

ETHNIC STUDIES IN APS

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) will be joining a nationwide movement after the landmark decision to offer ethnic studies in all APS high schools

What is ethnic studies?

“Ethnic studies...are centered on the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group, reflecting narratives and points of view rooted in that group’s lived experiences and intellectual scholarship. Ethnic studies arose as a counter to the traditional mainstream curriculum. Numerous content analyses of textbooks have found an ongoing marginalization of scholarship by and about African Americans, Latino/as, Native Americans, and Asian Americans...As students of color proceed through the school system, research finds that the overwhelming dominance of Euro-American perspectives leads many such students to disengage from academic learning (Sleeter, 2011:3).”

Ethnic studies curriculum content and Student Success

Ethnic studies includes units of study, courses, or programs that are centered on the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group, reflecting narratives and points of view rooted in that group’s lived experiences and intellectual scholarship. In a literature review of the role of ethnic studies in student success, Sleeter (2011:viii) concludes that: “curricula that teach directly about racism have a stronger positive impact than curricula that portray diverse groups but ignore racism.”

- 1) explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective;
- 2) examination of U.S. colonialism historically, as well as how relations of colonialism continue to play out;
- 3) examination of the historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism, and struggles for liberation;
- 4) probing meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold; and
- 5) studying one’s community’s creative and intellectual products, both historic and contemporary (Sleeter 2002).

“The curriculum teaches about racial and economic issues, immersing students in university-level theoretical readings. It includes a community-based research project in which students gather data about manifestations of racism in their school and community and use social science theory to analyze why patterns in the data exist and how they can be challenged (Sleeter, 2011:14).”

Ethnic Studies Research Findings

- A study connecting entrance and departures for 9th graders, authors Neild, Stoner-Eby, and Furstenberg (2008) find that efforts to decrease the dropout rate should focus on the critical high school transition year of ninth grade, arguing that 9th grade outcomes "add substantially to the ability to predict dropout. (p. 543)."
- In a recent quantitative study of high school students in San Francisco, California, Dee and Penner (2016) finds that 9th graders who entered with GPAs of 2.0 or less (<C average) and enrolled in ethnic studies had better attendance, grade point averages and earned more credits than comparable students (N=1,409).
- In Tuscon, Arizona, quantitative studies examining the impact of Mexican American Studies on student achievement found positive outcomes for student in these classes in terms of their standardized test results, graduation and/or college attendance (Hawley, 2012; Cabrera et al., 2014).
- Qualitative studies also report that students describe ethnic studies as nurturing critical thinking and creating safe spaces for racial and ethnic minority students (Yosso, 2006; Ochoa, 2013; Cammarota, 2007; Cammarota and Romero, 2006a,b; Pizarro, 2005; Nieto, 2007).
- In Native Pride: The Politics of Curriculum and Instruction in an Urban Public School, Martinez (2010) found that Native American students had visceral critiques of their mainstream courses because they marginalized their histories and cultures (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Lee & López, 2013).

If you are an interested student, please talk to your advisor to learn more about the ethnic studies elective. Some ethnic studies courses are also part of the dual credit program and they may meet the “U.S. & Global Diversity & Inclusion Requirement” as well as other core curriculum and diversity requirements at UNM and potentially other universities.

Talk to your high school guidance counselor for more information.

For more information on the Institute for the Study of “Race” & Social Justice visit: race.unm.edu

For more information on Albuquerque Public Schools visit: www.aps.edu