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

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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)
2	*David Schraub* *UC-Berkeley, School of Law and Department of Political Science (identification only)*	In the Arab American Studies model curriculum (Chapter 2, lines 4920 et seq) there is no mention of Arab or Middle Eastern (Mizrahi) Jews in any capacity. Particularly consistent with an intersectional frame, identifying the discrete history, perspective, and oppression of this group -- including where it converges with and diverges from dominant Arab or Middle Eastern narratives -- is essential for a full and rich understanding of Arab/Middle Eastern American identity, and is especially necessary avoiding essentialist understandings of Arabness in favor of establishing the poly-vocality of the "Arab voice" the curriculum is designed to "center" (see line 4931). As written, the curriculum entrenches a hierarchy of Arab/Middle Eastern identity where Mizrahi Jews are placed less at the bottom than they are omitted from the pyramid entirely. The ethnic studies model curriculum guidelines specifically require that the produced curricula "provid[e] balance and guidance to the field" and be "inclusive, creating space for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or citizenship, to learn different perspectives." Moreover, California has one of the largest concentrations of Mizrahi Jews in the United States; the ethnic studies curriculum guidelines also suggest that courses should be tailored to meet pupil demographics.

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2 (cont.)	*David Schraub* *UC-Berkeley, School of Law and Department of Political Science (identification only)*	The failure to include discretely Mizrahi Jewish perspectives in the curriculum implies either (a) such perspectives are implicitly included under a broader exploration of Arab/Middle Eastern identity, an assumed united between the Muslim and Christian majorities and Jewish minority; or (b) such perspectives are implicitly excluded insofar as they depart from Muslim/Christian majority narratives, thus rendering them inauthentic or not legitimate as Arab/Middle Eastern. Both of these are problematic. At best, they erase Mizrahi status as part of their own community; at worst implies that they are second-class or subordinated members of the group whose validity as Arab/Middle Eastern is contingent on them fitting into majoritarian norms (including those norms which may well be responsible for their marginalized status in the first place). Including American Mizrahi perspectives on Zionism, histories of dispossession and expulsion (including attempts at denaturalization), many of which emerged out of anti-Zionist activism in the wake of Israel's foundation in 1948, and the general failure to conceive of Middle Eastern Jews as truly or authentically Middle Eastern save to the extent they cohere to non-Jewish understandings of the term, in addition to being generally enriching, can also help provide critical balance to portions of the curriculum which currently touches on Jewish issues almost exclusively to focus on pro-Palestinian/anti-Israel activism (a frame which, again, implicitly erases and delegitimizes Mizrahi Jewish perspectives which frequently—though of course not exclusively—adopt a different perspective on these questions.).

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Chapter 2 (cont)	*David Schraub* *UC-Berkeley, School of Law and Department of Political Science (identification only)*	Note that, unfortunately, on the relatively rare occasions that Mizrahi Jewish perspectives have been included in ethnic studies curricula, the proffered voices are often ones deeply unrepresentative of the Mizrahi Jewish community as it stands. Instead, a few choice thinkers are cherry-picked primarily because their views (on Zionism, Arab identity, etc.) are largely in accord with the Arab Muslim/Christian majority and the ideological proclivities of many ethnic studies specialists. This is not an acceptable means of facilitating Mizrahi inclusion; it also does students a disservice by depriving them of the opportunity to consider issues raised by dissension and disagreement within the group as well as points of agreement and unity. Inclusion of Mizrahi Jewish perspectives means taking seriously that the majority are Zionist, that much of their outmigration to the United States (or Israel) from Arab countries of origin was due to anti-Zionist violence, agitation, discrimination, and coercion, and that their currently ambivalent relationship to Arab identity often stems directly from these histories and the knowledge that their Middle Eastern identity is erased/delegitimated (a process unfortunately facilitated by the current draft of the curriculum). This does not mean that the curriculum should take a "pro-Zionist" stance, any more than it should take an "anti-Zionist" stance; either choice would represent a failure to adhere to the requirements of balance, inclusivity, and presentation of diverse perspectives. Rather, it would do students a great service to explore these points of dissension and disunity and reflect on what it means for Arab identity, why pan-Arab solidarity might be viewed with suspicion by minorities within the Arab world who may not feel included by the understanding of "Arabness" that is supposedly unifying, what entitlements or claims internal minorities can claim from the majority (and vice versa?), and finally how these differences might be bridged. Figures to consider including: Albert Memmi, Rachel Wahba, Loolwa Khazzoom, Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz (Wahba and Khazzoom are California residents)

