

## Proposal for A-G Ethnic Studies

*Prepared by UC Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS)*

### Executive Summary

By equipping students with critical skills to analyze the world in which we live and deeper knowledge about the transformative power of community engagement, the interdisciplinary scholarly field of ethnic studies has been demonstrated to have broad educational and social benefits for all students. Qualitative studies show that ethnic studies improves students' overall academic performance, sense of empowerment and belonging, critical thinking skills, and likelihood of college enrollment, all of which can lead to a more successful student experience at the University of California.<sup>1</sup> In alignment with [AB 101](#), the proposed A-G ethnic studies requirement requires that high school students, beginning with the 2029-30 graduating class, complete a one-semester, college-prep-level ethnic studies course. High school students can satisfy this non-additive requirement by completing an ethnic studies course that has been approved as meeting the A-G requirements.

### Background

In November 2020, UC BOARS voted unanimously to amend Academic Senate Regulation 424.A.3 to require ethnic studies for first-year admission. The proposed requirement promotes the importance of ethnic studies without requiring additional A-G courses beyond the minimum 15. In keeping with AB 101, it supports the interdisciplinarity of ethnic studies as a scholarly field by ensuring that it can be taught in all subject areas, and it allows flexibility in how students can fulfill the requirement.

Signed into law in October 2021, AB 101 specifies that the new California high school ethnic studies requirement can be satisfied through four options: (a) a course based on the ethnic studies model curriculum, (b) an existing ethnic studies course, (c) an ethnic studies course taught as part of a course that has been approved as meeting the A–G requirements of the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU), or (d) a locally developed ethnic studies course approved by the governing board of the school district or the governing body of the charter school. AB 101 prohibits courses that do not “use ethnic studies content as the primary content through which the subject is taught from being used to satisfy the ethnic studies course requirement.” Thus far, California districts such as Los Angeles Unified School District (USD), San Diego USD, Compton USD, San Francisco USD, and Santa Ana USD already have ethnic studies graduation requirement policies.

An ethnic studies requirement for UC admissions is consistent with increased recognition of the value of ethnic studies as educationally essential, as reflected in the implementation of ethnic studies as a CSU undergraduate graduation requirement, as required by [AB 1460](#), and in the inclusion of ethnic studies as a requirement in the California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC). To align CSU and UC's common Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) with the new CSU ethnic studies graduation requirement, UC has already proposed and developed criteria for an ethnic studies IGETC subject area in collaboration with CSU.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See accompanying “Informational Supplement for Proposed A-H (Ethnic Studies) Course Criteria.”

<sup>2</sup> Cal-GETC, Area 6. In December 2022, the Academic Assembly approved the amendment to Academic Senate Regulation 479. Prior to this, the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS) had approved the addition of Area 7 Ethnic Studies to the [IGETC Standards](#).

## Proposal

Amend the California high school subject requirements (Academic Senate Regulation [424.A.3](#)), commonly known as A-G requirements, with a non-additive one-semester course that engages the methods, concepts, and content of ethnic studies:

Require at least **one-half unit** of an ethnic studies course among the minimum 15 A-G courses. High school courses across A-G subjects may earn an Ethnic Studies designation if they align with UC's ethnic studies course policy, to be determined by a UC faculty ethnic studies workgroup.

Ethnic studies is the critical, interdisciplinary, comparative/relational, and local/national/transnational study of formations of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity, as well as structures of power. It principally focuses on the histories, lived experiences, and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples and people of color through a lens attentive to gender, sexuality, class, religion, and other intersectionalities. Grounded in a structural critique of racism and a commitment to social transformation, ethnic studies is aimed at producing critical knowledge about power, inequality, and inequity as well as the efforts of marginalized and oppressed racialized peoples to challenge systemic violence and the institutional structures that perpetuate racial injustice. As an area of study, ethnic studies challenges the exclusion, marginalization, and cooptation of the histories, knowledge contributions, and worldviews of Indigenous peoples and people of color from and within the traditional curriculum.

Educational research points to the socially transformative effects of ethnic studies on all students, including underserved students, underrepresented students, students of color, and white students. A 2017 study on California high school students conducted by UC Irvine professor Emily Penner and Stanford professor Thomas Dee published in the flagship journal of the American Educational Research Association found that taking ethnic studies had a positive and significant causal effect on underserved students' academic outcomes, highlighting the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy.<sup>3</sup> Along similar lines, a more recent 2021 study showed positive longer-term impacts on underrepresented students from taking ethnic studies classes offered in San Francisco USD, including increased measures of engagement throughout high school (e.g., attendance) and the probability of postsecondary matriculation.<sup>4</sup> Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala's research on the impact of ethnic studies likewise supports the positive value of ethnic studies for students of color and white students. For white students, in particular, ethnic studies had a positive effect on cross-racial understanding.<sup>5</sup> By requiring all future UC applicants to take an ethnic studies course, UC can uplift the outcomes of all students, especially students of color and Indigenous students, and contribute to transforming the institutional structures that perpetuate racial injustice and diminished life chances.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas S. Dee and Emily K. Penner, "The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence from an Ethnic Studies Curriculum," *American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2017), 127-166, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1132535.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Sade Bonilla, Thomas S. Dee, and Emily K. Penner, "Ethnic Studies Increases Longer-Run Academic Engagement and Attainment," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, vol. 188, no. 37 (2021), e2026386118, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2026386118>.

