

Culturally Sustaining Social Studies: Practical Applications to a High School Elective
Course

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Education.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project is guided by the research question: *How can culturally sustaining pedagogy inform curriculum design for a social studies elective course?* My capstone project takes the form of a unit of curriculum to support a new 11th & 12th grade social studies elective class that I will be teaching in Fall 2021. Based on my research, I use culturally sustaining pedagogy as an informative framework to write one unit of my course. I employ Tomlinson and McTighe's (2006) Differentiated Instruction + Understanding by Design (DI + UbD) model, which allows me to use backwards planning to write engaging curriculum with the core learning and assessment in mind from the beginning. This project will be implemented in Fall 2021.

The elective social studies course in which this unit will be taught is American Environmental History. The course will run for approximately ten weeks in the fall trimester of 2021. It will be taught in a small private high school in New York City, where I will be a first-year member of the history department. I will have sixteen students in 11th and 12th grade in my class, which will meet for 65 minutes three times per week. This project is an introductory unit that will be taught over approximately 3 weeks, or 9 face-to-face lessons with some out-of-class assignments. I center culturally sustaining pedagogy in my unit design and lesson creation throughout the process (see Appendix A).

Although the great majority of my work is original and all of it has been carefully considered and presented with my teaching context and research paradigms in mind, I have also chosen to incorporate portions of lessons that were adapted from or inspired by secondary sources. These include Wakild and Berry (2018), Learning for Justice, Waziyatawin (2021), and Zinn Education Project. Use of these sources of inspiration

authentically reflects my curriculum design process. As a teacher, my work is often inspired by the work of others, but adapted to fit my teaching style and context. With this project, I hope to create a curriculum that is likewise inspiring, adaptable, and helpful for other educators in their own settings. I advise educators who wish to use my work to carefully consider the contexts of their classrooms when using this curriculum with their own students. For example, in Lesson 4, I use the Heat Vulnerability Index of New York City to illustrate the concept of environmental racism, because that is my students' home city, but another educator could modify the curriculum with an environmental injustice example from their own city or state to bring the concept of environmental racism close to home with their students.

Course Scope and Sequence

Course Length: 10 weeks

Each Week: 3 classes, 65 minutes each per week

Week	Unit/Topic Description	Summit Project
Week 1	Intro to Environmental History	Introduce project Students begin brainstorming topics as out-of-class work
Week 2	Environmental Justice, indigenous wisdom, first contact	Friday: Brainstorming day. Decide on four topics for the summit.
Week 3	Indigenous Peoples' Climate Conference (Unit 1 Assessment, all week)	Form groups (4 groups of 4) by the end of week based on student preferences/feedback.
Week 4	An environmental history of slavery (Monday, Wednesday)	Friday: Summit work day
Week 5	Environmental history of slavery continued (Monday, Wednesday)	Friday: Summit work day
Week 6	Industrialization (Monday, Wednesday)	Friday: Summit work day.

Week 7	Industrialization (Monday, Wednesday)	Friday: Summit work day. Website due end of day Friday
Week 8	Focus prep time for summit	Focus prep time for summit
Week 9	Globalization	Summit presentations Monday Start work on final paper
Week 10	Globalization, course wrap-up	Final paper due

Unit 1 Summary

<p>Unit Title: Foundations in Environmental History & Environmental Justice</p> <p>Subject: American Environmental History</p> <p>Grade: 11th-12th History elective</p>	<p>Teacher: Emily Thomas</p> <p>Duration: 3 weeks</p> <p>Length of lessons: 3 lessons per week, 65 minutes per lesson with 30-60 minutes of homework between each lesson.</p>
<p>Summary of unit: This unit will give students an introduction and foundation to studying environmental history. In a typical social studies education, students are familiar almost exclusively with learning political history, which focuses upon the organization and operation of power in societies. Students may also have some familiarity with social history, or the study of ordinary people in history. In this unit, students will be introduced to environmental history: the study of human interaction with the environment, and the environment’s role in shaping human culture and activity. Additionally, some time this unit will be spent preparing students for the course-long summative: the Environmental Justice Summit Project.</p> <p>All materials for this unit can be found in this Google Drive folder.</p>	
Stage One: Desired Results	
<p>Understandings</p> <p><i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental history is transdisciplinary and can reveal truths about the present-day. ● Human history and environmental history are inextricably linked. The environment shapes human culture and activity, while in turn humans modify the environment according to their needs. ● Environmental hazards such as climate change impact peoples 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What can an environmental lens of history reveal differently than a political or social history? ● To what degree can human beings and human behavior constitute or influence what is “nature” or “natural”? ● How can studying environmental history inform environmental justice work?

<p>differently depending on their indigeneity, geography, race, gender, food and energy systems, and income.</p>	
<p>Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i> <u>Vocabulary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental Justice: The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies ● Environmental Racism: the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color 	<p>Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask meaningful questions about the human experience, using a varied body of evidence to find answers to their questions. ● Critically evaluate historical narratives with attention to the differing experiences of people depending upon race, ethnicity, gender, class, culture, and sexuality. ● Use multiple types of sources to gain an understanding of environmental history.
<p>Stage Two: Assessment Evidence</p>	
<p>Performance Task(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indigenous Peoples’ Climate Conference (Unit 1 Summative Assessment) ● Ongoing work on Environmental Justice Summit Project 	<p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student participation in daily discussions and activities. ● Critical reflection upon content and application of course content to contemporary environmental issues.
<p>Stage Three: Learning Plan (Unit Summary)</p>	
<p><u>Week 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lesson 1: Introductions, land acknowledgement, syllabus, pass out readings, “Yes! We Have No Bananas” analysis. ● Lesson 2: Start with “What does nature/natural” mean? Discussion. Then discuss Source 1: Fresh Air Banana episode. Finally, end with Banana Republics history & explore Banana Republic Instagram. ● Lesson 3: Comparing the work of two environmental historians. <p><u>Week 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lesson 4: Analyze & define environmental justice. Introduce Summit project. ● Lesson 5: Indigenous environmental history. ● Lesson 6: Summit brainstorming day. <p><u>Week 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lesson 7: Indigenous Peoples’ Conference Day 1: Background & Research 	

- Lesson 8: Indigenous Peoples' Conference Day 2: Preconference Meetings
- Lesson 9: Indigenous Peoples' Conference Day 3: Conference, Written Assignment, & Self-Assessment

Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria

Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning activities in this unit plan enable/engage:

- Academic skills and concepts (ASC): This unit plan involves numerous academic skills including reading, annotation, formal and informal discussion, group work, and individual written work. By incorporating a variety of academic skills and concepts into each individual lesson and across the unit as a whole, I students are challenged to be dextrous while giving them opportunities to demonstrate their learning in ways that fit a variety of learning styles.
- Cultural competency (CC): In this unit, students are regularly required to reflect upon their own cultural assumptions and the impact of inequitable environmental histories in their immediate communities. By inviting this kind of reflection, students develop cultural competency through awareness of their own patterns of thinking in comparison to those of other cultures.
- Critical reflection (CR): Every lesson in this unit plan involves critical reflection upon institutions that enact oppression and unequally distribute power. Many of these lessons are designed for students to realize such inequities through reading, case study, or discussion, which enables critical reflection to occur on a deeper level as students are discovering it for themselves.
- Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): By inviting verbal and/or written discussion in every lesson, this unit plan is an embodiment of the strategy of critiquing discourses of power. As students engage in critical reflection on the institutions that created historical inequity, they likewise consider what patterns of thinking and discourse enable such inequities to persist in the present day.

Lesson 1

Lesson topic: Introductions & song analysis

Stage One: Desired Results	
<p>Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental history is a transdisciplinary field 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What can the history of the banana tell us about the study of environmental history as a discipline?
<p>Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An initial set of background 	<p>Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze song lyrics in order to

information on the human-banana relationship	make informed guesses about history
Stage Two: Assessment Evidence	
Performance Task(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inference and conclusion-drawing based on song lyrics ● Annotation of podcast transcript 	Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student-generated questions and connections during debrief and discussion period of class
Stage Three: Learning Plan	
<p>Link to Lesson 1 Slides</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce self to class. In addition, I recommend a land acknowledgement. In my context, I will acknowledge that our school is located in ancestral Lenape homelands, and I recognize the significance of this land for Lenape people past and present. 2. Prompt students to introduce themselves. In my class, students will be prompted to introduce themselves and describe their favorite food. (CC) 3. Pass out and discuss course syllabus & reading packet. 4. (Slide 3) Pass out lyrics to “Yes! We Have No Bananas.” Play the song twice as students read along. Then group students into groups of 2-3 to come up with guesses about why the grocer has no bananas in 1922. Encourage students to come up with multiple theories. Write student guesses on the board. (ASC, CR) 5. (Slides 4-5) Explain brief history of the banana and Panama disease. (ASC) 6. (Slide 6) Ask students to generate 2-3 questions that the history of the banana has raised for them. (ASC, CR) 7. (Slide 7) Assign homework: Listen to 32-minute Fresh Air episode: “Bananas: The Uncertain Future of a Favorite Fruit.” As students listen, they should read along to the transcript and annotate it by highlighting important or interesting parts of the interview. (ASC, CR, CDP) 8. If extra time at the end of class, do classmate bingo as a way for students to get to know one another. 	
Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria	
<p><i>Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning activities in this lesson plan enable/engage:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Academic skills and concepts (ASC): In this lesson, students will engage in the academic skills of questioning and hypothesis-building based on evidence. Additionally, for homework, they will engage in the academic skill of annotation. ● Cultural competency (CC): In the warm-up activity, students will introduce themselves and their favorite food. ● Critical reflection (CR): By engaging in hypothesis-creation, then revealing the actual environmental causes behind the song, students engage in critical reflection on the assumptions they may hold. 	

- Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): The homework assignment requires students to critique discourses of power by challenging preconceived notions or assumptions about the nature of banana cultivation. This podcast episode will reveal the darker history of bananas and encourage students to confront what they already know about banana cultivation and human history.

Lesson 2*

Lesson Topic: Delineating & Defining Nature

*Lesson inspired by Wakild, E. and Berry, M. K. (2018). *A primer for teaching environmental history: Ten design principles*. Duke University Press.

Stage One: Desired Results	
<p>Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Nature” and “natural” are deeply complex, nonuniform terms. ● Environmental history gives us great insight into the cultural and political history of humankind 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is “nature”? What does it mean to be “natural”? ● How have nature and the environment been operationalized within historical and modern-day capitalist systems?
<p>Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A basic history of the term “banana republics” 	<p>Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflect upon the degree to which human beings and human behavior constitute their idea of what is “nature” or “natural.” ● Use evidence to engage in discussion of a secondary source text. ● Analyze the clothing brand Banana Republic’s use of environment-based messaging to sell clothes.
Stage Two: Assessment Evidence	
<p>Performance Task(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student reflection and critical thinking during warm-up activity. ● Use of evidence from source to support claims during discussion. 	<p>Other Evidence</p>
Stage Three: Learning Plan	

[Link to Lesson 2 Slides](#)

1. (Slide 2) Warm Up: Pair students. With partners, students construct working definitions of the terms “nature” and “natural.” Then, once they have definitions, they should think of 3 things that do fit into that definition, and 3 things that do not. (CC, CR)
2. Share student responses and look for opportunities to challenge definitions and refine student thinking. Create a working class definition. (ASC)
3. (Slide 3) Give students 5 minutes to review their homework with their partner. Students should share 3 things that they found interesting, confusing, compelling, or which raised new questions. (ASC, CC, CR)
4. (Slide 4) Source discussion. Rearrange the classroom so that all students are sitting in a circle, and discuss the discussion questions on the slides. (ASC, CDP, CR)
5. (Slide 5) Play the video, [“The Dark History of Bananas” by John Soluri](#). Ask students, what in the video confirmed what you learned from the homework? What information was new? What additional questions did it raise for you? (CR)
6. (Slide 6) Using this slide, give students an initial set of background on the term, “Banana Republics.” Then distribute the article [“What is a Banana Republic? Definition and Examples”](#) and give students 10-15 minutes to read and process with a partner. Then discuss student reactions, drawing particular attention to the examples of Honduras and Guatemala. Finally, draw student attention back to the main idea of this lesson - that environmental history gives us great insight into the cultural and political history of humankind.
7. (Slide 7) For the final activity of this lesson, ask students where they have heard the term “Banana Republics” before. Likely a student will mention the clothing brand. Ask them to reflect on why a brand would choose to associate itself with such an exploitative concept. Ask students to take out their phones or computers to look up the [Instagram page](#) for the Banana Republic clothing store. Give them time to peruse the page and discuss the questions on the slide. At the end of class, gather student responses. (CR, CDP)

Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria

Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning activities in this lesson plan enable/engage:

- Academic skills and concepts (ASC): This lesson includes student-led discussion and grappling with complex, nuanced ideas. The Socratic-style discussion will challenge students who are unaccustomed to speaking in class, but it is an important skill to introduce early because discussion is a huge part of meaning-making and the learning process of this course.
- Cultural competency (CC): This lesson reminds students of the role the United States, presently and historically, plays in the global economy and culture of land and labor exploitation.
- Critical reflection (CR): The Instagram investigation activity engages critical reflection as students will ask deep questions of something that they may have

engaged with without critical reflection through their use of social media (e.g., corporations using nature-based images, messages, and slogans to sell products). This lesson encourages them to apply that type of thinking and questioning to their everyday use of the internet.

- Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): Prompting students to wonder why a contemporary clothing brand might normalize use of an exploitative concept like “banana republics” should prompt students to grapple, at a higher level, with the ways that we normalize exploitation of land and labor in our culture. Questioning the normalization of such narratives is a core piece of CSP-based work.

