

Human Experience + Cultural Perspectives

Course Description

This course equips students with a critical lens to see the world—and their place in it—by supporting them in the important work of learning and reflecting about the human experience and interpersonal relationships. Students will explore and think critically about their own lived and living experiences, as well as seek out diverse perspectives. Students will be supported in becoming comfortable in new situations, preventing incorrect assumptions, and breaking down biases. Ultimately—by fostering curiosity, open-mindedness, awareness, and reflection—students will develop leadership skills as participants in a global world.

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Course Overview + Routines

Overview: Units of study will last approximately 3 weeks. The first three units will be more teacher led; however, in keeping with the spirit of the course, students will take more of a leadership role with the final three by crafting essential questions, leading activities, and selecting texts to spark inquiry, for instance.

Journals Students will maintain a journal, frequently responding to readings, discussions, and/or current events.

Discussion Initially, discussions will be teacher facilitated but student driven. As much as possible, they will adhere to the tenets and protocols of the traditional circle keeper framework. As the semester progresses, the facilitation will be done by the students.

Reflection Assessment in the course will mainly take the form of periodic reflections, asking students to consider and explain what they've learned about themselves or others as we complete each unit. Additionally, the course will culminate in an **End-of-Course Reflection Project**—in the genre of each student's choosing—to highlight and showcase student growth and learning as a result of taking the course.

Book Circles Each quarter, students will participate in a book circle with at least one other student. The book will be of their choosing in keeping with the goals of the course; however, a curated list of fiction and nonfiction books will be provided (Appendix A).

Current Events Each week, students will bring current events to the class's attention to generate discussion.

Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors Readings, issues/topics, and perspectives will all be examined through these 3 lenses. In essence: I can see myself in this (a mirror), I can see another's perspective (a window), and I can see another perspective and it has changed my perspective (a sliding glass door).

Standards

Destination 2026

1. Students will become global learners. (Instructional Vision)
2. Students will be deeply committed members of the community and world. (Instructional Vision)
3. Students will be curious, creative, and demonstrate passion through their learning experiences. (Characteristics of an Engaged Student)
4. Students will demonstrate self-awareness, independence, and ownership of their learning. (Characteristics of an Engaged Student)
5. Students will value relationships and understand the importance of meaningful communication and collaboration. (Characteristics of an Engaged Student)
6. Students will take responsible academic risks and possess resilience. (Characteristics of an Engaged Student)
7. Students will be globally competent and understand other perspectives and cultures. (Characteristics of an Engaged Student)
8. Students will be critical thinkers who experiment, question, and solve problems. (Characteristics of an Engaged Student)
9. Students will build strong content knowledge, effectively filtering information, and demonstrating learning in authentic ways. (Characteristics of an Engaged Student)

Ohio Department of Education: Social and Emotional Learning Standards

- * A1: Demonstrate an awareness of personal emotions
- * A4: Demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility, confidence, and advocacy
- * B1: Regulate emotions and behaviors by using thinking strategies that are consistent with brain development
- * B2: Set, monitor, adapt, and evaluate goals to achieve success in school and life
- * B3: Persevere through challenges and setbacks in school and life
- * C1: Recognize, identify, and empathize with the feelings and perspectives of others
- * C2: Demonstrate consideration for and contribute to the well-being of the school, community, and world
- * C3: Demonstrate an awareness and respect for human dignity, including the similarities and differences of all people, groups, and cultures
- * C4: Read social cues and respond constructively
- * D1: Apply positive verbal and non-verbal communication and social skills to interact effectively with others and in groups
- * D2: Develop and maintain positive relationships
- * D3: Demonstrate the ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways
- * E1: Develop, implement, and model effective decision and critical thinking skills
- * E2: Identify potential outcomes to help make constructive decisions
- * E3: Consider the ethical and civic impact of decisions
- * E4: Explore and approach new situations with an open mind and curiosity while recognizing that some outcomes are not certain or comfortable

