



# Paramount Unified School District

Educational Services

## Ethnic Studies

Course Outline

### **Overview**

This Ethnic Studies course is designed to develop an understanding of how race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture have shaped and continue to shape individuals and society in the United States. It is designed to provide students with the knowledge to achieve an understanding of and an appreciation for the various cultures in their community and the nation. This course aims to educate students to be politically, socially and economically conscious about their personal connections to local and global histories. By studying the histories of race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture, including the legacy of social movements and mass struggles against injustice, students will cultivate respect and empathy for individuals and solidarity with groups of people locally, nationally and globally to foster active social engagement and community building.

### **Course Content**

#### **Unit 1: Introduction to Ethnic Studies and Identity**

In this introductory unit, students explore both the history of the Ethnic Studies movement and the influences that have shaped and continue to shape students' own identities. Students learn the origins of Ethnic Studies as an academic discipline in California in 1969 as well as about current efforts to ban Ethnic Studies courses in Arizona schools. Students analyze scholarly literature on the origins, historical, and contemporary meanings of identities/names of African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x Americans, and Native Americans that have been assigned or forced upon them by dominant society (external forces) as well as the identities/names that these respective communities have self-determined and embraced (internal forces). Students will explore answers to the essential question: What is Ethnic Studies and how might our participation in the course positively influence our intellectual development, the improvement of our school culture and increase our community pride?

As students learn about the history and impact of Ethnic Studies, they also begin exploring their own identities in this unit. Students investigate the myriad influences that impact their identities and perceptions of themselves, including bias, stereotyping, gender, sexuality, geography, race, class, language, and immigrant status. To better understand these influences, students are introduced to frameworks and theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Critical Race Theory. They begin to study the concepts of systemic racism and institutional, interpersonal and internalized oppression in order to apply them to future units of study. Students continuously ask the essential questions: How

do we define our various intersectional identities: global, national, state, local and community? What has shaped and continues to shape who I am?

### Key Assignments

1. Students will begin journals that continue throughout the year-long course, used for reflecting on their own identities as well as their newfound understandings of others.
2. Using “I am Esperanza” by Sandra Cisneros as a model, students will write an autobiographical “I am” poem in which they reflect on how intersections of race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture have shaped their identities. Students will have choice in the way they choose to publish their poem (autobiography, visual essay, mural, performance art) as a way of answering the essential question: What has shaped and continues to shape who I am?
3. Students select and analyze examples of contemporary stereotyping in popular culture (advertisements, music, television programs, films) to understand how stereotypes are reproduced and perpetuated. Based on these investigations, students produce public service announcements for distribution in their schools that challenge particular stereotypes in terms of institutional, interpersonal and internalized oppression.
4. Students will first draw their own maps of the Los Angeles area based on their perception of where they believe different ethnicities and socio-economic classes live. They will then compare these maps with maps derived from 2010 census data. They will write a 1-page reflection on the similarities and differences between their perceptions of geography and the realities based on data, linking this back to how geography shapes ethnic and cultural identity.
5. As a culminating activity to end the unit, students will participate in a Socratic Seminar that focuses on the impact of Ethnic Studies on individuals and communities, the impact of stereotyping, the difference between race and ethnicity, race as a social construct and the impact of social media on identity. Students will have the opportunity to create their own questions as well as discuss questions posed by the teacher.

### **Unit 2: History of Immigration and Movement in the US**

In the second unit, students address the essential question: How did we get here? By analyzing the history of the US, California, Los Angeles, and Paramount and its surrounding cities, students gain an understanding of immigration policies throughout US history, identifying the push and pull factors of voluntary, forced, and refugee migration including the role of war, natural resources, and ideology in movement. Students look at the cultural, social and economic implications of immigration, including how waves of immigrants have been treated differently and how immigration policies and legal status influences the perceptions that people hold of immigrants and their rights. Students identify and analyze the historical and current contributions that immigrants make politically, culturally, socially and economically in the US and how various immigrant experiences

contribute to ethnic identity. Students also examine and analyze the processes of acculturation and assimilation, weighing both their potential positive and negative effects.

