

From: Deborah Mendeloff
Sent: Monday, August 12, 2019 10:53 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Comments on proposed ethnic studies curriculum

- The Arab American Studies Course Outline within the Ethnic Studies Model curriculum is deeply problematic. It is highly politicized and not built on foundational scholarship necessary for the quality education our students deserve. It lacks cultural competency, nuance and sensitivity to student demographics.
 - We estimate that the state of California is home to some 236,000 Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent. The Iranian Jewish community in Los Angeles comprises an estimated 60,000 individuals, making them one of the largest Middle Eastern diasporic communities in the United States. Despite our community's numbers, we have been completely erased from the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.
 - The Arab American Studies Course curriculum, as it is currently written, fails to reflect Mizrahi demographics, needs and interests in the state of California.
 - The Arab American Studies Course violates a number of the Ethnic Studies Curriculum Guidelines
1. It is not *written in a language that is inclusive and supportive of multiple users* as it excludes and erases the experiences, perspectives, and voices of diverse Middle Eastern communities.
 2. It will fail *in promoting self and collective empowerment* of Coptic students, Bahai Students, Mizrahi Jewish students, Assyrian students, Iranian students, Kurdish students, Yazidi students and non-Muslim Middle Eastern students who together constitute a sizeable Middle Eastern demographic in California yet are entirely erased in the curriculum.
 3. The course will fail to *promote rigorous analysis of history, systems of oppression, and the status quo in an effort to generate discussions on futurity, and imagine new possibilities* as it only presents one Middle Eastern experience – that of Arab Muslims.
- The over-emphasis of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and the definition of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) in the Model Curriculum are both framed entirely from the vantage of proponents of BDS and fail to adhere to curriculum guidelines that require content to be taught in a manner that is “*balanced*“, “*inclusive*“, and reflective of “*different perspectives*.”
 - At a time of increased vulnerability for American Jews, it is essential that the State of California do its best to protect the unique needs and sensitivities towards American Jewish students.
 - We believe it is critical to remove the unbalanced definition of BDS from the glossary of terms and to include a working definition for antisemitism.

The Jewish people are not erasable. Israel is not erasable. Any curriculum should not be so political as to attempt to erase the history and experiences of an entire nation of people and

the country they call their own. Antisemitism is becoming a bigger and bigger problem in this country. The emphasis that is placed on the specific viewpoint of this curriculum will add to the scourge of antisemitism and does not belong in a school environment. Thank you.
Deborah Mendeloff