



# K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching Certificate Program

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**SDSU**

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## MEMO: Executive Overview - The K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching and Learning Certificate Program at SDSU

With initial conversations and collaboration among partners beginning in 2018, SDSU's Collaborative for K-12 Ethnic Studies (Domínguez et al.) was pleased to officially launch our Certificate in K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching as an offering for undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree seeking students in fall of 2021.

This program was designed in anticipation of local, state, and national efforts to include ethnic studies in the K-12 curriculum, as a supplemental offering for pre-service and in-service educators seeking the unique preparation necessary to teach ethnic studies courses with rigor, fidelity, and local-context responsiveness. We see the certificate as an essential component of training prospective ethnic studies educators, and a model for what robust training and credentialing in this particular content-area might look like at scale.

In addition to the included materials detailing the structure and design of our program, we offer the following summary reflections from our experience and research in developing this program:

- **Ethnic studies is a unique, distinct, (inter)disciplinary field with a clear intellectual history—not a DEI fad.** It is crucial that ethnic studies not be mislabeled or misunderstood as a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative, or seen as a peripheral “add-on” to core curriculum, either by schools and school districts, or by teacher preparation programs.
- **As a distinct field, ethnic studies involves distinct disciplinary knowledge.** Just as our single-subject credentials in ELA, Social Science, math, and science fields involve expectations of specific, disciplinary expertise, so too should ethnic studies. Educators interested in teaching ethnic studies should be required to hold expertise in ethnic studies.
- **Navigating the topics of race, ethnicity, identity, and power in the classroom in developmentally appropriate ways necessitates unique skillsets beyond those expected of average educators.** Purposeful and specific training are required for ethnic studies educators to ensure that they do not do harm while moderating such conversations.
- **Ethnic studies departments must not be excised or ignored from conversations and program development around ethnic studies teacher preparation.** Just as English, History, Math, and Science departments contribute to the setting standards and disciplinary training for prospective educators in their fields, ethnic studies departments should be included in the preparation of prospective ethnic studies educators.
- **Ethnic studies teacher education programs should be grounded in clear, robust learning objectives.** There are specific knowledge and skill standards that prospective educators should be able to demonstrate, and programs should be focused on developing and assessing these capacities.
- **An institutional endorsement to teach ethnic studies in California should reflect clear standards based on ethnic studies expertise.** Standards to regulate who teaches ethnic studies, and what adequate training involves, should be developed in concert with ethnic studies experts at the university level. In the absence of clear guidance, the potential exists for scattershot, insufficient, and problematic professional development efforts to proliferate, absent the guidance of experts in the field. This would not be tolerated for other disciplines, and the same should be true of ethnic studies.

We invite continued correspondence and inquiry regarding our program structure, learning objectives, and methods course. Please contact [michael.dominguez@sdsu](mailto:michael.dominguez@sdsu) for inquiries.

## **The K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching and Learning Certificate Program at SDSU**

Michael Domínguez, Ph.D., et al.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching and Learning program at SDSU is rooted in the desire to ensure that K-12 educators who aspire to teach ethnic studies are prepared to do so with fidelity and appreciation for the positive, decolonial, anti-racist vision the field grows from and is committed to. We hope to cultivate educators marked by their ideological clarity and critical commitments; educators who are prepared to account honestly and purposefully with the realities of race, ethnicity, and coloniality in schools and in their own lives; educators whose pedagogies are liberatory and culturally sustaining/revitalizing; educators engaged in the design of curricula that are inclusive, rigorous, transdisciplinary, and grounded in critical examinations of the world; educators who have the nuanced skills to approach conversations around race, identity, and power in inclusive, humanizing ways for all students and contexts; and educators who are dynamic, reflective, and humble partners of the communities in which they teach.

Simply, our mission is to ensure that as every student in California (and beyond) encounters Ethnic Studies in their K-12 schooling, the educators who will lead them in these journeys will be well-prepared, effective, and well-versed in the commitments, vision, and promise of Ethnic Studies.

### **Background**

#### ***Defining ethnic studies as a unique educational discipline***

Since its emergence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, led by the Third World Liberation Front coalition (TWLF), and built on the scholarship of Frantz Fanon and others, the field of Ethnic Studies has sought to advance the interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, identity, and power, emphasizing the experiences, contributions, and perspectives of people of color in the United States and beyond. As a discipline, Ethnic Studies reflects the voices, narratives, stories, beliefs, memories, and varying worldviews of communities of color, grown and evolving over many generations. It invites, and demands, reflection on the past, the present, the future, and the self, locating our own and others' identities within society's racialized plurality. In short, Ethnic Studies is not just another set of content to be taught, but a unique discipline that requires more than generic pedagogical preparation, more than generalized best practices, and more than simply culturally competent self-reflection.

In contrast to discourses of multiculturalism, humanism, and diversity/equity/inclusion in education, Ethnic Studies is unequivocal in grappling with questions of power and oppression: it is necessarily decolonial in its orientation, and anti-racist in its pursuit of equity. In short, cultural inclusion, competence, and appreciation are insufficient goals (Okihiro, 2016). The study of our current realities and our interconnected histories cannot be divorced from the examination of how our lives (and the lives of others) are shaped by persistent and lingering social and political systems and structures including, but not limited to: colonialism/coloniality, hegemony, White supremacy, racism, colorism, sexism, classism, homophobia and transphobia, patriarchy, xenophobia, and neoliberalism. By naming and honestly engaging with these realities as they are present in our world, Ethnic Studies invites hope and possibility; allowing us to consider how we might productively address the ways in which these malignancies continue to impact the social, cultural, economic, political, and affective experiences of historically marginalized communities.

By decolonizing our epistemologies, and centering the perspectives of historically marginalized communities of color as it examines content, Ethnic Studies seeks to affirm the presence and significance of all peoples in the American historical and cultural narrative, and thus promote a more liberatory, loving, and pluralistic future in which educational and racial justice might be achieved.

### ***Planning for ethnic studies teacher education at scale***

Given the growing body of evidence that ethnic studies coursework has significant positive impacts on students' achievement in school (e.g. Dee & Penner, 2017; Cabrera, et al. 2014, 2013), Ethnic Studies has emerged as a trending and growing subject area in K-12 schools, with California's recent passage of AB 331 part of a wider, nationwide trend that had already manifested across a number of local school districts in California, and elsewhere in the U.S.

While exciting, these new requirements present a pressing policy concern, for too often, the teachers who will be called on to teach these courses have had no contact with ethnic studies courses or perspectives in their own learning trajectories, leaving them under-prepared pedagogically, intellectually, and culturally to advance meaningful ethnic studies offerings to California's K-12 students.

At present, traditional models of teacher education have not effectively met the need of preparing a truly transformative, diverse, and critically-conscious teaching force (e.g. Domínguez, 2015, 2019; Kohli, et al. 2015). Moreover, while generative, the literature surrounding the development of critically conscious educators (e.g Valenzuela, 2015; Zeichner & Flessner, 2009) engages with slightly different questions, and often focuses on small-scale, idiosyncratic cases of ethnic studies pedagogical success. As such, the field has not yet attended to what it means to prepare ethnic studies educators—both in-service and pre-service—at the scale California will require. Thus, there is a need for programs that will ensure educators are up to the task the emerging policy requirements are producing; providing a meaningful and transformative experience with Ethnic Studies for all students in all of California's schools, and varied cultural contexts.

## **Student Learning Objectives**

As with any learning at any level, we believe that effective learning outcomes begin with clear, comprehensive learning objectives. To this end, the K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching certificate program at SDSU is designed as a purposeful, interdisciplinary program with clearly delineated knowledge and skill objectives.

The program integrates coursework from both SDSU's ethnic studies departments and School of Teacher Education to prepare educators who aspire to teach Ethnic Studies at the K-12 level effectively and with fidelity. Through coursework that attends to (a) the nature of Ethnic Studies as a discipline, (b) content knowledge within Ethnic Studies history and/or literature, and (c) humanizing approaches to ethnic studies teaching methods, students completing the certificate can expect to be well prepared for the intellectual and practical challenges involved in teaching Ethnic Studies courses at the K-12 level, and equipped with a unique skillset that will enhance their teaching effectiveness in all contexts.

Student learning objectives for the program as a whole follow, anticipating that they will be met across the multiple courses that compose the certificate.

### ***Knowledge Objectives:***

1. Define the field of ethnic studies, with respect to its historical, socio-cultural, political, and ideological origin and context, as well as to one's own subject-area interest, and intersectional social identity;
2. Identify and describe how the changing demographics in the United States/world, major historical events, court decisions, policy initiatives, and related socio-cultural and socio-political dynamics impact communities, schools, and learning for historically marginalized youth and communities;
3. Evaluate the significance of race and ethnicity (as well as other varying social, cultural, historical, and physiological influences—including but not limited to gender, sexuality, physical development, language, and class) on the identity development, learning, social and cultural practices, and schooling experiences of individuals in racially diverse settings;
4. Differentiate among key theoretical perspectives and analytical lenses used in the field of ethnic studies—including decolonial theory, critical theory, critical race theory, and sociocultural theory—to examine schooling, pedagogy, and educational inequality, as well as content materials in one's disciplinary specialty;
5. Assess one's own social-identity and epistemic/ideological position with respect to histories of hegemony and power, race and ethnicity, linguistic capital, dominant portrayals of schools, curriculum, and communities of color, and local community cultural wealth.

### ***Skill Objectives:***

1. Demonstrate critical and decolonial approaches to K-12 pedagogy which advance the core commitments of the field of Ethnic Studies and promote liberatory outcomes and humanizing reflection among students;
2. Moderate discussions of race and racial identity (and other critical concepts) among students and adults, inclusive of acknowledging one's own racial positionality, establishing norms, diagnosing sources of discomfort, mediating disputes, and supporting developmentally appropriate discourse use
3. Critique, compose, and modify new and existing curricula to reflect the commitments of the field of Ethnic Studies, trans/interdisciplinary framing, as well as the local needs of a particular racialized/historically marginalized community;
4. Devise and defend an ideological position reflective of the commitments of ethnic studies in relation to your pedagogy, curriculum development, engagement with youth and communities, and personal positionality;
5. Argue for the inclusion of ethnic studies perspectives in pedagogical, curricular, and school-community efforts, with respect to common and anticipated counter-arguments and Eurocentric/monocultural perspectives;
6. Analyze and reframe deficit oriented educational discourse (e.g. “achievement gaps”, “school failure”, “being unbiased/nonpartisan/colorblind”, “saving youth/communities”, “that’s just theory”) in professional conversation by leveraging theoretical perspectives and analytical lenses used in the field of Ethnic studies—including decolonial theory, critical theory, critical race theory, and sociocultural theory

### **Guiding Commitments/Program Objectives**

Just as we set out a mission statement and student learning objectives to shape our vision for what our students will know and be able to do, fidelity to a clear and coherent vision of Ethnic Studies for the K-12 level requires that we are attentive to what we as teacher educators must do for our students to ensure they meet the goals we have of them, and that we meet the goal of cultivating truly excellent Ethnic Studies educators. To this end, as partners in the program, we are committed to:

- Appreciating that teaching Ethnic Studies requires both pedagogical expertise and the expertise and perspectives located in ethnic studies departments. Cultivating truly excellent Ethnic Studies educators for the future requires shared expertise, clear communication, and collaborative partnership within our coalition.
- Ensuring that conferral of any institutional validation of expertise in the teaching of ethnic studies (e.g. Certificate, Minor, or Concentration awarded through this

program) involves robust and meaningful engagement with the discipline, with new coursework and challenges, and rigorous self-development and demonstration of decolonial/anti-racist positionality. Cultivating truly excellent Ethnic Studies educators for the future requires that an endorsement in Ethnic Studies teaching must not be a superficial badge to acquire, but an accomplishment built on evidence of a rich process of personal learning and growth, and new dispositions and skillsets acquired.

- Providing students with a clear understanding of ethnic studies, and how this approach to curricula, pedagogy, and learning differs from generalized, mainstream discourses of diversity and equity in education, including but not limited to: multiculturalism, inclusivity, humanism/human rights education, cultural competence, neoliberal conceptions of 'social justice', etc. Cultivating excellent ethnic studies educators for the future, without falling prey to the disruptions that have undermined the integrity of other well-intentioned equity-oriented ideas, requires an ongoing commitment and affirmation of the decolonial and anti-racist principles of ethnic studies.
- Providing students with rigorous, substantive feedback in regards to their pedagogical and curricular design skills. Cultivating truly excellent ethnic studies educators for the future requires that educators see that ethnic studies requires a new way of teaching and being with students, not simply small modifications to existing ones, and this ideal cannot be achieved without active guidance, new models, and support for imagining new futures in the classroom and beyond from program instructors.
- Ensuring that students' ideological, ontological, and epistemological development has received our considerable attention. Cultivating truly excellent ethnic studies educators for the future requires changes in who educators are, just as much as changes in what they can do. We must ensure that they have been challenged to confront and engage with their own perspectives, beliefs, habits, and cultural practices, recognizing that no one is without room for growth and development, and that often unrecognized elements of bias—however minor—shape our identities, pedagogies, and potentials as educators.
- Providing ample opportunity for students to consider content through decolonial and critical lenses, to ensure that they have themselves participated in an ethnic studies learning trajectory and experience. Cultivating truly excellent ethnic studies educators for the future requires that these educators have first participated in a minimum amount of Ethnic Studies coursework themselves, ensuring that their pedagogy begins from a place of awareness of the discipline, its commitments, and its approach to subject-matter content.
- Offering multiple, grounded opportunities to apply burgeoning ideological/theoretical skillsets to challenges reflective of those that will likely be

found in schools and classrooms. Cultivating truly excellent ethnic studies educators for the future requires that we offer a learning experience grounded in the realities of teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and offer practice-based opportunities to practice for, grapple with, and realize, feasible, to-scale, decolonial, anti-racist outcomes within the educational landscape.

### **Curriculum Sequence**

In practice, the K-12 Ethnic Studies certificate program draws from the expertise of our full partnership, and ensures that students pursuing the certificate will emerge from the program well prepared to teach ethnic studies, develop ethnic studies curricula, and competently facilitate educational conversations around race, racism, ethnicity, and diversity, at the K-12 level.

In addition to a purpose-built, ethnic studies teaching disciplinary pedagogical methods course, courses in the certificate were chosen that will encourage students to explore complex problems and ask complex questions about the pedagogical challenges and dynamics of today's classrooms, while ensuring their practical skillsets and knowledge for teaching are robust and effective. In short, the certificate asks students preparing to teach, or currently teaching in, K-12 contexts to richly consider the distinct nature, meaning, content, and challenges, of introducing the discipline of ethnic studies to this level of teaching and learning.

Through the certificate, students develop and demonstrate their professional and academic expertise by engaging in learning and coursework around three main themes:

- **Understanding Ethnic Studies as a Unique Discipline.** While discourses of diversity are popular and plentiful in society generally, and education particularly, ethnic studies is a unique, distinct discipline, not a 'diverse' variation of others. Students will acquire a clear understanding of ethnic studies, and how this approach to curricula, pedagogy, and learning differs from generalized, mainstream, and shallow discourses of equity in education, and is distinct from general best practices for culturally responsive teaching and diversification of the curriculum.
- **Expanding Content-area Knowledge to Include Historically-Marginalized Counternarratives.** Modern K-12 curriculum, though more attentive to issues of diversity than in years past, remains reflective of a singular 'American' narrative that positions historically marginalized communities at the margins, and histories of their origins and contributions as secondary at best. It is these very narratives that the discipline of ethnic studies runs counter to. Through a community and content area specialization, Certificate Students will be positioned with the background knowledge necessary to construct curriculum in keeping with the intentions of ethnic studies (i.e. reflective of the perspectives, histories, and cultural contributions of historically marginalized communities).



