

Alliance for Constructive Ethnic Studies

Summary of Concerns and Recommendations – Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Draft 3

Overall Concern: Critical Ethnic Studies has hijacked the ESMC, forcing a narrow agenda and pre-determined answers on students rather than fostering inquiry.

Overall Recommendation: Remove the Critical Ethnic Studies foundation from the Guiding Values and Principles AND the subsequent chapters of the ESMC.

This includes:

1. Removing the indoctrinating Critical Ethnic Studies (ES) ideology from the Guiding Values and Principles.
2. Replacing the narrow Critical ES language and leading questions that assume a foregone conclusion, with broader constructive language that invites inquiry and analysis from multiple perspectives.
3. Removing content that promotes violence or victimhood, or demeans any ethnic group.
4. Replacing the narrow ideological lens that romanticizes any one-sided political, economic, militant, or separatist movement, with a balanced evaluation including both positive and negative sides of the movement or “ism.”
5. Replacing the unvetted list of UC-approved courses in Appendix C with courses such as those of the Los Angeles Unified School District’s (LAUSD), which are not based on a Critical ES approach.

The line by line analysis in the attachment details how to accomplish this.

CRITICAL ES PRINCIPLES OBSTRUCT AB-2016

AB-2016 states the objective of California’s Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) as: *“preparing pupils to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures.”*¹

This objective has been subverted by a field called Critical Ethnic Studies (ES), which aims to “bring into conversation the ways that concerted efforts and collectivized resistance to US imperialism ground our approaches for dismantling the (neo)colonial schooling apparatus.”²

As a result, four of the ESMC’s six Guiding Values and Principles urge students to:

- “critique empire building”
- “challenge... imperialist/colonialist beliefs”
- connect to “transformative resistance.”³

These principles shift the focus from ethnic studies and from countering racism, including *all* its causes, to a focus on foreign policy and colonialism.

¹ AB No. 2016 https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB2016

² Tracy Lachica Buenavista and Arshad Imtiaz Ali, *Education at War: The Fight for Students of Color in America’s Public Schools*, 2018.

³ ESMC Draft 3, Appendix A: P.7, L. 150-158

Additionally, the ESMC's Critical ES-based Principles do not inspire "appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures."

These Critical ES Principles are in marked contrast to existing Constructive California ES curricula, which aim to "provide students with depth of understanding in relation to ethnic and social issues, rather than promoting specific political activism, demonstration, protest or the like."⁴

The Constructive ES curricula "examine how race and ethnicity have been constructed in the United States and continue to shape the country today," and "focus on the experiences, histories, cultures, struggles and accomplishments of specific ethnic/racial groups within American history and society with an emphasis on truth and healing through empathy and education."⁵ Constructive ES is the approach that's consistent with the actual goals of the ESMC, and should replace the Critical ES approach.

CRITICAL ES IMPOSES A NARROW, DIVISIVE IDEOLOGY

The Critical ES approach:

- Assumes predetermined answers, rather than inviting inquiry. The only exploration allowed to students is within the framework of the ideology, never questioning the indoctrinating underpinnings.
- Promotes a one-sided view that is based on Marxist/Maoist, militant, anti-Western ideologies.
- Divides students into victims and oppressors and pits them against each other based on skin color or ideology, and frames ideas and groups in all-or-nothing terms based on the controversial Critical Race Theory (CRT).
- Glorifies violence and advocates for separatist resistance.
- Exacerbates polarization rather than building community and fails to prepare students for normal development or participation in a nuanced and pluralistic society.
- Dismisses seminal BIPOC leaders and peaceful agents of change who do not pass the Critical ES ideological litmus test. **Martin Luther King and John Lewis, who are described as "passive" and "docile,"** do not warrant a mention in the ESMC's list of 154 "Important Historical Figures Among People of Color"—a list that includes many violent and/or neo-Marxist revolutionaries.⁶

The ESMC directs teachers explicitly to use CRT as a key theoretical framework and pedagogy in teaching ethnic studies. CRT, the cornerstone of Critical ES and the most controversial of numerous race theories, is the only race theory taught. CRT, which holds that all white people "further their economic and political interests at the expense of people of colour,"⁷ is a monolithic framework that lacks nuance and divides students into (white) powerful oppressors and (people of color) disempowered victims.

POSITIVE REPORTS OF ETHNIC STUDIES RESULTS ARE NOT BASED ON CRITICAL ES APPROACH

The ESMC lauds the benefits of Ethnic Studies, citing a report for the National Education Association by Christine Sleeter entitled "The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies."⁸ Very few of the studies in this source article were Critical ES courses. Many case studies were about reading literature featuring

⁴ Los Angeles Unified School District, "Guiding Principles for Ethnic Studies and Related Courses" <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Social%20Justice%202017.pdf>

⁵ Los Angeles Unified School District, "Guiding Principles for Ethnic Studies and Related Courses"

⁶ ESMC Draft 3, Appendix A: P. 39-52

⁷ Britannica: Critical Race Theory, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/critical-race-theory>

⁸ Christine E. Sleeter, "The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies: A Research Review," 2011.

people of color or written by non-white authors (e.g. Brozo and Valerio, 1996; Bean, Valerio, Senior, and White, 1999; Copenhaver, 2001).

These studies had nothing to do with colonialism, Critical Race Theory, or Critical ES political ideology. It is not necessary to sacrifice inquiry or impose a political ideology (with a Critical ES approach) to achieve the engagement benefit that Sleeter is touting.

The ESMC also lauds the benefits of Ethnic Studies by citing "The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance," a study by Stanford Education Professor Thomas Dee which found academic gains for some students who took an ethnic-studies class. When discussing that study, Dee stressed that "high-quality" ethnic-studies curricula "don't exclusively emphasize victimization." "Just the opposite," he said. They stress instead "the considerable cultural assets" of minorities and their capacity to achieve.⁹

A Constructive ES approach used by the acclaimed Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) curriculum demonstrates that it is possible to honestly address racism, *without* imposing a narrow ideology or CRT, while inspiring mutual respect and fostering balanced analysis.

SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS OF RECOMMENDED CHANGES

A detailed analysis of specific line changes is attached. The below summarizes key changes.

A. Guiding Values and Principles

Replace language that imposes the Critical ES foundation in the Guiding Values and Principles and throughout the ESMC, with a Constructive ES approach. Remove calls to use Critical Race Theory as a key framework.

Critical ES focuses the ESMC's values and principles on countering colonial/imperial/empire building. The principles should instead critique and counter *racism* and oppression, including *all* its causes. They should also inspire students with ethnic accomplishments. See recommended revisions below.

⁹ KQED Interview, hosted by Michael Krasny, Aug 21, 2019

<p style="text-align: center;">Problematic Current Guiding Values & Principles¹⁰</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Recommended Modified Guiding Values & Principles</p>
<p>3. Center and place high value on the <u>pre-colonial</u>, ancestral knowledge, narratives, and communal experiences of Native people/s and people of color ...</p>	<p>Center and place high value on <u>the ancestral</u> knowledge, narratives, and communal experiences of Native people/s and people of color ...</p>
<p>4. Critique <u>empire-building in history</u> and its <u>relationship to white supremacy</u>, racism and other forms of power and oppression</p>	<p>Examine how <u>race and ethnicity</u> have been <u>constructed</u> in the United States and continue to shape the country today. <u>Promote critical thinking</u> about the complexity of the intersections of race with gender, class, sexuality and other systems of difference that have power effects.¹¹</p>
<p>5. Challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, <u>imperialist/colonial-[and hegemonic]</u> beliefs and practices on multiple levels.</p>	<p>Challenge racist, bigoted, <u>discriminatory beliefs</u> and practices on multiple levels</p>
<p>6b. ...conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, <u>post-systemic racism</u> society that promotes collective narratives of <u>transformative resistance</u>, <u>critical</u> hope, and <u>radical</u> healing¹²</p>	<p>...conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a <u>post-racist society</u>.</p>
<p>[There is no ESMC principle about inspiring students by seeing ethnic group accomplishments, or any value about empathy. A new one should be added.]</p>	<p>Focus on the <u>experiences, histories, cultures, struggles and accomplishments</u> of specific ethnic/racial groups within American history and society with an emphasis on <u>truth and healing through empathy</u> and education.¹³</p>

Delete language that imposes the Critical ES approach on the curriculum, such as “The values rooted in humanization and critical consciousness are the guiding values each ethnic studies lesson should include.”¹⁴ Although seemingly innocuous, this language uses "code words" for CRT-based concepts, which refer to the necessity of dismantling systems.

¹⁰ ESMC Draft 3, Chapter 1: P. 12, L. 260-271

¹¹ Excerpt from LAUSD “Course Alignment – Guiding Principles”

<https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/ES%20Course%20-%20Alignment%20Guiding%20Principles%20Sheet1.pdf>

¹² ESMC Draft 3 Chapter 1: P. 13, L. 268-272

¹³ Excerpt from LAUSD “Course Alignment – Guiding Principles”

¹⁴ ESMC Draft 3, Chapter 1: P. 12, L. 250 - 252

B. Leading Questions vs. Inquiry

Replace narrow Critical ES language and leading questions that assume a foregone conclusion, with broader constructive language that invites inquiry and analysis from multiple perspectives.

