UCLA Asian American Studies Center

FOUNDATIONS and FUTURES

Asian American and Pacific Islander Multimedia Textbook

Samoans in the United States

Module 1: Overview

Chapter Compelling Question

Have Samoans benefitted from their "enduring friendship" with the United States?

Lesson Sequence

C1: Cultural Rituals & Energizers

C2: Critical Concepts

C3: Community Collaboration/Critical Cultural Production

C4: Closing Dialogue

Standards & Modifications

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Module Supporting Questions

- Who are Samoans?
- How are Samoans connected to the US?
- How are Samoan customs and values practiced in Samoan communities in the diaspora?

Lesson Plan Description

This module introduces students to the Samoan people, their historical and political ties to the United States, and the cultural values—*fa'a Sāmoa*—that guide Samoan life both on the islands and in the diaspora. As part of this module, students will engage in a hands-on activity called Mapping the Samoan Diaspora, where they will visually trace Samoan migration routes and explore how culture travels and transforms across time and space. By working together to map key locations and reflect on stories of movement, identity, and community, students will gain a deeper understanding of how Samoan culture continues to thrive beyond the islands—especially in places like California, Hawai'i, and New Zealand.

Learning Goals/Objectives

- **Learn** about Samoan people, significant concepts and values within fa'a Sāmoa (the Samoan way), and the connection between the United States and American Sāmoa.
- **Understand** the histories of colonialism, militarism, migration and diaspora.
- **Explore** the ways Samoans have made home and maintained culture in the United States.

Skills Focus

- ☑ Written Communication
- ☑ Oral Communication

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- ☑ Primary Source Analysis & Research
- ☑ Community Engagement
- ☐ Creative Arts
- ☑ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Additional Skills:

Ethnic Studies Framing and Pedagogy

- ☑ **Build a foundational understanding about Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders,** including the histories, perspectives, and contemporary experiences spanning the precolonial to the present day.
- ☑ **Develop literacy and the skills to communicate, understand, engage, and articulate different perspectives** through understanding multiple ways of knowing, including indigenous, ancestral, familial, and diasporic knowledge.
- ☑ **Nurture critical thinking and inquiry on fundamental assumptions** related to empire, capitalism, race and racism, gender and patriarchy, and other structures of power and inequality and how they shape society and the environment.
- ☑ **Cultivate holistic well-being amongst all and connections across difference** by strengthening historical empathy, self-worth and mutual respect, cultural expression, and cross-cultural understanding.
- ☑ **Grow wisdom and agency** to imagine and create new possibilities and solidarities for a more just, equitable, democratic, non-racist, compassionate, and sustainable society and world.

Suggested Grade Level(s)

- ☑ 9
- ☑ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12

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- ☐ 13-14

Suggested Discipline(s)

- ☐ Arts
- ☑ English Language Arts
- ☑ Ethnic Studies
- ☑ History / Social Studies
- ☐ Other:

Materials

- CAR Diary Worksheet
- Module 1 Slide Presentation
- Module 1 Handout
- Supplies For C3-Community Collaboration/Main Activity:
  - Large printed world map or projected digital world map (with Pacific Ocean centered)
  - Sticky notes (multiple colors)
  - Arrows or string (for connecting migration routes)
  - Markers or pens
  - Copies of the Module 1 narrative (printed or digital)
  - Access to relevant images and media (optional: projector or printed visuals)
  - Chart paper or poster boards (optional – for each group's version of the map)
  - "Mapping Instructions" handout (optional for scaffolding)

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LESSON PLAN

C1: Cultural Ritual and/or Energizer

Description: Land Acknowledgement

Land and Ancestor Acknowledgment (5 min)

Display the following image from Module 1 of the chapter: Sun rising over Ofu island from one of the Manu'a Islands in Amerika Sāmoa.

Read aloud to the class the beginning of the Introduction of Module 1:

"Sāmoa, an archipelago in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, has many creation origin stories. One involves Tagaloalagi, creator of the universe, looking down from his place in the sky. Tuli, his son, while flying in the shape of a bird across the surface of the ocean, could not find a place to rest, returned to his father and complained about it. Tagaloalagi then threw down a rock, forming Manu'atele, a land mass for Tuli and himself to rest on.

