



Ethnic Studies Lesson 1C: Introduction—Race and Ethnicity

TOPIC:
INTRODUCTION

GRADE LEVELS:
11-12

TIME:
1½ HOURS

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

Theme:

1. Identity

Values and Principles:

1. Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):

Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)

Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms. (RI.11-12.2)

Writing—(W.11-12)

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (W.11-12.1)

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (W.11-12.5)

Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):

History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)

Analyze diverse historical and modern definitions of race and ethnicity, including their social, cultural, and political contexts. (History-Social Science Content Standard 11.1)

Lesson Purpose

Students will research the historical and modern definitions of race and ethnicity and develop working definitions of these terms for this class.

Essential Questions

What are the historical and modern definitions of race and ethnicity, and how might a current, working definition aid in understanding ethnic studies?

Why is studying American history through ethnicity important?

Materials

[University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching: Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics](#)

[Anti-Defamation League: Can We Talk? Tips for Respectful Conversation in Schools, Workplaces, and Communities](#)

[American Anthropological Association: AAA Statement on Race](#)

[Scientific American: Race Is a Social Construct, Scientists Argue](#)

[Crash Course: Race and Ethnicity, Sociology](#)

[KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

race

ethnicity

social construct

culture

social justice

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- Before opening up the class to a discussion on race, ask the class to help develop norms or clear guidelines for successful class discussion on difficult subjects. Show students guideline resources such as [University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching: Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics](#) and [Anti-Defamation League: Can We Talk? Tips for Respectful Conversation in Schools, Workplaces, and Communities](#). Once students have reviewed the examples, have them pick rules for the class. Post the rules on chart paper and have students sign. Let students

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know that they can choose to add rules as the course progresses. (More resources can be found in Additional Readings and Resources at the end of this lesson.)

- As a class, ask students what they know about the term *race*. What does that mean to them? How do they believe that definition might have changed over time? Select student partners and have pairs of students read the following two articles. While students read, they should develop a definition for *race* from the past (before the year 2000) and for the present.
 - [American Anthropological Association: AAA Statement on Race](#)
 - [Scientific American: Race Is a Social Construct, Scientists Argue](#)
- When students have completed their notes, have pairs of students meet with another pair to share their notes and combine their definitions to form one past and one present definition. As a class, have students share their two definitions. As a class, have student groups share their definitions, and have the class help form one past and one present definition of race. Help students see that the current scientific community views race as a limited concept, but that race has been and is very important for personal identity formation, its intersection with other aspects of ethnicity, and its large impact on people's lived experiences. As a class, have students help add information to this unit's KWL chart.

Step 2:

- As a class, ask students what they know about the term *ethnicity*. Have students watch the first 5 minutes and 3 seconds of [Crash Course: Race and Ethnicity, Sociology #34](#) (video 10 minutes, 58 seconds). As students watch, have them take notes on a definition for *ethnicity*. They should include as many examples of culture as they can.
- When students have completed their notes, have each student pair with another student to check their notes. As a class, have pairs of students share their definition of *ethnicity*. [As a class, have the class help form a present definition of ethnicity](#). As a class, share American Psychological Association: Race and Ethnicity. Ask students how this definition is the same as or different from the one the students developed. Ask students why it might be important to study both race and ethnicity in the history of the US.

Step 3:

- As a class, ask students this lesson's questions, "What are the historical and modern definitions of race and ethnicity, and how might a current, working definition aid in understanding ethnic studies?" and this unit's question, "Why is studying American history through ethnicity important?" Make note of what was learned on this unit's KWL chart—along with additional questions.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits and for homework, have students watch [The Federalist Society: Is Social Justice Just? The Origins of Social Justice](#) (video 4 minutes, 15 seconds). As students watch, have them take notes on what social justice is. Students' notes should help them answer the question, "How is social justice, in its truest form, related to the purpose of studying American history through ethnicity?" Students should write their answers in a long paragraph and be sure to cite their sources.

Additional Readings and Resources

Boghossian, Peter, and James Lindsay. *How to Have Impossible Conversations: A Very Practical Guide*. Lifelong Books, 2019.

[The Federalist Society: Is Social Justice Just? The Origins of Social Justice](#)

[National Association for Independent Schools: Facilitating Politically Sensitive Discussions](#)

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NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES: America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

Ethnic Studies 1B: KWL Chart

KNOW**WONDER****LEARNED**

What do we think we already know about this topic?

What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.

After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.

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