

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.

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<p>Page 2 of Glossary</p> <p>Chapter 2, page 234 of Sample Lesson Plan</p>	<p>Raphael Londner</p>	<p><i>I am concerned with the definition of the BDS movement, while there are strong indications that this movement is heavily influenced, if not led, by 5 organizations that are officially recognized as terrorist organizations by the US government since at least 1997. These 5 organizations are:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Hamas,</i> <i>2. the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP),</i> <i>3. the Popular Front – General Command (PFLP-GC),</i> <i>4. the Palestine Liberation Front, and</i> <i>5. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)</i> <p><i>These organizations are all members of the larger Palestinian National and Islamic Forces group, which is the first member of the Palestinian BDS National Committee, as mentioned on this BDS Movement page.</i></p> <p><i>You may also find these 5 organizations mentioned here as part of the “The Islamic and National Forces in the Governorate of Hebron”.</i></p> <p><i>In other words, there are strong and concurring indications that supporting BDS financially indirectly supports terrorist organizations.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, I am concerned that by mentioning and presenting BDS as a peaceful protest movement, this curriculum will result in students and their parents financially supporting the BDS movement, and therefore indirectly supporting terrorism.</i></p> <p><i>Even if no financial support occurs as a result of this positive highlight of the BDS movement in the proposed curriculum, I have a hard time fathoming that the state of California might be unknowingly and indirectly supporting organizations that promote hatred, especially after the horrific, hate-filled attacks Californians have witnessed in San Bernardino in 2015 and Poway in 2019.</i></p>

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Chapter 2, pages 234-235 of Sample Lesson Plan	Raphael Londner, parent of school children	<p>I find some of the “Potential Significant Figures to Cover” in the Arab American Studies Course questionable and not compatible with the tolerance, respect and critical thinking values embodied by the California Department of Education. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Line 4962: Philip Hitti is known for denying the Jews any historical and religious ties to Israel, although such ties have been proved numerous times through archeological findings and ancestral Jewish traditions. - Line 4964: Edward Wadie Said is known to have praised the author of “Jewish History, Jewish Religion” for endorsing the phrase “Judeo-Nazi” as a characterization of methods used by Israelis to supposedly repress Palestinians. Regardless of the personal views we might have about the Israeli-Palestinian situation, one can hardly argue that such a statement is conducive to peace and acceptance of fellow human beings, especially in the context of the classroom. - Line 4971 & 4972: Rashida Harbi Tlaib and Ilhan Abdullahi Omar are controversial Congresswomen who have made borderline antisemitic statements that were disapproved by the Democratic Party. As such, they have no place in the classroom, especially given the highly charged context of national politics. <p>Overall, as a parent with children who might be exposed to such content in public schools, I am deeply concerned that highlighting such controversial figures in the classroom might create an environment where Jewish schoolchildren could be physically endangered in the school environment, or be ostracized by their fellow classmates simply for being Jewish, as a direct result of such highlights of highly controversial characters.</p>
Page 237 of Sample Lesson Plan	Raphael Londner, parent of school children	<p>Line 5030: the curriculum uses unclear language that may easily imply that “Israel-Palestine” is, as a whole, an Arab country. This is, of course, furthest from the truth and reality on the ground.</p>

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Chapter 2, page 242 of Sample Lesson Plan	Raphael Londner, parent of school children	<p>Line 5157 to 5161: the description of the Naqba frames the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War as a sole fact of expulsion and dispossession, with no alternative perspectives. It is indeed a well-known fact that the 1948 Israeli Independence War solely started because Arab countries did not accept the UN partition plan the new Israeli state had accepted and chose to attack the new Israeli state right after its declaration of independence. Additionally, by not granting any path to citizenship to their Palestinian brothers in the neighboring countries, these countries de facto encouraged emigration to other remote countries such as the US. However, This perspective seems conspicuously absent from the curriculum, which clearly has a strong pro-Palestinian bias.</p> <p>More generally, I am</p>
Chapter 1	Raphael Londner, parent of school children	<p>Line 10 to 18: 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. With antisemitism rising and ignorance about the Jewish people still a major problem in our society, the exclusion of Jews from this curriculum is deeply disappointing.</p>

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Chapter 2	Raphael Londner, parent of school children	<p>Line 4920 et al.:</p> <p>As a general comment about the Arab American Studies Course Outline, I am troubled at the focus and peculiarities on that singular course. I have thoroughly looked at each of the other sample courses and all of the topics mentioned in each course have a more or less direct connection to the United States of America.</p> <p>In contrast, the Arab American Studies Course seems to force-feed certain topics into its curriculum, even though they have very little connection with the US context.</p> <p>Case in point, the “Direct Action Front for Palestine and Black Lives Matter” topic mentioned on line #4956 seems to draw an artificial connection between the Black Lives Matter movement and a so-called Direct Action Front for Palestine, a groupuscule whose sole online presence is manifested by a Twitter account with a meager 78 followers. Which pedagogical relevance does this unknown Direct Action Front for Palestine group have in a California state school curriculum?</p> <p>The “Comparative Border Studies: Palestine and Mexico” topic also seems a bit out-of-place in this curriculum, as the US-Mexico relationship is hardly similar to the Israel-Palestine one.</p> <p>Last but not least, the “Call to Boycott, Divest, and Sanction Israel” topic seems to have no connection at all with the United States, and looks like a forced effort to draw attention to a topic that has no relevance to the issue at stake, i.e. the relationship between Arabs and America.</p> <p>All in all, the Arab American Studies course seems to put an exaggerated emphasis on 1) the victimization of Arabs in the United States and 2) the Israel-Arab conflict that is hardly the #1 problem in the Middle East at this point. On numerous occasions, the course underscores the purported importance of a conflict between a tiny country (Israel) and a minuscule fraction of the whole Arab/Muslim population, a conflict that has no root in the US and on which the US have had little influence over 70 years, apart from the Camp David discussions and the Oslo agreement, positive gestures towards the Arab world the US could be credited for in this course.</p>
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		<p>If the course aims at highlighting oppression and displacement in the Arab world without any direct reference to the US, why is the Kurd genocide by the Turks in the 1920's and later in the 70's-80's by the Iraqis not mentioned once? Why are the recent genocides of Shias, Yazidis and Christians by ISIL not mentioned?</p> <p>If the curriculum objectives are to foster values of respect and tolerance of all races, peoples, genders and religions, why are the incessant and murderous violations of human rights laws in Saudi Arabia and its genocide of Yemenis not mentioned once in this course as behaviors not to be followed?</p> <p>Why is Israel singled out as the sole Middle East black sheep while thousands of Arabs or Muslims are routinely killed every day, not at the hand of Israelis but at the hand of their Arab/Muslim fellows?</p> <p>To conclude, it seems to me that the Arab American Studies Course has by design a strong bias towards Palestinians and against Israel, which is particularly disturbing considering its stated goal of furthering dialogue, not hatred between diverse cultural groups. In its current form, the Arab American Studies Course is highly counter-productive and will only but incite heated and politically charged conversations in the classroom, the exact opposite of the curriculum's primary objective.</p>