### Key Assignments

1. Students will continue their journals, using them to reflect on the impact of immigration and movement on culture, society, economics, and politics as well as the contributions made by various ethnic groups.
2. Students will research their own family history or that of another culture, including their history before the US, where entrance to the US occurred; the reasons behind immigration (push/pull factors); initial experiences related to settlement, economic issues and assimilation; how immigration policy affected the family/culture; migration patterns through the US over time; and how the culture has contributed to the overall American cultural experience today. Students will give a final multimedia presentation to share their research with their class. After the presentations, students will reflect on what they learned about other cultures or the differing experiences of immigrants from the same culture.
3. Students will interview an immigrant or migrant and address a specific issue to the ethnicity of the person being interviewed (i.e., immigration experience or experiences as a member of their ethnicity in school, etc.). The interview should be audio recorded and transcribed. Students must get a signed consent form to conduct the interview and will have the choice to create a PowerPoint, short film, visual presentation, design an illustrated comic book or write an essay as a final product. The final product can then be presented to the class and/or shared with the school.

### **Unit 3: Power and Oppression**

In this unit, students answer the essential question: To what extent do internal and external social, political and interpersonal structural controls shape the inequalities found in American society? Students focus on comparing how institutions, such as public education, the legal system, immigration system, health care system, housing system, labor system, prison/detention institutions and economic system have functioned over time to impact groups' oppression, identity and resistance. Students analyze institutional, interpersonal and internalized oppression as well as media stereotypes and the rights of the governed and oppressed. Students connect the learning from this unit to their own community and reflect on ways that structural controls, institutions and resistance have influenced their lives. To close out the unit and bridge to the next unit, students use critical thinking skills to begin to identify and evaluate the forms of resistance that specific groups use(d) to counter oppressive structural controls and institutions.

### Key Assignments

1. Students will continue their journals, using them to reflect on how institutions, media and stereotypes play a part in the oppression of groups of people.
2. Students will create a dominant narrative reference guide for how to evaluate the various narratives they encounter in their lives. Students should use this assignment to design a plan for how to determine a narrative's reliability motivation and bias.
3. Students will produce public service announcements for distribution in their schools that challenge particular stereotypes in terms of institutional, interpersonal and internalized oppression.
4. Students will reflect on their history, culture and identity by evaluating their consciousness around a specific institution or structure that has influenced their lives by creating a visual representation to illustrate their ideas (using educational applications like Canva or PowerPoint) and writing a reflection that highlights their forms of resistance.

### **Unit 4: Social Movement and Advocacy**

In this final unit, students study various past social movements, analyzing similarities and differences in the approaches taken by different groups in overcoming oppression to gain an understanding of the most effective techniques used in the past. Using this knowledge, students answer the essential question: How might we continue to promote positive identities as scholars and community members through our continued engagement in advancing our studies, strengthening our community and advocating in favor of ideas that counter racism and oppression? Students will synthesize what they have learned and develop a passion project around contemporary issues that interest them most.

### Key Assignments:

1. Students will continue their journals, using them to reflect on their roles in the social movements of today and how they can effectively advocate for themselves and others.
2. Students will compare at least two social movements with a small group, based on interest, and then verbally present information to the class. Following the presentations, students will complete a 1-page reflection paper on larger themes across multiple social movement groups and how different social groups support one another throughout history to the present day.
3. Through an in-class exploration, students will investigate community involvement on a local level (Consider: Mayor, School Site Council, Student govt., city council, school board, etc.). As an end product, students will engage in a discussion thread to share their learning. To engage more meaningfully, they will respond to others' posts.
4. As culminating activity for the course, students will select a contemporary social justice topic (e.g., racism, LGBTQ rights, immigration rights, access to quality health care, income inequality, War on Drugs, school-to-prison-

pipeline, poverty, religious persecution, access to equitable public education, and gangs and violence) to explore more deeply through a passion project. Students will conduct research to identify, evaluate and interpret an issue that needs to be addressed and pose a solution and plan of action that is connected to topics that were analyzed in a previous unit of study. Students will research multiple sources and current organizations to determine what social inequalities still exist and put their ideas into action through civic engagement. Students will be paired with a peer support partner throughout the research process. Projects might include: Proposing a bill or law, podcast, writing a song, creating art, designing a mural, website, social media campaign, photo series, blog, video, celebratory letter, critical letter, planning an event, etc. These projects will be presented in a gallery walk as an exhibition.

### **Books**

- *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* by Ronald Takaki
- *A Young People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn