



Instructional Quality Commission  
 California Department of Education  
 Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division  
 430 N Street, Suite 3207  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

September 30, 2020

**RE: Protect and improve Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum**

Dear California Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission,

On behalf of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) and the undersigned organizations, we write with two purposes:

1. To provide comments on the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), specifically on the Asian American history section to include a much more comprehensive curriculum of the diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in California.
2. To advocate for the inclusion of comprehensive sample curriculum for Vietnamese, Laotian, Iu-Mien, and Cambodian American studies; the latter was included in the first draft of the ESMC but is omitted from the current draft without justification.

SEARAC is a national civil rights organization that represents the largest refugee community to ever be resettled in the United States. We empower the Southeast Asian American (SEAA) community – Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans, to create a socially just and equitable society. The SEAA community now numbers over 3.1 million in the country today, with one million calling California home.<sup>1</sup> SEAA communities continue to experience low educational attainment where 38.3% of Laotian, 38.2% of Cambodian, 36% of Hmong, and 26.8% of Vietnamese Americans do not have a high school diploma, compared to just 18.5% of total adults in California.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, each group alone or in combination

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau, 2011-2013 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

We appreciate the California Department of Education's effort to ensure appropriate implementation of AB 2016 (Alejo) by revising the draft of the model curriculum and considering public comments from August 2019. However, we were deeply disappointed that sample curricula critical to the representation of our communities was removed and that many of our public comments were not reflected in the revised draft of the ESMC released this month. **We urge you to protect and improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and take into consideration the critical feedback provided by communities represented under the four core fields of African American, Asian American, Chicanx and Latinx, and Native American Studies.**

We believe that California's ESMC must be robust and reflect the diverse populations that make up California, including the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Given the potential mandate for ethnic studies to be a requirement for high school graduation across the state, it is with utmost importance that the ESMC reflects a framework and curricula that are representative of all Californians.

We respectfully request that the ESMC include the following revisions:

1. Include curriculum covering the Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, Iu-Mien, Japanese, Korean, Lao, and South Asian American communities. California is home to the largest Asian American population in the United States. As such, it is critical to reflect the history and contributions of diverse subgroups and avoid the mischaracterization of an Asian American monolith.
2. Include curriculum that explores SEAA immigrant and refugee experiences and discusses the discrimination and resiliency these communities have faced as Americans. While Chapter 3 touches on using a "Southeast Asian Studies approach" (line 522), only Hmong curriculum is included while Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, and Iu-Mien curricula is excluded.
  - Topics to emphasize on the SEAA experience can include disparities in health care access due to the lack of in-language health care resources, including health care systems, resources, benefits, and providers without adequate language access and support
3. Restore sample lessons from the first draft of the ESMC, including:
  - a) Myths and Realities Surrounding the Asian Pacific Islander American Community
  - b) Cambodian Americans – Deportation Breaking Families Apart
4. Include appropriate assignments and homework within the Asian American curriculum, where students can digest information and deepen understanding and analysis of the lessons.
5. Ensure integration of the full ESMC. Currently, Chapters 2 and 3 are not integrated with specific sample lessons in Appendix B or instructional resources in Appendix C. The curriculum needs to state how to use the appendices appropriately.
6. There is not a uniform structure of each "lesson" in the curriculum. Some units are developed, while others are less comprehensive and thorough.

Please see attached documents for detailed comments.

- Attachment A: SEARAC comments on the ESMC Draft August 2020
- Attachment B: SEARAC comments on the ESMC Draft May 2019, redacted to include our original and additional comments for the two sample lessons to be restored (see #3 above)
- Attachment C: Sample lesson plan for Vietnamese American studies
- Attachment D: Sample lesson plan for Laotian American studies, which is inclusive of the Iu Mien community

We urge the Instructional Quality Commission to protect the ESMC, carefully review the curriculum, and make the appropriate changes and additions we have proposed above and attached. These changes will be crucial to the success of the students from school districts that will turn to the ESMC for guidance. We look forward to continuing this partnership as we seek to ensure that all students in California are able to learn about their own and other's histories toward cultural awareness, self-determination, and community.

Please reach out to our Director of California, Mandy Diec at [mandy@searac.org](mailto:mandy@searac.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants  
Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries  
Hmong Cultural Center of Butte County  
Hmong Innovating Politics  
Iu-Mien Community Services  
Khmer Girls in Action  
Laotian American National Alliance  
Stone Soup Fresno  
The Cambodian Family of Santa Ana  
The Fresno Center  
United Cambodian Community of Long Beach  
Vietnamese American Roundtable

## Attachment A: Public Input–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum August 2020 Draft

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Chapter 3	Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)	<p><b>Page 3 Line 38:</b> The introductory paragraph of this chapter should explicitly speak about how marginalized and minority students will benefit from ethnic studies because traditional curricula have failed to serve and represent these students. Subsequent sections touch on this concept, but the first paragraph does not accurately lead into the rest of the content in this chapter.</p> <p><b>Page 27 Line 709:</b> The sentence should be revised to say that interlocking systems of oppression and privilege that impact <i>all</i> students.”</p> <p><b>Page 31 Line 800:</b> Change “model minority myth” to “model minority” myth, to avoid misunderstanding and reaffirm that these stereotypes are indeed false.</p> <p><b>Page 32 Line 829:</b> Include the Lu-Mien population alongside Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian history during the Southeast Asian Refugee Crisis. There are significant Lu-Mien communities in Northern California and their support of the United States, such as during the Secret War in Laos should not be overlooked within the experiences of SEAA immigrants.</p> <p><b>Page 33 Line 858:</b> Include the Southeast Asian Refugee Crisis into lessons on Populations Displaced by War and Genocide, if both lessons are not taught separately. As the largest group of refugees to ever resettle into the United States, due largely to war and genocide, SEAs must be included in any curricula regarding such displacement.</p>
Appendix B: Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies	SEARAC	<p><b>Page 4 Line 82:</b> Instead of asking how people can “overcome systemic discrimination and marginalization,” the question should ask how individuals and groups of people can “dismantle systemic discrimination and racism.” The current text implies that racism is a fact of life and that systems that perpetuate discrimination and racism cannot be changed.</p>

