

**FOREST LAKE AREA SCHOOLS
FOREST LAKE, MN 55025**

December 18, 2025

AGENDA ITEM: 7.5

TOPIC: Recommendation to Approve Woven Histories: Minnesota and the World as an Ethnic Studies Elective.

BACKGROUND:

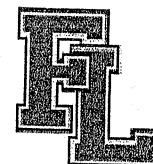
Minnesota statute requires school districts to offer a course in ethnic studies beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. This course is designed to allow students to explore and research how various groups have shaped our world, with a particular focus on Minnesota.

PROCESS:

A team reviewed state standards in ethnic studies and developed a course that met those standards by leveraging student research, exploration, and curiosity about one's own social background and the identities of others. If approved, this elective course would be available to students in grades 11 or 12.

RECOMMENDATION: Recommendation to approve Woven Histories: Minnesota and the World.

**To be offered beginning in 26-27 pending Board Approval*



REQUEST TO ADD/REVISE A COURSE

Forest Lake Area Schools

Primary Contact: JP Jacobson	Department: Social Studies
Career Pathway: n/a	Subject: Ethnic Studies
Grade Level(s)/School(s): Grades 11 or 12 at the High School level	Proposed Course Start Date: 2026-2027 School Year
Department Members involved in the development of the course proposal:	
Is your department currently in Instructional Review?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <i>* For all departments in the instructional review process, new courses will be developed as part of that work.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> No What approximate year is your department scheduled to begin?
Requesting FastTrack due to an urgent department need or concern? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	

PART I (complete with department colleagues)

COURSE PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

A. Course Information

Proposed Course Title: Woven Histories: Minnesota and the World	Length of Course: Semester
Course Description as it will appear in the registration guide: This course explores the diverse history, cultures, and contributions of the people of Minnesota and beyond using multiple viewpoints and primary sources. Students will investigate how various groups have shaped our state, country, and world, focusing on how their stories connect to key themes of community, change, and identity. Through inquiry-based learning, students will analyze historical documents, oral histories, and community narratives to develop a deeper understanding of the complex fabric of life.	

B. Background: Describe the process that led to this request.

Gaps/Needs State the current issues and gaps for why this course is needed. Key considerations: What standards are currently not being met? What skills are not currently being taught? What data support these conclusions? What other relevant needs would this course address? Can an existing course be modified to address the same concerns? Why or why not?
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Minnesota statute requires school districts to offer an ethnic studies course beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. We do not currently have a course that fits the definition of "Ethnic studies" as defined in 120B.25. Therefore, a new course is needed to meet the statute. References are included below.

120B.251 ETHNIC STUDIES REQUIREMENTS

Subdivision 1. **Definition.** "Ethnic studies" has the meaning provided in section 120B.25.

Subd. 2. **Requirements.** (a) Starting in the 2026-2027 school year, a district or charter school high school must offer an ethnic studies course that fulfills the requirements of this paragraph. Nothing in this section increases or otherwise affects the number of credits required for graduation under section 120B.024. An ethnic studies course may fulfill a social studies, language arts, arts, math, or science credit if the course meets the applicable state academic standards. An ethnic studies course may fulfill an elective credit if the course meets applicable local academic standards or other requirements.

(b) School districts and charter schools must provide ethnic studies instruction in elementary schools and middle schools by the 2027-2028 school year in accordance with state academic standards.

(c) Ethnic studies instruction must meet statewide ethnic studies academic standards.

(d) An ethnic studies course may focus specifically on a particular group of national or ethnic origin.

Standards | Indicate the state, national, or professional standards to which this course could be aligned.

