



Ethnic Studies Lesson 1Hb: Introduction—Affirmative Action Debate, Part 2

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):

Speaking and Listening—(SL.11-12)

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. (SL.11-12.1)

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. (SL.11-12.1b)

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

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

Lesson Purpose

Students will research the pros and cons of affirmative action in the US, take a position, and debate its merits in addressing race-based educational opportunities.

Essential Questions

What are some of the pros and cons of affirmative action in education in the US? How successful has it been in addressing race-based educational opportunities?

Why is studying American history through ethnicity important?

Materials

[DEBATE RUBRIC](#)

[ChatGPT](#)

[KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

affirmative action

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, let students know that today we will prepare for our first classroom debate. We will spend one day preparing and one day debating. Just as the class had developed classroom norms, the class will also use debate norms. Show students the [DEBATE RUBRIC](#). Take time to review each norm, and let students know they will be evaluating themselves and the other team when the debate is concluded.

Step 2:

- As a class, have the two student groups continue their research and organize their cards by topic. Have them continue to pose questions to ChatGPT and continue finding evidence from reputable sources. Encourage students to anticipate the questions from the other group and research those questions in order to find rebuttals. Allow the groups to work for an additional 20 minutes if possible.

Step 3:

- When the research time has elapsed, as a class, introduce the students to a circular debate. Half of the students from each team will sit in chairs that are arranged in a circle. The other half of the students will stand behind the students who are actively participating in the debate. The students who are standing are given sticky notes in order to remind the debate participants about key facts they may have forgotten. Students inside the circle will be holding the note cards the group has made with evidence.
- The students who are seated can start the discussion at any time by saying something like:
 - According to the website...., this point was made.
 - According to this authority...., this point was made.
- Students should listen carefully and wait their turn to speak. Seated students can also support their own team, but saying something like:
 - I agree with my friend...., and I would add....
- Or students can disagree with the other team by saying something like:
 - While I see your point, I would disagree. According to this website...., this point was made....

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- Students who are standing can pass sticky notes to those who are sitting in order to keep the debate going.

Step 4:

- As a class, once the debate is concluded, or after about 20 minutes, have the students return to their groups and have them make a copy of and fill out the [DEBATE RUBRIC](#) for their group.
- When students have completed the rubric, as a class, review the debate rubrics and have students discuss how their first debate went. What can they do next time to improve?

Step 5:

- As a class, ask students what they have learned so far about this lesson's questions, "What are some of the pros and cons of affirmative action in education in the US? How successful has it been in addressing race-based educational opportunities?" 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

For homework, have students write a short paragraph of how their beliefs about affirmative action stayed the same or changed over the course of the debate. Also, they should include in their paragraph their observations on some of the difficulties of trying to improve race-based societal problems.

Additional Readings and Resources

Boghossian, Peter, and James Lindsay. *How to Have Impossible Conversations: A Very Practical Guide*. Lifelong Books, 2019.

Boonin, David. "Two Cheers for Affirmative Action." In his *Should Race Matter?: Unusual Answers to the Usual Questions*. Cambridge University Press, 2011. <https://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/phil1200,SP08/boonin.pdf>

Carter, Stephen L. "I Am an Affirmative Action Baby." *New York Times*, August 5, 1991. <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/05/opinion/i-am-an-affirmative-action-baby.html>

Carter, Stephen L. "Interview on Richard Heffner's Open Mind." November 30, 1991. <https://www.thirteen.org/openmind-archive/civil-rights/reflections-of-an-affirmative-action-baby/>

Carter, Stephen L. *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*. Basic Books, 1991.

[CATO Institute: Affirmative Action in College Admissions](#)

[Foundation for Economic Education: Affirmative Action](#)

Garrow, David L. "Review of 'Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby,' by Stephen L. Carter." *New York Times Book Review*, September 1, 1991. <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/01/books/is-there-a-correct-way-to-be-black.html>

[National Association for Independent Schools: Facilitating Politically Sensitive Discussions](#)

Paul, Pamela. "This 1991 Book Was Stunningly Prescient About Affirmative Action." *New York Times*, May 25, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/25/opinion/columnists/affirmative-action-stephen-carter.html>

Sander, Richard H., and Stuart Taylor Jr. *Mismatch: How Affirmative Action Hurts Students It's Intended to Help, and Why Universities Won't Admit It*. Basic Books, 2012.

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- Sowell, Thomas. *Affirmative Action around the World: An Empirical Study*. Yale University Press, 2005.
- Sowell, Thomas. "Affirmative Action Around the World," *The Thomas Sowell Reader*. Basic Books, 2011, 287-304.
- Sowell, Thomas. "Assumptions Behind Affirmative Action," *The Thomas Sowell Reader*. Basic Books, 2011, 269-271.
- Sowell, Thomas. *Barbarians Inside the Gates*. Hoover Institution Press, 1999, 168-171.
- Sowell, Thomas. "End It, Don't Mend It," *Barbarians Inside the Gates*. Hoover Institution Press, 1999, 171-173.
- Sowell, Thomas. "Phoney Arguments for Quotas," *Barbarians Inside the Gates*. Hoover Institution Press, 1999, 113-115.
- Sowell, Thomas. "Quotas Against Asians," *Is Reality Optional?* Hoover Institution Press, 1993, 121-122.
- Williams, Walter E. "Affirmative action can't be mended." *Cato Journal*, 1997.

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 1Ha: Debate Rubric

Rate on a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being did well in adhering to the norm and 3 being did not do well in adhering to norm.

FOR TEAM
(1 to 3) and comments

AGAINST TEAM
(1 to 3) and comments

Adhered to classroom norms of respect and allowing others to speak		
Included evidence with citation or attribution while inside the circle		
Provided supporting evidence with citation or attribution while outside the circle		
Participated in a lively debate even if the topic was not their first choice		
Encouraged different viewpoints, reflected on own biases and assumptions, challenged others to maintain an open mind		
Listened actively while not speaking		
Acknowledged differing points of view and maintained civility		

Ethnic Studies 1B: KWL Chart

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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