Lesson 3

Lesson Topic: Understanding environmental history as a discipline

Stage One: Desired Results	
<p>Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental history is transdisciplinary and can reveal truths about the present-day. ● Different environmental historians approach the discipline from a variety of angles. 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What can the writings of two environmental historians reveal about the different ways to “do” environmental history?
<p>Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Historians approach environmental history from a wide variety of entry points. ● There is no one singular narrative of environmental history. 	<p>Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Compare and contrast the work of two environmental historians in order to understand the diversity of the discipline.
Stage Two: Assessment Evidence	
<p>Performance Task(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annotation of a high-level history text ● Compare and contrast discussion 	<p>Other Evidence</p>
Stage Three: Learning Plan	

No lesson slides as this lesson is intended to be taught outdoors, without technology.

1. If weather and school setting allow, I envision this lesson being taught outdoors. In an environmental history course, it is important to get in touch with the environment when and where possible. In my context specifically, I hope and intend to teach it in Hudson River Greenway Park, approximately a 10-minute walk from the school. (CC)
2. Ask students to pair up. Once they are in pairs, distribute copies of the two readings: the introduction (pp. xvii-xxiv) to Ted Steinberg's *Gotham Unbound* and "Skywoman Falling" (pp. 3-10) from Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*. In their pairs, students should decide which of the two readings each partner will complete in detail. (ASC)
3. Explain to students that the purpose of this exercise is to get a sense of the different approaches that environmental historians may take depending on the subject they are writing about and the story they are trying to tell. As they read, students should annotate places where they think the author is "doing" environmental history, as well as any parts that stand out to the student for any other reason. Give students at least 15 minutes to read and annotate their chapter. (ASC, CR)
4. Students return to their partner and explain what they each found in their respective reading. After students have had at least 5-10 minutes to generally debrief one another, ask students to compare what they found about each author's sense of place. (ASC, CR)
5. Open up to all-group discussion. Prompt students to really investigate each author's sense of place. They should notice that Steinberg and Kimmerer have significantly different senses of place. Additionally, prompt students to interrogate why Steinberg does not include any mention of Manhattan Island's indigenous human inhabitants. (ASC, CR, CDP)
6. Walk back to school.
7. *If time allows:* Today is the ideal day to introduce the [Environmental Justice Summit Project](#), which will be the course-long summative assessment. When back at school, pass out handouts of the assessment directions and give an initial overview of the project. Explain that the four topics for this project will be entirely student-generated. Thus, students' homework for the next week is to begin thinking about contemporary examples of environmental injustice that they would like to learn more about throughout the course. Tell them that next week, we will do a more thorough investigation of the concept of environmental justice. (ASC, CR, CDP)

Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria

Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning activities in this lesson plan enable/engage:

- Academic skills and concepts (ASC): This lesson engages students in annotation, discussion, partner work, and compare-and-contrast. Additionally they will be reading high-level texts from real historians.
- Cultural competency (CC): This lesson challenges students to look at their own

city (New York City) through an environmental historian’s lens. Often New York is seen as “anti-nature,” but by taking this lesson outdoors and reading a natural history of the place, students will see that every place, no matter how human-made, has an environmental history.

- Critical reflection (CR): Students will interrogate the way that history and place are differently represented depending upon the author’s indigeneity.
- Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): This lesson will broaden students’ understandings of what is “real history” and how history is supposed to be learned. Students will also question why Steinberg does not include any mention of Manhattan Island’s indigenous human inhabitants.

Lesson 4*

Lesson Topic: Environmental justice

*Lesson adapted from Learning for Justice. *Analyzing environmental justice* [Lesson plan].

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/analyzing-environmental-justice>

Stage One: Desired Results	
<p>Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the United States as well as worldwide, people experience environmental hazards at vastly differing rates depending upon their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and nationality. 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is environmental racism/environmental bias? ● How does environmental justice provide a framework for addressing environmental racism/environmental bias?
<p>Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i> <u>Vocabulary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental Justice: The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies ● Environmental Racism: the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color 	<p>Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze maps showing data on race/ethnicity and exposure to pollution and draw conclusions about the disproportionate impacts of environmental degradation by race. ● Apply the concept of environmental bias to a case study based in New York City and brainstorm solutions based in environmental justice.
Stage Two: Assessment Evidence	

