



COTATI-ROHNERT PARK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Learning for a Lifetime – Committed to the Future

American Ethnic Studies Course Description UCOP PROPOSED for the 2025/2026 School Year – Rancho Cotate High School

Course Overview:

In this course, students engage with concepts of identity, history and movement of people, systems of power and social movements, and equity and civic engagement. Students will understand the politics of privilege and the historical impacts of ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppression, while furthering self-understanding and promoting self-empowerment. Specifically, students discuss how various demographic identifiers including race and ethnicity influence human experiences, as they develop a better understanding of others. Students learn about the historical treatment of people from differing identity groups, as well as the ways that differing racial and ethnic identities originate by studying significant events and people and supporting a community focus. Students discuss the current issues informing the opportunities for and constraints of people associated with differing communities and work toward greater inclusivity. While learning about inclusion of cultures, students develop interpersonal communication skills as they learn how differing groups pursue justice and equity while navigating the complexities of intersectionality. At the end of the course, students will participate in a civic engagement project.

Unit 1: Identity

Unit Summary: In this unit, students will explore the concept of identity, both personal and collective, and how it is shaped by culture, race, ethnicity, gender, language, and history. Through the lens of ethnic studies, students will examine how identity influences their lives and the world around them, including the ways systems of power and privilege impact individual and group identities. Students will reflect on their own identities, learn about the experiences of others, and investigate how identity plays a key role in social justice movements.

Required Assignment: Personal Creative Artifact Assignment

Students have the option to write either; a 2-3 page paper, a google slideshow, poster and/or collage, playlist, comic strip or comic book in order to create a personal artifact. An artifact is an object, document, or art piece that represents values, beliefs, and experiences. For this assignment, students create their own personal artifact that represents them. In their creative artifact, they must include four personal values (loyalty, honesty, security, etc.), and pick from a list of other topics to include in their project (ex: name story, academic or personal goals, types of music, personal successes, etc.). To begin, they start with a brainstorm activity and then jump into their final project.

Skills and content covered in the unit:

By the end of the unit, students will develop a deeper understanding of the complex factors that contribute to identity, appreciate diverse perspectives, and critically analyze how societal structures and narratives affect the development of identity.

Expected Student Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of this unit, students should know and/or be able to...
 - I can define Ethnic Studies in my own words.
 - I can articulate how identity impacts my experiences and the experiences of others (ES 1.1)



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- I can explain how intersectionality of identities contributes to individual and group identities (ES 1.2)

Sources:

Takaki, Robert. *A Different Mirror: For Young People*. New York: Triangle Square, 2012.

The Fight for Ethnic Studies. *PBS Learning Media*. <https://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/the-fight-for-ethnic-studies/asian-americans-video/>.

Pipes, Eliana. *Race, Ethnicity, Nationality and Jellybeans*. Youtube, 2016.

Standards Addressed:

R1.9-10.1, R1.9-10.3, R1.9-10.7, W.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.4, W.9-10.7, SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, ES 1.1, ES 1.2, ES 1.3

Unit 2: History and Movement

Unit summaries and assignments:

In this unit, students will examine the multifaceted experiences of immigrants to the United States, exploring how immigration has shaped American identity and democracy. Through historical analysis, discussions of current events, and the examination of diverse narratives, students will consider questions about land, citizenship, belonging, and the impact of immigration on national identity. This unit will also investigate how layered narratives—those of Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and long-standing citizens—create a complex American story. By the end of the unit, students will critically assess how immigration influences individual and collective identities, societal integration, and the principles of democracy.

Sample Assignment: The Great Migration. Examine nine (9) primary source documents that explain the push and pull factors that lead to the great migration.

- Source 1 - Excerpt from “Their Own Hotheadedness” speech by Benjamin Tillman.
- Source 2- Hughes, Langston (1949). “One Way Ticket”.
- Source 3 - Lynching Map Across the United States
- Source 4- The Great Migration map
- Source 5 - African Americans Workers at Ford Motor Company Kalinski, P. (2013, February 23). African American Workers at Ford Motor Company
- Source 6- Advertising Card from The Chicago League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes. As migrants filled Northern factories, groups offering social services handed out advertising cards. (University of Illinois at Chicago, The University Library, Special Collections Department, Arthur and Graham Aldis Papers)
- Source 7 - Jim Crow Laws in the South and photograph of segregation 2018 Photo: Lee, Russell. (1939, July). *Negro drinking at “colored” water cooler in streetcar terminal*. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Library of Congress. Jim Crow Laws. (n.d.).
- Source 8 - Help Wanted Sign: *The Chicago Defender*, December 1, 1917. *General Research and Reference Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library*.



