

TV panelists argue multicultural issues

Matthew Reeves

Daily Texan Staff

The possibility of requiring six hours of multicultural courses for undergraduates, the differing definitions of multiculturalism and its purposes at the University were the subjects of a Wednesday panel discussion at the KLRU television studio.

Tom Spencer, host of the program *Austin at Issue*, led the discussion. He began by saying, "The hope is that we will hear what should or could be done concerning these issues."

The four panel members were Barbara Harlow, associate professor

of English; Louis Mendoza, member of Todos Unidos; Maxine Hairston, English professor; and Brian Willats, editor of the *University Review*.

Mendoza advocated the requirement of multicultural courses within the undergraduate degree plan. "I have taught English 306 courses, and I taught a multicultural curriculum," he said. "I see more people willing to exchange ideas equally in those courses."

Hairston agreed that the requirement would contribute to a multicultural university. But she said these courses should replace other current requirements. "We can't just add this to the student's load. We have 18 hours of social studies requirements and one of those can

go."

However, Willats expressed doubt about the multicultural courses, saying their effectiveness would depend on how they were taught. He said works by minority writers should not displace those in the established canon.

Harlow said that a multicultural university would be a democratic university. "Democratizing at both the curricular level as well as the personnel level enables more people to be involved," she said.

Willats said many advocates of multiculturalism who want to mandate that students learn about certain cultures are forgetting about "Western values" of freedom of choice and freedom of speech.