

## **Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum May 2019 Draft**

(Download and use to provide specific recommendations)

Include the chapter of the model curriculum, the page number, and line number(s) to ensure that the California Department of Education and Instructional Quality Commission can reference the content of the document when reviewing your comments. Please email this document as a Word document to [ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov](mailto:ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov). You may contact Kenneth McDonald, Education Programs Consultant, at [kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov](mailto:kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov) with any questions regarding this template or the public input process.

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p. 2 of the Glossary and Bibliography	Lara Goldberg	<p>The definition of the BDS movement is factually and historically inaccurate, inflammatory and anti-semitic. It describes BDS as a “is a global social movement that currently aims to establish freedom for Palestinians living under <b>apartheid conditions</b>.” This is, again, completely factually inaccurate and anti-semitic in that it demonizes the only Jewish state in the world. Only a little factual research would demonstrate that the “conditions” under which Palestinians live (in Israel, where all the citizens, Palestinian, Arab and Israeli, enjoy the same rights and there is an Arab party in the Israeli parliament, and outside of Israel proper, in Gaza and the West Bank). The definition also omits that BDS specifically does not seek peace in the region – it only seeks to harm Israel, it does not seek to hold Egypt and Jordan accountable for the harm they have done to the Palestinians (including the Egyptian wall with Gaza and the numerous massacres of the Palestinian people), BDS has ties to terrorist groups, BDS’s actions have harmed Palestinian people economically (as with the Soda Stream factory in the West Bank) showing that again, BDS is not a movement for the Palestinian people, but a movement solely to harm and demonize the only Jewish state in the world, and BDS members routinely harass and intimidate Jewish students on campuses all over the US, for no other reason than that they are Jewish. If my children are to study BDS, I would like the curriculum to reflect that BDS, while its stated goals may be to help the Palestinians, is nothing like that in reality. As many political movements, it started with a noble goal, but its purposes have been warped and its impact is not only harmful to Palestinians, but also anti-semitic to Israel and the Jewish people of the world. BDS promotes hate and division, not peace and inclusion, and seeks to end the only Jewish state in the world and to harass and intimidate Jewish people in the United States and worldwide.</p>
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<p>pp. 234, 237, 242, 256, and 264-269 of the Sample Course Models</p>	<p>Lara Goldberg</p>	<p>Similar comments about BDS. Also, when discussing “activists” like Linda Sarsour, there should be guidance to discuss her well-documented anti-Semitism and the calls to demonize the only Jewish state. Linda Sarsour has called for a “one state solution” which in practice would mean that the only Jewish state in the world would cease being a Jewish state. As a Jewish person and a parent of Jewish children, this is incredibly hurtful and frightening.</p> <p>The <a href="#">sample lesson plans</a> for the curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage teachers to highlight BDS and a pro-BDS group called Direct Action for Palestine, but no voices critical of their perspectives (p. 234).</li><li>• Promote a false equivalence between Israel's efforts to stop terrorists from entering communities to murder innocent people, and U.S. policies on the border with Mexico (p. 234).</li><li>• Use unclear language that implies "Israel-Palestine" as a whole is an Arab country (p. 237).</li><li>• Frame the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War as fact, with no alternative perspectives (p. 242).</li><li>• Encourage teachers to use a poem featuring harsh criticism of Israel, but no content offering a positive perspective about Israel or criticism of Palestinian leaders (p. 256, 264-269).</li></ul>
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General comment	Lara Goldberg	<p><b>I urge the state to add lessons about American Jews as an ethnic group, including those who fled the Holocaust, oppression in the Middle East, and discrimination in the former Soviet Union.</b></p> <p>The <a href="#">Introduction</a> of the proposed curriculum states that, "The implementation of Ethnic Studies presents an opportunity for teachers to... enable students to develop a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion, and aids in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism."</p> <p>Despite this stated goal, the curriculum does not feature a single lesson about the Jewish community, mentioning Jews only in passing. <b>With anti-semitism rising and ignorance about the Jewish people still a major problem in our society, the exclusion of Jews from this curriculum is deeply disappointing.</b></p>
General comment	Lara Goldberg	<p><a href="https://www.ins.org/proposed-anti-israel-ethnic-studies-curriculum-in-california-high-schools-has-jewish-community-on-alert/?fbclid=IwAR1omwTfOh7N7A-VCPm2kzDtzzfFs7vBJCJNwdMguTnLWCmgFkvPQDSXur0">https://www.ins.org/proposed-anti-israel-ethnic-studies-curriculum-in-california-high-schools-has-jewish-community-on-alert/?fbclid=IwAR1omwTfOh7N7A-VCPm2kzDtzzfFs7vBJCJNwdMguTnLWCmgFkvPQDSXur0</a></p> <p>I strongly suggest all personal involved at the minimum read this article. The issues are complex, but now days are very skewed one direction, causing people who are not familiar with any issues to form opinions that are based on lies and manipulation of truth.</p> <p>Copy/paste of an article:</p>

