

Course Title:	African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies
Grade(s):	9-12th

Course Description
The African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies course is a year-long elective in which students will study the scope of African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino contributions to U.S. history, society, economy, and culture. It utilizes Connecticut's Social Studies Framework themes and inquiry-based approach already familiar to social studies teachers to deliver a content-rich and personalized learning experience. The course is an opportunity for students to explore accomplishments, struggles, intersections, perspectives, and collaborations of African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino people in the U.S. Students will examine how historical movements, legislation, and wars affected the citizenship rights of these groups and how they, both separately and together, worked to build U.S. cultural and economic wealth and create more just societies in local, national, and international contexts.
Approved Curricular Materials/Textbook(s)
Connecticut Model African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Course of Studies

Unit Title	Unit Description (Include Unit Objectives)	Unit Pacing
Unit 1: Where We Come From: Introduction to African Origins and Contributions of Ancient African Empires to World Civilizations and the African Diaspora	This unit invites students to embark on a critical exploration of global history by centering the profound contributions of African culture to both ancient and modern world civilizations. Students will investigate the rich legacy of African societies, analyzing how their innovations in science, governance, art, and philosophy have shaped the global landscape. Crucially, the unit confronts a historical paradox: <i>Why have these foundational contributions been systematically overlooked or minimized in mainstream historical narratives?</i> To understand this, students will deconstruct the social construction of race, tracing how the concept was manufactured over time to justify global conflict, colonization, and systemic inequality. By examining the intersections of power, history, and identity, students will not only analyze the root causes of modern racialized conflicts but also	Semester 1 (August-September)

	engage in vital self-reflection. Through this inquiry, students will develop an understanding of their own identities, fostering an awareness of and comfort with their membership in multiple societal groups, ultimately empowering them to navigate and contribute to a diverse world.	
Unit 2: How African Americans Persisted: Slavery and Freedom Stories of Resistance and Agency (1619 to 1819)	This unit confronts realities and enduring legacies of transatlantic slavery by examining it not as an abstract historical event, but as a deliberate system deeply embedded in local and global structures. Students will begin by grounding their understanding locally, analyzing the historical prevalence and economic vitalities of slavery right here in Connecticut, across the United States, and throughout the Caribbean. Through a rigorous examination of historical legal frameworks, students will explore the ways in which slavery was systematically embedded in legislation to codify inequality and protect economic interests. Students will investigate how Africans, African Americans, and their descendants have historically struggled—and continue to struggle—to gain freedom, equality, and social justice. By exploring multiple racial and cultural perspectives, students will learn to critically evaluate how different lenses influence the interpretation of slavery. Ultimately, students will grapple with the complex dynamics of human agency, examining the specific conditions that allowed some individuals within the African diaspora to successfully assert their agency and resist enslavement, while analyzing the overwhelming systemic barriers that prevented others from doing the same.	Semester 1 (September-October)
Unit 3: Black Literacy, Organizations, and Liberation (1820-1865)	This unit propels students into a critical examination of the mechanisms of oppression and the powerful forces of resistance that defined the era of slavery. Students will investigate the economic engine of this period, analyzing how the explosion of the cotton economy directly fueled the development and devastation of the domestic slave trade. Against the backdrop of this expanding system, the unit highlights human agency, exploring the diverse and complex perspectives of enslavement held by both free and enslaved Africans. Rather than viewing history through a singular lens, students will examine how Africans and African descendants worked both individually and collectively to spark revolutionary change, challenging the very structures designed to enslave them. By evaluating the actions of abolitionists alongside the high-stakes risk of slave rebellions, students will grapple with the strategic differences between individual heroism and organized, collective movements. Ultimately, this unit pushes students to confront	Semester 1 (October)