<p><b>General</b></p>	<p><b>Page 4 Line 95:</b> Add a guiding question around race, which is not the same as ethnicity. Adding guiding question(s) with examples of how race can be a social construct that is changed to shift power and privilege. This can help ensure that teachers less versed in critical race theory will not conflate “race” and “ethnicity.”</p> <p><b>Pages 111-113:</b> Additional Sample Topics include a wide range of pertinent topics, but most of them are not expanded upon in the ESMC. Only Hmong American and Pacific Islander Studies have sample curriculum to help ethnic studies teachers develop and implement courses. Key topics underlying the AAPI experience such as the model minority myth deserve more thought and guidance within the ESMC.</p> <p><b>General:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The terms “Asian American” and “Asian American and Pacific Islander” are used inconsistently throughout this section. Under this section, Pacific Islanders should not be assumed to be part of the Asian American identity and the collective AAPI term should be used consistently.</li> <li>• The current curriculum must be comprehensive of diverse AAPI experiences. There is missing curriculum for various ethnic communities, including Cambodian, Lao, Lu-Mien, and Vietnamese Americans. Developing a comprehensive AAPI curriculum will allow school districts with varying demographics to have appropriate curriculum from which to reference, utilize, and build on.</li> <li>• Curriculum should be more uniform throughout the lessons; it appears that some lessons are more organized, developed, and thorough than others. Each section and lesson should have specific time allocations appropriate for the scope of the topic(s) to be covered.</li> <li>• More homework, exams, reflection exercises, or other avenues should be implemented to ensure that students are retaining what they are taught. Instead of just learning during class time, students can do background research or analyze texts before getting introduced to it in class the next day – this way, they have sufficient time to process new information.</li> <li>• The sample lesson on the “Myths and Realities Surrounding the Asian Pacific Islander American Community” from the first ESMC draft should be restored, including the section that explores significant figures and their</li> </ul>
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		<p>contributions to Asian Americans. Our comments on this section are also attached from the previous public commenting period. Concepts to include in this lesson may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Racialization</li><li>○ Color/colorism</li><li>○ Third world</li><li>○ Pan-ethnicity</li><li>○ Other including yellow peril/model minority</li><li>○ Inclusion/exclusion (constant part of Asian American history)</li><li>○ Colorblind concept (used to pit two peoples against each other)</li><li>○ Lessons of LA Riots</li><li>○ Orientalism (under ideology)</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The sample lesson on the “Cambodian Americans – Deportation Breaking Families Apart” from the first ESMC draft should be restored. Our comments on this section are also attached from the previous public commenting period.</li><li>● There should be a specific sample lesson on Vietnamese Americans. A draft sample lesson is reflected in Attachment C.</li><li>● There should be a specific sample lesson on Laotian Americans that is inclusive of the Lu Mien community. A draft sample lesson is reflected in Attachment D.</li><li>● The Southeast Asian American experience may also be combined (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) into one lesson due to similar narratives regarding the refugee resettlement experience, such as growing up as American, being bi-cultural, serving as a cultural broker, and intergenerational trauma. This lesson can be 4 days, 1 day for each ethnic group, with the Lu-Mien experience woven through. The last day can be reflection on the similarities and differences of SEAs and the wider AAPI community.</li><li>● Lessons on Asian American movements, activism, and Yellow Power should include the following groups that played key roles in California – AAPA, ICSA, PACE, Red Guards, KDP, and Wei Min She/Asian Community Center.</li></ul>
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<p>Appendix B: Sample Lesson 8 <b>Hmong Americans...</b></p>	<p>SEARAC</p>	<p><b>Page 68 Line 1357:</b> Instead of asking students if they “have questions about the Hmong,” the teacher should ask “What type of information would be useful in learning more about the Hmong community?”</p> <p><b>Page 68 Line 1366:</b> Include a trigger-warning prior to watching the video. Following the video, students will need time to process the information. There should be a discussion or reflection that is facilitated by the teacher after students finish processing.</p> <p><b>Page 69 Line 1380:</b> There should be a transition between the prior video and the new video. This video would make more sense in a model minority myth lesson as a counter argument. The video does not address the gender dynamic and issues that are being focused on in the section.</p> <p><b>Page 70 Lines 1397-1398:</b> This bullet implies that there are failures or deficits among Hmong Americans within the educational system. Please remove this line or replace it with “feeling like they need more support to succeed in school, but failing to receive that support within the American education system.”</p> <p><b>Page 74 Lines 1493-1496:</b> This bullet oversimplifies the myth of the “model minority.” Line 1496 can be amended to say “...into the Asian American group, which is an aggregate of more than 25 ethnic groups that have diverse histories and experiences in the United States.”</p> <p><b>General:</b> We recommend separating the sections into two different lessons: Day 1 - Hmong Immigrant Experience and Hmong Americans, and Day 2 - Compare and Contrast of Genders in the Hmong Community. There is also a lack of homework for students to do; students can conduct research on outstanding questions from the first activity of the lesson.</p>
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## Attachment B: Public Input–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum May 2019 Draft

*Please note:*

- *Comments highlighted in yellow reflect additional comments provided during the Second ESMC Field Review period.*
- *SEARAC has also provided input and direct revisions on the Cambodian American lesson draft separately to the CDE.*