<sup>5</sup> Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala, What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies, reprinted from *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2020), <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/what-research-says-about-ethnic-studies>.

Reflecting the history of the University of California as a transformative site in the emergence of ethnic studies as an interdisciplinary scholarly field, this proposed new requirement affirms the university's commitment to prepare its students to engage with the diversity of the student body at the University of California and the general California population.<sup>6</sup>

### **Overview and Purpose of A-G Ethnic Studies Course Criteria**

From 2020 to 2022, a twenty-person UC Ethnic Studies Faculty Workgroup drafted the proposed course guidelines and criteria. During the 2021-22 academic year, the workgroup made recommendations to BOARS regarding the course criteria. In November 2021, BOARS approved these recommendations, which were then reviewed by UC systemwide faculty. In Fall 2022, BOARS convened an implementation workgroup to finalize the course guidelines and criteria, and to oversee the implementation of the UC ethnic studies requirement.

The revised criteria do the following:

- Establish UC's expectations for all A-G courses approved for the ethnic studies subject requirement to ensure they embody the foundational values of the field of ethnic studies;
- Provide guiding principles regarding A-G ethnic studies course content and pedagogical approaches; and
- Identify the repertoire of skills that students will develop for critical analysis and engagement with, and transformation of, society and the world.

UC's A-G ethnic studies criteria serve as a high-level guiding document for the primary target audience of those preparing and submitting new A-G courses to the UC: namely, K-12 ethnic studies educators, high school counselors, and school/district administrators. The BOARS High School Articulation team will provide additional guidance documents to school district course development teams.

### **Timeline**

The next steps for the proposal for both the A-G ethnic studies requirement and the course criteria are the following:

1. Approval of the revised final draft of the criteria by the BOARS Ethnic Studies Implementation Workgroup
2. Review and approval by BOARS
3. Review and approval by Academic Council for 2<sup>nd</sup> systemwide review
4. A 90-day UC systemwide faculty review, providing feedback to Academic Council and BOARS
5. Review and approval by Academic Council for consideration by Assembly
6. Review and approval by Academic Assembly

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.calstate.edu/csu-system/faculty-staff/academic-senate/resolutions/2013-2014/3164.pdf>

**A-G Ethnic Studies Course Criteria**  
*Approved by BOARS, November 5, 2021*

**A-G Ethnic Studies**

At least one-half year of an ethnic studies course among the minimum 15 A-G courses is required. High school courses across the A-G subject areas may be eligible for approval for UC's ethnic studies requirement, provided they are sufficiently designed. Courses focused on a single group as well as courses focusing on multiple groups are acceptable.

**Course Criteria & Guidance**

All A-G courses approved for the ethnic studies subject requirement will embody the foundational values and engage the critical methods, concepts, and content of ethnic studies, an interdisciplinary scholarly field that emerged from the grassroots struggle of students of color and Indigenous students for self-determination and liberation within institutionalized educational settings. Even as the ethnic studies subject requirement can be satisfied by A-G high school courses, ethnic studies content cannot merely be tacked onto preexisting subject areas but stands in potentially transformative relationship to established disciplines, bodies of knowledge, research methods, and academic norms. As a field grounded in a critique of power and inequality, ethnic studies equips students to inquire into how knowledge is produced and how the production of knowledge is conditioned by race, racism, and racialization. Ethnic studies courses ask, among other questions, the following:

- Who are centered as producers and holders of knowledge? How is knowledge produced and by whom? How is the production of knowledge itself analyzed?
- How are systems of power analyzed?
- How do race, racism, and racialization shape and inform bodies of knowledge, areas of study, and fields of thought?
- How might inquiry into and analysis of racially oppressive conditions enable efforts to change those conditions?

