



LIBERATED ETHNIC STUDIES

MODEL CURRICULUM COALITION

[Link to Slides](#)

Questioning Common Sense: Hegemony and Normalization

Time: Four to Five 60 minute sessions

Grade Level: 7th-12th

Purpose (What will students learn from this lesson?):

- Students will understand how normalization (how people, places, things, and ideas become normal or not normal) affects them and others.
- Students will understand that normalization is a way to take power from people by dehumanizing them.
- Students will understand how to identify normalization in themselves, their classroom, classroom materials, and in society.
- Students will understand how normalization, implicit bias, common sense and consent work together to create hegemony.
- Students will understand how to stop normalization through questioning common sense and regain their power to name the world in their own terms.

Unit Enduring Understandings Alignment:

- We understand and critique the relationship between white supremacy, racism, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, xenophobia, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, ageism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression.
- We understand that while studying forms of oppression, it is also critical to engage ourselves in developing critical consciousness, reclaiming hope and healing.

Lesson Guiding Questions:

- What does normalization look like? Sound like?
- What happens when there is normalization in our classroom, school, and society?
- How does normalization make some people seem less human?



- How can we question common sense so that “normalized” people are not unfairly favored and continue to name the world in their interests? How can we give respect to all?

Cultural Wealth (Yosso, p. 78):

- I know how to question common sense to stop normalization and hegemony and humanize with respect.
- My whole being can help tell me when normalization, implicit bias and dehumanization or humanization is happening.

Ethnic Studies Principles Alignment:

- *Principle 1:* cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and people of color.
- *Principle 5:* challenge imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels.

Standards Alignment:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6

Materials:

1. Video from the New York Times on Implicit Bias “Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism” (3 minutes) with multilingual closed captioning preferred. 2. Music Video Soy Yo from Bomba Estéreo with closed captions. (Lyrics in Spanish here and in English here.) 3. Slide deck on normalization and hegemony with photos of normalized and not-normalized people and places, video links and graphic organizers. 4. T-charts and response charts in the slide deck.	5. Computer/LCD projector/Internet access 6. Electronic whiteboard and dry erase markers or chart paper and markers.
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Modifications, Accommodations, Resources for Multilingual Students:



• Modify the slidedeck to respond to the needs of your classroom. Add photos and examples that are familiar to your students and that will be responsive to your students. • Have bilingual students sit next to monolingual students to translate as needed.	• You can shorten or lengthen this lesson depending on the needs of your class.
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Critical Vocabulary:

CRITICAL VOCABULARY	Definition and Rationale for choosing this word, phrase, or concept	Idea for pre-teaching or front-loading the concept.
normalization	how people, places, things, and ideas become normal or not normal	Discuss: Which is abnormal? Who should decide? What does normal mean?
implicit bias	unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that can manifest in the criminal justice system, workplace, school setting, and in the healthcare system.	Show the video “Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism” to explain implicit bias. Explain implicit bias is like an invisible fog or virus that changes us without us knowing it.
dehumanize	To treat someone in a way that makes them seem like they are not as good as other people by treating them like they are not human, depriving them of their rights.	Offer age-appropriate examples of dehumanization from the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights .
hegemony	How people with power make their ideas seem like common sense so others consent to their will (what they want) allowing those in power to keep their power.	Use the graphic organizer that shows the parts that make up hegemony to preview the



		concept.
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C1: Cultural Ritual and/or Energizer

Title: Link-Up: Two Feelings *The steps in this section (C1, Steps 1-3)) should be used prior to each class session until all of the steps of the entire lesson are complete.

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Step 1	Sit in a circle on the floor or in chairs. Land Acknowledgement: We remind ourselves that we are sitting on the land of the (Indigenous Land) in [City, State]. We do this to remember and how we can respect the people of this land past and present.	2 minutes
Step 2	Ancestor Acknowledgement. We think about and bring those who have come before us to help guide what we do everyday. Is there someone you know about that you bring with you in your heart today? Share with the class who you bring with you to your learning or work today and why?	1-2 minutes
Step 3	Link-Up: Two Feelings: Tell students that we are going to play a game called Link-Up. They can link-up physically (e.g.link arms) or verbally. Tell the class, "I am Mx. ____ and I feel [feeling] today." Then share the sentence frame: "My name is ____ and I ALSO feel ____ AND [another feeling]." Any other person who also feels the same way uses the frame and adds another feeling to the sentence until everyone who wants to share or the whole class has shared their two feelings.	10 minutes
Step 4	Explain that the activities and reflection in which we will all be engaging in the next few days will lead us to understanding how hegemony works. Share (or review) the slide "How Hegemony Works" and identify the terms students will learn <i>without</i> going into detail. Concepts you will be able to talk about are: implicit bias, normalization, common sense and consent, of course, hegemony too.	5 minutes

C2: Critical Concepts



Title: “What are Implicit Bias, Normalization, Common Sense and Consent? What is dehumanization and hegemony?”

