

a- g Ethnic Studies (Revision #3)

Overview

Ethnic Studies is a course that explores the cultural, social, economic, and historical experiences that shape the United States' diverse ethnic groups past and present. Students will explore the historical and contemporary journeys of various groups, including Indigenous peoples, African Americans, European immigrants, Mexican and Latinx populations, Asian immigrants, and refugees. Students will learn key themes such as self-identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and political policy regarding ethnicity and multiculturalism. Students will learn the historical skills of critical thinking, analyzing sources, historical questioning, making historical claims, and evaluating present social topics through the lens of history. An emphasis will be placed on civil discourse, where students will practice how to engage in productive and respectful conversations about difficult topics regarding diversity and multiculturalism. Students will gain a deeper understanding of how personal and collective identities intersect with national identity. The course encourages critical thinking and empathy as students analyze ethnicity and multiculturalism in the United States. By the end of the course, students will be equipped with the tools to engage in meaningful conversations about identity, diversity, and inclusion in the modern world. The ultimate objective of the course is an understanding of ethnicity, multiculturalism, national unity, and respect.

Unit 1: Identity

In this introductory unit students will explore the concept of self-identity and how it is shaped by personal experiences, cultural influences, immigration, and societal factors. This unit will walk students through a combination of activities and discussions that will allow students to gain a foundational understanding of basic human geography and how it relates to the broader story of human migration, culture, identity, placemaking, and history. Students will explore how ethnicity shapes public spaces to foster a sense of community, belonging, and cultural identity. Students will learn how ethnic communities are shaped by religion, language, food, and architecture. There will be an emphasis on how ethnic communities create vibrant, engaging environments that reflect local character and enhance overall quality of life. The concepts of assimilation and acculturation will be applied to topics of immigration, multiculturalism, cultural diffusion, and personal identity. This unit will explore key concepts such as the differences between race, ethnicity, and nationality, encouraging students to reflect on their own identity. Upon completion of this unit, students will have a deeper understanding of the forces that shape human identity, policies addressing the needs of increasing diversity in the United States, and the positive role identity and diversity plays in American society.

Unit 2: The Indigenous Experience

In this unit students will explore the rich histories and cultures of the Indigenous peoples of North America, focusing on their societies before, during, and after European colonization. The unit will examine the various

indigenous groups, their ways of life, the impact of European colonization, and modern experiences. Students will study the impact of European colonization, by examining the disruptions it caused to native societies through displacement, violence, the reservation system, the Dawes Act, and forced assimilation. Students will learn about the causes and impacts of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Through a combination of historical analysis, discussions, and research activities, students will gain a better understanding of the long-lasting effects of colonization on Indigenous peoples, contributions to the United States, and how these experiences continue to shape their communities today. The unit will emphasize the importance of recognizing Indigenous perspectives and experiences in the broader narrative of American history.

Unit 3: The African Experience

In this unit students will explore the African American experience in the United States, tracing its roots from the forced migration of the transatlantic slave trade to contemporary movements for racial justice. Students will understand the impacts slavery and segregation had on the African experience culturally, economically, and politically. Students will investigate the erasure of parts of African Americans native culture, the concept of syncretism as related to the African experience, and the diffusion of African culture to the general population of the United States. Through the study of the Abolitionist movement, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Jim Crow era, The Great Migration, The Harlem Renaissance, WWII, and the fifties and sixties civil rights movement students will uncover the evolving fight for freedom. In addition, students will understand how the African American civil rights movements inspired, shaped, and contributed to other marginalized groups' fight for equality. Finally, students will explore modern African American identity and activism. Students will develop an understanding of the historical and ongoing struggles for justice and equality, while recognizing the profound contributions African Americans have had in shaping the fabric of American society.

Unit 4: The European Experience

In this unit students will explore the European experience in the United States during the 19th century and early 20th century. The unit will focus on several key groups, including the Irish, Germans, Italians, Poles, Scandinavians, and Jews, each of whom faced distinct challenges and opportunities as they settled in America. Students will examine the push and pull factors that drove these groups to leave their homelands, such as famine, political unrest, economic hardship, and religious persecution, and how these immigrants navigated their new lives in the United States. The unit will also discuss the processes of assimilation and cultural preservation, as well as the tensions and discrimination these groups often faced from nativist movements that resisted multiculturalism. Upon completion of this unit, students will gain a deeper understanding of how European immigrants shaped and were shaped by American society during this period.