- **Cultivating Humanizing and Decolonial Pedagogical Skills.** Ethnic studies educators must necessarily be ready to moderate and lead robust conversations about race, identity, and power that are well tailored to their local context, and the developmental level of their students. To do so in humanizing ways that lead to liberatory outcomes for youth requires a new kind of pedagogical expertise, and relationality. Students will consider the relational aspects and responsivity to communities required for teaching Ethnic Studies content and developing Ethnic Studies curricula, and develop a strong pedagogical skillset and repertoire of practices with which to implement curriculum in K-12 settings.

By completing the certificate in K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching, students will be prepared to operate as highly effective, uniquely skilled ethnic studies educators in K-12 contexts, respecting and honoring the perspectives of historically marginalized communities, advancing the discipline of ethnic studies at the K-12 level, and serving the developmental needs of youth in schools as they approach discussions of race, ethnicity, and diversity.

The design of the certificate grounds itself in courses that achieve these themes and student learning outcomes, while allowing a student completing an MA in Education, a BA in Africana Studies (AFRAS), American Indian Studies (AMIND), or Chicana and Chicano Studies (CCS), or a BA in Social Science or Liberal Studies (pre-credential), to complete their degree maps by adding, at most, 2 elective courses that might not directly contribute to their existing major/concentration and GE requirements.

Course sequences may be found on the undergraduate and graduate road-map documents.

### **Educator Production**

To date, we have conferred certificates on 12 students, from across a range of majors/backgrounds. Two are presently credentialed educators in California, three are in certificate programs, two others are in graduate programs relating to education and youth, and three are working in non-profit youth services roles.

A further eight continuing students are actively enrolled in the certificate and on track for matriculation in the spring, with more expected to join as the year progresses.

### **Further Information**

Further information on the SDSU K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching certificate program may be found at our program website < <https://cal.sdsu.edu/programs/es-teaching> > or by contacting the program Director, Dr. Michael Domínguez at [michael.dominguez@sdsu.edu](mailto:michael.dominguez@sdsu.edu).

## K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching Certificate Undergraduate Roadmap

1. **Core Ethnic Studies Education Foundations:** Choose six units from:

- ☐ AFRAS 0421 Black Urban Experience
- ☐ AMIND 0480 Issues in American Indian Education
- ☐ CCS 0580 Chicanas and Chicanos and the Schools
- ☐ DLE 0515 Multilingual Education: Theory and Practice for Biliteracy Teachers
- ☐ TE 0472 Ethnic Identity Development in Education

2. **Ethnic Studies Content Area Specialization Electives:** Choose a specialization, and three units from:

*Social Studies/Humanities Focus – For Prospective Social Studies/History Teachers*

- ☐ AFRAS 0471 Africana History
- ☐ AMIND 0320 American Indians in Contemporary Society
- ☐ AMIND 0331 The American Indian Political Experience
- ☐ AMIND 0420 Indian Peoples of California
- ☐ AMIND 0451 American Indian Identity
- ☐ CCS 0301 Political Economy of the Chicano People
- ☐ CCS 0340B Chicana Women's History: 1848 to Present
- ☐ CCS 0350A Chicana and Chicano History
- ☐ CCS 0350B Chicana and Chicano History
- ☐ CCS 0375 US/Mexico Border History

*Language Arts/Literature Focus – For Prospective English Language Arts Teachers*

- ☐ AFRAS 0365B African American Literature After 1900
- ☐ AMIND 0430 American Indian Poetry and Fiction
- ☐ CCS 0320 Chicana and Chicano Life-styles
- ☐ CCS 0335 Chicana and Chicano Literature

