

Course Title: Artivism: Ethnic Studies in the Visual Creative Arts Course

Grades:	9-12
Length:	Full Year
Environment:	Classroom-based
Honors:	None
Subject:	Ethnic Studies
Discipline:	Visual Arts
Institution:	Santa Ana Unified School District

Course Overview

In this Ethnic Studies course, students will develop and cultivate respect, empathy, and solidarity with historically marginalized groups of people (Asian and Pacific Islander, Black, Chicano/a/Latinx, and Native American) through Visual Arts. Through personal reflection and narrative storytelling, students will foster active social engagement and community building. Additionally, students will gain the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to creatively express themselves as individuals and members of their communities through art.

By engaging in artivism (activism through the arts) students will become socially and politically conscious about their connection to various issues of oppression or threats to identity. Students will creatively document aspects of their community and apply their knowledge of race, ethnicity, culture and identity to address injustice. Students will use their agency to collectively generate a themed exhibition that celebrates the artistic works they have curated over the course of the class and challenge the lack of diversity, space and representation within the arts.

Artivism: Ethnic Studies in the Visual Creative Arts

Semester 1: Introduction to Ethnic Studies

- **Unit 1: Defining Identity and Ethnic Studies**
 - **Performance Task:** Create a Self Identity Portrait and a written reflection, small group discussion, surveys/questionnaires
- **Unit 2: Building Community Through Storytelling**

- **Performance Task:** Storytelling: The Fabric of Our Community Project, visual journaling
- **Unit 3: The Arts as a Means of Resistance, Survival and Accommodation**
 - **Performance Task:** Meet the Artist Project

Semester 2: Art & Transformative Action

- **Unit 4: Advocacy and Activism**
 - **Performance Task:** Current events journal, create a social justice poster, poster presentation and peer evaluations
- **Unit 5: (Un)Documented: My Community**
 - **Performance Task:** Mapping the community through documentary photography, create a zine (choice of digital or mixed media) or a short documentary
- **Unit 6: Acknowledging our Past...Celebrating our Future**
 - **Performance Task:** Collaboratively curate a themed multimedia exhibition, present/showcase a physical and/or virtual exhibition with community (class, school, or local community)

Semester 1: Introduction to Ethnic Studies

Unit 1: Defining Identity and Ethnic Studies

The first unit provides an introduction to how individuals think about race, ethnicity, and identity in America, and how these concepts are expressed through the visual arts. The purpose of the unit is to provide students with foundational skills to express themselves as individuals and members of their communities through art. Students will also cultivate an appreciation of the arts in communities beyond their own.

We will discuss the history of the formation of Ethnic Studies, power and privilege, and what it means to be American in our society. We also define the differences between race, ethnicity, and identity along with other core ideas such as assimilation, appropriation, alienation, gentrification, oppression, racism (institutionalized and internalized), stereotypes, privilege and intersectionality.

After examining various media sources, artifacts, and readings, students will be asked to reflect on their personal identity and how it fits in with the American image in addition to their past experiences with racism, diversity, and identity politics. Students will be introduced to various art forms and artists of different identities and ethnic backgrounds. They will learn to develop the skills and language necessary to analyze art critically through the lens of ethnicity and identity. The unit will conclude with students synthesizing their knowledge and personal experiences to create a self identity portrait and written reflection.

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to be American?
- How do we define ourselves?

- What is the difference between race, ethnicity, national origin?
- What is prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination?
- How do stereotypes affect our own identities and why do they negate us of our individuality?
- How might groups of people be marginalized by the use of labels?
- How can stereotypes affect our thinking of different social groups?
- How do media stereotypes and artistic representations of different social groups lead to the scapegoating and discrimination of marginalized communities in the United States? What does oppression mean and how is it carried out?
- What are the origins of race, racism and white supremacy in the United States?
- How has race been socially constructed?
- How can we better understand our own subjectivity & bias in different contexts?
- How has art been used to communicate ideas of the dominant culture?

