

California requires ethnic studies for university system

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Students at California State University, the nation's largest four-year public university system, will need to take an ethnic studies course to graduate under a bill signed Monday by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The change comes amid the national reckoning over racism and police brutality sparked by the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. It represents the first change to the CSU general education curriculum in over 40 years.

Under the measure, beginning in the 2021-2022 [academic year](#), all 23 CSU campuses must offer courses on race and ethnicity. Beginning with 2024-2025 graduates, students must take a three-credit course to graduate.

The system enrolls over 481,000 students.

The [bill](#) will cost an estimated \$16 million to implement.

The bill says the programs will have a special focus on "four historically defined racialized core groups: Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina and Latino Americans."

"Studies have found that both students of color and [white students](#) benefit academically as well as socially from taking ethnic studies courses. Ethnic studies courses play an important role in building an inclusive multicultural democracy," according to the text of the measure,

which was authored by Assemblywoman Shirley Weber, D-San Diego.

"This bill reflects 50 years of [student](#), faculty, and community advocacy for curriculum reflective of and responsive to our diverse state," Weber tweeted.

The university had opposed the measure for over a year. The measure would set a "dangerous precedent for legislative interference" with the curriculum, Toni Molle, CSU's director of public affairs, wrote before the measure was signed.

A call to Molle seeking comment Monday night wasn't immediately returned.

Critics in the state Senate argued that the bill wouldn't count studies of other ethnic groups that have faced oppression, such as Armenians, and said the measure would pose a financial burden on campuses already facing uncertain school years and lean budgets because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The measure will overrule reforms approved by the university's Board of Trustees last month that required students to take ethnic studies and social justice courses on a wider array of marginalized communities, including Jewish, Muslim and LGBTQ groups. Under that plan, students could have met their graduation requirement by taking courses on social justice that explored issues such as the criminal justice system and public health disparities.

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