# Proposed anti-Israel ethnic-studies curriculum in California has Jewish community on alert

“[It] is deeply troubling—not only for its shocking omission of any mention of Jewish Americans or anti-Semitism or its blatant anti-Israel bias and praise of BDS, but for its clear attempt to politically indoctrinate students to adopt the view that Israel and its Jewish supporters are part of ‘interlocking systems of oppression and privilege’ that must be fought with ‘direct action’ and ‘resistance,’ ” said Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, head of the AMCHA Initiative.

**BY JACKSON RICHMAN AND SEAN SAVAGE**

The California State Capitol in Sacramento. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

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**(August 2, 2019 / JNS)** Hostility towards Israel and its supporters across college campuses throughout the United States and beyond—well-documented for years—has been the focus of pro-Israel groups. Now the anti-Israel movement may be officially trickling down into the high school system of the largest state in America.

A new ethnic-studies curriculum under proposal by the California Department of Education is being widely condemned by pro-Israel and Jewish groups, California lawmakers and activists for its “blatant bias against Israel.”

“The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum is deeply troubling—not only for its shocking omission of any mention of Jewish Americans or anti-Semitism or its blatant anti-Israel bias and praise of BDS, but for its clear attempt to politically indoctrinate students to adopt the view that Israel and its Jewish supporters are part of ‘interlocking systems of oppression and privilege’ that must be fought with ‘direct action’ and ‘resistance,’ ” Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, co-founder and director of the California-based AMCHA Initiative, told JNS.

California lawmakers have begun to raise alarms over the proposed curriculum, the result of a [2016 law](#) calling for the creation of a model ethnic-studies curriculum by the state’s board of education.

The proposed curriculum is currently going through public comment and is expected to go through revisions, followed by being approved next year by the board.

Members of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus, all Democrats, wrote a letter, dated July 29, 2019, to Soomin Chao, chair of the Instructional Quality Commission at the California Department of Education.

“As elected representatives and members of California’s diverse Jewish community, we have consistently prioritized efforts to promote inclusion and have strongly supported efforts to ensure that California

students understand our state’s complicated history and rich diversity,” they wrote. “However, we cannot support a curriculum that erases the American Jewish experience, fails to discuss anti-Semitism, reinforces negative stereotypes about Jews, singles out Israel for criticism and would institutionalize the teaching of anti-Semitic stereotypes in our public schools.”

**“The curriculum should reflect the true diversity of California’s population.”**

The Jewish caucus has been seeking support from the LGBT, Black and Hispanic caucuses, among other affected parties, to call for changes to the curriculum that would include removing the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an example of an ethnic-studies curriculum.

The caucus, which was alerted to the proposed curriculum by members of the Jewish community, is trying to be strategic in its approach, while respecting the reality of politics in California. It has also been having what members describe as productive conversations with Gov. Gavin Newsom’s office and state legislators.

Jewish groups, including in California, have also been monitoring the curriculum proposal with concern.

“We have concerns that include the curriculum’s omission both of Jews as an ethnic group and of anti-Semitism as a concept. The curriculum should reflect the true diversity of California’s population,” Jeremy Russell, director of marketing and communications at the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, told JNS.

“We are also concerned by the curriculum’s inclusion of the divisive BDS movement, which is inconsistent with the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Guidelines to ‘create space for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or citizenship, to learn different perspectives.’ ”

Russell said that the JCRC, as part of a coalition headed by the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California, has “communicated these and other serious concerns to the Instructional Quality Commission of the Department of Education of California.”

### **From anti-Israel rhetoric to provocative songs to troubling legislation**

The proposed curriculum section on “Arab American Studies Course Outline” contains a number of passages concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as “Direct Action Front for Palestine and Black Lives Matter,” “Call to Boycott, Divest, and Sanction Israel” and “Comparative Border Studies: Palestine and Mexico.” It also includes studying national figures such as Rep. [Ilhan Omar](#) (D-Minn.), Rep. [Rashida Tlaib](#) (D-Mich.), the late Columbia University professor [Edward Said](#), Women’s March leader [Linda Sarsour](#), the late radio personality [Casey Kasem](#), actress [Alia Shawkat](#) and the late White House



correspondent [Helen Thomas](#)—all of whom are associated with anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric, and in the case of the congresswomen, a push to enact [legislation punishing Israel](#).

According to the [sample course models](#), students also are introduced to concepts like the *nakba*, defined from Arabic as “the catastrophe,” which is used to describe the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel in May 1948 and the displacement of Arabs that occurred.

The curriculum also includes songs and poems containing questionable lyrics in relation to the Middle East.

One is a rap song by Iraqi-Canadian rapper Narcy: “The Real Arab Money.” Lyrics include, “In Palestine, kids can’t shop at these malls. ... My nation on my back, look how proud we are. ... America bustin’ nuts on Saudi Riyals.”

Another song, by Shadia Mansour, reads: “Get out Yankees from Latin America, French, English and Dutch, I love you Free Palestine.”

**“This is nothing more than an attempt by fringe activists to hijack the model ethnic-studies curriculum for California high schools in the service of radical political goals.”**

The course goes over Arab stereotypes, including one that views Palestinians as “terrorists” who “blow up airlines,” try to “destroy Israel” and attempt to “drive the Jews into the sea.” It also has a song with the

lyrics, “I love you, Free Palestine,” and “As the saying goes, ‘The situation must be threatened, but in reality, the situation must stop’; For every free political prisoner, an Israeli colony is expanded.”

The song also implicitly refers to Jews in saying that Israelis, most of whom are Jews, “use the press so they can manufacture,” a classic anti-Semitic trope that Jews control the media.

Currently, the curriculum is in a public comment period until Aug. 15, where residents can voice concerns.

At the same time, California is set to enact [resolution AB-331](#), which will require all California high school students to take at least a one-semester course in an ethnic-studies-based model curriculum, which consists of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel content, in order to graduate, effective from the 2024-25 academic year.

“If AB 331 is approved by the California state legislature in the coming days, every high school student in California will be required to take an ethnic-studies course based on such a model curriculum before graduating,” said Rossman-Benjamin. “It’s not hard to see how California college and university campuses, already reeling from the alarming number of anti-Zionist-motivated acts of aggression perpetrated against Jewish and pro-Israel students, could begin to see even more dramatic increases in these anti-Semitic acts.”

The resolution was introduced in January by Assembly Member Jose Medina, a Democrat who chairs the Assembly Higher Education Committee. It passed the Senate Education Committee in June.

Medina signed the July 29 Jewish caucus letter.

### **A history of anti-Israel views**

Three of the 18 members on the [advisory committee](#) in developing the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum include Gaye Theresa Johnson, Theresa Montano and Samia Shoman; are all academics documented for their anti-Israel sentiments and outright bias.

Johnson, who teaches Chicano and African-American studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, co-authored an [article](#) that included an interview with former Black Panther Party member Angela Davis that was sympathetic to Davis's views on Israel and BDS.

Montano, vice president of the California Teachers Association and a professor of Latino studies at California State University, Northridge, signed the U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel [petition](#) supporting the academic boycott of Israel.

Shoman, a manager of English Learner & Compliance programs in the San Mateo Union High School District, taught in the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED) program at San Francisco State University and talks widely on how to teach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the high school level.

She has further [signed](#) a petition accusing Israel of being a “racist,” “apartheid” state, engaging in “ethnic cleansing,” and treating Palestinians in “a savagely racist way,” in addition to calling on a local food store to boycott all Israeli goods.”

Johnson, Montano and Shoman did not respond to a request for comment.

**‘A disaster for all Jews in California’**

“This is nothing more than an attempt by fringe activists to hijack the model ethnic-studies curriculum for California high schools in the service of radical political goals,” Seth Brysk, the Anti-Defamation League’s central pacific regional director. “Educators and students should not be denied the opportunity to learn about the distinct culture of the Jewish community and its experience as an ethnic group in America.”

Brysk noted that while the ADL supported the initiative in principle, the organization “will vigorously push back against pedagogically unsound attempts to distort the purpose of the bill and erase core aspects of Jewish identity and the American Jewish experience.”

Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center told JNS that if this curriculum is left unchallenged, it would “be a disaster for all Jews in California.”

“BDS is the tipping point of a global campaign to demonize, weaken and ultimately do away with the Jewish state. Its fundamental anti-Semitism has been called out by the German Bundestag. It is opposed by the vast majority of Democrats and Republicans,” he said.



Students with UC Berkeley's "Bears for Israel" hold a counter-demonstration at a Students for Justice in Palestine rally. Credit: Bears for Israel via Facebook.

While Cooper said his organization is not opposed to a curriculum about ethnic groups, he is concerned about the imbalance with the specific Palestinian narrative in this case.

“There much more than Palestinian talking points, whose leaders have institutionalized victimhood as their core identity. All this comes at a time when many Arabs from the Gulf are beginning to normalize their

interaction with the Jewish world, including Israelis. Any curriculum should focus on all Arab nations and celebrate those that have religious tolerance as a norm, like Bahrain—not, unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority.”

“I hope,” said Cooper, “that the very diverse Jewish community here in California will oppose any state-mandated curriculum that validates or promotes anti-Semitism.”

Similarly, StandWithUs CEO Roz Rothstein said that the Jewish people should also be included in any ethnic-studies curriculum as a historically oppressed people.

“It is outrageous that an effort to teach students about marginalized communities is being used to promote a campaign of hate against Israel,” she told JNS. “Furthermore, Jews should be included as a historically oppressed people who have a right to self-determination in their ancestral home. The State of California must modify this curriculum to remove anti-Israel bias and include education about the Jewish community.”

SWU sent out [an action alert](#) on Friday morning.

In a statement, the American Jewish Committee remarked that the curriculum excludes Jews and others, in addition to being historically inaccurate.



“The proposed mandatory ethnic-studies curriculum inexplicably snubs Jews and other ethnic groups as it falls woefully short on inclusiveness of California’s diverse population,” AJC Los Angeles chief of staff Dganit Abramoff and AJC Northern California Rabbi Serena Eisenberg told JNS. “It mischaracterizes Jewish history and identity, especially Mizrahi Jews, who comprise a significant portion of the state’s Jewish population; neglects the history and scope of anti-Semitism; and demonizes the State of Israel.”

**“It mischaracterizes Jewish history and identity, especially Mizrahi Jews.”**

“We urge the State Senate to revise the legislation establishing this curriculum to include safeguards against biased and inaccurate educational guidelines,” they continued. “The State’s Department of Education should carefully review the full contents of the draft curriculum, which will require significant revisions for accuracy. Finally, the current draft adopts politically tendentious views on race and identity which should not be taught as unchallenged truths in our state’s public schools.”

“California needs to offer its students an opportunity to understand fully the role of ethnicity, race and religion in the life of all its citizens, especially those previously ignored,” added Abramoff and Eisenberg. “But this proposed curriculum is not even close to that.”

Club Z executive director Masha Merkulova told JNS, “The proposed California curriculum intentionally excludes Jews as an ethnic group that has faced oppression; presents a one-sided narrative of the only Jewish state; and provides a mouthpiece for the bigoted BDS movement.”

“We are now witnessing the result of decades of complacency and passiveness in our society when it comes to discrimination against the Jewish community,” she continued. “This is not a Jewish issue; this should be a concern for every American. We must act before anti-Semitism becomes institutionalized in our public schools.”

Club Z launched a [Change.org petition](#) think week, calling on the California state legislature and Newsom to not adopt the proposed curriculum. At press time, it had 182 signatures.

**‘There is a rot that has taken firm root’ in university classrooms**

Observers see the situation in the ethnic-studies curriculum as a result of anti-Israel bias that is “trickling down” from college campuses to high schools.