Performance Task: Create a Self Identity Portrait and a written reflection, small group discussion, surveys/questionnaires.

Unit 2: Building Community Through Storytelling

In the second unit students will learn to further explore their own identities and cultivate interpersonal relationships within the various communities they belong to through the arts and storytelling. Students will relate their artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen their understanding of the importance of storytelling. The culminating project, “Storytelling: The Fabric of Our Community,” will occur in two phases. The first phase of the project will involve an interview between students and a family member or member of the community, with a specific focus on ethnicity, culture, and identity. This recorded oral history will then be used in the second phase of the project to convey and connect the individual’s story in the form of a work of art.

Essential Questions:

- What is a community?
- What do you consider to be your community?
- In what ways do you connect to your local community?
- What role does community play in individual members’ lives?
- In what ways are stories told or shared?
- In what ways do marginalized communities preserve their histories?
- What is an oral history?
- Why are oral histories/storytelling important to marginalized groups and the survival of cultural traditions?
- Why do artists follow or break from established traditions?
- What oral histories/stories do you have within your community?
- How can stories be transformed through visual media?
- What is gained and lost in telling stories through visual art?
- How does knowing the contexts, histories, and traditions of art forms help us create works of art and design?

Performance Task: Storytelling: The Fabric of Our Community Project, visual journaling.

Unit 3: The Arts as a Means of Resistance, Survival and Accommodation

In this unit, students will critically examine works of art by means of resistance to colonization and oppression of marginalized groups, specifically African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicana-Latina, and Native Americans, including the intersectionalities of sexism, homophobia, ableism and religious discrimination (which creates more layers of oppression within these groups), within the United States. Students will explore case studies, historical events, artistic movements, and relevant artworks to look more closely at the concepts of colonization, hegemony, oppression (i.e., racism, classism, sexism, hetero-sexism, homophobia), prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination and gentrification. Students will gain a deeper understanding of how historically marginalized groups have worked to resist, survive, and accommodate colonization and oppression through visual art within the context of American history. Additionally, students will select an artist to research and present to the class in the form of a slideshow. Lastly, students will create an original piece of art inspired by their artist of choice.

Essential Questions:

- What is colonization?
- What are the ultimate goals of colonization?
- How does colonization act to suppress and/or oppress indigenous communities?
- What is a marginalized group? What marginalized groups can you identify in the U.S.? How do artistic movements act as a means of resistance to oppression?
- How can identity be expressed through visual art?
- How do artists represent their cultural and ethnic identities through different forms of art? How are artistic expression and identity related and can they be separated from one another?
- How do marginalized groups adapt traditional forms of art to accommodate colonization and oppression? How and why do marginalized groups create art as a means of resistance?

Performance Task: “Meet the Artist” research an artist and create a piece inspired by their work.

Semester 2: Art & Transformative Action

Unit 4: Advocacy and Artivism (Activism Through the Arts)

Students will study and identify contemporary issues of oppression or threats to identity in order to become advocates for their communities. Possible topics students may choose to examine include: racism, LGBTQ+ rights, immigration rights, access to quality health care, income inequality, War on Drugs, school-to-prison-pipeline, poverty, religious persecution, access to equitable public education, gentrification, gangs and violence. In this unit, students will use their knowledge to facilitate positive change in their communities; they will use knowledge from previous units to address a social or political concern in the form of an original social justice poster.

Essential Questions:

- How are art and advocacy related and where do they intersect?
- What is activism?
- What role have activists played in the course of history?
- What contemporary social or political issues are affecting your local, regional, national, and global community?
- How does one engage in activism to make positive change?
- How does visual imagery influence our understanding of and response to the world?

Performance Task: Current events journal, create a social justice poster, present posters and engage in peer evaluations

Unit 5: (Un)Documented: My Community

Students will closely observe their own community through the lens of advocacy and activism using documentary style methods. Their independent exploration will include field work (as permitted), online research, and other mediums of observational study such as note taking or journaling. Students will engage in a scavenger hunt to identify aspects of history, culture, home and social justice in their community. Through the scavenger hunt, students may encounter social and political issues mentioned in the previous unit such as gentrification, housing, discrimination, racism, immigration and so forth. They may choose to document local murals, street art, architecture, and cultural practices/festivals to further reflect these aspects of their community. To conclude the unit, students will create a zine (digital magazine) or short documentary that uses a combination of imagery and text to creatively express, preserve, analyze, and share their findings with one another and their community.

Essential Questions:

- Why is documentation important?
- What is the value of documenting aspects of one's community?
- What spaces within your community are significant?
- How are aspects of community preserved through documentation?
- How can the concepts of history, culture, home, and social justice be interpreted through an artistic lens?
- How is public art a reflection of community culture?
- What do we choose to memorialize and why?
- How do murals serve as a means of communication?
- How will documenting/mapping the community give students a shared ownership and understanding of where they live?
- How is documentation used as a means of storytelling?
- How will students' exploration of their neighborhoods give them a sense of belonging to their community?

Performance Task: Mapping the community through documentary photography, create a zine (choice of digital or mixed media) or a short documentary

Unit 6: Acknowledging our Past...Celebrating our Future

Based on students' understanding of key concepts from the previous units of study, they will analyze art exhibited inside and outside of schools (such as in museums, galleries, virtual spaces, other venues and institutions) and how it contributes or possibly acts as a detriment to community culture. Students will collaboratively work to curate an exhibition of their own original works. This is to impact the viewers' understanding of underrepresented or marginalized social, cultural, and/or political experiences. They will use their agency to collectively generate a theme for the exhibition. The exhibition will include pieces of art that have been curated over the course of the class. This reimagines the idea of public art exhibition.

Essential Questions:

- Why do people value objects, artifacts, and artworks?
- What is the importance of art preservation and presentation?
- How have art institutions such as museums and galleries functioned historically?
- What ethnic groups traditionally make up museum board members, collectors, curators, and patrons?
- Are art institutions accessible to marginalized communities?
- What role have marginalized groups played in the decision making process in said institutions?
- How have marginalized groups been underrepresented by the art world in the U.S.?
- Can art institutions play a role in challenging the conditions of institutional racism in America?
- How does collaboration influence and shape community ideas, beliefs, and experiences?
- How do objects, artifacts, and artworks that are collected, preserved, or presented, cultivate appreciation and understanding?
- What is the role of self advocacy in curating artistic spaces for underrepresented communities?
- How do we shift away from the traditional art institution model in order to create more inclusive and diversified creative spaces?

Performance Task: Collaboratively curate a themed multimedia exhibition, present/showcase a physical and/or virtual exhibition with community (class, school, or local community)

Resources:

Websites		
Title	Publisher	Url
Art, Activism, Social and Environmental Justice: Art & Activism	SVA Library	https://sva.libguides.com/artandactivism
Art History: Social justice and anti-racism library resources	Berkeley Library University of California	https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/arthistory/art_race_and_social_justice
Collection of Lessons on Art	Facing History and Ourselves	https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library?search=Art
Learning for Justice	Learning for Justice	https://www.learningforjustice.org/search?query=Art
PBS Learning	PBS	https://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/art_social_justice/
Social and Public Art Resource Center	Creating Sites of Public Memory	https://sparcinla.org/
Teaching Artistry and Social Justice Database		https://teachingartistsguild.org/social-justice-resource-database/
K-12 Ethnic Studies Teacher Resources	UCLA Institute of American Cultures	https://www.teachethnicstudies.org/?resourcetype=primary-sources-and-texts
VIBE Arts for Social Justice For Children and Youth	Ontario Trillium Foundation	https://vibearts.ca/project/arts-for-social-justice/