Performance Task(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Map analysis ● Application of environmental racism concept to New York City Heat Vulnerability Index 	Other Evidence
Stage Three: Learning Plan	
<p>Link to Lesson 4 Slides</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (Slide 2) Place students into small groups. Students should discuss the following questions to clarify definitions: What is pollution? What are some causes of pollution? What are some effects of pollution? 2. (Slide 3) Distribute the handout: The Effects of Pollution: Who and Why. Brainstorm groups of people affected by pollution in the left-hand column. When you've got your list, look at the right-hand column. Think about why each group of people is affected by pollution. For example, if the left-hand column reads "people with asthma," then in the right-hand column you might write "because they have a physical health issue." Give students 5-10 minutes to brainstorm as many groups as they can. 3. Once students appear to reach a stopping point, pause and ask them to share out. Ask students to check their lists to see if it includes any groups of people who are affected by pollution for reasons besides their physical health. Ask: "Do you have low-income people on your list?" If not, add it to the left column, and discuss with your group why low-income people might be more affected by pollution than those who have more money. 4. Ask students if there are any other groups that should be included for reasons other than physical health. If students do not think of it on their own, prompt them to add "members of race and ethnic minority groups" to the left-hand column, because members of race and ethnic minority groups are more likely to be exposed to pollution than others. Direct students to discuss and fill in the right-hand column with the reason(s) why this might be true. 5. (Slide 4) Project the air pollution map of Connecticut with the key blocked. Ask students to guess what the blue shading means and what the yellow dots mean. Then reveal the key by clicking the slide to advance. Students will see that blue shading mean % minority areas and yellow dots mean power plants emitting pollutants. Ask students to summarize the information that the map shows. (ASC, CR) 6. (Slide 5) Project the definition of Environmental Justice ("The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies"). As a class, discuss the ways that environmental <i>injustice</i> and environmental racism may come to be. What would a more environmentally <i>just</i> map look like? (ASC, CR) 7. (Slide 6) Direct students now to think about their own community in New York City. Ask students to brainstorm other types of environmental hazards that can impact people in New York City, besides pollution. After a few minutes to 	

brainstorm, gather student input. If students do not mention heat on their own, guide/prompt them to think about the hazards of heat in the city in the summertime. Then prompt them to think about what might cause some neighborhoods to become hotter than others. Guide students to think about access to home air conditioning, surface temperature, quantity of concrete surface vs. green space/tree cover in a neighborhood, and levels of poverty. (ASC, CR, CDP)

8. (Slide 7) Ask students to visit the [Heat Vulnerability Explorer](#) page from New York City's Department of Health. Ask students not to scroll past the opening page just yet. Ask them to search their own home neighborhood. They do not need to share out answers unless they want to. (CC, CR, CDP)
9. Direct students to read through the information that follows after entering their neighborhood. This will provide them with information about how their neighborhood compares to the four factors that cause extreme heat citywide: Temperature, Green Space, Air Conditioning, and Poverty. (CC, CR, CDP)
10. (Slide 8) Engage in the closure discussion. Students should recap what environmental racism/bias and environmental justice mean, then brainstorm some possible solutions, informed by environmental justice. (CR, CDP)
11. In closing, remind students about the Summit Project introduced last week. Now that we have explored two examples of environmental racism/environmental justice, remind them that their homework by Friday is to come up with several present-day examples of environmental justice emergencies for us to investigate thoroughly as a class.

Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria

Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning activities in this lesson plan enable/engage:

- Academic skills and concepts (ASC): This lesson includes the academic skills of map and data analysis, inference, drawing conclusions, and asking questions.
- Cultural competency (CC): In this lesson, students are directed to think about environmental hazards in their own city, and then even more specifically in their own neighborhood.
- Critical reflection (CR): This lesson will cause students to reflect upon the neighborhood in which they live and question why or why not they live in a neighborhood that is disproportionately vulnerable to dangerous heat levels.
- Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): By prompting students to ask questions about the history that causes environmental bias/environmental racism, students will critique discourses of power that dismiss these injustices as coincidental or unimportant. Rather they will pause to reflect on the ways that racism has been built into the environmental structures of communities and environmental hazards continue to disproportionately harm people based on race and income.

Lesson 5*

Lesson Topic: Indigenous Environmental History and Wisdom

*Lesson inspired by Waziyatawin (2021, July 27-28). *Education for life and land* [Keynote address]. Minnesota Educational Equity Edcamp, Virtual Conference.

Stage One: Desired Results	
<p>Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain pervasive cultural myths, including human supremacy, social evolution, and progress, are baked into our education system and western worldview. 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do pervasive myths of human supremacy, social evolution, and progress impact us historically and presently?
<p>Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i> <u>Vocabulary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human-Created Myths: Pervasive beliefs, perceived in dominant culture as truths/realities, that uphold colonizers' supremacy. • Anthropocentrism (Human Supremacy): The cultural belief that human life is more important than animal, plant, or ecosystem life. • Social Evolution: The belief that human societies naturally evolve from a state of savagery to a state of civilization. A myth perpetuated by western colonialism. • Progress Narrative: The culturally-constructed belief that 'forward' movement as a society is inevitable and desirable. 	<p>Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify examples of human-created myths of human supremacy, social evolution, and progress narrative in their own lives.
Stage Two: Assessment Evidence	
<p>Performance Task(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written reflection (2-3 paragraphs) reacting to and applying the concepts learned in class. 	<p>Other Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student reflection, discussion, and questioning during lecture and lesson activities.
Stage Three: Learning Plan	
<p>Link to Lesson 5 Slides</p>	

