

AAAS Statement on the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

We write as researchers, teachers, and organizers in the field of Asian American studies to lend our unequivocal support to the inclusion of Arab American studies in the current draft of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) [<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/modelcurriculumprojects.asp>]. The current draft includes Arab American studies under the rubric of Asian American studies, one of the four recognized pillars of ethnic studies as a field formation. Arab American studies has been a part of the broader field of Asian American studies for nearly two decades and ethnic studies since its inception fifty years ago. We oppose current and future efforts that seek to undermine, dilute, or sideline critical dimensions of the ESMC draft outside the mandated revision process. It troubles us greatly that a handful of outlier organizations, without a broad base or representational authority, has attempted to exclude Arab American studies from the curriculum. We insist on the inclusion of Arab American studies in the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Asian American studies as a field has historically included research and teaching on the U.S.-Philippine War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War; the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II; the seizure and militarization of Hawai'i as well as the militarization of Guam, Samoa, and other Pacific islands; and U.S. nuclear testing on the Marshall Islands. It is because of the centrality of U.S. war and militarism as well as anti-imperialism as central tenets of analysis in Asian American studies that Arab American studies, in the post-9/11 era, has emerged both within and in dialogue with Asian American studies. Topics such as Orientalism, 9/11, U.S. wars of intervention, Islamophobia, the "war on terror," and racial securitization oftentimes emerge as explicit intersections between Asian American and Arab American studies.

In addition, Arab American studies is institutionally linked with Asian American studies in critical ways. The first ever Arab American Cultural Center at the University of Illinois, Chicago, was founded by Nadine Naber, whose appointment resides in the Global Asian Studies Program. In 2006, the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, the flagship journal of the Association for Asian American Studies, published a special issue on Asian/Arab American studies. *Amerasia* journal, one of the founding journals in Asian American studies, also recently published an issue similarly focused on the intersections of Asian American and Arab American studies. Moreover, the West Asian Section of the Association for Asian American Studies regularly sponsors panels related to Arab American issues.

We urge the California Department of Education (CDE) to be clear-sighted and undeterred in the inclusion of Arab American studies in the current draft of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). Indispensable to fairness of process and soundness of outcome is the continued formal involvement of the ESMC's original writers and committee members. The CDE must be transparent and accountable to the communities of color who have long agitated for ethnic studies as a democratizing project.

AAAS Annual Meeting
Washington, DC
April 9-11, 2020

Have a Posting?

Interested in posting a job announcement, funding opportunity, new publications, accomplishments or news stories through AAAS? Email aaassecretariat@gmail.com your job posting, and we'll get it listed on our Facebook page!