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Asian American Studies: <b>Myths and Realities</b>	SEARAC	<p><b>Page 162 Line 3337:</b> When explaining the negative effects of the model minority myth, include an explanation on how Asian Americans have systematically been used as a wedge between communities and are pitted against other groups of color. Change the language from “African Americans and other oppressed groups” to “other oppressed groups including but not limited to...”</p> <p><b>Page 165 Line 3397:</b> Before transitioning from explaining how stereotypes are the result of the model minority myth to showing the article, ask students if they know what the model minority myth is. If someone raises hand, have student answer. Afterwards explain to the class that they’ll be examining the effects of the MMM in society. If nobody raises hand, just do the latter part.</p> <p><b>Page 165 Line 3414:</b> Homework should involve more critical thinking. In addition to developing counter arguments, have students also research case studies or situations in which the model minority myth has impacted Asian Americans (i.e. Vincent Chin case, Southeast Asian youth with low education attainment, etc.)</p>
Asian American Studies: <b>Cambodian Americans - Deportation</b>	SEARAC	<p><b>Page 191 Line 3944:</b> Revise “felons” to “Cambodian Americans with felony convictions.” The current language of calling community members felons can be dehumanizing and projects the criminalization of immigrants.</p> <p><b>Page 191 Lines 3945-46:</b> The number of Cambodian American deportees should be updated to say “over 1,000 Cambodian Americans have been deported.” It is also important to note that those departed back to Cambodia are sent to a country where they often do not have familial or social connections.</p> <p><b>Page 192 Line 3970:</b> The number of people that died during the Khmer Rouge should be updated to reflect a range of 10-30% of the population, or 1.2 million</p>



	<p>to 2.8 million people. We suggest using a number count to show how large of a population was affected.</p> <p><b>Page 193 Lines 3985-3986:</b> This learning objective should also include understanding of the school, to prison, to deportation pipeline.</p> <p><b>Page 193 Lines 3998-4001:</b> Suggest removing activity #1 and starting immediately with activity #2. The purpose for this first activity is unclear.</p> <p><b>Page 193 Lines 4005-4010:</b> Suggest replacing activities #3 and #4 with multimedia engagement and reflection. Students can watch “My Cambodia” and “My Cambodian American,” short videos produced by the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education. SPICE also provides public teacher guides that include reflection questions for students after watching the video.</p> <p><b>Page 195 Line 4045:</b> Suggest rephrasing to some type of analysis that will help students come to this point. Such as, “given the community’s history of forceful displacement and lack of social and economic support resettling into the United States, are these deportations fair?”</p> <p><b>Page 195 Line 4044-4049:</b> Clarify if each group member thinks about a specific question at their station or if all members think about these 4 questions.</p> <p><b>Page 195 Line 4052:</b> Where is the two-page handout? This is one of the most critical pieces of the lesson: tying in the history and challenges of Cambodian resettlement to the current risks of deportation. Any handout(s) should be an attachment with the lesson plan.</p> <p><b>Page 196 Line 4067-4072:</b> Modify the actions to be more feasible to students’ capacity. Change Option #2 to “Research an organization that is helping the families and report back on ways in which people can support” and provide options such as Asian Prisoner Support Committee, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, Asian Law Caucus, Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants, Asian American Advancing Justice- Los Angeles, Asian Pacific Islander Re-entry Orange County (APIROC), APIRISE</p>
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# **Attachment C: Sample Lesson 1 under Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies**

Vietnamese American Experiences – The Journey of Refugees

## **Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies**

### **Sample Lesson 1: Vietnamese American Experiences – The Journey of Refugees**

**Grade Level:** 11-12

**Theme:** History and Movement

1. What does it mean to live on this land? Who may become an American? What happens when multiple narratives are layered on top of each other?
2. How should societies integrate newcomers? How do newcomers develop a sense of belonging to the places where they have arrived?
3. How does migration affect the identities of individuals, communities and nations?
4. How do ideas about who may belong in a nation affect immigration policy, the lives of immigrants, and host communities?
5. What role have immigrants played in defining notions of democracy?

**Disciplinary Area:** Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies

**Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment:** 1, 2, 6,7

**Standards Alignment:**

HSS Content Standard 11.11.1: Discuss the reasons for the nation’s changing immigration policy, with emphasis on how the Immigration Act of 1965 and successor acts have transformed American society.

**CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy:** RH.11–12.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; W.11–12.1; SL.11–12.1

**Lesson Purpose and Overview:** The lesson focuses on the history, politics, culture, contributions, challenges, and current status of Vietnamese Americans in the United States.

*Overview:* Vietnamese Americans play an integral part in shaping the America’s multicultural and multilingual transformation. To understand this process, we must examine the following:

- **Vietnamese Refugees:** Vietnamese refugee experience include escapes by boats to neighboring countries from 1975 to 1995. There were estimates of up to two millions of people escaping by boats and approximately half of them perished in the high seas. Many faced hunger, thirst, piracy or other traumatic experiences during their journeys. The international community made great efforts to support these coming waves of refugees, but exhausted around 1995 when it started to stop accepting these refugees and forcing them to return to their homeland. The boat people saga and the hypervisibility of the plight of refugees forced the U.S., and the international community, to negotiate with Vietnam to allow other waves of Vietnamese leaving through other humanitarian programs under the auspices of family reunification that particularly targeted former political prisoners, Amerasian children, and former employees of the U.S. government. Most of the refugees were accepted for resettlement to sanctuary countries all over the world, and many resettled in the U.S. The resettling refugees were first

scattered all over the U.S., but most of them eventually congregated around largest concentrations of Vietnamese communities in Orange County, San Jose, Houston, Virginia or Florida.