1. (Slide 2) Show the video, [Can You Name A Country?](#) From Jimmy Kimmel. Gather initial student reactions. Then show [Schooling the World: The White Man's Last Burden \(trailer\)](#) by Carol Black. Gather student reactions to the trailer. Then discuss: if we put these video clips in conversation with one another, what do they tell us about our education system? Who decides what knowledge is important to know and what is not? (CR, CDP)
2. (Slide 3) Acknowledge that this lesson was inspired by a talk given by Waziyatawin, a Dakota educator and scholar. I am attempting simply to relay her teachings. Then, introduce the idea of human-created myths. Pause to gather student reactions and questions about the concept of human-created myths. (CC)
3. (Slide 4) Display the definition of Human Supremacy (Anthropocentrism). Ask students, what examples of human supremacy can you think of? Then read through [Genesis 1](#), the Christian creation story. Ask students to discuss ways that this story teaches or reinforces anthropocentrism. Then display the image, [the Great Chain of Being](#). Ask students to share observations about the image. Explain that in Medieval Europe, the codified notion of a chain of supremacy allowed monarchs to retain absolute power, because the belief was that their power was directly appointed by God. Finally, give students time to discuss the discussion question. (CC, CR, CDP)
4. (Slide 5) Show students the image from Lupinacci and Happell-Perkins (2015) illustrating the difference between a “human-centered worldview” and an “ecological understanding.” Give students time to process and discuss the differences between these images and the ways that they have experienced messaging that promotes one or the other. If students do not notice on their own, point out the way that the able-bodied man is depicted as the pinnacle of the triangle image, with women, children, and the disabled pictured beneath him. Discuss the ways that human-supremacy culture leads to enforcement of patriarchy, ableism, and white supremacy. (CR, CDP)
5. (Slide 6) Display the title of the next concept, Social Evolution. Give students time to share what they know about *evolution* generally. Next, distribute the [reading on social evolutionism](#). Give students time to read the first four paragraphs, then turn to a partner to discuss:
 - a. What is the theory of social evolution? (Put it in your own words)
 - b. How did European colonization and “discovery” (from their perspective) of other cultures and social organizations challenge the theory of social evolution?
 Gather student responses and reactions. Then display the definition of social evolution. Allow students to respond to this idea. Prompt them to consider how social evolution interacts with human supremacy, previously discussed. Finally, ask them how a worldview that accepts the idea of social evolution would react to an indigenous society that engaged in hunting, gathering, and/or herding. (CC, CR, CDP)
6. (Slide 7) This slide will open with John Gast's 1872 painting *American Progress*. Ask students, where have you seen this image before? What do you know about it? What is its message?

Then, project the definition of progress from Merriam-Webster. These definitions include the idea that progress is towards a destination, objective, or goal. Ask students, What is that objective or goal? Prompt them to consider whether climate change, and its associated natural disasters, is in fact the goal of so-called progress. Allow students to discuss the ways that the idea of progress is taught to them as an all-around positive and whether that is in fact true or not. (CC, CR)

7. (Slide 8) Display the closing reflection writing prompt. Give students at least 15 minutes to quietly review their notes, then respond to the prompt in 2-3 paragraphs: *Think of an incident, story, or example of a time where you witnessed or were taught one or more of the three human-created myths we discussed today. What impact did this incident have on you? Additionally, in your reflection, you may choose to include overall general reactions to today's lesson.* Collect student responses. (ASC, CR)

Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria

Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning activities in this lesson plan enable/engage:

- Academic skills and concepts (ASC): This lesson will involve writing and application of key concepts to students' own lives. It will also involve discussion, reading, and image analysis.
- Cultural competency (CC): This lesson challenges deep-held assumptions that students may hold. Asking students to question things such as where they get the belief that humans are the most important beings on earth, or who gets to determine what is the most important
- Critical reflection (CR): The writing prompt asks students to apply the teachings from today's lesson to their own lives and think of examples of times where they witnessed or were explicitly taught the worldviews discussed.
- Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): This lesson challenges fundamental worldviews that uphold existing systems. It is important to expose these worldviews for the *belief systems* they are.

Lesson 6

Lesson Topic: Environmental Justice Summit Brainstorming Day

Stage One: Desired Results

Understandings

Students will understand that...