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- Source 9 -Black Farmers in America, 1865-2000 The Pursuit of Independent Farming and the Role of Cooperatives Reynolds, B. J. (2002, October). Black Farmers in America, 1865-2000 The Pursuit of Independent Farming and the Role of Cooperatives.

Assessment: Write 1 Paragraph (4-7 sentences) explaining the PUSH Factors (what was pushing African Americans out of the South and to the North.) Refer to three (3) sources. Write 1 More Paragraph (4-7 sentences) explaining the PULL Factors (what was pulling African Americans out of the South and to the North.) Refer to three (3) sources.

Sources:

Takaki, Robert. *A Different Mirror: For Young People*. New York: Triangle Square, 2012.

Kendi, Ibram X. (2020) *Stamped: Racism, AntiRacism and You*. [New York], Hachette Book Group.

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Expected Learning Outcomes:

- I can critique how power, privilege, and oppression have historically affected marginalized groups. (ES. 2.1)
- I can critically assess how immigration influences individual and collective identities, societal integration, and the principles of democracy.
- I can identify and evaluate the bias of a source document and examine the historical background of the author

Standards Addressed: RI.9-10.1, RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.6, W.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.7, W.9-10.8, W.9-10.9, SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3, ES 2., ES 2.3

Skills and content covered in the unit:

Students will analyze the content of the primary source documents and determine the context of each of the primary sources. Students demonstrate their ability to interpret meaning from the primary source documents from the historical perspective of the document. Students will extract details from the documents in order to answer the questions that are provided to them. They will connect the evidence from the documentation and connect it to the broader historical ideas.

By the end of this unit, students should know and/or be able to...

- Critical Thinking and Interpretation: Students analyze the content, tone, purpose, and context of the primary source. They demonstrate their ability to interpret meaning, identify biases, and evaluate the reliability and perspective of the document.
- Evidence-Based Reasoning: Students extract specific details or quotes from the document to support their interpretations and arguments. This shows they can connect textual evidence to broader historical or thematic ideas.
- Contextual Understanding: By situating the primary source within its historical, cultural, or social context, students show they understand the significance of the document and its relationship to larger events or movements.
- Comparison and Contrast: If comparing multiple sources, students articulate similarities and differences in perspective, purpose, or impact. This demonstrates higher-level analytical skills.
- Written and Verbal Expression: Through written responses, essays, presentations, or discussions, students articulate their analysis and understanding clearly and effectively, showing mastery of historical concepts and vocabulary.



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- Synthesis and Application: Students connect the primary source's themes or implications to contemporary issues, their own lives, or other disciplines, demonstrating the ability to apply their learning beyond the classroom.

As determined by ... Document Based Question (DBQ) assessments

Unit 3: Systems of Power & Social Movements

This unit examines the concepts of power, privilege, and oppression within society. Students will explore how power dynamics function in different social contexts, understanding who benefits from privilege and how systems of oppression affect marginalized groups.

Sample Assignment: The FBI's War on the Black Freedom Movement

Students will read the excerpts from the following documents:

- Goldfield, David, et al. 2005. *The American Journey: A History of the United States*. 3rd ed.
- Vol. 2. Pearson. Henretta, James A., David Brody, and Lynn Dumenil. 2006. *America: A Concise History*. St. Martin's.
- McClenaghan, William. 2005. *Magruder's American Government*. Pearson.
- Nash, Gary. 2004. *American Odyssey: The 20th Century and Beyond*. McGraw Hill. PBS. 1990. "A Nation of Law? (1968–1971)" Eyes on the Prize. Produced by Henry Hampton. Blackside.
- August 25, 1967, memo from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, initiating COINTELPRO against civil rights organizations.
- January 22, 1969, memo about FBI-created factionalism in the Nation of Islam.
- October 27, 1967, memo suggesting legal harassment of a Nation of Islam grade school.
- Sept. 27, 1968, memo from W. C. Sullivan to G. C. Moore, describing the Black Panther Party as the "most violence prone organization . . . now operating in the United States," with FBI plans to create factionalism within the party.
- December 1, 1964, memo to W. C. Sullivan from J. A. Sizoo, about "taking steps to remove King from the national picture."
A clean, unredacted version of the letter sent to King encouraging him to commit suicide.
- March 8, 1968, memo suggesting misinformation leaflets be distributed in Baltimore to combat the influence of new SCLC offices opening there.
- October 10, 1968, memo from W. C. Sullivan to G. C. Moore, in which a "media source" is sought "to help neutralize extremist Black Panthers and foster a split between them and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee."
- July 10, 1968, memo proposing false information be used to "convey the impression that [Stokely] CARMICHAEL is a CIA informant" and "would spread the rumor in various large Negro communities across the land."
- The floor plan of Fred Hampton's apartment, as drawn by an FBI informant.

Students will take notes on the following questions as they read:

- Who or what is being targeted? What methods and tactics of harassment are described?

Assesment: Students write a piece related to the Church Committee report.



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The report concludes, in part: The findings which have emerged from our investigation convince us that the government's domestic intelligence policies and practices require fundamental reform. . . . The Committee's fundamental conclusion is that intelligence activities have undermined the constitutional rights of citizens.

After reading this statement, discuss which constitutional rights the report might be referring to; students have recently studied government, so it doesn't take long for them to recall the Fourth Amendment's privacy protections, the First Amendment's speech and expression protections, and the Fifth Amendment's due process protections. We also use this discussion to recall examples from our investigation of the COINTELPRO documents that demonstrate the government infringing on these rights. Finally, I ask students to use the committee's statement as the thesis for some in-class writing.

Writing prompts:

Based on the documents you read and the film you watched, write at least two supporting paragraphs for the excerpt from the Church Committee's conclusions. In order to do this you will need to:

1. Identify protections in the Bill of Rights that were denied or abused by COINTELPRO.
2. Identify examples from the COINTELPRO documents or the film that prove that the rights of activists were abused.
3. Explain and analyze how the evidence in the documents proves that a constitutional injustice occurred.

Lesson Plan source: <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/cointelpro-teaching-fbis-war-black-freedom-movement/>

By the end of this unit, students should know and/or be able to...

- I can analyze current issues impacting African, Asian, Latino, and Indigenous Americans.
- I can explain how systems of power impact the experiences of African, Asian, Latino, and Indigenous Americans.
- I can Investigate and critique how power, privilege, and oppression have historically affected marginalized groups.
- I can analyze how systems of power impact individuals based on race, ethnicity, gender, and other social categories.
- I can discuss the positive and negative effects of desegregation

As determined by...

- Document Based Question (DBQ) assessments

Skills and content covered in the unit

Standards Addressed: RI.9-10.1, RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.6, W.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.7, W.9-10.8, W.9-10.9, SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3, ES 3.2, ES 4.1, ES 4.2

- **ES 3.2:** Examine how marginalized groups have historically organized to challenge and resist systems of oppression, including social justice movements related to identity and culture.
- **ES 4.1:** Explore the ways in which marginalized communities have maintained and transformed their identities in response to systemic oppression and injustice.
- **ES 4.2:** Encourage students to engage in actions that promote equity, social justice, and community empowerment.



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When you see *Unit Assignment*, think of how you would answer, “How do your students demonstrate learning in this assignment?”

Students will write two supported paragraphs to formalize their thinking including:

1. Identify protections in the Bill of Rights that were denied or abused by COINTELPRO.
2. Identify examples from the COINTEL-PRO documents or the film that prove that the rights of activists were abused.
3. Explain and analyze how the evidence in the documents proves that a constitutional injustice occurred.

Through examining FBI documents, students learn the scope of the FBI’s COINTELPRO campaign to spy on, infiltrate, discredit, and disrupt all corners of the Black Freedom Movement. Students will fill out a graphic organizer with their notes on each primary source document from the FBI program as they read the documents. Students will explain the ways that the FBI program violated the Constitution’s Bill of Rights in several paragraphs as a final product demonstrating their understanding of the program and its violations. Students will cite from the primary source documents and the Bill of Rights to demonstrate the violations specifically.