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Step 1	Share the images in the next slides and ask volunteers the question and discuss their responses: • Which is a normal family? Which is a different family? Why?: All of these families are normal to those families. Discuss: If something is normal then something else is not normal. But this is not true. • What is normal food? What is different food? Why?: You may be less familiar with some of these foods. You may be vegetarian or vegan or kosher. You may not eat pork. Those foods are normal for the people who eat them. • What is a normal school? What is a different school? Why?: All of these children are learning. Some inside, some outside, some in classrooms and some online. Some are learning about the living conditions of migrant laborers. Which school did you see as normal? What does that mean for the schools that are “different”? • Who is a normal doctor and who is different? Who is a normal teacher and who is different? Why? • Who is a normal American? Who is a different American? Why?: It’s very important that people feel they belong in this land we now call the United States and that they are treated fairly. As you look at these pictures of people who live here, think about what you think what an American means?	10-15 minutes
Step 2	Ask students to share what it looks like and sounds like when you are treated like you are different? Offer a couple of examples in the t-chart in the slidedeck. Record their responses.	10-15 minutes
Step 3	Discuss: Why do people talk about things as normal or different? Using the previous images and student discussion about the images, discuss the reasons why people categorize things as normal and different. Show that people, places, ideas, and things that people call different are ignored and not listened to or taken seriously. People that we decide are different don’t get to make choices, have less freedom, and in the end have less power and that this is not fair.	10-15 minutes
Step 4	Show the slide: What is normalization? Share the definition with students. Offer examples of how over time through repetition certain people, places, things and ideas have become normalized. For example, can you call a place that does not have tests a school? Those in positions of leadership	5-10 minutes



Step 5	have normalized that tests are a good way to measure how smart you are. But, perhaps, projects or conversations are the best way for you to show your intelligence. Maybe a student has test anxiety and they do not do their best on a test. Ask the class to give examples of other things that have been normalized in school and society (e.g. boys are better at math than girls etc.)	
	Work with students to fill out the “Normalization and Power” chart that asks students to identify aspects of difference that are normalized and are considered not normal. Explain that there are many normalized people, places, things and ideas. Explain that the normalized things get power from being normalized but those things that are not normalized have less power. Example of normalized/privileged groups: white, male, US citizens, standard English speakers, Christians, wealthy class, heterosexual, adults, able-bodied, business owners etc. Students may have more specific school-based examples like wearing expensive clothes, having a certain type of phone as a sign of class etc. Offer the examples and discuss how the normalized people and characteristics gain more power through their connection with normalcy. We need to question the idea of normalcy to make school and society more fair.	20 minutes
	Normalization leads to implicit bias. Implicit biases are unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that can manifest in the criminal justice system, workplace, school setting, and in the healthcare system. Introduce the 3 minute implicit bias video “Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism” by the New York Times. We are going to watch a video that describes implicit bias. Play the video.	5 minutes
	Ask students how it feels when someone treats them like they are different or not normal or you are the target of implicit bias? Offer examples they may be familiar with. Explain that you would like them to talk about their thoughts, emotions, feelings in their body, and how they think other people feel when people are treated differently or as if they are not normal. There are many ways we can tell when someone is not being treated fairly. We might think, “Wait. That’s not fair.” We might feel sad. We might get a tight feeling in our stomach. We might look at our friend who knows it’s not right either. Ask for volunteers. Record their responses in the chart under the correct column: thoughts, emotions, body feelings, and other people feel.	10-15 minutes
Step 8	Introduce the concept of dehumanization. Show the slide with the definition: to treat someone in a way that makes them seem like they are not as good as other people by treating them like they are not human, depriving them of their rights. Choral read the word and the definition. When we say one	10 minutes



	thing is normal, we are also saying that another is <i>less</i> normal or even <i>not</i> normal. When we are talking about people, we dehumanize them. When we say one thing is normal, we are also saying that another is <i>less</i> normal or even <i>not</i> normal. When we are talking about people who we say are not normal, we dehumanize them. Imagine doing this to an entire generation of people. It's a long term process that strips you of your humanity bit by bit. Your humanity is your religion, your culture etc. It starts when you are little and can happen over and over until...imagine you are an 80 year old man and what happens after years of dehumanization? Then think about what does dehumanization do to an entire group of people? Show the next slide about the impact of dehumanizing groups of people. Explain: When we dehumanize groups of people, we make them seem less human, and then people feel okay about harming them and making them suffer. Here is an example of migrant families coming to the United States and how they are treated like they are less than human.	
Step 9	Remind students of the 4 concepts we are learning to understand hegemony (How people with power make their ideas seem like common sense so others consent to their will (what they want) allowing those in power to keep their power.) Now that we understand normalization and implicit bias, we need to understand common sense and consent. First, we need to understand common sense the way that Antonio Gramsci, an Italian philosopher, understood it: the beliefs that many people around us think are true that we don't question. Review the examples on the slide. The past is the past. (History is over.); It's best to be unbiased.; Women are weaker than men.; The rich are successful.; It's your own fault if you are poor.; Schools are fair to everyone.) Invite volunteers to share additional examples. Next with the next slide, explain that we could question or disagree with the normalizations, implicit biases, and "common sense" we use every day, but what makes these ideas hegemonic is that we consent to them or agree with them or go along with them. Use the next slide to give an example of normalization, implicit bias, common sense and consent about hegemonic ideas about enslavement.	20 minutes



