



# Paramount Unified School District

Educational Services

## Introduction to Ethnic Studies

(Semester-Long 9th Grade Course)

Course Outline

### **Overview**

This Ethnic Studies course is designed to introduce 9th grade students to the concepts of identity, race, and intersectionality, with an aim to find commonalities in the struggle against injustice and to develop empathy for the plights of individuals and historically oppressed groups. After an overview of the history and movement of the four main ethnic groups covered by this course, African Americans, Latinx Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, students will learn to analyze the dominant narratives found in the history books of the present and past and compare them with counter narratives using primary source documents as a guide for filling in the excluded histories of these groups. The course concludes with a study of social movements of the past and present and a civic engagement project that will help students meet the criteria for the State Seal of Civic Engagement on their high school diploma.

### **Course Content**

#### **Unit 1: 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. As students learn about the origins 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. 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 semester-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 that challenge particular stereotypes in terms of institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppression.

## **Unit 2: Race**

In the second unit, students address the essential question: How have the experiences and contributions of different ethnic groups helped shape their identity and modern society? By analyzing the history of the immigration and migration of the four key ethnic groups in the US, students gain an understanding of the cultural, social, and economic implications, including how waves of immigrants have been treated differently and how immigration policies and legal status impact 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.

### 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.

## **Unit 3: Dominant Narrative vs. Counter Narrative**

In this unit students answer the essential question: What really happened in US History? Students will learn to recognize how the dominant narratives around underrepresented groups that are shared in history classes and textbooks are often untrue, misleading, or leave out entire parts of history. Students will learn to analyze multiple perspectives and use primary sources to discover the people and events often ignored by standard history books. They will learn how these dominant narratives have affected bias, stereotypes, and public view of the key ethnic groups and make connections to the previously learned concepts of institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppression.

### 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 that challenge particular stereotypes in terms of institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppression.

#### **Unit 4: Civic Engagement**

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 civic engagement 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. Through in-class exploration, students will investigate community involvement on a local level (Mayor, School Site Council, ASB., City Council, School Board, etc.). As an end product, students will engage in a discussion to share their learning.
3. As a culminating activity for the course, students will choose and define problems in their own communities, investigate root causes and possible solutions, develop and implement plans to address those problems, and reflect on their actions to help them develop identities as citizens with rights and responsibilities. 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 may choose to spearhead new initiatives or projects; alternatively, students may also choose to participate in projects that improve upon a pre-existing opportunity. Efforts may be undertaken individually, with classmates, or in partnership with community members and organizations. This project will help students meet the requirements to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement for their high school diploma.

#### **Text**

- *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* by Rebecca Steffoff and Ronald Takaki