- **New Life in America.** Most of Vietnamese refugees arrived in America without any preparation economically, educationally, or culturally. Children were enrolled in schools at their age level with a new language and education system and limited support. Adults were either enrolled in adult schools or began new lives with new job skills or life experiences which were totally different from their normal lives in Vietnam. Many refugees who settled in the U.S. had no proof of certification of their trades or professional careers. They worked in manually laborious jobs that did not require a mastery of the English language. Many Vietnamese children adapted well in American schooling, but their parents or adult relatives were less successful. Overall, they adapted well in their new homeland but the scars of the war, life under community rule, boat escapes, and cultural shocks upon arrival in American continued with many of them in varying degrees. Those scars foster their anti-communist sentiments and strong pride in and gratitude to America which welcomes them as refugees, while at the same time nostalgically yearning for the day in which they can return to their homeland.
- **Vietnamese American Success and Contributions.** The Vietnamese have been resettled throughout the U.S. with varying degree of success and California is home to many of the largest Vietnamese communities outside of the Vietnam. In California, there are large Vietnamese American communities in Orange County, San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and Sacramento. Vietnamese students make up one of the highest performing groups academically. Vietnamese Americans make up the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest world language in public schools, only after Spanish but before Chinese if Mandarin and Cantonese are considered different dialects. Vietnamese Americans have also made large contributions in high-tech businesses, health care, education, military high-ranking officers or government officials. Despite the successes, the Vietnamese American community remains the community which has the lowest level of education, low level of median income or most linguistically isolated, i.e., depending on language assistance.

**Key Terms and Concepts:** Vietnamese Americans, Refugees, Oral Histories

**Lesson Objectives (Students will be able to...):**

- Enhance understanding and analyze the refugee experiences of Vietnamese Americans by engaging in a variety of primary and secondary sources including, oral histories, books, documentaries, scholarly articles, community programs and resources.
- Introduce the distinction between refugees, those who seek political and economic refuge as a result of the various wars taken place on Vietnam soil, and immigrants in America seeking for opportunity for a better life.
- Conduct an interview of someone who is a Vietnamese refugee or to listen to archived interviews of Vietnamese refugees. Students will develop and ask questions that explore the lived experiences of Vietnamese refugees. Students will record and transcribe the interviews. Students analyze the transcription and create a presentation (using various formats such as PowerPoint, video, paper) on the experiences of Vietnamese refugees.

**Essential Questions:**

1. What is the history of Vietnamese Americans in the U.S.?

2. How has the cultural perception of Vietnamese people and Vietnamese Americans been shaped and framed by mainstream discourse in the U.S?
3. How did the first-generation Vietnamese refugees' experiences differ from their children who were born in the U.S. How did their refugee status factor into differing experiences?
4. Why is the Vietnamese American experience important to understand within the context of Asian American studies and U.S. history? What are the differences between the refugee and immigrant experience?

### Lesson Steps/Activities:

1. The teacher begins the lesson by asking students, "Tell me one thing about you that shapes your experiences and how you see the world." This provides the students with the opportunity to hear the various perspectives.
  - a. Students engage in writing "I am From..." poem. Students write a three-stanza poem that speaks to their identity, background, experience, and where they are from. Each line of the poem begins with "I am From..." and should follow something specific about their life, upbringing, and identity. Teachers can provide examples. Allow students 10-15 minutes to write their poem. After everyone has finished writing, students can share their poems in class throughout this lesson (5-6 poems shared per day).
2. The teacher tells students that they are going to learn about Vietnamese Americans and focus on three essential questions (read essential questions 1–3 aloud).
3. The teacher asks students about what they know about Vietnam and its relationship to the United States – "what comes to mind when you think of Vietnam?"
4. The teacher presents some basic information about Vietnamese American history and Vietnamese Americans via article, poem, PowerPoint or other presentation method. The teacher asks students, "what questions do you have about the refugee experience? what would you like to know more about the refugee experiences of Vietnamese Americans? Please write them down."
  - a. National Geographic resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in the U.S.:  
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/resettling-vietnamese-refugees-united-states/>
  - b. The Vietnamese Refugees relive their escapes to Malaysia:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRSffhyYDM>
  - c. AJ+ - "I Was a Boat Person: Vietnamese Refugees Look Back:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQTviKM9Mx0>
  - d. KPBS How the Fall of Saigon made San Diego a refugee hub:  
<https://www.kpbs.org/news/2015/apr/24/how-fall-saigon-made-san-diego-refugee-hub/>
5. The teacher leads a read aloud of the Quick Fact Sheet about the Vietnamese Americans in the U.S. Alternate choral reading – teacher reads one fact, the whole class reads the next fact, teacher walks around the room as students and teacher read the facts – Quick Fact Sheet attached.
  - a. Students draft a set of questions that they would like to learn more about the Vietnamese refugees based on the information provided. Prompting questions may include: "What questions do you still have? Whose story is being told? Whose narrative is being left out?" The class compiles a list of shared questions.

6. The teacher leads a deeper discussion about the Vietnamese refugee experience in the U.S., focusing on the essential questions. The teacher shows the movie, *Journey from the Fall*, inspired by the true stories of Vietnamese refugees who fled their homeland after the fall of Saigon in 1975 – and those who were forced to stay behind. As students watch the movie, they should note the hardships and difficulties Vietnamese refugees experienced in their struggle for freedom. Students are also asked to reflect on how the film addresses how refugees are being portrayed in the context of racism and discrimination in the U.S.
  - a. Movie: *Journey from the Fall* (3 hours including bonus materials): <http://www.journeyfromthefall.com/Home.aspx> . April 30, 1975 marked the end of Vietnam's civil war and the beginning of the exodus of hundreds of thousands of refugees. Those who remained in Vietnam were imprisoned in communist re-education camps, others escaped by boat and embarked on the arduous ocean voyage in search for freedom. Thousands of lives were lost at sea. For the lucky few who found refuge in other countries were later reunited with their families.
7. After the movie, students engage in a Think, Write, Pair/Share followed by Group Share exercise, guided by the following questions:
  - a. How do Vietnamese Americans describe their refugee experience?
  - b. How were/are Vietnamese refugees being perceived by both Vietnamese Americans and the American public?
  - c. How was/is the Vietnamese refugee experience being shaped by racial and discrimination policy and practices in the U.S.?
  - d. How are the Vietnamese refugee experiences similar to and different from other immigrant groups?

