

A group of five diverse high school students are walking towards the camera, smiling. In the foreground, a young woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue denim shirt dress and a backpack, is smiling. Behind her, a young man in a white striped shirt and backpack is also smiling. To the right, a young woman with long blonde hair is walking, her hair blowing in the wind. Another student in a red and black plaid shirt is partially visible behind her. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with warm lighting.

American Experience Curriculum



Introduction to FAIR's American Experience Curriculum

FAIR's American Experience Curriculum is a comprehensive social studies course that explores the evolution of American identity, the tensions between unity and diversity, and the ongoing struggle to fulfill our country's founding principles. This course addresses fundamental questions:

- What does it mean to be American?
- How have different groups maintained their cultural heritage while becoming part of the American experience?
- How have American ideals of freedom and equality been tested, expanded, and realized through the unique experiences and challenges of these groups?



Designed for grades 11-12, FAIR's curriculum helps students appreciate foundational principles and values that unite all Americans and the contributions various groups have made to our national identity.

Students engage with primary sources, apply critical thinking skills, and engage in civil discourse to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be American in a pluralistic society.



What Makes FAIR's Approach Unique?



- Provides a strong understanding of the Constitution and America's founding principles.
- Explores the experiences and challenges of various ethnic groups while emphasizing our shared humanity, interests, and values.
- Emphasizes critical thinking, encourages students to engage in civil discourse across differences, and empowers them to collaborate effectively in an increasingly diverse society.
- Provides civic-building opportunities to work collaboratively toward common goals
- Addresses multiracial Americans and acknowledges perspectives that transcend conventional racial categorization.
- Meets California and Oregon Ethnic Studies standards.
- Meets Social Studies and History standards and aligns with federal priorities emphasizing civic education.



Course Structure

Lesson Format

Each unit within this curriculum follows a consistent structure:

- **Opening Lessons:** Introduce key concepts and historical context
- **Core Content Lessons:** Explore experiences of different groups during each time period
- **Synthesis Lessons:** Connect different perspectives and experiences
- **Civil Discourse Exercise:** Apply principles of respectful dialogue to complex issues

Learning Activities

- **Primary Source Analysis:** Students engage with primary sources, compare contrasting viewpoints on historical events, and analyze evolving interpretations of our founding documents.
- **Historical Investigation:** Students research demographic changes, map patterns of migration, and examine socio-economic forces that influenced immigration.
- **Personal Connection:** Students interview community members, research family histories and migration stories, and connect historical patterns to contemporary experiences.
- **Creative Application:** Students create visual representations of adaptation models, design proposals to address diversity challenges, and develop guidelines for civic engagement.



Civil Discourse & Viewpoint Diversity

At the end of each unit, students participate in civil discourse exercises to develop their ability to engage respectfully:

- **Exploring Multiple Perspectives:** Students examining diverse viewpoints on historical and contemporary issues, moving beyond binary thinking to understand nuanced positions.
- **Building Evidence-Based Arguments:** Students learn to support positions with factual evidence, primary sources, and historical context while distinguishing between facts, interpretations, and opinions.
- **Practicing Respectful Engagement:** Students demonstrate active listening, asking clarifying questions and responding to ideas rather than attacking individuals on emotionally charged topics.
- **Identifying Shared Values:** Students discover areas of common ground despite significant disagreements, focusing on shared principles that can unite diverse viewpoints toward constructive solutions.





Learning Arc and Timeline | 16 Weeks

Foundations of American Pluralism

Establishes the philosophical and legal foundations framing American society and explores how concepts of identity and equality have evolved over time. These units equip students with a framework to understand how experiences of diverse groups have been challenged, shaped, and enabled by our foundational principles.

1. What Does it Mean to be a Society?

- The Question of Identity and Ethnicity
- Character Strengths and Shared Humanity
- The Challenge of Integrating Experiences and Backgrounds
- Pluralism vs. Diversity
- Civil Discourse

2. Principles of American Governance

- The State of Nature and the Social Contract
- The American Mind: The Declaration of Independence
- The Foundations of American Constitutional Democracy
- The Foundations of American Constitutional Democracy
- Separation of Powers



Learning Arc and Timeline | 16 Weeks

Historical Evolution of American Pluralism

Explores the experiences and challenges different ethnic groups have experienced and considers multiple perspectives on historical events. Students apply their learning and skills through document analyses, comparative essays, and creative projects.

3. Immigration Overview and Colonial America

- America's Immigrants
- Adapting to America: Melting Pot, Mosaic, Salad Bowl
- Identity Beyond Boundaries: Introduction to Multiracialism

4. Revolutionary & Early Republic Era - 1600-1790

- European Ethnic & Religious Diversity in Colonial America
- The Early Republic and Native American Relations
- Enslaved Africans & the Constitution





Learning Arc and Timeline | 16 Weeks

Historical Evolution of American Pluralism (continued)

5. Antebellum & Civil War America - 1790-1865

- Early Republic & Native American Relations
- Free African Americans & Northern Abolitionism
- Irish & Other Immigrants
- Slavery, Sectionalism & Civil War

6. Industrial America & Mass Migration - 1865-1914

- Reconstruction & Its Aftermath
- Native Americans: Displacement & Defeat
- Asian Immigration: A Door Half Opened
- The “New” Immigration from SE Europe: Italians, Jews, & Poles

7. World Wars & Economic Crisis 1914-1945

- Black Resilience in the Age of Jim Crow
- Great Depression & New Deal
- World War II & America Unity



Learning Arc and Timeline | 16 Weeks

Historical Evolution of American Pluralism (continued)

8. Civil Rights Era & Global Immigration 1945-2000

- Civil Rights Movement: Competing Strategies, Contrasting Dreams
- 1965 Immigration Act and its Consequences
- *Loving v Virginia* & the Multiracial Family
- The Indian Renaissance

9. Contemporary America and New Challenges - 2000 to Present

- Immigration Goes Global
- Different Sides of the African American Story, 1965 to Present
- Contemporary Immigration Debates





Capstone | 4 Weeks

Empowers students to synthesize their learning of their own identities within the American experience and apply it to contemporary questions about American identity and pluralism.