- *Example: “How did they challenge systems of white supremacy?”¹⁵ This narrow framing assumes the only noteworthy contribution is challenging white supremacy. Replace with the broader: “How did they contribute to racial equality, social justice, or improving society? What skills, attributes, or approach helped this person to succeed?”*

C. Indoctrination

Replace the narrow ideological lens that romanticizes any one-sided political, economic, militant, or separatist movement, with a balanced evaluation including both positive and negative sides of the movement or “ism.” Present a range of methods for addressing racism and discrimination.

- *Example: “The challenges and opportunities faced by South Asian immigrants to California will allow students to learn about socio-economic issues, identity, religion, culture, racism, immigration reform and legislation, and political contributions to anti-imperial and anti-colonial movements.”¹⁶ Students learning about South Asian contributions should *not* be limited to only “political contributions to anti-imperial and anti-colonial movements.” They should include all contributions regardless of political orientation. Requiring the indoctrinating lens of anti-imperial or anti-colonialism would rule out study of broad political leaders such as Kamala Harris, journalists such as Fareed Zakaria, actors such as Hari Konabolu, etc. This filtering by anti-imperial contributions shows the narrowing effect of the problematic Critical ES principles and approach.*

D. Violence

Remove content or figures that promote violence or demean any ethnic group, such as:

- Mumia Abu-Jamal - Convicted of first degree murderers of a police officer. Known for quoting Mao: “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.”
- Assata Shakur- Engaged in armed struggle against the US Government, robbing banks and convicted of first degree murderer of a police officer
- Oscar López Rivera - Militant leader of FALN that carried out more than 130 US bombings
- Joaquin Murrieta Carrillo – leader of gang responsible for bloody crime spree, including killing 22 men in two months, most were Chinese miners; he is mythicized as Robin Hood of the West

E. Victimhood

Remove the Critical ES orientation that defines ethnic groups only as victims. In accordance with the objectives of AB-2016, inspire students and build intergroup understanding by adding lessons representing the breadth of each group’s achievements and experiences.

¹⁵ ESMC Draft 3, Appendix A: P. 40, L. 894

¹⁶ ESMC Draft 3, Chapter 3: P. 36, L. 926-930

- *Example: “Ethnic studies is a class [about the] overarching study of the process and impact of the marginalization resulting from systems of power”¹⁷ Critical language has corrupted the definition of ES to be more about victimhood and exacerbating anger than about pride in ethnic contributions. This obstructs rather than promotes achievement. Replace this text with “overarching study of the role and impact various ethnic groups have played and continue to play in our society, including how they have overcome obstacles and changed discriminatory practices.”*

F. Bibliography

Remove the preponderance of CRT and/or Marxist sources (highlighted in attachment). The bibliography is permeated with these sources (31 total). Not only is this disproportionate representation reflective of the narrow ideological lens of Critical Ethnic Studies and its dominance in the ESMC, but on a practical level, it leads teachers to promote specific ideologies in the classroom. Furthermore, CRT is only one - the most controversial one - of a number of race theories.

G. Approved courses

Replace the unvetted list of A-G courses in Appendix C with courses such as the Los Angeles Unified School District’s, which are not based on a Critical ES approach. The CDE has not verified or reviewed this content in Appendix C,¹⁸ and the UC Office of the President did not have Ethnic Studies curricular guidelines to adhere to when approving these electives.

- *Example: The Salinas Union High School District Introduction to Ethnic Studies course is an example of one that should be deleted from the recommended list. It is a clearly Critical ES course, whose introduction describes it as, “A critical analysis of systems of oppression and privilege and how they impact and shape resistance, consciousness, and identity.”¹⁹*

This course also includes sections glorifying violence. For example, it includes the song “Malcolm, Garvey, Huey.”²⁰

Excerpted lyrics (see footnotes for description of violent characters):

*“I study Malcolm Garvey Huey, Malcolm Garvey Huey
 Monster Kody²¹ with a UZI...
 I'm a goon with the machete, especially if it's deadly
 Got the Santos²² for the Xe to protect me, so respect me...
 Bang bang, pig shooting, we should blame Rudy Julie...
 Police cannot stand me packing y'all like a manny
 Call me Little Bobby Hutton²³, cause I'm first to push the button
 Rappers don't be saying nothing to the system, we say fuck 'em”*

¹⁷ ESMC Draft 3, Appendix A: P. 5, L. 94-97; and Chapter 1: P.3, L. 19-22

¹⁸ ESMC Draft 3, Appendix C: P. 4, Line 51-6

¹⁹ ESMC Draft 3, Appendix C: P. 73, L. 1973-74

²⁰ ESMC Draft 3, Appendix C: P. 85, L. 2327

²¹ Monster Kody - brutally violent L.A. gang member

²² Santos - violent gang overseen by the Mexican Mafia

²³ Bobby Hutton - Treasurer Black Panther Party, ambushed Oakland police, wounding two officers