- Environmental justice is a response to environmental racism and environmental bias.

Essential Questions

- What are the most urgent environmental justice situations facing the United States today?
- How can history inform future action when confronting an environmental justice emergency?

<p>Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States is home to many environmental justice emergencies. 	<p>Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in group discussion and consensus-building in order to select four environmental justice emergencies to study in depth throughout this course.
Stage Two: Assessment Evidence	
<p>Performance Task(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group consensus and participation in selecting four topics of study for the course summative: Environmental Justice Summit Project 	<p>Other Evidence</p>
Stage Three: Learning Plan	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell students that today we are spending the whole day, as a group, choosing our four topics for our Environmental Justice Summit at the end of the trimester. Remind them that we will be spending at least one day per week on this project for the next 7 weeks, so it's important to choose topics that interest us. 2. Students have been independently researching contemporary environmental justice emergencies as homework. Begin by randomly pairing students to share one or more of the examples they found with a partner, then change partners 2-3 more times. Give them at least 10 minutes with each partner and encourage them to ask questions of one another and if their partner asks a question they don't know the answer to, they can try to look it up online. 3. Bring the class back to the whole group. Begin by asking students to share out all of the ideas/examples that they brought themselves or heard from a partner. Write down all ideas on the whiteboard. 4. Facilitate student discussion, debate, and consensus-building with the goal of narrowing down to four topics. Throughout the process, be sure that all students get a chance to offer ideas and opinions. Encourage students to listen to one another carefully. If possible, try to come to four topics that have some geographic and situational diversity, but the outcome will really depend on what is best for one's own classroom context and groups of students. 5. Once four topics have been determined, direct students to the Topic Choice Survey (be sure to insert the names of the four topics before giving the survey to students). Ask them to fill it out by next Wednesday (Lesson 8). Use student feedback to form four groups of four. 	
Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria	
<p><i>Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning</i></p>	

activities in this lesson plan enable/engage:

- Academic skills and concepts (ASC): Collaboration, compromise, and consensus-building are at the heart of this lesson. Students are engaging in work that will engage numerous facets of academic skills throughout the project and today's lesson is about building enthusiasm and buy-in for the long-term work we will do, while establishing an environment of respect and rapport as colleagues in the work.
- Cultural competency (CC): Student choice is central to this lesson and project, thus cultural competency is present in students' reflections on what comprises important environmental justice emergencies in their country and community.
- Critical reflection (CR): By engaging in powerful dialogue about what are the *most important* topics for our summit, students reflect upon what matters in their communities and the environment at large.
- Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): This entire project is about critiquing discourses of power. Students will evaluate, critique, and propose solutions to environmental justice emergencies that are currently being undervalued and unaddressed due to capitalist and white supremacist power structures.

Lessons 7-9*

Lesson Topic: Unit 1 Summative Assessment: Indigenous Peoples' Climate Summit

*Lesson adapted from Treick O'Neill, J. & Swinehart, T. (n.d.) *'Don't take our voices away': A role play on the Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change* [Lesson plan]. Zinn Education Project.

<https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/dont-take-our-voices-away/>

Stage One: Desired Results	
<p>Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climate change impacts peoples differently depending on their indigeneity, geography, food and energy systems, and income. ● Indigenous knowledge and ways of interacting with the environment hold key strategies to combating the climate crisis. 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do the effects of climate change vary depending upon geographic differences within the U.S.? ● How does climate change impact Indigenous Peoples differently than non-indigenous peoples? ● What strategies for dealing with climate change can be found through indigenous knowledge and consensus-building?
<p>Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information regarding the ways that climate change impacts indigenous peoples differently depending on their geography and 	<p>Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research the history and present-day impact of climate change on Indigenous Peoples. ● Propose creative solutions,

