



Ethnic Studies Lesson 5I:

Asian American Similarities and Differences, Part 1

TOPIC:

ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

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

Themes:

1. Identity
2. History and Movement

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).
2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth.
3. Center and place high value on the precolonial ancestral knowledge, narratives, and communal experiences of Native People/s and people of color and groups that are typically marginalized in society.

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 information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. (RI.11-12.2)

Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)**

Investigate the religions and political systems of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, and analyze their impacts on Asian American communities in the United States. (12.9)

Lesson Purpose

Students will investigate the religions and politics of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia to determine those areas' impacts on Asian Americans.

Essential Questions

How do the politics and religions of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia continue to impact Asian Americans?

How has life changed for Asian Americans over the last 150 years?

Materials

[TED-Ed: The five major world religions](#)

[Jainism 101: What Is Jainism?](#)

[Daoism: The Basics](#)

[Pew Research: Religion Among Asian Americans](#)

[Council on Foreign Relations: World 101—Politics East Asia](#)

[Council on Foreign Relations: World 101—Politics South Asia and Central Asia](#)

[NBC News: Generational Changes in Asian America's Politics](#)

WORKSHEET

[Unit 5 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

East Asian	Southeast Asian	South Asia
Buddhism	Islam	Hinduism
Daoism		Jainism

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, ask students what they know about the similarities and differences among the religions of Asian Americans: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism, Christianity, Judaism, and Jainism. As a review, have students watch [TED-Ed: The five major world religions](#) (video 11 minutes, 9 seconds). As students watch, students should take notes on where these five major religions originated and where they are practiced today. When the video is complete, show students this unit's WORKSHEET and have them help complete the section on religion in the shared worksheet.
- Let students know that two other, smaller religions from India and China have an impact on the culture of those countries and the cultures of Asian Americans. Have students watch [Jainism 101: What Is Jainism?](#) (video 1 minute, 30 seconds) and [Daoism: The Basics](#) (video 3 minutes, 22 seconds). As students watch, they should take notes on where these religions originated. When the videos are over, have students help add these to the correct location in the WORKSHEET.
- As a class, analyze the graph of Majority Religion by Country (midway down the page) from [Pew Research: The Global Religious Landscape](#). Ask students if the current, majority religion in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia is aligned with where the religions began. Make sure that students

understand that there are minority religions within these vast areas, just as the US shows Christianity as being the majority religion, but there are many more minority religions practiced here. (If students have questions, there are more resources in the Additional Readings and Resources section.)

Step 2:

- Ask students what they believe this research about Asian religions by country might have to do with the religions of Asian Americans. Break the students into pairs and have the pairs read [Pew Research: Religion Among Asian Americans](#). On 3 x 5 cards, have students write down an interesting fact from the online article on one side of the card and a question that reflects that fact on the other side of the card. On the side with the fact/answer, they can write two clues above the fact, such as what paragraph to find it in or what country of origin they are talking about. Students should put a sticky note over the clue and the answer.
- When students have found at least two facts, have them meet with other pairs until most pairs have had a chance to share. Help students see that even though a large percentage of Asian Americans may not be affiliated with a specific religion, they are often still culturally connected to the religion of their family's ethnic country of origin.

Step 3:

- What do students know about the politics of East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia? Break the students into three groups and have them research the political systems in that region by using the following websites. Students should take notes on the shared WORKSHEET and note the politics of several countries in the region. Students should also note the positives and concerns in regions. Students should be sure to carefully cite their sources.
 - [Council on Foreign Relations: World 101—Politics East Asia](#) (arrow over to read in detail about different regions—both East and Southeast countries are listed here. Help the groups divide the reading).
 - [Council on Foreign Relations: World 101—Politics South Asia and Central Asia](#) (help students focus on South Asian countries).
- When students have completed their research, have groups share what has been added to the shared WORKSHEET.
- Ask students how understanding the vast politics of Asia might help them understand immigration issues and the politics of Asian Americans. Have students watch [NBC News: Generational Changes in Asian America's Politics](#) (video 6 minutes, 7 seconds). As students watch, they should take notes on how Asian culture might impact a voter's preferences. Also, how does being a second-generation immigrant impact political views?
- When students have finished watching, have them pair up with another student and share their notes. As a class, have pairs of students share their thoughts.

Step 4:

- As a class, ask students this lesson's questions, "How do the politics and religions of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia continue to impact Asian Americans?" Also ask this unit's question, "How has life changed for Asian Americans over the last 150 years?" 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 allows, and for homework, have students read [Psychology Today: Filial Piety and Mental Health in Asian American Families](#). As students read, have them consider these questions, "Where might the common

cultural idea of filial piety have come from? How can this cultural trait be both a strength and a complication for Asian Americans today? Could this be true of other cultural traits?” Students should write a short paragraph in response.

Additional Readings and Resources

Bernstein, David E. *Classified: The Untold Story of Racial Classification in America*. Bombardier, 2022.

[Council on Foreign Relations: The state of Democracy in Southeast Asia is bad and getting worse.](#)

[Pew Research: Religious Composition by Country](#)

Qin, Amy. “They’re Asian. They’re American. But, They Wonder, Are They Asian American?” *New York Times*, June 1, 2024 (on Bhutanese Americans). <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/01/us/asian-american-identity-bhutanese.html>

Sowell, Thomas. *Ethnic America: A History*. Basic Books, 1981, 133-179.

Sowell, Thomas. *Migrations and Cultures: A World View*. Basic Books, 1996, chaps. 3, 5, 7.

Thomas SowellTV. “Middleman Minorities.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GWzzBm4ixQ&t=48s>

Thomas SowellTV. “A Worldwide Perspective on Chinese People.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFz52PTTjkc&t=332s>

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 5I: Asian American Similarities and Differences

	SOUTH ASIAN	EAST ASIAN	SOUTHEAST ASIAN
Religions			
Politics			

Ethnic Studies 5A: 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.

<i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i>	<i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i>	<i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i>