**Facing History
and Ourselves:
Approach to Social,
Emotional, and
Academic
Development
(SEAD)**

1. **Self-awareness**—Facing History fosters deeper awareness of identity, including how students see themselves, how others see them, and the factors that affect one’s identity, ultimately strengthening student voice.
2. **Self-management**—Facing History students actively engage with complex issues that elicit different perspectives and opinions. Facing History teachers emphasize respectful communication and deliberation, and students report decreased conduct problems in school.
3. **Social awareness**—Facing History’s emphasis on perspective taking and developing empathy helps students understand and appreciate differences and see the humanity in others, leading to students’ documented increase in empathy and interpersonal understanding.
4. **Relationship skills**—Facing History students have improved ability to communicate, cooperate, collaborate, and deliberate with others who hold different points of view about meaningful social and civic issues.
5. **Responsible decision-making**—Facing History students reflect on decisions made by people in history or literature in order to inform their own ethical decision-making. Further, Facing History fosters respect for others, awareness and concern for how one’s actions may affect others, and a greater commitment to balancing one’s own interests and well-being with that of others in school and beyond.

Unit Community



Essential Questions

1. What is community?
2. What is an individual's responsibility to community? What is a community's responsibility to an individual?
3. How is community built or established? How is it dismantled or demolished?

Activities

1. Class guiding principles (designed by and agreed upon by students)
2. Introduction to mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors
3. Universe of obligation
4. Class playlist

Possible Texts to Spark Inquiry

1. "Invitation to Brave Space" by Micky ScottBey Jones
2. *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (excerpts) by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
3. *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson (illus.)
4. *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig and Patrice Barton (illus.)
5. "Not in Our Town" (Facing History and Ourselves)
6. "The Challenge of Black Patriotism" by Theodore R. Johnson
7. "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson

Essential Questions

1. How do we form/construct and shape our identities?
2. How do we define others' identities?
3. How do we make decisions for ourselves in a culture where we are bombarded with others trying to define us?

Activities

1. Identity map/web (also interlocking circles activity)
2. "Where I'm From" poem
3. Playlist of my life
4. Research and present a public figure whose lived/living experience has been different than your own
5. List identity characteristics and eliminate them one-by-one

Possible Texts to Spark Inquiry

1. "Can Art Amend History?" by Titus Kaphar (TED Talk)
2. *Milo Imagines the World* by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson (illus.)
3. "Little Things Are Big" by Jesús Colón (Facing History and Ourselves)
4. Zealy daguerreotypes
5. *Cast Away: Poems for Our Time* by Naomi Shihab Nye
6. *Sister Outsider* (excerpts) by Audre Lorde
7. *The Mask You Live In* (documentary)
8. "We Wear the Mask" (poem) by Paul Laurence Dunbar
9. "Widen the Screen" ads (P&G)
10. "Identity" (short film) by KJ Adames

Essential Questions

1. Who has power? Who doesn't?
2. How is power defined in our society?
3. How does one gain or lose power?
4. To what extent does power or the lack of power affect individuals?

Activities

1. Microaggressions poem analysis
2. Implicit bias and confirmation bias
3. Trash can activity
4. Exploring the “detours” we make

Possible Texts to Spark Inquiry

1. *A Few Red Drops: The Chicago Race Riot of 1919* by Claire Hartfield
2. *Say Something* by Peter H. Reynolds
3. *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* (excerpts) by Monique W. Morris
4. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (excerpts) by Richard Rothstein
5. *The Address Book: What Street Addresses Reveal about Identity, Race, Wealth, and Power* (excerpts) by Deirdre Mask
6. *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Essential Questions

1. What is the difference between empathy, pity, sympathy, and compassion?
2. What does empathy look like?
3. How does one develop empathy?
4. How do we build a culture of empathy?

Activities

1. Play Spent (poverty simulation)
2. Expanding our circles of concern

Possible Texts to Spark Inquiry

1. *Be Kind* by Pat Zeitlow Miller and Jen Hill (illus.)
2. *Come with Me* by Holly M. McGhee and Pascal Lemaitre (illus.)
3. *Bully* (documentary)
4. *Brown Girl Dreaming* (excerpts) by Jacqueline Woodson
5. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (excerpts) by Rebecca Skloot
6. “The Power of Vulnerability” by Brené Brown (TED Talk)

Essential Questions

1. What does justice look like?
2. When is it necessary to question the status quo? Who decides?
3. What does power have to do with fairness and justice?