	deeply rooted historical biases by questioning who decides when resistance and revolution are justified, glorified, or condemned.	
Unit 4: Long, Long History for Equality (1865-1915)	This unit anchors students in one of the most transformative, contentious, and pivotal eras in American history: Reconstruction. Students will investigate this period not merely as a series of legislative acts, but as a profound battlefield for human rights, democracy, and equality. The unit highlights black agency, examining how Africans and African descendants worked both individually and collectively to spark revolutionary change to their existence, actively shaping the post-Emancipation landscape. To understand the complex realities of this era, students will deeply explore Reconstruction politics through the vivid lenses of literature and other firsthand accounts drawn from primary documents. By analyzing these diverse voices, students will evaluate the immediate and long-term impacts of Reconstruction policies on both Black and White communities. Ultimately, this unit challenges students to move beyond simple historical binaries, pushing them to evaluate the systemic breakthroughs and violent backlashes of the era to determine how Reconstruction was simultaneously a monumental success and a devastating failure.	Semester 1 (October-November)
Unit 5: Black Movement for Equality (1915-1965)	This unit offers a rigorous and multi-layered exploration of the twentieth-century struggles for freedom, equality, and social justice in the United States. Students will dive deeply into the Civil Rights Movement, identifying the distinct tactics, core missions, and landmark accomplishments of the major organizations and grassroots groups that drove the push for equality. Rather than viewing these milestones in isolation, students will investigate the underlying causes, profound consequences, and broader historical contexts of the key events that defined this era. Students will evaluate how various individuals, social groups, and entrenched institutions have both promoted and hindered the struggle for civil rights. This includes a critical analysis of the dual role played by the federal government, examining how its branches acted as both vital supporters and active inhibitors of various 20th-century movements. Furthermore, the unit will intentionally center the intersectionality of these struggles by analyzing the distinct and often marginalized role of women of color within the broader women's rights movement. Ultimately, students will synthesize these historical threads to confront a vital, ongoing question: <i>How successful have Black Americans' movements for equality been in transforming the dreams, status, and rights of Black Americans in the United</i>	Semester 1 (November)

	<i>States?</i>	
Unit 6: Protest, Politics, and Power (1965-Present)	This forward-looking unit invites students to engage with the modern and future landscapes of social justice through the rich lens of African American and Black experiences, intellectual thought, and culture. To understand the full complexity of the Black community, students will first examine the profound impacts of class and gender, exploring how the Black experience is shaped by a vibrant tapestry of diverse identities, distinct communities, and varied perspectives. Moving from identity to action, students will analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting human rights—ranging from traditional grassroots organizing to digital activism and systemic policy reform. Armed with these tools and inspired by generations of Black visionary thinkers, artists, and organizers, students will be challenged to look forward. They will radically critique existing societal structures and actively reimagine new possibilities and more just futures for our country and our world.	Semester 1 (December-January)
Unit 7: Early Beginnings: Who Are We?	This unit invites students to engage in a deep, nuanced exploration of Latino and Puerto Rican identity, moving beyond monolithic stereotypes to uncover a vibrant tapestry of history, culture, and lived experiences. Students will examine both the collective and individual identities within these communities, demonstrating a critical understanding of how these diverse backgrounds influence both public perceptions and everyday realities. A central focus of this unit is deconstructing how Latinos understand and navigate the concept of race, particularly looking at how Latino communities "show up" within a historical American color line that was rigidly constructed around a strict Black and White binary. The historical geography of this unit traces the complex waves of Puerto Rican migration, analyzing the push-and-pull factors that shaped the diaspora. Concurrently, students will explore and celebrate the profound strengths, resilience, and cultural contributions of the African diaspora across Latin America and the Caribbean. Ultimately, students will synthesize these historical and social threads to challenge conventional definitions of race and ethnicity, grappling with the evolving nature of self-determination and community identity.	Semester 2 (January-February)
Unit 8: Blood and Beauty	This unit untangles the complex historical threads that have shaped the Latino and Puerto Rican experience, tracing them from the moment of European contact to the modern era. Students will begin by critically exploring differing perspectives	Semester 2 (February)