Some important things to point out in the discussion:

- The wars in Southeast Asia have been framed by a general understanding in mainstream discourse of the Vietnam War as a proxy war to a global Cold War between two international superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union as a precursor to discussions surrounding communist/anti-communist political ideological differences and divides that would exacerbate the experiences of resettling Vietnamese later.
- Many Vietnamese refugees experience loss, trauma, sufferings as they flee their homeland and seek political and economic refuge in a foreign land.
- Being caught between two worlds, Vietnamese Americans are neither accepted by the country they left behind or America given their refugee status, a reminder of the war that America played a role in it.
- Vietnamese American community development over the past four decades – its resettlement from refugee camps to recognized ethnic enclaves throughout California and the U.S.
- The racial inequalities and discriminatory practices toward Asian Americans and how they negatively impact the Vietnamese community. The COVID-19 pandemic shed light on the racial and socioeconomic disparities that communities of color experience (CA Governor's remarks about nail salons as the center of the widespread illness has a negative impact on the industry and its workers).
- Recognize the growth, development, and contributions that many Vietnamese Americans are making to the shape the diversity of our America.

8. Students read various articles and books through the perspective of Vietnamese American refugees.
  - a. Book: Being Vietnamese in America (Hay Song “My” Mot Cach Rat “Viet Nam”) by Nguyen Ha Tran: [http://www.fullerton.edu/nrcal/orderbooks\\_2020.php](http://www.fullerton.edu/nrcal/orderbooks_2020.php)
  - b. Book: The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui: <https://www.amazon.com/Best-We-Could-Do-Illustrated/dp/1419718770>
  - c. Article : Vietnamese American Art and Community Politics: An Engaged Feminist Perspective by [Lan Duong](#), [Isabelle Thuy Pelaud](#). Journal of Asian American Studies: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/488126/pdf>
  - d. Article: Toward a Critical Refugee Study: The Vietnamese Refugee Subject in US Scholarship by Yên Lê Espiritu. Journal of Vietnamese Studies: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/vs.2006.1.1-2.410?seq=1>
  - e. Article: April 30 by Viet Thanh Nguyen: <https://vietnguyen.info/2016/april-30>
  - f. Article: Our Vietnam War Never Ended by Viet Thanh Nguyen: <https://vietnguyen.info/2015/vietnam-war-never-ended>
  - g. Article: Author Viet Thanh Nguyen on the struggles of being a refugee in America by Viet Thanh Nguyen: <https://vietnguyen.info/2018/author-viet-thanh-nguyen-struggles-refugee-america>
  - h. Article: Asian Americans are still caught in the trap of the model minority stereotype and it creates inequality for all by Viet Thanh Nguyen: <https://vietnguyen.info/2020/asian-americans-are-still-caught-in-the-trap-of-the-model-minority-stereotype-and-it-creates-inequality-for-all>
  - i. [Excerpt: Prologue and Introduction from \*Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War\* by Viet Thanh Nguyen](#)

As students read through these articles, students reflect in the following questions:

- Viet Thanh Nguyen’s book *Nothing Ever Dies* begins with the statement that ‘All wars are fought twice: the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory’ – drawing from the assigned articles, how might this make sense for in different ways for the first generation of Vietnamese refugees and their second-generation Vietnamese American children?
  - What is it like to be Vietnamese Americans today?
  - How is the identity of Vietnamese Americans being shaped? What is visible and what is invisible?
9. Students conduct Oral Histories by interviewing Vietnamese refugees using the set of questions that the class has compiled in #4 above. Students can also personalize their project by considering how their personal and/or family stories connect to Vietnamese American experience and how the Vietnamese American experience connect to the larger historical narratives and how and why some narratives have been privileged over others. Lastly, students may consider how to improve their own community, what constructive actions can be taken, and whether they provide a model for change for those in other parts of the state, country, and world.
    - a. See: REFUGENE Project “Record Family Stories” Storytelling Kit for oral history resources in partnership with the Union of North American Vietnamese Student Associations (UNAVSA): <https://refugene.com/pages/refugenexunavsa>

Some important things to point out in the interviews:

- b. How has the refugee experience shaped the identity of Vietnamese Americans?
- c. What are the stories that were told and what remain invisible?
  - i. Why did some remain invisible? What conversation topics/themes were more difficult to talk about?
- d. What emotions and/or trauma arise from refugees in sharing their experiences?
- e. How do Vietnamese Americans see themselves in relation to other Asian American communities?
- f. What are the hopes and dreams for the next generation of Vietnamese Americans?

#### Making Connections to the *History–Social Science Framework*

Chapter 14 of the framework includes the civil rights movement of the 1960s which brought attention to the discrimination faced by various ethnic groups after generations of prejudice, discrimination, and discriminatory policies and practices against communities of color (Hispanic farm workers, Native, and Blacks protested against the heavy hand of racism in housing, employment, and educational opportunities). Following this civil rights movement, California’s diversity increased only after President Johnson’s immigration act of 1965, opening the door to increasingly large numbers of immigrants from Asia and Central America (page 297). Students may analyze the push-and-pull factors that contributed to shifting immigration patterns, but they should also learn about changes in immigration policy (page 299). Two guiding questions for this chapter include: **1) What did protests and frustrations expressed by Californians in the late Cold War Era reveal about the state?; 2) In what directions is California growing in the twenty-first century?**

9. Assessment – To show evidence of what students have learned, students can choose one the following assignments:

- a. Write a 2-page essay answering each of the essential questions for this lesson using the evidence from the sources provided and the oral histories collected.
- b. In small groups (3-4 students), create a digital presentation answering the essential questions for this lesson using the evidence from the sources provided and the oral histories collected (photos, video, interviews).

**Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection:** See Step 9 above.

#### Materials and Resources:

1. National Geographic resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in the U.S.:  
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/resettling-vietnamese-refugees-united-states/>
2. The Vietnamese Refugees relive their escapes to Malaysia:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRSffhyYDM>
3. KPBS How the Fall of Saigon made San Diego a refugee hub:  
<https://www.kpbs.org/news/2015/apr/24/how-fall-saigon-made-san-diego-refugee-hub/>
4. Movie *Journey from the Fall*: <http://www.journeyfromthefall.com/Home.aspx>



- [Would also recommend \*Bolinao 52\* \(2008\) to highlight tragedy and travesty of the boat people experience; and/or \*Daughter from Danang\* \(2002\) to emphasize Amerasian experience](#)
- 5. Book: Being Vietnamese in America (Hay Song “My” Mot Cach Rat “Viet Nam”) by Nguyen Ha Tran: [http://www.fullerton.edu/nrcal/orderbooks\\_2020.php](http://www.fullerton.edu/nrcal/orderbooks_2020.php)
- 6. Book: The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui: <https://www.amazon.com/Best-We-Could-Do-Illustrated/dp/1419718770>
- 7. Article : Vietnamese American Art and Community Politics: An Engaged Feminist Perspective by [Lan Duong, Isabelle Thuy Pelaud](#). Journal of Asian American Studies: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/488126/pdf>
- 8. Article: Toward a Critical Refugee Study: The Vietnamese Refugee Subject in US Scholarship by Yên Lê Espiritu. Journal of Vietnamese Studies: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/vs.2006.1.1-2.410?seq=1>
- 9. Article: April 30 by Viet Thanh Nguyen: <https://vietnguyen.info/2016/april-30>
- 10. Article: Our Vietnam War Never Ended by Viet Thanh Nguyen: <https://vietnguyen.info/2015/vietnam-war-never-ended>
- 11. Article: Author Viet Thanh Nguyen on the struggles of being a refugee in America by Viet Thanh Nguyen: <https://vietnguyen.info/2018/author-viet-thanh-nguyen-struggles-refugee-america>
- 12. Article: Asian Americans are still caught in the trap of the model minority stereotype and it creates inequality for all by Viet Thanh Nguyen: <https://vietnguyen.info/2020/asian-americans-are-still-caught-in-the-trap-of-the-model-minority-stereotype-and-it-creates-inequality-for-all>

*Supplemental Resources:*

1. Voices of Vietnamese Boat People by Cargill and Huynh (stories directly from refugees)
  - Incorporated, Publishers, Mar 1, 2000
  - [https://books.google.com/books/about/Voices\\_of\\_Vietnamese\\_Boat\\_People.html?id=z93VHlp4-S8C](https://books.google.com/books/about/Voices_of_Vietnamese_Boat_People.html?id=z93VHlp4-S8C)
2. Hearts of Sorrow by Freeman (stories directly from refugees)
  - Stanford University Press, Apr 1, 1991
  - <https://www.bookdepository.com/Hearts-Sorrow-James-M-Freeman/9780804718905>
3. The Gangster We Are All Looking For by Le Thi Diem Thuy
  - Knopf Doubleday Publishing, Apr 13, 2011
  - [https://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Gangster\\_We\\_Are\\_All\\_Looking\\_For.html?id=4KpUt3yl4W8C](https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Gangster_We_Are_All_Looking_For.html?id=4KpUt3yl4W8C)
4. Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics by Lisa Lowe
  - Duke University Press, Oct 1996
  - <https://www.dukeupress.edu/immigrant-acts>
5. When Heaven and Earth Changed Places by Le Ly Hayslip
  - Plume, 1990
  - [https://books.google.com/books/about/When\\_Heaven\\_and\\_Earth\\_Changed\\_Places.html?id=EY6CsmJeS\\_MC](https://books.google.com/books/about/When_Heaven_and_Earth_Changed_Places.html?id=EY6CsmJeS_MC)
6. [\*The Best We Could Do\* by Thi Bui](#)

7. [\*I Love You are for White People\* by Lac Su](#)
8. [\*Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge\(es\)\* by Yen Le Espiritu](#)
9. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* by Viet Thanh Nguyen

Quick Fact Sheet (below)

Think Write Pair/Share Group Share Handout (below)

Annotation Chart (below)

### Quick Fact Sheet about Vietnamese Americans in the U.S.

- **Vietnamese Americans** (*Người Mỹ gốc Việt*) are make up about half of all overseas Vietnamese (*Người Việt hải ngoại, also known as Việt Kiều*) and are the fourth-largest Asian American ethnic groups after Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans, and Indian Americans.
- The Vietnamese community in the United States was minimal until the South Vietnamese refugees arrived in the U.S. following the Vietnam War which ended in 1975. Early refugees were refugee boat people who fled political persecution or sought economic opportunities as a result of U.S. involvement on the war in Vietnam.
- More than half of Vietnamese Americans reside in the two most populous states of California and Texas, primarily their large urban areas. Orange County, California is the home to the largest Vietnamese American population outside of Vietnam.
- As a relatively-recent immigrant group, most Vietnamese Americans are either first or second generation Americans. As many as one million people five years of age and older speak Vietnamese at home, making it the fifth-most-spoken language in the U.S.
- April 30, 1975 marked the fall of Saigon, which ended the Vietnam War, prompted the first large-scale wave of immigration; many with close ties to America or the South Vietnam government feared communist reprisals. Most of the first-wave immigrants were well-educated, financially comfortable, and proficient in English.
- From 1978 to mid-1980s marked the second wave of Vietnamese refugees. Political and economic instability under the new communist government led many to escape Vietnam by small, unsafe, crowded fishing boats. The second wave of refugees were generally lower socioeconomically, as most were peasant farmers or fishermen, small-town merchants or former military officials. Survivors were picked up by foreign ships and brought to asylum camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and the Philippines from which they entered countries that agreed to accept them.
- After suffering war and psychological trauma, Vietnamese immigrants had to adapt to a very different culture. Language was the first barrier Vietnamese refugees with limited English proficiency had to overcome.
- Emotional health was considered an issue common to many Vietnamese refugees, with war-related loss and the stress of adapting to a different culture leading to mental-health problems among refugees.
- Vietnamese Americans' income and social classes are diverse. Refugees arriving in the United States often had a lower socioeconomic standing in their home country and more difficulty integrating due to greater linguistic and cultural barriers.
- Vietnamese Americans have arrived in the U.S. primarily as refugees, with little or no money. While not as academically or financially accomplished collectively as East Asian counterparts,

census data indicates that Vietnamese Americans are an upwardly-mobile group; their economic status improved substantially between 1989 and 1999.

