



Chicano studies professor hired by CNN

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The newly hired City College Chicano studies professor was a social activist, professional actor, and was just hired by CNN as a political commentator.

“I’m going to write for their online opinion section,” said Dr. Thomas Carrasco, a full-time City College faculty member. “That’s been one of my dreams, to be a professor and also a part of the national dialogue as a political commentator. Hopefully I’ll be an ongoing contributor.”

Born and raised in Oxnard, Carrasco, 50, earned his bachelor’s degree in Chicano studies and political science at San Diego State University. He earned a master’s in ethnic studies at Berkeley before he went to UCSB to get his doctorate. Carrasco is one of the first five in the United States to receive a doctorate in Chicano studies.

“To me, Chicano history is American history and the Chicano culture is a part of the American culture,” he said. “I think it’s a great evolution of democracy and fairness that one of the best universities in the world, [Berkeley], created a PhD in Chicano studies.”

Having a passion for Chicano studies, Carrasco still feels “numb” after getting a job only a few months after graduating in June. Craig Cook, department chair of American ethnic studies, knew Carrasco was going to be one of his final choices almost immediately.

“I was taken by his teaching demo and his extra-curriculum activities within the community,” Cook said. “He’s also a



[Michael Clark](#)

Dr. Thomas Carrasco (right) jokes with students during his Racism in America class, Oct. 17, 2012. Besides being the newest member of the American Ethnic Studies department at City College, Carrasco is also an actor with the acting troupe Chicano Secret Service.

very caring and humorous person with a positive attitude and you need that in a teacher. You want someone with a passion for what they do.”

Carrasco likes the positive energy at City College and tries to incorporate it in his own classes.

“I’m very academic, but at the same time I use a lot of humor in my class,” he said. “Chicano history is a hard history and sometimes you just got to laugh.”

His students describe him as funny and passionate. Josehois Velazquez, 18, is enrolled in one of Carrasco’s classes and says he is one of his favorite professors.

“He is really friendly and likes to crack sarcastic jokes,” Velazquez said. “Either the entire room is laughing at his jokes or they are completely in focus at the subject he’s talking about.”

Velazquez says Carrasco’s best quality is his lecturing.

“He has a very good rhythm and makes sure that everybody is keeping a good pace. He also always have a big smile on his face,” Velazquez said.

Sociology major Jazmin Cuellar, 22, also likes the Chicano studies class and thinks Carrasco has a great influence on the students.

“Half of the students come early to his classes every week,” Cuellar said. “He talks to us like he is talking to a friend but he is very forward and you can’t b—— him.”

Carrasco started his career as a teacher at Oxnard Community College where he “fell in love with teaching.”

“To me, teaching is a performance,” he said. “I’ve learned a lot about body movement, voice and other things during my acting that have really helped me out as a professor.”

At Berkeley, Carrasco was a co-founder of the acting troupe, Chicano Secret Service. The group started out as street performers who acted out sketches. They got a big break when Luis Valdez, “the father of Chicano theater” discovered them in the United States.

“He trained us and then we started to perform all over the country,” Carrasco said. “We also performed at the HBO Comedy Festival.”

Carrasco smiles when he describes his acting as “over-the-top.” He says he uses a lot of exaggeration and that people either love or hate it.

Besides working as a teacher and actor Carrasco is also adviser of the student club M.E.Ch.A that has been around since the ‘60s, but has been down for the past seven years.

“It is a Mexican-American student movement open to everybody,” he said. “It’s like a scholar activist club. The main thing is to make connections with high schools to get students to City College. I really like it.”





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