Activities

1. [“The Rock Collectors”](#) (by Jess Lifshitz) - problem solving and discussion

Possible Texts to Spark Inquiry

1. “The Difference Between Justice and Revenge” (video) by Coronel West (Big Think on YouTube)
2. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (excerpts) by Michelle Alexander
3. *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* (documentary)
4. *Felon: Poems* by Reginald Dwayne Betts
5. *Stolen Justice: The Struggle for African American Voting Rights* (excerpts) by Lawrence Goldstone
6. *One Person, No Vote: How Not All Voters Are Treated Equally* (YA Edition) (excerpt) by Carol Anderson
7. *I Am Not Your Negro* (documentary)
8. *Just Us: An American Conversation* (excerpts) by Claudia Rankine
9. *Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese American Internment* by Linda Gordon and Gary Y. Okihiro (editors)
10. *Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II* (excerpts) by Richard Reeves

Essential Questions

1. What does it mean to be a good citizen?
2. What is an individual's role in society? In progress? In change?
3. What does it mean to be civically engaged? What happens if an individual is not?

Activities

1. Evaluating sources and lateral reading (identifying and building awareness of misinformation and disinformation)
2. Setting ongoing and lifelong goals (What are you comfortable doing?)
3. Final reflection project (demonstrating the learning)

Possible Texts to Spark Inquiry

1. *How to Citizen with Baratunde* (podcast)
2. Civic Online Reasoning (videos and lessons) (Stanford History Group)
3. *Democracy and Me* (blog); *Democracy and Z* (podcast) (hosted by WVXU)
4. "The Power to Change the World: A Teaching Unit on Student Activism in History and Today" (*NY Times*)

Appendix A

Possible texts for book circles. Not a finalized list.

Fiction

- [*The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime That Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater](#)
- [*Displacement* by Kiki Hughes](#)
- [*Black Enough: Stories of Being Young & Black in America* by Ibi Zoboi \(ed.\)](#)
- [*Black Buck* by Mateo Askaripour](#)
- [*The Vanishing Half* by Britt Bennett](#)
- [*Apple: \(Skin to the Core\)* by Eric Gansworth](#)
- [*In the Time of the Butterflies* by Juloa Alvarez](#)
- [*There There* by Tommy Orange](#)
- [*The Only Good Indians* by Stephen Graham Jones](#)
- [*The Nickel Boys* or *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead](#)
- [*Ring Shout* by P. Djèli Clark](#)
- [*Salvage the Bones* or *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward](#)
- [*All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely](#)
- [*Genesis Begins Again* by Alicia D. Williams](#)
- [*Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson](#)
- [*The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison](#)
- [*The Sun Is Also A Star* by Nicola Yoon](#)

Blue denotes on the original Curriculum
~~Crossed out are books that have been removed~~
Green are books that have been added

Nonfiction

- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
- *Hillbilly Elegy* by J. D. Vance
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas* by Frederick Douglas
- *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* by Alice Wong (ed.)
- *Up from Slavery* by Booker T. Washington
- ~~*All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir – Manifesto* by George M. Johnson~~
- *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond
- *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* by Richard Rothstein
- *Hollowed Out* by Jeremy Adams
- *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Dust Tracks on a Road (A Memoir)*
- *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership (Justice, Power, and Politics)* by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor
- *Educated (A Memoir)* by Tara Westover
- *The Yellow House: A Memoir* by Sarah M. Broom
- *The Address Book: What Street Addresses Reveal about Identity, Race, Wealth, and Power* by Deirdre Mask
- *EAVY: An American Memoir* by Keise Laymon
- ~~*Mediocre: The Dangerous Legacy of White Male America* by Jeoma Luo~~
- *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* by Cathy Park Hong
- *Black Like Me* by John Howard Griffin

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