Tagaloalagi thought it would be great to have even more resting places in the ocean and divided the rock further into fourteen islands and two coral atolls, creating the islands of Sāmoa—the sacred center. The Samoan people thrived as ocean-goers, grounded in fa'asāmoa, the Samoan way. But how did people get from this cluster of islands created by Tagaloalagi in the middle of the Pacific Ocean to the United States, and who exactly are Samoans?"

Potential discussion questions for students to connect to this land acknowledgement:

- *How is this different from other land acknowledgements?*
- *What can we learn from this creation origin story?*

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C2: Critical Concepts/Introduction to the Lesson

Critical Concepts:

- **colonization:** The act in which a group or country brings a region and its Indigenous people under its domination and control.
- **diaspora:** The dispersal, movement, migration, or scattering of a people from their established or ancestral homeland.
- **Indigenous:** Refers to someone or something that originates from a region, predating colonialism.
- **militarism:** The ideology that a country should maintain a strong military power and be prepared to use it aggressively to secure its interests.
- **culture:** Culture is understood as the shared beliefs, values, practices, languages, customs, traditions, art, and ways of knowing that shape how a group of people understand themselves and relate to the world.

Samoan Language Glossary:

- **ala**: pathway, road
- **alagaupu**: proverb
- **alofa**: love
- **faʻa Sāmoa**: Samoan way or Samoan custom
- **faʻaaloalo**: courtesy, respect, honors
- **faʻafafine**: third gender, translates to “in the manner of a woman.”
- **faʻamatai**: chiefly governance system
- **faʻaumu**: celebratory cry (cheehoo), war cry, challenge
- **fitafita**: soldier
- **fue**: fly whisk
- **lavalava**: customary clothing; wrap
- **malaga**: journey, travel
- **malu**: women’s customary tattoo from the upper thigh to above the knee, place of safety
- **malofie**: men’s customary tattoo from the waist to the knees
- **matai**: chief
- **Tagaloalagi**: progenitor god in Samoan cosmology
- **tatau**: tattoo
- **taulima**: tattoo armband
- **tautua**: service

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- **tauvae**: tattoo ankle band
- **toa o Sāmoa**: Samoan warriors
- **tufuga tatau**: tattoo master
- **Tuli**: Tagaloalagi's son
- **uatogi**: war club
- **ula fala**: necklace made of pandanus seeds
- **uso**: brother (of a man), sister (of a woman)

Educators may utilize the **Module 1 Handout** in this section.

Description:

Students will use the **CAR Diary Worksheet** as they read Module 1 of the chapter. The CAR Diary worksheet will help students break down the text into main *concepts*, *applications* of the concepts, and their own *reflections*. This reading and reflection tool draws from Ethnic Studies pedagogy and can be used for various modules to help students keep track of what they are learning.

Discussion:

Based on the CAR Diary, facilitate a discussion. Consider using the following questions to guide the discussion:

- *What did you learn about fa'a Sāmoa (Samoan way or Samoan custom)?*
- *What did you learn about their history?*
- *What did you learn about their history with the United States?*
- *What is the difference between Sāmoa and Amerika Sāmoa?*
- *What did you learn about their "enduring friendship" with the United States?*

Optional Extension: You could start off the lesson with a discussion on what friendship means to the students, referencing the usage of "enduring friendship" in the compelling question.

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C3: Community Collaboration

Critical Cultural Production/Main Activity/Project

Title: Mapping the Samoan Diaspora

Time: 50-60 min

Description:

In this activity, students will work together to create a visual map that traces the migration of Samoan people from their island homeland to communities around the world. Using what they've learned from Module 1 of the chapter and multimedia sources, students will identify where Samoans live today, how they got there, and how they continue to practice their cultural values in the diaspora. By mapping migration routes, population centers, and cultural touchpoints, students will deepen their understanding of Samoan history, identity, and resilience. This collaborative activity encourages students to think critically about movement, belonging, and the power of cultural continuity across generations and geographies. Educators may utilize the **Module 1 Handout** in this section.