Grades 9-12: Ethnic Studies				
Grade	Strand	Standard	Code	Benchmark
9	5. Ethnic Studies	23. Identity: Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity, and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.	9.5.23.1	Analyze how the definitions, identifications and understanding of racial and ethnic groups have changed over time as a result of politics.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	23. Identity: Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity, and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.	9.5.23.2	Examine the construction of racialized hierarchies based on colorism and dominant European beauty standards and values. Examine the construction of hierarchies based on classism, racism, colorism and dominant beauty standards and values.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	23. Identity: Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity, and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.	9.5.23.3	Investigate the connection between language and power and how it has been used for and against various racialized and ethnic groups.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	23. Identity: Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity, and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.	9.5.23.4	Investigate how the establishment of the Minnesota and U.S. government upheld and violated ideas of freedom, equality and justice for individuals and groups.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	23. Identity: Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity, and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.	9.5.23.5	Examine the impact of U.S. imperialism and foreign policy on immigration patterns.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	23. Identity: Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity, and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.	9.5.23.6	Describe and analyze examples of how religions develop and change over time in response to differing social, historical, and political contexts, including, but not limited to, Shamanism/Animism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Indigenous religious traditions in Africa and the Americas, and African diasporic religions.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	24. Resistance: Describe how individuals and communities have fought for freedom and liberation against systemic and coordinated exercises of power locally and globally. Identify strategies or times that have resulted in lasting change. Organize with others to engage in activities that could further the rights and dignity of all.	9.5.24.1	Compare and contrast the liberation struggles of people in different regions of the world that have fought for self-determination, liberation, and the empowerment of disenfranchised and/or marginalized groups.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	24. Resistance: Describe how individuals and communities have fought for freedom and liberation against systemic and coordinated exercises of power locally and globally. Identify strategies or times that have resulted in lasting change. Organize with others to engage in activities that could further the rights and dignity of all.	9.5.24.2	Examine the characteristics of freedom movements; develop an analysis of racial capitalism, political economy, anti-Blackness, Indigenous sovereignty, illegality and indigeneity.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	25. Ways of Knowing and Methodologies: Use ethnic and Indigenous studies methods and sources in order to understand the roots of contemporary systems of oppression and apply lessons from the past that could eliminate historical and contemporary injustices.	9.5.25.1	Evaluate the legacy and lasting effects of the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s; explain their connections to current events and concerns.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	25. Ways of Knowing and Methodologies: Use ethnic and Indigenous studies methods and sources in order to understand the roots of contemporary systems of oppression and apply lessons from the past that could eliminate historical and contemporary injustices.	9.5.25.2	Analyze contemporary representations (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous) of Indigenous history, iconography, imagery, symbolism and culture today.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	25. Ways of Knowing and Methodologies: Use ethnic and Indigenous studies methods and sources in order to understand the roots of contemporary systems of oppression and apply lessons from the past that could eliminate historical and contemporary injustices.	9.5.25.3	Apply methodologies of fugitivity to map-making, economics and education.
9	5. Ethnic Studies	25. Ways of Knowing and Methodologies: Use ethnic and Indigenous studies methods and sources in order to understand the roots of contemporary systems of oppression and apply lessons from the past that could eliminate historical and contemporary injustices.	9.5.25.4	Explore how criminality is constructed and how social, political and legal systems define a person as a criminal, and the possible impact of that label on individuals and communities.

Rationale | How does this course support the needs outlined above?

Key Considerations: Describe how this course supports the district strategic plan and/or the Middle School Course of Study redesign and learning statements. Describe the Pathways/Design opportunities this new course would create for

your students & department. Include any relevant advances in your content area that support the need for this new course.

The creation of this course is to address a gap in our curriculum and ensure compliance with state law. Under Minnesota Statute 120B.251, the district is required to offer a course that fits the definition of "Ethnic Studies." As we do not currently have such a course, this new elective offering is specifically designed to fulfill that statutory requirement.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

	Consider & Describe Impact
Similar programs in other departments/grade levels	None
Credit and prerequisite considerations	It is preferred that students have taken US History A prior to taking the proposed course.
Anticipated major expenditures (specialized equipment, software, textbooks)	None at this time.
Space Considerations (classroom/lab needs, storage, furniture, etc.)	This class would be taught in a standard classroom.
Schedule Considerations (time of year, skinny, etc.)	Schedule for 2nd semester to ensure that students have had the chance to complete US History A.
Technology Considerations (access to current software & equipment, etc.)	None
Other	

PART II (Complete with T&L following building administrative approval)

C. Goals and Learning Outcomes

Long Term Goals for the Course | Identify desired results - what will students be able to do independently?