culture.	informed by research, discussion, and debate, to combat the impacts of the climate crisis on Indigenous People.
Stage Two: Assessment Evidence	
Performance Task(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Written reflection assignment ● Self-assessment 	Other Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student participation in group-work, including research, sharing of ideas, discussion, debate, and consensus-building
Stage Three: Learning Plan	
<p><u>Link to Lessons 7-9 Slides</u> <i>This lesson is designed to take three days to complete. This is the summative assessment for Unit 1 of American Environmental History. <u>Note</u>: Day 1=Lesson 7; Day 2=Lesson 8; Day 3=Lesson 9.</i></p> <p><u>Day 1 (Lesson 7)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (Slide 3) Project the warm-up prompt. In small groups, students will brainstorm 5-10 individuals, peoples, organizations, or groups who they believe are (A) most impacted by climate change; and (B) most responsible for addressing climate change. Share student responses. 2. (Slide 4) Play the 6-minute video “Indigenous Communities are on the Front Lines of Climate Change” from PBS: Hot Mess. Ask students to share reactions and responses. 3. (Slides 5-6) Introduce this week’s activity. As a summative assessment for Unit 1, students will role play a contemporary indigenous community of the United States facing the climate crisis. The purpose is to learn about the history behind the varying impacts of the global climate crisis and build consensus across communities to demand climate action. Explain that this activity is inspired by the 2009 Anchorage Summit, and play Longhouse Media’s 5-minute mini-documentary “Global Climate Change: Indigenous Leaders Speak!” about the 2009 summit. 4. (Slide 7) Divide students into groups each assigned a role, which should be determined ahead of time (Treick O’Neill & Swinehart, n.d.). Give each group a copy of their role handout and a copy of the discussion questions handout. Ask for a volunteer within each group to read the role description out loud to the rest of the group. After the groups have read through their role, they may begin discussing and drafting answers to the discussion questions, focusing particularly on their initial thoughts to questions 1 & 2. 5. (Slide 8) Give students the remainder of class to conduct research on the real-life Indigenous peoples that they are representing. They should use factual, citable information to support their answers to the discussion questions. <p><u>Day 2 (Lesson 8)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (Slide 10) While on Day 1 students focused on the climate crisis as it 	

specifically presents to their own group, today's work is about comparing situations, solutions, and building solidarity across Indigenous Peoples.

2. (Slide 11) Each group should meet together. Pass out a copy of the [Preconference Meetings handout](#) to each group. Each group of four should split into pairs. Two members will be rovers, with the task of moving about to each other group to complete the Preconference Meetings handout. The remaining two group members will be stationary representatives, who will meet with the rovers from other groups to represent their own group. Remind students that the purpose of these meetings is to share details of each group's specific problems, but also each group's strengths, strategies, and to build alliances.
3. (Slide 12) Once each pair of rovers has visited every stationary representative, return to original groups. Remaining in their roles as representatives of one Indigenous People, students should share what they learned from preconference meetings. Then, students will prepare for Friday's full conference by deciding on the two top-priority action items for their group and preparing a rationale or explanation to be given at the beginning of Friday's conference.

Day 3 (Lesson 9)

1. (Slide 14) Ask students to return to groups. Give them 5 minutes to refresh their ideas from last class and pick a spokesperson to share their top two priorities and rationale for each. Have each spokesperson stand and present their top priorities. Write these 8 action ideas on the board.
2. (Slide 15) Project the Conference Goals. The purpose of this conference is to build consensus, thus the ultimate goal is for representatives to mutually agree on three action items. These three actions must satisfy each of the four nations in attendance at the conference. As the teacher, facilitate student discussion, but be sure to take a step back and allow students to guide the discussion and debate. By the end of the class period, have a written list and explanation of the three action items/demands.
3. (Slide 16) Assign the individual written assignment and self-assessment. Students will compare the three goals created from the class conference simulation to the [2009 Anchorage Declaration from the actual IPGSCC](#). Students will explain similarities and differences. Then, they will assess their own work from the entire week according to the [project rubric](#).

Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria

Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning activities in this lesson plan enable/engage:

- Academic skills and concepts (ASC): Academic skills present in this lesson include group work, research, developing empathy, public speaking, consensus-building, writing, and self-assessment.
- Cultural competency (CC): By placing students in the roles of contemporary Indigenous Peoples, this lesson requires students to reflect on their personal relationship to climate change while understanding the ways that climate change impacts peoples differently depending on their indigeneity, geography, food and energy systems, and income.

- Critical reflection (CR): Through debate, discussion, and comparison, students will reflect upon the unique impacts of climate change depending on different factors of identity. Students will understand the uniquely exploitative ways that Indigenous Peoples continue to be victimized by environmental racism.
- Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): This lesson requires students to think beyond simplistic solutions to the climate crisis while giving them license to propose radical strategies. This will allow students to critique discourses that dismiss radical solutions (e.g., vastly limiting fossil fuel consumption, etc.) because they threaten prevailing power structures.

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APPENDIX A

Unit Plan Design Template

Stage One: Desired Results	
Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i>	Essential Questions
Knowledge <i>Students will know...</i>	Skills <i>Students will be able to...</i>
Stage Two: Assessment Evidence	
Performance Task(s)	Other Evidence
Stage Three: Learning Plan	
<i>Describe learning activities and label instances of the CSP core criteria, e.g., (CC, CR)</i>	
Stage Four: CSP Core Criteria	
<i>Reflect on the ways that the desired results, assessment evidence, and learning activities in this lesson or unit plan enable/engage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Academic skills and concepts (ASC): ● Cultural competency (CC): ● Critical reflection (CR): ● Critiquing discourses of power (CDP): 	