- Most first-wave Vietnamese immigrants initially worked at low-paying jobs in small services or industries. Finding work was more difficult for second-wave and subsequent immigrants, due to their limited educational background and job skills.
- Young Vietnamese Americans adults are well educated, and often provide professional services. Since older Vietnamese Americans have difficulty interacting with the non-Vietnamese professional class, many Vietnamese Americans provide specialized professional services to fellow immigrants.
- Vietnamese Americans are among the most-assimilated immigrant groups in the U.S. Although their rates of cultural and economic assimilation were comparable to other groups (perhaps due to language differences between English and Vietnamese), their rates of civic assimilation were the highest of the large immigrant groups. As political refugees, Vietnamese Americans viewed their stay in the U.S. as permanent and became involved in the political process at a higher rate than other groups.

#### Sources:

1. ["Southeast Asian Americans State Populations 2010 U.S. Census"](#)
2. [2012 American Community Survey: Selected Population Profile in the United States". United States Census Bureau](#)
3. ["ACS DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING ESTIMATES"](#). United States Census Bureau.
4. ["Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States"](#). *Migrationpolicy.org*. Migration Information Source. 13 September 2018.
5. Wieder, Rosalie. "Vietnamese American". In *Reference Library of Asian America*, vol I, edited by Susan Gall and Irene Natividad, 165-173. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1996
6. Bankston, Carl L. "Vietnamese American." In *Gale Encyclopedia of Multicultural America vol 2*, edited by Judy Galens, Anna Sheets, and Robyn V. Young, 1393-1407. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1995
7. Nguyen-Hong-Nhiem, Lucy and Joel M. Halpen. "Vietnamese". In *American Immigrant Cultures*, vol 2, edited by David Levinson and Melvin Ember, pp. 923-930. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998
8. Chung, R. C; Bemak, F.; Wong, S. (2000). "Vietnamese refugees' level of distress, social support, and acculturation: Implications for mental health counseling". *Journal of Mental Health & Counseling* (22): 150–161.
9. Jacob L. Vigdor (May 2008). ["Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States"](#). [Manhattan Institute](#). Retrieved 2008-05-18.
10. Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana; Krogstad, Jens Manuel (2018-01-18). ["Naturalization rate among U.S. immigrants up since 2005, with India among the biggest gainers"](#). Pew Research Center. Retrieved 2018-03-13.
11. Le, L. K., & Su, P. H. (2016). Vietnamese Americans and Electoral Participation. In K. L. Kreider & T. J. Baldino (Eds.), *Minority Voting in the United States*, (pp. 363, 365, 349-368), Santa Barbara: Praeger Press.
12. Countries of Birth for U.S. Immigrants 1960 – Present. Migration Policy Institute.

### **Think Write Pair/Share Group Share**

Essential Question:

Think for one minute about how the source had details that answered the essential question.

Write for one minute about the details and facts you can remember from the source which addresses the essential question.

Pair/Share for one minute per person, share out your thinking and writing about the essential question using the sources provided. Be ready to share out the information your partner provided if the teacher calls on you.

Group Share for five to ten minutes. At the end, have the class share out their information, giving students a chance to present to their peers.

### Annotation Chart

Symbol	Comment/Question/Response	Sample Language Support
?	<p>Questions I have</p> <p>Confusing parts for me</p>	<p>The sentence, “...”is unclear because...</p> <p>I don’t understand what is meant when the author says...</p>
+	Ideas/statements I agree with	<p>I agree with the author’s statement that...because...</p> <p>Similar to the author, I also believe that...because</p>
-	Ideas/statements I disagree with	<p>I disagree with the author’s statement that... because...</p> <p>The author claims that... However, I disagree because...</p>
*	<p>Author’s main points</p> <p>Key ideas expressed</p>	<p>One significant idea in this text is...</p> <p>One argument the author makes is that...</p>
!	<p>Shocking statements or parts</p> <p>Surprising details/claims</p>	<p>I was shocked to read that...(further explanation)</p> <p>The part about...made me feel...because...</p>
0	<p>Ideas/sections you connect with</p> <p>What this reminds you of</p>	<p>This section reminded me of...</p> <p>I can connect with what the author said because...</p> <p>This experience connects with my own experience in that...</p>

# **Attachment D: Sample Lesson 2 under Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies**

The Immigrant Experience of Lao Americans

## Sample Lesson Template

**Lesson Title:** The Immigrant Experience of Lao Americans

**Grade Level(s):** 11th Grade

### **Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment:**

- Ethnic studies provide students the opportunity to engage with ethnic studies materials and content within their classrooms. They are exposed to a diverse curriculum that is meaningful and supportive.
- Relevance- Ethnic studies provide students with an education that is culturally and community relevant
- Ethnic studies draw extensively from the lived experiences and material realities of each individual student.
- Community- Ethnic studies teaching and learning are meant to serve as a bridge between educational spaces/institutions and community. These studies encourage students to use their knowledge to become agents of change, community builders, social justice organizers and advocates, and engaged global citizens.

