



LIBERATED ETHNIC STUDIES

MODEL CURRICULUM COALITION

Chapter 2 Black Studies

Black studies is an interdisciplinary field that is focused on the study of the politics, histories, cultures, perspectives, and identities of Black people. Black Studies within the United States are sometimes referred to (or include) African American studies, African or Africana studies as they focus on Black peoples from the United States as well as African diasporic and/or immigrant peoples linked to the Americas including continental Africans, Caribbeans, Afro-Latinx, Afro-indigenous peoples. For our purposes, we will be using the terms “Black Studies” to describe our course as that term encompasses all of the aforementioned groups with the understanding that identities are not fixed and that each generation of Black scholars and practitioners must and will choose how to name themselves and theorize around their own conditions. In general, our Black studies curriculum will focus on the critical histories, politics, resistances, sociopolitical realities, and lives of Black peoples within the United States context and internationally.

In engaging a thematic approach to teaching a Black studies course, our unit plans are organized around five major themes namely self, stories, systems, social movements, and solidarity. Each of these interdisciplinary units will incorporate works from a variety of fields including but not limited to sociology, education, history, art, humanities, geography, anthropology, and even philosophy. This chapter will present units, lessons, activities, and theoretical perspectives in



Black studies' topics from an asset-based, decolonizing perspective that is rooted in and shaped by our communities' knowledges and cultural products.

We see the creation of Black studies programs and departments across United States universities in the 1960s and 70s as part of the organizing and inter-ethnic solidarity movements of the time. This is not to say that there had not been extensive scholarship in this field before then. W.E.B DuBois and Carter G. Woodson (who is first proposed African American History month) were among many Black academics who were “fighting” to create a discipline that centered, accurately portrayed, and engaged with the histories and cultures of Black people outside of Eurocentric logics in the late 19th and early 20th century. Apart from prominent Black scholars articulating the discipline of Black studies from within academic institutions, this field has been created, nurtured, and inspired by the organizing and scholarly efforts of Black women, Black workers, Black immigrants, Black queer folks, Black youth, and many others whose names are not known to us but to whom we owe a debt of appreciation.

As with every course of study, new questions in the field of Black studies emerge and new commitments to principles need to be made. Over the past few decades, we see Black studies practitioners want to move this field beyond male-dominated, cis-gendered, and able-bodied perspectives. We see anti-colonial internationalist understandings of Black studies being embraced. And we are also witnessing new ways in which Black studies scholars are exploring racial and ethnic identity in even more nuanced and complex ways along with the continual examination of the solidarity (and tensions) among other racialized minorities within the ethnic studies umbrella. As such, our model does not suggest a dogmatic approach to the field of Black studies but one that has a full reckoning with its past and present commitments includes feminist, queer, and disabled perspectives, and wrestles with the complex issues that define Black identity within the United States. The sample lesson plans presented in this chapter will familiarize the reader with what that might look like in an Ethnic Studies classroom.