☐ CCS 0376 Chicana and Chicano Culture and Thought

3. **Capstone Methods Course:** Complete three units of dedicated, practice-based study in Ethnic Studies pedagogy and praxis:

☐ CCS 0585 Methods in Ethnic Studies Teaching: Decolonial Pedagogies in K-12 Schools

## K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching Certificate Graduate Roadmap

1. **Core Ethnic Studies Education Foundations:** Three units, consisting of:

☐ CCS 0580 Chicanas and Chicanos and the Schools

2. **Core Advanced-Pedagogical Foundations:** Three units, consisting of:

☐ DLE 0600A Foundations of Democratic Schooling

3. **Ethnic Studies Perspectives Elective:** In conjunction with a program advisor, and approved by the certificate program coordinator, choose three units of graduate level coursework at the 600-700 level relevant to the goals of the certificate program and student's individual goals. Possible courses may include, but are not limited to:

☐ CCS 0605 Borderlands and Feminist Theories

☐ DLE 0651 Curriculum, Teaching, and Assessment: Designated and Integrated ELD

☐ DLE 0652 Literacy and Language: Critically Examining Curriculum for Teaching and Learning

☐ DLE 0686 Seminar in Multicultural Education

☐ WMNST 0601 Foundations of Feminist Scholarship

☐ WMNST 0604 Seminar: Gender, Culture, and Representation

☐ WMNST 0607 Seminar: Privilege and Oppression

☐ WMNST 0612 Seminar: Feminist Pedagogies

☐ MALAS 0600A Seminar: Cultural Studies

☐ MALAS 0601 Seminar in Interdisciplinary Thinking

☐ TE 0655 Sociocultural Foundations of American Education

☐ ED 0640 Critical Pedagogy for Advanced Learners

4. **Capstone Methods Course:** Complete three units of dedicated, practice-based study in Ethnic Studies pedagogy and praxis:

☐ CCS 0585 Methods in Ethnic Studies Teaching: Decolonial Pedagogies in K-12 Schools

**"Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who we are so that we can more wisely build the future."**

*~Paulo Freire*



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SDSU Center  
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*New  
for  
2021*



## K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching

Interdisciplinary  
Certificate Program  
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# K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching

Driven by student activism, it was just over 50 years ago that the field of Ethnic Studies emerged at U.S. colleges and universities.

Today, in response to the challenges that racism and discrimination continue to pose, schools and school districts at the K-12 level across California and the nation are beginning to embrace the value, importance, and promise of ethnic studies as an essential part of education for a pluralistic American future.

## OUR CERTIFICATE

The K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching certificate program involves faculty expertise from across campus, and a collaborative curriculum built to ensure that students pursuing the certificate will emerge from the program prepared to teach ethnic studies, develop ethnic studies curricula, and competently facilitate educational conversations around race, racism, ethnicity, and diversity, at the K-12 level.



# Why Ethnic Studies Teaching?

## IDEAL FOR FUTURE & CURRENT EDUCATORS

We are committed to preparing K-12 Ethnic Studies leaders!

Whether you are a undergrad interested in education, a future teacher pursuing your credential, or a veteran educator seeking new expertise, the K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching certificate is an ideal complement to your degree.




Students explore decolonial solutions to social problems in an Ethnic Studies classroom

## GRADUATE & UNDERGRADUATE OFFERINGS

With an array of interesting courses at various levels that overlap with popular majors/degree programs, the certificate is available and open to students at **both** the undergraduate AND graduate level!



New opportunities to teach Ethnic Studies at the K-12 level are opening up in school districts everyday! 

## An Exciting Curriculum

## FLEXIBLE & INTERDISCIPLINARY

The K-12 Ethnic Studies Teaching Certificate requires 12 units of study, exploring:

- Foundations of ethnic studies education
- Deep dives into ethnic studies in the content areas
- Electives tailored to your interests
- A capstone, ethnic studies-specific methods course in decolonial pedagogy

Photo credits: Michael Domínguez, SDSU Chicana/o Studies Department