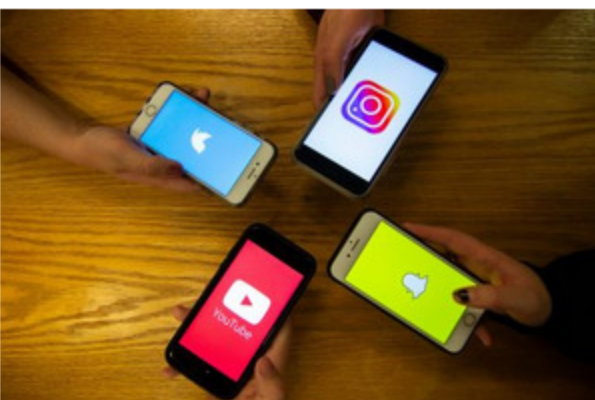
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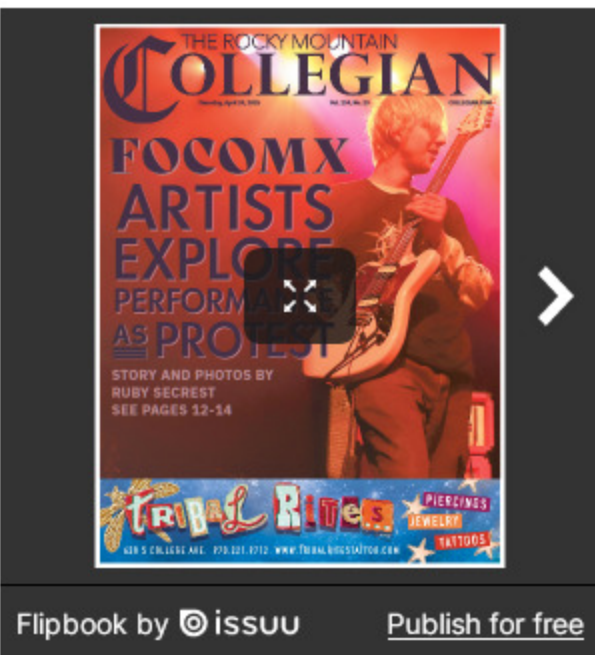
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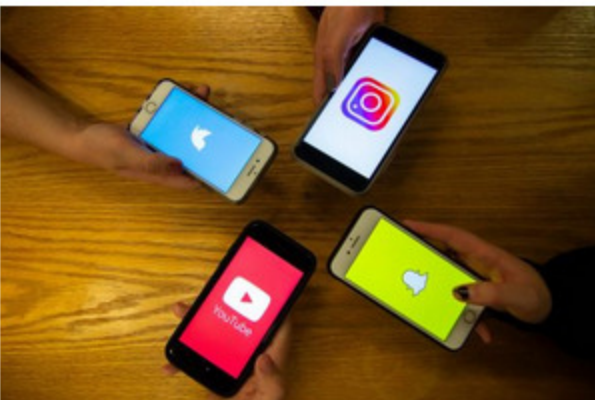
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