**Course Content Guidelines**

Courses approved for the ethnic studies requirement will need to satisfy both the course criteria for the relevant A-G subject area and all of the following criteria specifically for ethnic studies. A-G ethnic studies courses, teaching, and learning will fulfill each of the bolded guidelines below. Non-bolded text following each bolded guideline title represents a non-exhaustive list of possible ways the primary (bolded) guideline can be fulfilled:

**1. Foregrounding ethnic studies pedagogy:** Explain how ethnic studies pedagogy will be used throughout the course (for example, community responsive pedagogy,<sup>7</sup> youth participatory action research,<sup>8</sup> community cultural wealth,<sup>9</sup> culturally relevant pedagogy,<sup>10</sup> culturally sustaining pedagogy,<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Tintiangco-Cubales, A., Kohli, R., Sacramento, J., Henning, N., Agarwal- Rangnath, R., & Sleeter, C. (2015). Toward an Ethnic Studies pedagogy: Implications for K-12 schools from the research. *Urban Review*. doi: 10.1007/s11256-014-0280-y

<sup>8</sup> Cammarota, J. (2016). The praxis of ethnic studies: transforming second sight into critical consciousness. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 19(2), 233-251. DOI:10.1080/13613324.2015.1041486

<sup>9</sup> Solórzano, D.G. & Yosso, T.J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling and as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/10778004020080010>; Yosso, T.J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91. DOI: 10.1080/1361332052000341006

<sup>10</sup> Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>11</sup> Caraballo, L., Martinez, D.C., Paris, D., & Alim, H.S. (2020.) Culturally sustaining pedagogies in the current moment: A conversation with Django Paris and H. Samy Alim. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 63(6), 697-701.

reality pedagogy,<sup>12</sup> abolitionist teaching<sup>13</sup>).<sup>14</sup> In designing and teaching the course, consider not only how to incorporate ethnic studies content but also how to apply ethnic studies methods to a range of objects of study, including within other disciplines. Ultimately, the content, methods, and assignments of the course should reflect a commitment to racial justice.<sup>15</sup>

**2. Studying systems and their legacies:** In addition to naming Indigenous dispossession<sup>16</sup> and migrant labor exploitation in the local context, grapple with how the structural violence of racism and colonialism has shaped and continues to shape the site in which learning is taking place. For example, in cases where ethnic studies is articulated within a traditional discipline, consider how the structural violence of racism and colonialism informs the methods, concepts, and content area of the course. Reflect that reckoning with racial injustice in the course design, critical questions, and assignments.<sup>17</sup>

**3. Applying critical analysis:** Examine race as a social construct with real-world effects and racialization as a historical and ongoing structural/systemic process. For example, contextualize ethnic studies within racial capitalism as a global system historically linked to transatlantic chattel slavery and the emergence of European and Euro-American colonialism. Study histories of imperialism, dehumanization, and genocide to expose their continuity to present-day laws, ideologies, knowledge systems, dominant cultures, institutions, and structures that perpetuate racial violence, white supremacy, and other forms of oppression.<sup>18</sup>

**4. Nuancing approaches to race, racism, and racialization:** Challenge monolithic, one-dimensional approaches to race and racism by examining, for example, how multiple oppressions intersect and how categories, ideas, and experiences not typically understood as implicated in racialization are intrinsic to systems of racial exploitation and subjugation. Consider the impact of racism on multiple scales, including the intimate and the everyday.<sup>19</sup>

**5. Teaching the struggles of Indigenous peoples and communities of color:** Center the self-determined perspectives, experiential knowledge, culturally sustaining practices, lifeways, and worldviews of Indigenous peoples and communities of color.<sup>20</sup> Recognize the ways, for example, that oppressed peoples have resisted and continue to resist racist and colonial violence in order to survive. Teach local and global struggles against racism, imperialism, and state violence.<sup>21</sup> Animate the concepts and practices of anti-racism, anti-imperialism, solidarity, and justice throughout the course.<sup>22</sup>

**6. Enacting resilience:** Foster space, for example, to honor and enact the joy, knowledge, agency, strength, healing, and endurance of Indigenous communities and communities of color.<sup>23</sup>

## Skills Guidelines

Because ethnic studies requires that students develop a repertoire of skills for critical analysis and engagement with and transformation of society and the world,<sup>24</sup> approved courses will support them to

<sup>12</sup> Emdin, C. (2020). A ratchedemic reality pedagogy and/as cultural freedom in urban education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52(9), 947-960.

<sup>13</sup> Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.