Students will develop skills that equip them to be critically conscious and engaged citizens who can analyze their world through multiple points of view.

Standards | Indicate the state, national, or professional standards or frameworks to which this course is aligned.

(Copy and Paste standard and benchmarks)

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Essential Learning & Skills | Describe the essential learning and skills addressed in this course. Students will know and be skilled at:

- critically analyzing systems and narratives
 - deconstruct media and portrayals
 - consider how broad systems can impact individuals or groups
- connecting history to their own lives and current events
 - provide opportunities to explore historical context
 - understand how events of the past shape one's own perspective
- explore diverse communities empathetically
 - learn about multiple lived experiences in various contexts
 - practice community-based inquiry

D. Course Content

Course Outline | Add units and any key experiences or projects that students will engage in.

Unit 1: Government, Justice, and the American Ideal (9.5.23.1, 9.5.23.5, 9.5.23.4): This unit will cover a brief introduction and background on Ethnic Studies. There will be a review of the role of government. Students will apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, ensuring the inclusion of stories and histories that have been previously overlooked or set aside.

Unit 2: The Power of Language (9.5.23.3, 9.5.23.6): This unit will allow students to look at how cultural identity is shaped by language and religion. Students will apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, ensuring the inclusion of stories and histories that have been previously overlooked or set aside.

Unit 3: Past to Present and Shaping Identity - (9.5.25.2, 9.5.23.2, 9.5.25.4): Students will draw connections between historical events and contemporary issues. They will consider how culture and communities have been shaped by varying standards and values.

Unit 4: Movements (9.5.24.1, 9.5.24.2): Students will compare and contrast how individuals and communities have worked for freedom and liberation against systemic and coordinated exercises of power in different regions of the world.

Unit 5: Movement Outcomes and Legacies (9.5.25.1, 9.5.25.3): Students will evaluate the legacy and lasting effects of the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s and explain their connections to current events.

Possible Final Project: "Our Minnesota Story"

Students will choose a Minnesota-based community (their own or another) and create a project that utilizes the methods of Ethnic Studies. Project options include:

- **Oral History:** Conduct and transcribe an interview with a community elder or activist.
- **Digital Storytelling:** Create a short documentary or podcast about a specific historical event or cultural tradition in Minnesota.
- **Community-Based Research:** Research a contemporary issue facing a specific ethnic community in Minnesota and propose potential solutions or actions.
- **Artistic Expression:** Create a piece of visual art, music, or creative writing that reflects the themes of identity and resistance studied in the course.

E. Budget Considerations

Materials, Equipment, Supplies | List any new resources not already available necessary for this course. This might include subscriptions, technology, or other various resources needed for the course.

<p>____ <i>Textbooks</i></p> <p>Title(s):</p> <p>Approximate total cost:</p>	<p>____ <i>Digital Curriculum Resources</i></p> <p>Title(s):</p> <p>Approximate total cost:</p> <p>One-time cost or annual renewal?</p>
<p>____ <i>Other Curriculum Materials (consumables, supplies, ancillaries, etc.)</i></p> <p>Materials:</p> <p>Consumable/non-consumable?</p> <p>Approximate total cost:</p>	<p>____ <i>Technology Devices/Equipment/Hardware</i></p> <p>Devices/equipment needed:</p> <p>Approximate cost:</p>
<p>____ <i>Staff Development</i></p>	<p>_____ <i>Follow Up Plan</i></p>

Staff Development description: Approximate cost: Frequency (one time? yearly?):	Additional Staff Development Check in Meetings
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FINAL APPROVAL PRIOR TO SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

John-Paul Jacobson <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> Director of Teaching and Learning Signature November 6, 2025
Proposed School Board Meeting Date:

