

From: Neil Achtman
Sent: Sunday, August 9, 2020 10:07 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] feedback on ethnic studies model curriculum

Hello,

I'm writing to provide feedback on the Draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum posted at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/cc/cd/aug2020iqcagenda.asp>.

In Chapter 3, it states (emphasis added):

This course can explore a broad range of topics and events pertaining to the Asian American and Pacific Islander experiences, and examine their contributions to U.S. history. Topics may include: immigration, intergenerational conflict, the myth of the model minority, the internment of Japanese Americans, U.S. Supreme Court Case *Lau v. Nichols* regarding the right to an equal education, **the unique experiences of Arabs and other Middle Easterners**, Filipina/o/x, South Asians, Southeast Asians, East Asians, Pacific Islanders, and U.S. colonialism and imperialism in the Pacific.

I'm opposed to explicitly mentioning the Arab experience while leaving unmentioned other groups which have significant populations in and contributions to California. Within California, Arabs make up at most 33% of the population of Middle Eastern descent. For example, there are 600,000 Armenians and 500,000 Persians living in California -- why are their unique experiences not worth mentioning? Many individuals from those groups immigrated to California to escape persecution by Arab majorities in various countries in the Middle East, so to leave them out of the Model Curriculum while highlighting the Arab community is insensitive. Even outside of the Middle East, no other individual group is mentioned apart from Filipino: for example, it talks about East Asians, not Chinese or Korean.

Per the State Board of Education's Standards and the Guidelines of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum itself, the Curriculum must

"accurately and equitably represent the cultural and racial diversity of California so it is balanced". Thus, I propose that unless the Model Curriculum will be enumerating all of the ethnic groups who live in and contribute to California, it instead should mention regions:

"..., the unique experiences of Middle Easterners, South Asians, Southeast Asians, East Asians, Pacific Islanders, and..."

Furthermore, the UC-approved course outline has courses that discuss Arab/Muslim Americans, while leaving out the experiences of non-Arab and non-Muslim Middle Eastern Americans, such as Assyrians, Yazidis, Armenians, and Jews. There is no course discussing anti-Semitism, but instead there is one course which refers to the "racial privilege" of Jewish Americans, thus ignoring the steady rise of anti-Semitism in this country:

Students will write a paper detailing certain events in American history that have led to Jewish and Irish Americans gaining racial privilege.

The approved list of courses should include units discussing the experiences of other Americans of Middle Eastern descent, so that students have the opportunity to learn about the full diversity of California's communities and experiences.

Thank you.

-Neil