### **Standards Alignment:**

- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- Present information, findings and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed and the organization, development, substance and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and a range of formal and informal tasks.
- Offering and justifying opinions, negotiating with and persuading others in communicative exchanges
- Expressing information and ideas in formal oral presentations on academic topics
- Justifying own arguments and evaluating others' arguments in writing

### **Lesson Purpose and Overview (1-2 paragraph narrative explanation):**

Students will discuss the reasons for the changing immigration policies of the United States, with emphasis on how the Immigration Act of 1965 and successive acts transformed American society with focus on the unique challenges confronting Lao American immigrants and the different groups among them (i.e Lao, Hmong, lu-Mien, Akha, etc). Students will learn how the lesser-known immigrants from Laos contributed to greater diversity in American society since the middle of the twentieth century.

### **Key Terms and Concepts (Ties into larger unit key terms but may also include terms specific to the lesson):**

The evolving US immigration policies since 1965, their effects on Lao Americans to their contributions to the diversity of the population of the United States of America.

### **Lesson Objectives: ("Students will be able to..."):**

1. Discuss the reasons for the nation's changing immigration policy, with emphasis on how the Immigration Act of 1965 and successive acts have transformed American society
2. Understand the unique challenges confronting Lao American immigrants and the different groups among them (i.e Lao, Hmong, lu-Mien, Akha, etc).
3. Examine the origins and stages of Lao American immigration and their effects on Lao Americans.
4. Learn how the lesser-known immigrants from Laos contributed to greater diversity in American society since the middle of the twentieth century.
5. Understand how the Vietnam War changed US immigration policy since 1975.

### **Essential Questions (Ties lesson to larger unit purpose):**

1. Which period of US policy immigration did your family arrive in the United States? How has that policy supported/unsupported your family?
2. How has the immigration policies of 1975 and 1980 benefited the United States?
3. What current policies exist to support the original intentions of the United States as a country that receives all whom are oppressed?

### **Lesson Steps/Activities:**

1. Instructor opens the class by giving a brief lecture on the following: At the end of the Vietnam War, the Royal



Lao Government was overthrown by the Pathet Lao in a communist revolution. Lao politically aligned individuals or families with the USA were allowed entry to the United States with the passage of the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act in 1975. The Refugee Act of 1980 authorized further Lao refugee migration to the US. Between 1975 and 1992 with over 230,000 (up to 400,000 by some estimates) Lao, Hmong, Khmu, Lu-Mien, Tai-Dam, Tai Lue, Lua, Akha, Lahu and others from Laos immigrated to the US, especially to California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Texas.

2. The instructor then shows a short film clip on the Lao immigrant experience ('The Betrayal').
3. Classroom
  - a. Individual Students read packet materials in-class to prepare for student presentations and discussion comparing and contrasting experiences of Lao immigrants, independently organizing information in note-taking guide while viewing video and reading, identifying and evaluating sources in each media format. (Model writing down points on organizer)
  - b. Small Group: Students assigned to one memoir/oral history account assemble in individual groups. Students discuss the main ideas and details of the memoir/oral history. They then create a visual display/poster that communicates the immigrant experience (e.g. isolate one quotation for presentation). (Instructor will demonstrate before small group discussion.)
  - c. Large Group: The class holds a discussion on Immigrant Experience of Lao Americans. Each student shares their response to the discussion. Students compare and contrast the unique and common/general aspects of each memoir/oral history account.
4. Homework: Students write to their local legislator about how Federal/State/Local government policy should be changed to better aid new immigrants in their integration to American society. Or, students may write a defense of why the US government should be responsible to assist migrants from Laos stemming from US involvement in the war in Laos.

#### Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection:

- Ability to accurately present facts from the videos and readings as support for their opinion on the War
- Clearly express their position on the War during debate and small group discussion.
- Ability to correctly identify its influence on US foreign policy.

#### Materials and Resources:

##### Materials

- Video [time-stamp] to be shown to class: "The Betrayal" (Nerakhoon)
- Packet:
  - Thavisouk Phrasavath, *Stepped Out of the Womb: A Memoir of a journey to the land where the sun falls* (Lao Century Media, 2010) Chapter 6 'Coming To America'
  - Joanna Scott, *Indochina's Refugees: Oral Histories from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam* (MacFarland Publishing, 1989)  
Laos: Land of the Seminar Camps;  
Khamsamong Somvong: Not so wonderful was that time
  - Kao Kalia Yang, *The Late Homecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2008) Chapter 8: Before the Babies
- Writing prompt: homework

##### Resources

General works:

- Hein, Jeremy, *From Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: A Refugee Experience in the United States* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1995)
- Lee, Jonathan X. and the Center for Lao Studies,

*Laotians in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Arcadia Publishing, 2012)

- Robinson, W.C., *Terms of Refuge: The Indochinese Exodus and the International Response* (London: Zed Books, 1998)

**Lao Immigrant Memoirs:**

- Bounsang Khamkeo, *I little Slave: A Prison Memoir from Communist Laos* (Eastern Washington University Press, 2007). Interview: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=R24i9llqg20](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R24i9llqg20)
- Kao Kalia Yang, *The Late Homecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2008)
- Kao Kalia Yang, *The Song Poet: A Memoir of My Father* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2016)
- Joanna Scott, *Indochina's Refugees: Oral Histories from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam* (MacFarland Publishing, 1989)
- Nakhonkham Bouphanouvong, *Sixteen Years in the Land of Death: Revolution and Reeducation in Laos* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2004)
- Sucheng Chan, ed., *Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994)
- Thavisouk Phrasavath, *Stepped Out of the Womb: A Memoir of a journey to the land where the sun falls* (Lao Century Media, 2010)

Documentary Film

- *The Betrayal* (Nerakhoon) Written and directed by Ellen Kuras and Thavisouk Phrasavath

**Ethnic Studies Outcomes:**

- The student will expand on previous lesson(s) covering the U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, including the Vietnam War and the US Civil Rights movement, including the anti-war movement.
- Recognizing the Laotian American refugee experiences, their unbreakable spirit through survival and resilience with visibility, acknowledgment, and celebration through Ethnic Studies provides Southeast Asian American youth and their colleagues with an understanding around a subject that is historically overlooked.