	on how Native populations were treated by European colonizers. By analyzing the writings of figures like Bartolomé de las Casas, students will learn to navigate the limitations and insights of historical accounts that left behind distinct perspectives of this initial encounter. The unit explicitly connects these early colonial dynamics to the long- and short-term consequences of the persisting Columbus narrative, evaluating how this mythos has influenced the formation and evolution of Latino identity. Moving into the modern era, students will investigate institutional and systemic forms of anti-Latino treatment. The curriculum sheds light on historical injustices that are frequently omitted from mainstream narratives, including unethical medical and scientific experiments conducted on populations in Puerto Rico and Guatemala, as well as systemic language suppression in educational and public spheres. However, the core arc of this unit balances these harsh realities with a celebration of agency. Students will actively discover and analyze the profound contributions of Latino people to American history, understanding how resilience, cultural preservation, and achievement flourished in spite of systemic oppression.	
Unit 9: Sweat	This unit provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical, economic, and social forces that have structured Puerto Rico and Latin America from the colonial era to the present day. Students will begin by exploring how European colonialism initiated a profound period of social and economic "transformation," laying the groundwork for enduring systems of stratification. Central to this exploration is an examination of how Indigenous peoples, Spaniards, and Africans uniquely intersected and contributed to the foundational formation of the Puerto Rican nation. Students will interpret how Latin Americans and Puerto Ricans constructed their own complex racial, ethnic, class, and gender identities as a direct result of these historical encounters and the economic realities of enslaved Africans in the region. The unit then shifts focus to geopolitical and macroeconomic influences. Students will investigate the complex ways in which United States foreign relations and colonial dynamics with Puerto Rico and Latin America have either helped or hindered local social and economic growth. Finally, students will connect history to current events by evaluating how severe economic policies—such as austerity measures, debt crises, and trade agreements—impact the economic growth of Puerto Rico and Latin American nations today. Ultimately, students will synthesize these threads to confront a fundamental question about	Semester 2 (March)

	systemic inequity: <i>How did power and hierarchy come together to create the social and economic structures of Puerto Rico and Latin America?</i>	
Unit 10: Resistance and Defiance	This unit explores the enduring legacy of resilience within the Latino world, tracking a long history of resistance against both internal and external structures of oppression. Students will begin by exploring the historical roots of self-determination, analyzing the fights for independence against Spanish colonial rule. The curriculum then transitions into the twentieth century, guiding students through an investigation of nationalist movements that rose up to challenge dictatorial and non-democratic regimes across Latin America and the Caribbean. To connect these global struggles with domestic dynamics, students will analyze the specific political, economic, and social power structures within the United States that have historically influenced, marginalized, or suppressed the people and voices of the Latino world. Crucially, this unit balances the study of systemic oppression with a celebration of cultural vitality. Students will examine the arts—including muralism, music, literature, and performance—as a profound, dynamic form of resistance, collective strength, and community preservation. Keeping the global diaspora in mind, students will synthesize these historical and cultural threads to answer a vital question: <i>How has the theme of resilience been illustrated in the past and present history of Latinos’ battle for equity?</i>	Semester 2 (April)
Unit 11: Where are we now?	This final unit shifts the focus of the Latino and Puerto Rican diaspora directly to our local communities, exploring the rich, interconnected history of these populations right here in Connecticut. Students will begin by analyzing the diverse economic, political, and personal reasons that drove individuals from Puerto Rico and various Latin American nations to migrate to the state, tracing the growth of vibrant local neighborhoods and cultural hubs. Rather than viewing this history solely through the lens of arrival, the unit highlights the profound legacy left by these communities, guiding students to explore the immense accomplishments and foundational contributions these individuals and their descendants have made to Connecticut’s history, economy, politics, and culture. Students will understand and examine the pervasive misconceptions and negative beliefs that have been normalized over time—biases that have systematically minimized or excluded the contributions of Latinos and Puerto Ricans from mainstream state narratives and textbooks. By dismantling these stereotypes and	Semester 2 (May)

	restoring these vital histories to their proper place, students will synthesize past achievements with future possibilities. Ultimately, this unit challenges students to reflect on their own roles as civic agents, answering the question: <i>What impact have Puerto Ricans and Latinos had on Connecticut, and what impact might they (and you) have on the future?</i>	
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