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Glossary	*David Schraub* *UC-Berkeley, School of Law and Department of Political Science (identification only)*	Lines 30-40: In the glossary of terms, BDS (lines 30-40) is defined entirely by reference to its proponents' preferred framing. BDS is an issue of contemporary public concern, and while it is of course controversial, it's not per se unreasonable for it to be taught in an ethnic studies curriculum so long as (as per the guidelines) it is taught in a manner that is "balanced", "inclusive", and reflective of "different perspectives". Consequently, the BDS portion of the glossary, and any usages in the curriculum, should be modified to present the perspective of both proponents and opponents. For example, proponents prefer to tie the origination of BDS to its "inspiration" from anti-apartheid activism; opponents instead present it as part of a longer history of opposition to Jewish presence in Israel, beginning with the 1938 Arab boycott of Jewish-owned business designed to shut down the migration of Jewish refugees. Proponents claim BDS' goal is to establish freedom for Palestinians under apartheid; opponents describe it instead as seeking the elimination of Israel as a Jewish homeland. Proponents view boycotting as protected free speech, akin to protesting segregation in Alabama; opponents describe it as a form of religion or nationality-based discrimination, no different than a business refusing to serve a gay customer as a matter of "conscience". Students should get an accounting of the range of perspectives on the issue, and BDS should not be taught unless the DOE is confident that teachers and education officials will be willing and able to present this range of perspectives in a manner that is balanced, inclusive, and reflective of diverse views. While it is too reductive to describe the BDS debate as between the "Jewish" perspective on one side and the "Arab" one on the other (there are Jews who support BDS and Arabs who oppose it), pursuant to the above comment, it may be useful to adopt an expressly intersectional vantage here and inquire into how Middle Eastern Jews relate to and are affected by the BDS debate (resource: David Schraub and Analucia Lopezrevoredo, "An Intersectional Failure: How Both Israel's Backers and Critics Write Mizrahi Jews Out of the Story").

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General	*David Schraub* *UC-Berkeley, School of Law and Department of Political Science (identification only)*	While my comments thus far have focused primarily on the specific case of Mizrahi Jews and their exclusion from a curricular offering that they very much have claim to and deserve representation in (see Loolwa Khazzoom: "We are here and this is ours"); it is worth noting briefly that the model curricula as a whole is worryingly non-inclusive of Jews. There is no model curriculum for a Jewish Studies course; and antisemitism is scarcely mentioned at any point. Both omissions are troublesome. The general failure to conceive of Jewish Studies as part of ethnic studies has been remarked upon for years by several Jewish scholars of multicultural education; the failure can no longer be deemed accidental. Many of these scholars attribute this omission to the assumption that Jewish perspectives are already included under a broader "Judeo-Christian" dominant paradigm. This assumption is wrong, and indeed reflects antisemitic bias—"Judeo-Christian" typically just means "Christian"; discretely Jewish histories are not typically included in its ambit. The assumption that Jews are naturally included in dominant paradigm is not unrelated to antisemitic presumptions that Jews are the paradigmatic representative social power and control (i.e., *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*); the need to interrogate this assumption only reiterates the pressing need for such a course. Other justifications for not including a Jewish Studies course include the belief that Jews aren't "really" a minority or oppressed group anymore, that they are "basically White" and have "made it" in contemporary American society. Not only does this overlook internal diversity within the Jewish community (including Mizrahi Jews discussed above, but also other Jews of Color); but it fails to account for the persistence of antisemitic violence in America (Jews remain the most frequent victims of religion-based hate crimes in America) and the continued power and recent resurgence in antisemitic stereotyping as a mobilizing feature in American politics (e.g., "Soros"-based conspiracy mongering, "Jews will not replace us", dual loyalty tropes and the claim that we have a "Zionist occupied government" or that Americans are forced to pledge "allegiance" to Israel, and more)

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General (cont); Chap. 2	*David Schraub* *UC-Berkeley, School of Law and Department of Political Science (identification only)*	Even absent a specific course on Jewish Studies (which would also fit the curricular guidelines suggestion that courses be tailored to meet pupil demographics, as several California school districts have substantial Jewish populations), the failure to incorporate antisemitism in the general ethnic studies survey course (Chapter 2, lines 28 et seq) is hard to justify. The importance of antisemitism in the development of modern notions of race, racism, and racial oppression is well known (see George Frederickson, "Racism: A Short History"), and its contemporary importance as a master narrative tying together otherwise discrete forms of ethnic hatred as all emanating from a Jewish plot (where Jews are the architects of "White genocide") has also been well-explored (see Eric Ward, "Skin in the Game"). It seems likely that the general failure to view Jews as a valid "case" within ethnic studies, or antisemitism as a non-trivial part of the ethnic studies discussion, is not unrelated to the specific omission of Mizrahi Jews from a curricular offering about their own community. If Jews can be rendered invisible within an ethnic studies frame, then their non-inclusion does not reflect a failure of "balance" or "inclusion" (what is being balanced? Who is being included?). In other words, the general failure and the specific failure together suggest a more systemic issue that obstructs Jewish inclusion as equals in ethnic studies curricular offerings, even in circumstances where it seems obvious they have an important voice to offer. The portions of the curriculum which touch on Jewish issues (or perhaps more accurately, should touch on Jewish issues but don't) need significant revision and guidance from experts on Jewish Studies and antisemitism.