



## 2023 COURSE SYLLABUS

**Ethnic Studies (one semester)**

**Ms. Johnson, Room T2**

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**Introduction:** Hello Ethnic Studies students and parents! My name is Elisabeth Johnson and this is my 15th year of teaching in the district. I grew up not far from Kennedy and graduated from California State University Sacramento. In my career, I have taught this course, World Geography, Contemporary Global Issues, US Government, Economics, US History, and World History. I look forward to applying all of my experience from these courses to present a relevant approach to Ethnic Studies for students of all backgrounds.

**Course Description:** In this class, we will have three main intentions: learn the history of groups of people that are typically ignored in mainstream history classes, critically analyze the systems of power that impose inequities, and explore our identities in order to find connections with these histories, systems, and each other. Ultimately, we hope this class inspires us *all* to take action in our local communities to create a more equal and peaceful society.

This course is currently a graduation requirement in our district (Sacramento City Unified School District). Thanks to [Assembly Bill 101](#) passing in California last year, it will be a requirement statewide starting in 2025. In the research review 'Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies' by Christine E. Sleeter, it states that "there is considerable research evidence that well designed and well-taught ethnic studies curricula have positive academic and social outcomes for students."

**Objectives of This Course:** I have three main objectives with this course:

- 1) To help students build academic and real-life skills. Although not often viewed as a skill building course, in this class students will be supported step-by-step to improve their evidence-based writing, active reading strategies, critical thinking, speech and communication and social emotional competencies. I fully acknowledge that in our class there will be a diverse set of skills and all students will be met where they are.
- 2) To help students make personal and real-world connections with the past by acknowledging the great diversity at Kennedy and honoring and studying the stories of people like us in the past. These stories exist and matter! At the end of the day, I hope this class inspires students to become active agents of change and leaders in our country and in their own personal lives.
- 3) To build a classroom community that is safe emotionally and physically. In order to deeply understand the diverse and complex past of our country, we will practice how to have hard conversations about complex topics like race, power, identity and gender. This hard work can only be done if we all feel safe and part of a community.



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**Course Outline:** Below is a list of the units we will cover. Depending on a variety of factors, the content outline for this course is subject to change at any time.

### *Unit 1: What is ethnic studies?*

#### **Topics:**

- How did ethnic studies come to be?
- What is the academic discipline of ethnic studies? What is it not?
- What are some principles of ethnic studies?
- What is the academic and social value of ethnic studies?
- What are the norms and community expectations for this class?

### *Unit 2: Identity*

#### **Topics:**

- Who am I?
- What shapes my identity?
- How is identity shaped by my family ties and community experiences?
- How are identities socially constructed?
- How has race been socially constructed in history?

### *Unit 3: Indigeneity*

#### **Topics:**

- Who is native to this land?
- How have and do indigenous people resisted and continue to resist colonialism and empire?
- What do the lives of Native peoples look like today?
- How do indigenous peoples sustain and revitalize their cultures?

### *Unit 4: Power, Privilege, and Regeneration*

#### **Topics:**

- How are power systems constructed and maintained?
- What have people individually and collectively done to both negotiate or challenge those systems?
- What do equity, justice, and democracy look like in practice (locally, nationally, globally)?
- How can we achieve allyship across race, class, gender, and sexuality?
- What barriers and obstacles to allyship exist, and how can these be overcome?
- How can we achieve transformative social change?

### *Unit 5: Migration*



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### Topics:

- Why do people move, and why is movement a human right?
- What are push and pull factors for human migration?
- How do people individually and collectively navigate their intersections of identity to sustain their well-being?
- What have been U.S. responses to immigrants and refugees over time?

### Unit 6: Reflection and Action

### Topics:

- How has what I've learned in Ethnic Studies helped me be and advocate for myself and others?

### Materials Required for This Course:

- **Tools of a scholar - chromebook, pen, pencil, and highlighter.** Most assignments will be provided on paper in class and available digitally for students who are absent. Students need to be prepared for digital or paper assignments on a daily basis.
- **Textbook-** We will use the text [\*Our Stories in Our Voices\*](#) by Dale Allender and Gregory Yee Mark. You are welcome to keep it in my classroom, and we will label them, but please know that you are solely responsible for your book.
- **A folder and binder paper:** Although we will have many digital assignments, I will provide a folder and notebook to help you stay organized in class ( you might get many handouts). This folder will not go home; your folder must be kept in the classroom folder bin unless you need it to complete an assignment at home.

**Classroom Expectations:** The teacher expects all student behaviors to conform to school rules. Additionally, we will work together as a community to help hold each other accountable for scholarly behavior.

### Grading policy:

**You May Have Homework:** Most commonly once a week. It is not for punishment, but to help you understand content more deeply that may help you make more connections with the material in class.

**Point System and Grading Scale:** Every class day will be given a point value, based on the difficulty or importance of that day (major writing activities, group projects, etc., tend to have a higher point value).

Your semester grade consists of these four categories: 1.) attendance and productivity 2.) class assignments 3.) exams and projects and 4.) homework. You get ten points a day for being in class and being productive. If you are late, absent, or off-task despite repeated reminders, you can lose these daily points. Homework assignments are due at the beginning of the class period and are anywhere from 10-20 points. Exams and projects are obviously worth more, depending on how much time is required.

I use the following grading scale (90%-100%=A, 80%-89%=B, 70%-79%=C, 57%-69%=D, 50%-56%=F). Per District mandate, students are not allowed to drop below a 50% which means all incomplete assignments will automatically be given half credit.

**Late Work:** Will be accepted but points may be deducted (about 5%-10%, so it really is still worth turning it in!).



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**Grades Are Posted Bi-Weekly:** They will be posted up in class, by your student number. We will also write reflections and identify goals we want to work on to keep us motivated.

**Attendance:** There is a direct connection between your grades and your attendance. Please make sure to come to school and be on time. **There will definitely be flexibility when students are ill or in quarantine.** Thanks to Google Classroom, everything will be at your fingertips. Extra days will be provided to do make up work.