Sources:

- Viva La Causa. *Zinn Education Project*. Web. 2024. <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/viva-la-causa/>
- Delano Manongs. *PBS*. Web. <https://www.pbs.org/video/kvie-viewfinder-delano-manongs/>
- Ladd. C. *Up Heartbreak Hill - Lesson Plan: Factors in a Successful College Experience*. PBS, 2012. We. 2016. <https://pov-tc.pbs.org/pov/downloads/2012/pov-upheartbreakhill-lesson-plan.pdf>

Unit 4: Equity & Civic Engagement

Unit summaries and assignments: This unit focuses on understanding how social movements have confronted various forms of discrimination and oppression throughout history and into the present. Students will explore key historical and contemporary movements, examining the tactics, challenges, and achievements of individuals and groups striving for equity and justice. Through case studies, students will investigate unresolved debates on rights and justice, analyzing why certain dilemmas persist and how they connect to current societal issues. Students will also engage in discussions and activities around the difference between equality and equity, developing a nuanced understanding of these concepts and why they matter. As a culminating project, students will identify ways to make an impact in their communities, learning skills and tools for creating positive social change and becoming informed, engaged citizens.

Required Assignment: Students will complete a County Solutions Action Plan in which they examine the broad context of issues and the role of the state, county, and other levels of government to focus on bringing about local change. They will identify issues and choose one issue that impacts local communities, analyze new articles about the issue, and describe the current state of the issue (i.e. who the issue impacts, what is currently being done to address the issue, groups that are in support or opposed). They will then learn about various policy options and determine the policy they think best addresses the issue. They will develop a plan to advocate for



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Possible topics to focus on, with an emphasis on one or more of the four groups (African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, Indigenous Americans):

- education/dropout rates/access to higher education, housing availability, income inequality, School-to-prison pipeline, unemployment, access to healthcare, substance abuse rates, poverty, workplace discrimination
- Product options: Writing letters to congressmen, written proposal to school principal/school board/city council, virtual meeting with senator/city mayor/board of supervisors, letter to the editor, volunteering at a local organization, coordinating an action with a RCHS student club or SSU student group, PSA or video, another effort to raise awareness, etc...

Expected Student Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of this unit, students should know and/or be able to...
 - I can examine how marginalized groups have historically organized to challenge and resist systems of oppression, including social justice movements related to identity and culture
 - I can explore the ways in which marginalized communities have maintained and transformed their identities in response to systemic oppression and injustice.
 - I can engage in actions that promote equity, social justice, and community empowerment.
 - I can participate in one or more informed civic engagement project(s) that address real-world problems and require students to identify and inquire into civic needs or problems, consider varied responses, take action, and reflect on efforts (Seal of Civic Engagement).

Sources:

- State and Local Governments. *iCivics*. Web. 2024. <https://ed.icivics.org/curriculum/state-and-local-governments?back-ref-search=&back-ref-filter=grades%3A41572>
- ‘Like becoming a refugee again’: They paid for their crimes. The US deported them anyway. *The Guardian*. 2023. Web. 2024 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/17/cambodia-prison-sentence-deportation>
- The Long Struggle for Indigenous People’s Day. *Facing History & Ourselves*. 2020. Web. 2024. <https://www.facinghistory.org/ideas-week/long-struggle-indigenous-peoples-day>

By the end of this unit, students should know and/or be able to...

- I can examine how marginalized groups have historically organized to challenge and resist systems of oppression, including social justice movements related to identity and culture.
- I can explore the ways in which marginalized communities have maintained and transformed their identities in response to systemic oppression and injustice.
- I can engage in actions that promote equity, social justice, and community empowerment.

Skills and content covered in the unit:

By the end of this project, students will have an action plan that they could actually carry out in the community to make positive change related to an issue they care about. Each student will have a proposal, strategy and starter kit of material that can be used to gather support for their idea. Even if students don’t actually carry out their plans, they will



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come away knowing exactly what to do when they want to take action on issues in the future. Students will assemble a paper or digital portfolio to present their work on this project.