C3: Community Collaboration and/or Critical Cultural Production

Title:

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Step 1	Pair up students with one copy of the How Hegemony Works graphic organizer.	2 minutes
Step 2	We are going to dig into this chart and be able to give our own examples of hegemony. Remind students that hegemony is How people with power make their ideas seem like common sense so others consent to their will (what they want) allowing those in power to keep their power. Choose a topic, a stereotype, and figure out how it works to create a hegemonic belief, an unquestioned, commonly accepted normalization that keeps those in power in power and those who are not normalized in lower positions with less or no power to define the world. With your partner, fill out the “How Hegemony Works” slide. First discuss and choose the topic or stereotype you want to explore. It is likely a key unquestioned belief, value, or story many people believe about that topic. Use the sentence starters for each of the four parts of hegemony to identify how normalization, consent, common sense and implicit bias all contribute to hegemonic beliefs. Ask students to work together to fill out the chart with their partner. The search for and choose an image that represents this hegemonic belief and paste it in the slide.	20-30 minutes
Step 3	Invite partners to share their chart and how they decided on the unquestioned belief they chose.	10-15 minutes

C4: Conclusive Dialogue/Critical Circular Exchange

Connection : How is	We can create counter-hegemonic stories that disrupt hegemony based on celebrating what might not be	
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this relevant to students? How is it relevant to the unit? How do you bring back to the PURPOSE of the unit?	normal for others can be normal for each of us in our different home communities. Ask the students to share what is normal for them in their community that might not be normal for others? Invite a few volunteers to share. Introduce the music video “Soy Yo” by Bomba Estéreo with subtitles in Spanish. Explain that this is a music video about a girl who is proud of her identity and refuses hegemonic beliefs about her. As you watch, try to identify the normalizations, implicit biases, common sense and consent that this counter hegemonic story calls out. Multilingual students will be able to understand that the main character in the story is proud of who she is without lyrics. You can also post the lyrics in the languages of the students. After viewing the video ask students to share: What do I bring to the community that is normal for me? For example, fasting, not eating, might be a normal celebration for my community. As students share, celebrate the part of their culture that is normal and that they want people to recognize. What hegemonic beliefs do you plan to disrupt?	
	Turn and Talk: Take turns telling your partner (or the person sitting next to you): How can we question common sense so that “normalized” people are not unfairly favored and continue to name the world in their interests? How can we give respect to all and stop hegemonic thinking and actions? Volunteers share responses they heard from their partner.	10-15 minutes
Assessment: How will the students be assessed?	Explain that in our classroom we will work to question common sense and stop normalization and give respect to everyone. Here are some ways we can stop it using these sentence starters. Share the sentence starters (from the slide deck) and choral read them: In our classroom and school... ...we question common sense: “Is that true? How do we know?” ...we stop normalization: “Just because it happens a lot, doesn’t mean it’s normal or better or true.” ...we disagree when people are dehumanized: “I disagree!” ...we make implicit biases visible: “That’s an implicit bias.” ...we respect Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities: “I respect you and	5 minutes



	celebrate your community.”	
	Offer a few examples with the help of student volunteers. For example, a teacher says, “I don’t know why you are taking an ethnic studies class instead of a history class?” You can respond with, “I disagree that a traditional history class will respect BIPOC communities. That’s why I am taking ethnic studies, because I respect BIPOC communities.” Or, a classmate says, “That’s a bad neighborhood.” You can respond with, “Is that true? How do you know? What makes it bad? Is it possible that it's a good neighborhood?”	5 minutes
	Ask volunteers to think of a time their home community and they themselves were celebrated? Share how it feels when they are respected, humanized, and celebrated? How does it feel to be treated fairly, especially after you have been treated unfairly? Fill out the chart on the last slide in the slidedeck asking for their thoughts, emotions, body feelings, and how other people feel.	10 minutes
Evaluation: How will the effectiveness of this lesson plan be evaluated?	Throughout the year, prompt students to notice and speak up about normalization, implicit bias, common sense, and consent as well as hegemonic thinking and beliefs. Identify when you notice a student “name” the world on their own terms and when they show respect to people, places, things, and ideas that have been dehumanized.	ongoing

RESOURCES AND NOTES

- **Resources**

Hegemony: An [8 minute video](#) that explains Gramsci’s cultural hegemony.

Three minute **implicit bias** [video “Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism”](#) by the New York Times.

- **Worksheets and Handouts:**

Normalization and Power Graphic Organizer

How Hegemony Works worksheet for pairs

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