

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. You may contact Kenneth McDonald, Education Programs Consultant, at kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov with any questions regarding this template or the public input process.

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Glossary	Benjamin Cosman Graduate student, University of California San Diego	page 2, lines 30-40 B is for bias, bigotry, and some other basic Ethnic Studies terms, I would have thought. But it turns out B is only for BDS, a strange harbinger of the bias that seems to pervade this document. This is a California Ethnic Studies course, which one would presume would draw its examples from California's history, and then from American society as a whole. But instead there is a pervasive emphasis on boycotting a small, faraway country full of Jews. Odd.
Glossary	Benjamin Cosman Graduate student, University of California San Diego	page 10, line 249 BDS is a divisive, racist movement that flies an anti-racist flag, yet this is one of the two examples given for liberation movements. BDS is an anti-liberation movement (Zionism was the liberation movement, recall), but if we squint just so, we can almost see it as a liberation movement, hence another chance to tout BDS, a foreign boycott with no connection to California, in the glossary of a California education curriculum. Seriously?

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Arab American Studies Course Outline	Benjamin Cosman Graduate student, University of California San Diego	page 234, lines 4956-4958 Is it Arab Americans who are obsessed with BDS, or is it someone who had a hand in developing this curriculum? Arab Americans are divided on BDS, but they have in common the Arab American experience. Arab Americans presumably want to talk about the Arab American experience, yet the curriculum directs us to Direct Action Front for Palestine and the BDS movement yet again. The Israel-Palestinian issue is complex, but to whoever made this curriculum, it's strictly one-sided, and there's the assumption (almost certainly incorrect) that Arab Americans don't mind if it dominates the piece of the curriculum ostensibly devoted to them. The US-Mexico border issue is also complex: analogizing it to the Israel-Palestinian Territories border ('comparative border studies') is a clumsy, heavy-handed attempt to make the faraway, not-pertinent-to-California Israel-Palestinian issue locally relevant. In California, the issue is immigration; in Israel, the issue is terrorism. Other than the presence of a border and barriers, how are they alike? Suggesting this far-fetched analysis to teachers, especially those who know border issues, is either insulting or bizarre, and it just makes the Department of Education look BDS-obsessed.
Arab American Studies Course Outline	Benjamin Cosman Graduate student, University of California San Diego	page 237, line 5030 Someone wants to say that "Israel-Palestine" is an Arab country. Actually there's no such country. Since there are 22 certifiably Arab countries to choose from, putting "Israel-Palestine" in a list of Arab countries seems like another example of bias and anti-Israel obsession. Why can't we call Israel by its official name? Would you apply the same standard to other countries that have disputed parts ("Spain-Basque Country," "China-Tibet," "Turkey-Kurdestan")? This is a case where the one Jewish country is being singled out for special negative treatment; that's called antisemitism.

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Arab American Studies Course Outline	Benjamin Cosman Graduate student, University of California San Diego	page 242, lines 5157-5163 The section on the Nakba (catastrophe) should at least include what the Israelis call it (Independence Day). The Ethnic Studies curriculum seems to have a positive attitude towards indigeneity and self-determination, except where Israel is involved. Here is a genuine analogy between this faraway conflict and our own backyard: our celebration of American Independence Day must be tempered by the knowledge that US independence wasn't an unalloyed blessing for everyone. We do not, however, call July 4 Catastrophe Day. That would be overly simplistic, not to say ridiculous. So how about taking the same kind of balanced approach to Israel? If we don't take the same kind of balanced approach, then we're applying one standard of behavior to Jews, and another to the rest of the world; that's called antisemitism.
Arab American Studies Course Outline	Benjamin Cosman Graduate student, University of California San Diego	pages 256, 264-269 "Somos Sur" attacks Israel as a colonial power, which is rich considering that Israel is the product of an anti-colonial struggle. You could present "Somos Sur" followed by an assignment to write a critical response, by analogy to Narcy's response to Busta Rhyme. Presenting it uncritically, as you do now, is bizarrely one-sided and unfortunately reminiscent of the uncritical presentation of BDS elsewhere in the curriculum.

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Pacific Islander Studies Course Outline	Benjamin Cosman Graduate student, University of California San Diego	page 239, line 6238 Now comes the word we've been waiting for, not to say avoiding. <i>Antisemitism</i> gets its place in the sun with this one-word reference, buried in a list of badnesses, in the curriculum's section on Pacific Islanders. The critical reader is left speechless. In any kind of objective ethnic-studies account of California or America, antisemitism would rate a chapter. Antisemitic crimes occur in California: one such murder occurred in my city this year. Antisemitism is part of California history: the place I currently live used to be explicitly off limits to Jews. So why no chapter on the Jews in California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum? One of your goals should be not to erase history. Please let's have less antisemitism and more discussion of antisemitism in the next iteration of the Ethnic Studies Curriculum.

California Department of Education, June 2019