<sup>14</sup> *Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum* (2021). [California Department of Education](#). Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview, p. 10, para 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum* (2021). [California Department of Education](#). Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview, p. 9, para. 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15, para 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16, para 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16, para. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9, para. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15, para. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16, para. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16, para. 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15, para. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10, para. 3.

accomplish each of the bolded skills below. Non-bolded text following the bolded skill title represent a non-exhaustive list of possible ways the primary (bolded) skills can be achieved:

1. **Questioning norms:** Critically examine claims of objectivity, neutrality, and freedom from bias with regard to sources, methods, and bodies of knowledge.
  - Identify, analyze, contextualize, and corroborate sources, with attention to epistemologies, histories, explicit and implicit biases, as well as insider and outsider perspectives relative to all course materials and objects of study (e.g., books; articles; films; primary documents; artwork; performances; media; websites; archaeological “finds”; scientific and mathematical theories, methods, and discoveries; mathematical applications).<sup>25</sup>
  - Critique dominant narratives of power and their claims to neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, freedom from bias, and meritocracy in order to examine their violence and harm to Indigenous communities and communities of color.<sup>26</sup>
2. **Understanding power:** Analyze and assess power and oppression along ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized lines, with attention to intersectionalities.<sup>27</sup>
3. **Working for justice for all:** Develop skills, including dialogue and self-reflection, to recognize, address, and dismantle systems of racialized and colonial oppression and dehumanization in the many forms in which they appear.<sup>28</sup>
4. **Centering marginalized people and practices:** Learn from Indigenous and people of color-centered histories, knowledge systems, and pedagogical practices that traditional Western educational approaches and practices disregard, obscure, marginalize, and/or coopt.<sup>29</sup>
5. **Teaching civic engagement:** Learn about racial injustice in order to enact justice.<sup>30</sup> Connect study with action, and theory with praxis.<sup>31</sup> Nurture community engagement/participation/care, voting, service learning, public scholarship, grassroots leadership, and accountability in order to foster anti-racist and anti-imperialist futures and solidarity across all communities.<sup>32</sup>

#### A-G Implementation Team (2022-2023)

- Co-Chair Wallace Cleaves, BOARS Vice Chair and Associate Director of the University Writing Program, Riverside
- Co-Chair Christine Hong, Associate Professor and Chair of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, Santa Cruz
- Anne Britt, Professor of Plant Biology and former BOARS member, Davis
- Louis DeSipio, Chair of UC Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (UCAADE) and Professor of Political Science and Chair of Chicano/Latino Studies, Irvine

<sup>25</sup> [Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum \(2021\)](#). [California Department of Education](#). Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview, page 19, para. 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, page 13, lines 272-273.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18, para 4-6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, page 16, para. 5.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, page 19, para. 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, page 18, para. 7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17, para. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-18, para. 7, 1.

- Andrew Jolivéte, Professor and Chair of Ethnic Studies, San Diego
- Darlene Lee, Teacher Education Program Faculty Advisor, Los Angeles
- Daniel Solorzano, Professor of Social Science and Comparative Education and Chicana/o and Central American Studies, and Director, Center for Critical Race Studies in Education, Los Angeles
- Daniel Widener, Associate Professor of History, San Diego

#### **A-G Ethnic Studies Faculty Workgroup (2020-2022)**

- Co-Chair Eddie Comeaux, BOARS Chair and Professor of Higher Education, Riverside
- Co-Chair Monica Lin, Director of A-G and Transfer Policy Analysis and Coordination, UC Office of the President (UCOP)

#### Writing Team:

- Verónica Castillo- Muñoz, Associate Professor of History, Santa Barbara
- Tricia Gallagher-Geurtsen, Lecturer in Education Studies, San Diego
- Christine Hong, Associate Professor and Chair of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, Santa Cruz
- Andrew Jolivéte, Professor and Chair of Ethnic Studies, San Diego
- Darlene Lee, Teacher Education Program Faculty Advisor, Los Angeles
- Kimberly Woo, Undergraduate Student, Berkeley

#### Workgroup Members:

- Courtney Bonam, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, Santa Cruz
- Dolores Inés Casillas, Associate Professor of Chicana/o Studies, Santa Barbara
- Keith Feldman, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies, Berkeley
- Genavieve Koenigshofer, Undergraduate Student, San Diego
- Inés Hernández-Ávila, Professor of Native American Studies, Davis
- Julia Lee, Associate Professor and Chair of Asian American Studies, Irvine
- Jennifer Nájera, Associate Professor and Chair of Ethnic Studies, Riverside
- Arturo Nevárez, Graduate Student, Riverside
- Bettina Ng'weno, Associate Professor of African American and African Studies, Davis
- Emily Penner, Assistant Professor of Education, Irvine

- Laura Pérez, Professor of Ethnic Studies-Chicano/Latino Studies, Berkeley
- Lee Ann Wang, Assistant Professor of Asian American Studies, Los Angeles
- Daniel Widener, Associate Professor of History, San Diego
- Chris Zepeda-Millán, Associate Professor of Chicana/o Studies, Los Angeles

UCOP Staff Support:

- Kimberly Boral, Project and Policy Analyst
- Chase Fischerhall, Associate Director of A-G and Transfer Policy Analysis and Coordination
- Danyale Willingham, High School Articulation and Policy Analyst