Unit 5: The Asian Experience

In this unit students will explore the Asian experience in the United States from the mid-19th to early 20th century, with a focus on the Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Indian populations. Students will examine the factors that drove these groups to seek better opportunities in America, including economic hardship,

political instability, and the promise of work, particularly in industries like railroad construction and agriculture. The unit will also address the challenges these immigrants faced, including discrimination, exclusionary laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the impact of American anti-Asian sentiment. Students will explore the past and present contributions of these immigrant groups to American society, as well as the long-lasting effects of exclusion and marginalization. The unit will emphasize the resilience and lasting cultural influence of Asian communities in the United States.

Unit 6: The Mexican and Latinx Experience

In this unit students will examine the Mexican and Latinx experience in the United States beginning in the late 19th century and continuing to the present day. The unit will cover the history of Mexican immigration, including the impact of the Mexican Revolution and labor migration. Students will also explore the experiences of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central Americans, highlighting the different push and pull factors that shaped their migration patterns, such as political instability, economic hardship, and U.S. foreign policies. Students will examine the contributions and challenges faced by Latinx communities in areas like labor, civil rights, and culture. The unit will also address contemporary issues related to immigration. The unit will emphasize the experiences and lasting impacts of the Mexican and Latinx populations on the United States.

Unit 7: The Refugee and Asylum Seeking Experience

In this unit students will examine the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the United States from the 20th century to the present. The unit will focus on the various global crises that have forced people to flee their home countries, including Southeast Asian refugees after the Vietnam War, Middle Eastern refugees escaping conflict, Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution, and African refugees escaping war and violence. The unit will emphasize Middle Eastern immigration, particularly in the 21st century, that has been heavily influenced by ongoing conflicts in countries like Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen. The involvement of the United States in the Middle East, along with political and religious persecution, has led to a significant influx of refugees seeking asylum in America. Students will explore the challenges faced by Middle Eastern immigrants, including cultural adjustment, discrimination, and the impact of national security policies on immigrant communities. Students will explore the policies and legal frameworks surrounding refugee and asylum status, including the process of resettlement and the challenges refugees face as they try to rebuild their lives in the United States. Upon completion of this unit, students will gain an understanding of the humanitarian and political dimensions of the refugee experience.

Unit 8: WE are America

In this unit students will explore what it means to be American and how the experiences of each person shapes American identity. This unit encourages students to reflect on the different ethnic groups that have shaped American society in the past and how modern peoples and movements will shape America in the future. Students will explore questions like: What does it mean to belong to a community, state, or nation? How do individuals and communities shape the identity of a country? What is the current identity of America? How do you hope America will look in the future? By exploring these questions, students will better

understand how contemporary peoples and movements reflect and challenge American values, and how their own identity connects to the broader story of the United States.

Final Project

The final project will give students the opportunity to tell their ethnic story and explore their identity. The project can be a personal narrative, the story of a family member, a mentor, a teacher, or even someone from history whose experience resonates with the student. Students will choose the means through which they wish to tell their story. Options to share their story may include but are not limited to creating a documentary, a book, a podcast, a song, or another creative medium. This project encourages students to make personal connections to the material and share meaningful stories that highlight the diverse experiences of individuals and communities in the United States.

Resources

All Units:

[A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America by Ronald Takaki](#)

[U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services](#)

[American Immigration Council](#)

[World War II Foundation](#)

[Minority Groups in WWII](#)

Unit 2:

[National Museum of the American Indian](#)

[California Indian Museum & Cultural Center](#)

Unit 3:

[Negro Leagues Baseball Museum Kansas City](#)

[National Museum of African American History & Culture \(Searchable Museum\)](#)

[Archives of African American Music and Culture](#)

[The Museum of African American Art - Los Angeles](#)

Unit 4:

[United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

[Ellis Island Virtual Tour](#)

[The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Inc](#)

Unit 5:

[Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation](#)

[Angel Island Museum Virtual Exhibition](#)

[Japanese American National Museum](#)

[Chinese Historical Society of America](#)

Unit 6:

[National Museum of the American Latino](#)

[The Mexican Museum In Association with the Smithsonian Institution](#)

Unit 7 & 8

[The UN Refugee Agency](#)