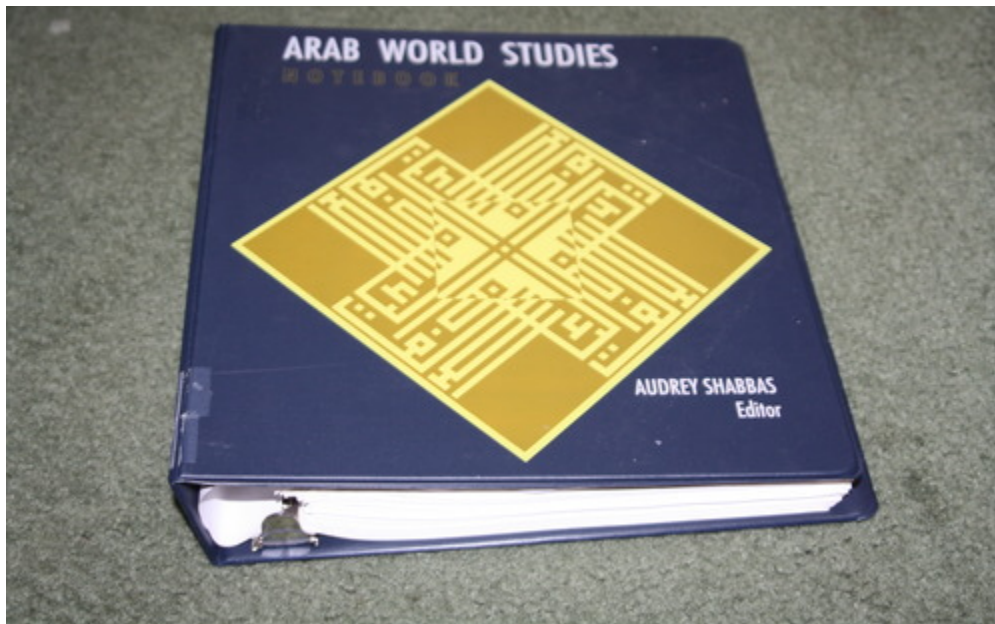
The Endowment for Middle East Truth has been studying the problem and trying to utilize the legislative process to make changes in the teaching of Middle Eastern Studies at the college level for a decade, its founder and president, Sarah Stern, told JNS.



“This one-sided, rigid dogma has trickled down from the university classroom to teachers of kindergarten through 12th grade in many ways—some subtle and some not quite so subtle,” she said. “Unfortunately, there is a rot that has taken firm root, heavily biased against Israel in most university classrooms.”

Indeed, other communities across the North America have been dealing with anti-Israel bias found in its curriculum.

Syracuse University political-science professor Miriam Elman described this phenomenon as a “negative feedback loop.”



The anti-Israel “Arab World Studies Notebook,” pictured, has been used to educate Massachusetts students in the Newton schools. Photo Credit: Amazon.

“Not only does anti-Israel hostility on college campuses influence the next generation of high school teachers, but these high school teachers are in turn sending kids up to college with a misinformed view of Israel,” she said at a talk earlier this year, discussing the biased curriculum and textbook use in Newton, Mass., hosted by the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA).

“Exposure of this radical educational initiative is vital so that it does not spread to other states,” Steve Stotsky, senior research analyst with CAMERA, told JNS. “The curriculum politicizes the education of America’s children. Particularly insidious are efforts to inject anti-Israel indoctrination, including support for the anti-Semitic BDS movement. The material is prejudicial, devoid of factual content and has no place in public-school education.”

Similarly, Asaf Romirowsky, executive director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, said the proposed study represents a “one-sided politicized curriculum, especially as it relates to Israel and the Middle East.”

Romirowsky said that ethnic studies at universities, in particular, have a “long history of supporting the fallacious, ahistorical BDS movement—something we have witnessed in California.”

For example, when an anti-Israel student-taught course at the University of California at Berkeley called “Palestine: A Settler Colonial Analysis” was re-approved by dean of social sciences Carla Hesse following a recommendation by the Department of Ethnic Studies.

As such, Romirowsky said that this, too, is an example of the “trickle-down” effect of anti-Israel bias going from college campuses to high schools.

“This is not some big push from California,” Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel told JNS. “This is about a small group of people who drafted this curriculum, and we’re going to get it fixed.”