Step 1 - Discussion [10 min]

Facilitate a discussion that responds to the reading of the Samoan origin story introduced at the beginning of the lesson. You can ask the following questions to encourage students to connect their own cultural stories:

- *What do you notice about the Samoan origin story? What stands out to you?*
- *How does this story connect the Samoan people to the land and ocean?*
- *Do you know of any origin stories from your own culture, family, or background? What do they teach about your community's values or identity?*
- *Why do you think origin stories are important to a community's identity?*
- *What values or lessons can we learn from the story of Tagaloalagi and Tuli?*

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Step 2 - **Preparing the Activity** [30 min before class]

Introduce the elements of the *Mapping the Samoan Diaspora* activity:

Purpose: Students will visually map Samoan migration routes, diaspora communities, and cultural connections using information from Module 1 of the chapter and its multimedia. This helps students explore migration, colonialism, and cultural continuity through the lens of the Samoan experience.

Go Over the Materials Needed with the students:

- Large printed world map or projected digital world map (with Pacific Ocean centered)
- Sticky notes (multiple colors)
- Arrows or string (for connecting migration routes)
- Markers or pens
- Copies of Module 1 (printed or digital)
- Access to relevant images and media (optional: projector or printed visuals)
- Chart paper or poster boards (optional – for each group's version of the map)
- "Mapping Instructions" handout (optional for scaffolding)

Preparation (Before Class):

1. **Print or project a world map** that includes the Pacific region, emphasizing:
    - Sāmoa (Upolu and Savai'i)
    - American Sāmoa (Tutuila and Manu'a Islands)
    - New Zealand, United States (e.g., California, Hawai'i), and other known diaspora communities.
2. **Set up materials** at each group station (map, sticky notes, markers).
3. **Organize students** into small groups of 3–4. Assign roles: reader, note-taker, map organizer, presenter (can rotate as needed).

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Step 3 - **Introduce the Activity** [5 min]

Go over the following instructions with the students:

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS: MAPPING THE SAMOAN DIASPORA

Objective: In this activity, you will work in a small group to create a visual map that shows how Samoan people migrated from the Pacific Islands to different parts of the world and how they continue to maintain their cultural identity through the values of **fa‘a Sāmoa**.

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step A: Review the Narrative [10 min]

- Re-read the **Module 1 Narrative** (individually or as a group).
- As you read, highlight or underline important ideas related to:
  - Migration (who moved, where, and why)
  - American Sāmoa and US national status
  - Cultural values and practices in the diaspora (e.g., church, language, tautua, youth clubs)
- Use sticky notes or your notebook to jot down quotes or facts you might want to include on your map.

Step B: Set Up Your Map [2 min]

- Use the map or poster board your group receives.
- Label key locations mentioned in the narrative:
  - **Independent Sāmoa**
  - **American Sāmoa**
  - **United States** (California, Hawai‘i, Washington)
  - **New Zealand**

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Step C: Add Migration Paths and Notes [15–20 min]

Work with your group to do the following:

- Use arrows or string to show migration paths between the islands and diaspora communities.
- Use different colored sticky notes for:
    - Migration reasons (*Why did people move?*)
    - Cultural practices (*What Samoan traditions continue in each place?*)
    - Challenges (*What struggles do Samoan communities face in the diaspora?*)
- Include **key Samoan values** like:
    - alofa (love)
    - fa‘aaloalo (respect)
    - tautua (service)
    - collectivism and reciprocity
- Include **organizations** like:
    - Samoan Community Development Center
    - Office of Samoan Affairs
    - *Ask: How do you see these key Samoan values embedded within these community organizations?*

Step D: Present Your Map [3–5 min per group]

- Each group will briefly present their map to the class.
- When presenting, explain:
    - The migration routes and why people moved.
    - What parts of **fa‘a Sāmoa** you found in diaspora communities.
    - Any surprises or insights you discovered.

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Step E: Reflect

- After all presentations, you may be asked to reflect with a short writing prompt:
  - *"What did this activity teach you about the importance of culture and community for Samoans living outside of their homeland?"*

Step 4 - Work Time [20–30 min]

Step 5 - Student Presentations [20 min]

C4: Closing Dialogue

To close out the lesson, facilitate a short discussion using the following questions as a guide:

- *What were some of the most common migration routes we saw on your maps? Why do you think those routes exist?*
- *How might colonial history have shaped these routes?*
- *Even though Sāmoa and American Sāmoa are separated politically, what connections still exist between them? And how does the "enduring friendship with the US" fit into that relationship?*
- *We learned about key cultural values like* alofa *(love) and* tautua *(service). How do you think those values help Samoan communities build strong relationships in the diaspora?*

Consider emphasizing the following:

- *Reflect on how the Samoan creation story connects to the larger history and identity of Samoans, both in the islands and diaspora.*
- *Discuss why maintaining cultural values like fa'a Sāmoa is important for Samoans living in the United States.*

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- *Explore the challenges and strengths of living in diaspora while holding onto cultural heritage.*

Links to Resources and Notes

Resources:

- **Land & Ancestor Acknowledgement**
  - Resource: https://native-land.ca/

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Note About Content Standards

The following standards are based on the Common Core established by the California State Board of Education. Please check your own state's English Language Arts and History/Social Studies Standards for specific curriculum alignment.

