



# Ethnic Studies Lesson 1B:

## Introduction—Ethnic Studies Schools of Thought

**TOPIC:**  
INTRODUCTION

**GRADE LEVELS:**  
11-12

**TIME:**  
1½ HOURS

### California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

*Themes:*

4. Social Movements and Equity

*Values and Principles:*

6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

### California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

*English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):*

**Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)**

Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms. (RI.11-12.2)

**Writing—(W.11-12)**

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (W.11-12.1)

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (W.11-12.5)

*Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):*

**History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)**

## Lesson Purpose

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Students will research different schools of thought about teaching high school ethnic studies and determine why this topic is important.

## Essential Questions

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*What are some of the schools of thought in teaching high school ethnic studies?*

*Why is studying American history through ethnicity important?*

## Materials

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[KWL Chart](#)

[WORKSHEET](#)

[WWLTV: What is critical race theory?](#)

[PBS NewsHour: Why Americans are so divided over teaching critical race theory](#)

[Constitution US: What Is Pluralism?](#)

## Vocabulary

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race	critical race theory (CRT)	systemic racism
ethnicity	intersectionality	colorblind
meritocracy		assimilation

## Lesson Steps

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### **Step 1:**

- As a class, ask students what they believe this course will be about. What do they already know about race, ethnicity, or the history of ethnic studies? Introduce this unit's [KWL chart](#). Document what students already know and what they would like to learn.
- Let students know that there are different schools of thought on studying ethnicity in American history. We will be looking at three different schools of thought. Introduce students to the [WORKSHEET](#) for this lesson. Have students watch: [WWLTV: What is critical race theory?](#) (video 3 minutes 15 seconds). As students watch, have them take notes on what are the main ideas behind CRT. What are some of its advantages and some of its disadvantages for high school students to understand race and ethnicity? When students have finished watching, have students pair up with another student to share their notes. As a class, have pairs share and make their notes on the WORKSHEET. Help students understand that CRT is about systemic racism, power by race, and social justice. It is also a graduate-level concept.

### **Step 2:**

- Ask students if they know what the terms *meritocracy* and *colorblindness* mean. Let students know that the word *meritocracy* was made up by the British author Michael Young in his book, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. Read this definition to students from Wikipedia, "Meritocracy is the notion of a political system in which economic goods or political power are vested in individual people based on ability and talent, rather than wealth or social class." Ask students to work with a partner to put this definition in

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their own words. Have students share until the class can come up with a working definition that can be put on the WORKSHEET.

- Ask the class why the term *colorblind* might be paired with meritocracy as a way to think about race and ethnicity. Have students pair up and share their thoughts. As a class, have the pairs share their ideas and note them on the WORKSHEET.
- What do these two different viewpoints have to do with how ethnic studies are taught or our ethnic studies course? Have students watch [PBS NewsHour: Why Americans are so divided over teaching critical race theory](#) (video 9 minutes, 4 seconds). As students watch, ask them to take notes on whether they can identify the different viewpoints on teaching ethnic studies. Do they hear words that are used to escalate or words that are used to help others understand ethnicity?
- When students have completed watching, pair students to share their notes. Have pairs of students share their notes and add ideas to the WORKSHEET.

### Step 3:

- Let students know that this course does not explicitly teach about systems of power but does address justice and ethnicities. It also does not go to the other pole and teach colorblindness or assimilation. The course falls somewhere in the middle with the ideas of multiculturalism and pluralism. Have students read a dictionary definition of *multiculturalism*. On the board, ask students to call out particular words that stand out to them. Add those words to this week's WORKSHEET. Ask students why studying distinct groups through an American history timeline might not be a complete picture. What else might be needed?
- As a class, use a group reading strategy such as popcorn or round robin to read [Constitution US: What Is Pluralism?](#) As students read, have them take notes on what the main ideas behind pluralism are. When students have completed the reading, have students pair with another student. As a class, have pairs share their notes and add information to the WORKSHEET. Ask students if it is possible to use the best aspects of any of these schools of thought as they try to understand ethnic history in the US. Ask students how they believe they might benefit from taking this course. What are the benefits of studying American history through the lens of ethnicity?

### Step 4:

- As a class, ask students this lesson's questions, "What are some of the schools of thought in teaching high school ethnic studies?" and this unit's question, "Why is studying American history through ethnicity important?" Make note of what was learned on this unit's KWL chart—along with additional questions.

## Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

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As time permits and for homework, have students write a short paragraph on what they believe they might get out of this ethnic studies course. What are they hoping to learn about? What are their concerns? Do they think it's important to take this course? Students should write a short paragraph and cite any sources of information they use.

## Additional Readings and Resources

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[Crooked Timber or Bent Twig? Isaiah Berlin's Nationalism by David Miller](#)

[Culture and Diversity in John Stuart Mill's Civic Nation by Jason Tyndal](#)

Glazer, Nathan. "The Problem of Ethnic Studies." In his *Ethnic Dilemmas, 1964–1982*. Harvard University Press,

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1983, 97-125.

Glazer, Nathan, and Daniel P. Moynihan. *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. M.I.T. Press, 1963.

Glazer, Nathan, and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds. *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*. Harvard University Press, 1975.

Greeley, Andrew M. *Why Can't They Be Like Us?*, 1971.

Greeley, Andrew M. *Ethnicity in the U.S.: A Preliminary Reconnaissance*, 1974.

Handlin, Oscar. "Historical Perspectives on the American Ethnic Group." *Daedalus*, Spring 1961: 220-232.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/i20026650>

Handlin, Oscar. *Out of Many: A Study Guide to Cultural Pluralism in the United States*. Anti-Defamation League, 1964.

Handlin, Oscar. *Race and Nationality in American Life*. Little Brown, 1948.

Jones, Garrett. Review of "Out of the Melting Pot Into the Fire," by Jens Heyche. *The Independent Review*, Spring 2024: 683-686. <https://www.independent.org/publications/tir/article.asp?id=1954>

[Mouk, Yascha. \*The Identity Trap: A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time\*. Penguin Random House, 2023.](#)

[Nationalism and the Open Society by Andrew Vincent](#) [Karl R. Popper]

Novak, Michael. *Further Reflections on Ethnicity*. EMPAC, 1977.

Novak, Michael. *Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in American Life*, 2nd ed. Routledge, 1995.

Pluckrose, Helen, and James Lindsay. *Cynical Theories*. Pitchstone Publishing, 2020.

Reeves, Richard. [Institute of Art and Ideas, \*What Is Meritocracy? Short Pitch\*](#) (video 4 minutes, 52 seconds).

Rojas, Fabio. *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

Sanneh, Kelefa. ["The Fight to Redefine Racism."](#) *The New Yorker*, August 19, 2019.

Thernstrom, Abigail, and Stephan Thernstrom, eds. *Beyond the Color Line: New Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America*. Hoover Institution and Manhattan Institute, 2002.

Thernstrom, Stephan, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin, eds. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. Harvard University Press, 1980.

[What Lord Acton Can Teach Us about Nationalism by Kai Weiss](#)

**NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES:** America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

## Ethnic Studies 1B: KWL Chart

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**KNOW****WONDER****LEARNED**

*What do we think we already know about this topic?*

*What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.*

*After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.*

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## Ethnic Studies 1B: Introduction—Schools of Thought

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**CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

**MULTICULTURALISM  
AND PLURALISM**

**RACE BLIND, MERITOCRACY,  
AND ASSIMILATION**

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