10. Pluralism in the 21st Century: Students analyze how multiple dimensions of identity intersect in contemporary America, creating both tensions and opportunities to expand concepts of American pluralism.

11. Civil Discourse in a Digital Age: Students develop strategies for maintaining productive dialogue in digital/AI environments while practicing skills that support respectful engagement in a polarizing media environment.

12. Finding Common Ground: Students identify shared values and issues that unite Americans across deep divides, research successful bridge-building initiatives, and design collaborative approaches to addressing common challenges in the future.





Curriculum Goals and Expected Impact

FAIR's curriculum instills an appreciation of our shared principles and values, encourages students to see themselves and their peers as unique and equally vital parts of the American story, and encourages them to make constructive contributions to their communities so they can tackle society's future challenges with fairness, understanding, and humanity.



By the end of the course, students will learn to:

- Articulate the philosophical principles that support **pluralism** and **America's founding principles**
- Evaluate the tensions between **unity and diversity** throughout American history
- Apply **critical thinking skills** to historical and contemporary events and issues
- Appreciate **viewpoint diversity** and engage in **civil discourse** across differences
- Develop their own perspectives of **America identity** in a diverse society
- Appreciate the importance of **civic engagement** and **collaboration**



Why FAIR's Curriculum Deserves Your Support

A Non-Polarizing Alternative – Research from George Mason University found that intolerance is becoming more prevalent in schools. According to a 2022 RAND Corporation study, district leaders are deeply concerned that polarization around critical race theory interferes with education. These concerns coincide with declining public school enrollment and average reading and math scores that have plummeted to historic lows. FAIR's curriculum offers a balanced approach in a challenging educational landscape.

Meets Ethnic Studies Standards – FAIR's curriculum meets state Ethnic Studies standards in California and Oregon.

Meets Social Studies and History Requirements – FAIR's curriculum meets Social Studies and History standards and aligns with federal priorities emphasizing civic education.



Impact – FAIR's curriculum equips students with tools for civic engagement and constructive dialogue; helps them develop a positive sense of identity by embracing their unique heritage and common humanity; and empowers them to collaborate effectively in a diverse society with competing interests.

Sustainability – Earned income from training and professional development will fund broader implementation of FAIR's curriculum on an ongoing basis and create a financially self-sustaining model as we work to depolarize the educational landscape.



Your generous support will create meaningful and lasting change where it's needed most: in the hearts and minds of young Americans.

Together, we can make a positive impact on education for generations to come.

[Donate now](#) to support FAIR's groundbreaking educational effort!



FAIR's Curriculum Team

Our team includes highly experienced and credentialed educators and subject matter experts with extensive experience in higher education, secondary education, and professional curriculum development.

Monica Harris, J.D.

Monica Harris is FAIR's Executive Director and author of *The Illusion of Division*. A graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School, she brings expertise in communication and project management from her background in entertainment business affairs. Monica leads with a passion for bridging societal divides by embracing shared values, providing visionary direction for FAIR's curriculum development.

Jon Burack

Jon is a Veteran history educator with 30+ years creating teaching materials and conducting nationwide workshops. A Harvard graduate with MAT, he developed MindSparks history materials focused on primary source interpretation and historical thinking skills. Jon develops original lesson content for FAIR's curriculum, applying this expertise in primary source analysis and historical pedagogy.

Lisa Gilbert, MPH, MA.

Lisa is a health educator with extensive experience developing adolescent-focused educational programs and curricula, including directing a major state-funded peer education relationship violence prevention program. Lisa applies her expertise and passion for promoting positive interpersonal connections to the refinement and development of FAIR's lesson plans and materials.

Dr. Adam Seagrave

As Associate Professor of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University and a co-founder and co-director (with Dr. Stephanie Shonekan) of the *Race and the American Story Project*, Adam contributes original lesson content to FAIR's curriculum, drawing from his expertise in civic thought and American political foundations.

Dave Ferrero, Ed.D.

Dave is an independent education consultant specializing in school redesign, a former journalist, and high school teacher who taught at the Universities of Michigan, Washington, and Drexel. Dave is a FAIR education Fellow who develops positive alternatives to liberated ethnic studies. Dave contributes original lesson content and ensures FAIR's curriculum provides positive alternatives to divisive approaches to ethnic studies education.

Dr. Ashley Rogers Berner

Deputy Director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy and Associate Professor in the Johns Hopkins School of Education and former Codirector of Moral Foundations of Education at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, Ashley leads a team of reviewers who ensure FAIR's curriculum meets the high quality educational standards for American History and Ethnic Studies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:



Monica Harris, ED of FAIR
monica@fairforall.org
www.fairforall.org