ELA State Standards Alignment

Grade 6–8 ELA Standards (can also adapt to 9–10)

Reading Informational Text (RI):

- **RI.6.1 / RI.7.1 / RI.8.1** – Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RI.6.2 / RI.7.2 / RI.8.2** – Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details.
- **RI.6.3 / RI.7.3 / RI.8.3** – Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced and developed.

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- **RI.6.7 / RI.7.7 / RI.8.7** – Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visual, oral) to understand a topic.

Speaking & Listening (SL):

- **SL.6.1 / SL.7.1 / SL.8.1** – Engage effectively in collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.6.2 / SL.7.2 / SL.8.2** – Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats, explain how it contributes to a topic.
- **SL.6.4 / SL.7.4 / SL.8.4** – Present claims and findings clearly, using appropriate facts and relevant details.

Writing (W):

- **W.6.2 / W.7.2 / W.8.2** – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **W.6.9 / W.7.9 / W.8.9** – Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

History / Social Studies Standards Alignment

Grade 8: United States History and Geography: Growth and Conflict

- **8.12** – Students analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in the United States in response to the Industrial Revolution and immigration.
    - *This lesson connects to immigration patterns and how US territories affect migration and citizenship status.*

Grade 10: World History, Culture, and Geography: The Modern World

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- **10.4** – Students analyze patterns of global change in the era of New Imperialism in at least two of the following regions or countries: Africa, Southeast Asia, China, India, Latin America, and the Philippines.
    - *Can be expanded to include US imperialism in the Pacific (including American Samoa and Samoa).*

Grade 11: United States History and Geography: Continuity and Change in the Twentieth Century

- **11.11** – Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.
    - *Migration, identity, cultural values, and challenges of diaspora are deeply embedded in this lesson.*

Ethnic Studies (California Model Curriculum Connection)

While not a formal standard yet, **this lesson aligns strongly with the goals of California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum**, particularly:

- **Theme 1: Identity** – Exploring how cultural values, traditions, and histories shape identity.
- **Theme 2: History and Movement** – Analyzing migration, diaspora, and colonialism.
- **Theme 3: Systems of Power** – Understanding the legacy of US territorial expansion and its impact on Samoan communities.
- **Theme 4: Agency** – Showing how Samoans maintain cultural practices and community resilience in diaspora.

Modifications, Accommodations, Resources for Multilingual Students, SPED, Newcomers

- **Chunk the Narrative**
  While reading the creation story and Samoan migration history, pause between sections (e.g.,

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the origin story, the US connection, the diaspora experience) to discuss key ideas or clarify concepts. This helps students process rich historical and cultural information in smaller, manageable pieces.

- **Pre-Teach Key Vocabulary**
  Introduce and define terms such as *fa'a Sāmoa*, *diaspora*, *US national*, *alofa*, and *tautua* using visuals and real-life examples.
- **Use Visual Aids**
  Provide maps, labeled diagrams, photographs, timelines, and icons to reinforce concepts and provide context.
- **Offer Sentence Frames and Starters**
  Provide prompts to support student writing and speaking, especially during group work and presentations.
- **Check for Understanding Frequently**
  Use informal checks (thumbs up/down, exit tickets, short reflections) throughout the lesson.
- **Connect to Students' Backgrounds**
  Encourage students to relate the Samoan migration story to their own family or cultural stories. During the opening discussion, ask: "Do you know a migration story from your family?" or "Are there cultural values in your home that guide how your family lives?" This fosters personal relevance.
- **Provide Extended Time When Needed**
  Offer additional time to review the narrative, complete activities, or prepare group presentations.
- **Create a Supportive Environment**
  Foster a respectful space where students feel safe sharing personal or cultural experiences during discussions. Validate diverse perspectives by highlighting how each student's background adds to the collective understanding of migration, identity, and cultural continuity.

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