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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2019 Volume II: Teaching about Race and Racism Across the Disciplines

On Teaching Race in the Classroom: A Foundational Thematic Approach to Race & Law in the US History Curriculum

Guide for Curriculum Unit 19.02.05
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The purpose of this unit is to analyze the different ways that race and law have operated over the course of American history. The unit is designed to be implemented in a United States History course, but can also be used in a Civics classroom as a way of understanding the function of the law. The unit comprises of three main case studies 1) Racial Formation of Legal Code in Colonial America with the specific focus on the aims and goals of the Naturalization Law of 1790 2) The Prerequisite Cases of the 1920s and finally, 3) Anti-Miscegenation Cases and Racial Categories at the time of the Eugenics Movement in the 1930s and 40s. The purpose of weaving these different historical time periods together is to help students reshape the ways in which they look at the law and more importantly understand how race and law have worked together to shape the world in which we live. The different case studies can be introduced individually or used in a thematic manner.

(Developed for U. S. History, grade 11; recommended for U. S. History, Civics, Sociology, and American Law, grades 9-12)

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