

# CARE-ED

California Alliance of Researchers for Equity in Education

## Why the Social Science Credential is Not Sufficient to Teach Ethnic Studies

October 3, 2023

Earning a Social Science credential does not sufficiently prepare teachers to teach Ethnic Studies. As California prepares to offer Ethnic Studies in schools statewide, it must create pathways that explicitly and substantively prepare teachers and teacher candidates to teach Ethnic Studies.

### What is Ethnic Studies?

Ethnic Studies is a curricular and pedagogical movement to understand and reclaim the cultural identities, experiences, and knowledge of racialized groups in the United States, particularly Black, Indigenous/Native, Latinx, and Asian American and Pacific Islander. (For a more thorough definition, see CARE-ED's Research Brief #2, *Ethnic Studies and Critical Multicultural Education*.)

### Why was the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum adopted by the California State Board of Education?

On March 8, 2020, the State Board of Education approved the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum as a tool for developing curriculum in public schools across the state. The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum focuses on four foundational disciplines: African American, Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x, Native American, and Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies. Starting with the class of 2030, all high school students will be required to take an Ethnic Studies course to graduate. With the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, the Board makes clear that teaching Ethnic Studies requires that teachers understand the purpose of Ethnic Studies and the contexts in which it is being taught. Educators must have a deep understanding of the histories, cultures, struggles, and contributions of historically marginalized communities, as well as of how racism plays out in schools and society and how it intersects with other forms of injustice. Furthermore, educators must reflect on how their own identities, perspectives, and experiences can shape the ways that they approach teaching and interacting with their students – as is the case teaching any subject matter and grade level.

### Does the Social Science credential prepare candidates to teach Ethnic Studies?

Currently in California, with a credential in Social Science, a teacher would be deemed qualified to teach Ethnic Studies. Our analysis of learning outcomes, however, shows that a Social Science credential does not provide significant instruction about racialized groups. We analyzed each learning outcome in the six domains of the California Social Science Subject Matter Requirements: World History, U.S. History, California History, Principles of American Democracy, Principles of Economics, and Principles of Geography. Of the 167 learning outcomes in total, 74 focused on disciplinary concepts (e.g., interest rate) rather than people and culture. The remaining 93 learning outcomes focused on the following (some had more than one focus): 22 on Africa/African American; 23 on Asian/Asian American; 30 on Europe; 49 on European American; 14 on Indigenous America; and 8 on Middle East. By far, Europe and European Americans receive more attention in the Social Science subject matter requirements (79 learning outcomes) than the other groups combined.

## How well do the subject matter requirements prepare teachers to teach Ethnic Studies?

The Social Science requirements offer a very limited and introductory level of preparation that would be insufficient – and could even be problematic – for teaching Ethnic Studies. For example:

- **In African American Studies:** Africa appears sporadically in the World History domain, including social structures of ancient African civilizations, the impact of Islam on Africa, and the impact of nationalism, imperialism, and World War II on Africa. In U.S. History, teachers learn a little about slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction, segregation laws and the rise of White supremacy, the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments, the KKK and the Back to Africa movement, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movement.
- **In Latin America/Latinx Studies:** Latin America appears sporadically in the World History domain, including pre-Columbian civilizations of the Americas, and the impact of imperialism on Latin America. In U.S. History and California History, teachers learn about Spanish colonization of the Americas, the Mexican American war, the California Gold Rush, the Spanish-American war, and international migration to the U.S. after World War II and to California after the Gold Rush.
- **In Indigenous Studies:** In World History, teachers learn a little about pre-Columbian civilizations of the Americas, and how geography affects civilization. In U.S. History, they learn about some American Indian cultural groups and their contributions to America, relationships between Indian societies and the colonies, the evolution of federal American Indian policy, forced migration, and the Navajo Code Talkers. California History includes a little about California Indians, Indian contributions to democracy, how tribal governments are organized, and jurisdictional issues involving tribes and other levels of government.
- **In Asia/Asian American Studies:** The World History domain gives some attention to India, China, and Japan, including some Chinese and Indian philosophies, contributions of Islam to Asian cultures, feudalism in Japan, the Russian Revolution, the Cold War, and the Open Door with China. In U.S. History, teachers learn about Japanese American incarceration camps during World War II and the 442nd Regimental Combat Unit, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and the SE Asia Treaty Organization. In California History, they learn about migration to California.

## Is the Social Science credential sufficient to verify content knowledge for Ethnic Studies?

In California, secondary social science credential candidates have four options to verify their content knowledge in the six domains of the Social Science Subject Matter Requirements: (1) Passing all 3 subtests of the CSET-Social Science exam, (2) graduating with an undergraduate degree in Social Science/Social Science major, (3) completing an approved Subject Matter Preparation Program (SMPP) of courses, and (4) a combination of individual CSET section passing and SMPP coursework completion. When examining the 24 California institutions with a CTC-approved Social Science SMPP or Social Science BA/major program and their lists of required courses:

- A student at any of these institutions could take **no courses** in Ethnic Studies or even related coursework and still be deemed eligible for a Social Science credential.
- Half of the institutions with CTC-Approved SMPP or BA/Major programs offer **no Ethnic Studies courses or related coursework** to verify content knowledge.
- Only half of the institutions offer one or just a few Ethnic Studies or related courses, and all of these courses are optional (not required).

## What can I do?

- Push for state legislation that mandates a credential explicitly and substantively about Ethnic Studies
- Engage in widespread public discussion about Ethnic Studies, why it is important, and how we can support Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools throughout California
- Support and develop resources that build the capacity for all teachers to teach Ethnic Studies
- Join CARE-ED's list-serve [here](#) to be involved in community events and action releases

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