Fulbright-Hays GPA South Africa 2025 Curriculum Module
Natalie Witherspoon, PhD
GPA Fellow Participant

Module Title: *Isibongo*: My Community, My Song

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| Target Grade Levels: | 9th-12th |
| Recommended Length: | 6-36 Weeks |
| Indiana State Ethnic Studies Course Description & Standards | Social Studies: Ethnic Studies (1516) Ethnic Studies provides a framework to broaden students' perspectives concerning historical and contemporary lived experiences and cultural practices of ethnic and racial groups in the United States. This course may either focus on a particular ethnic or racial group or take a comparative approach across multiple groups. Course content should be presented from the perspective of the ethnic or racial group(s). The course may include an analysis of the economic, intellectual, social, and political contributions of an ethnic or racial group(s), as well as the socio-political and economic forces that create systemic challenges to accessing resources and opportunities. As a result, this course will better prepare students for an increasingly diverse, global community and participation in a democratic society. The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) encourages the use of multicultural curriculum materials and provides multiple resources on IDOE's website which is updated periodically. These standards are intended to be cross-curricular and may be taught as a social studies course and used in other subject areas including English/Language Arts. The Indiana Ethnic Studies course contains four standards with distinct indicators. Teachers are encouraged to build connections between standards in lessons. The standards are not required to be taught in a specific sequence.<br><br>Source: https://www.in.gov/doe/files/Ethnic-Studies-Standards-2020.pdf |
| Module Standards | Standard 1: Cultural Self-Awareness<br>ES. 1.3: Students evaluate how society's responses to different social identities lead to access and/or barriers for ethnic and racial groups in relation to various societal |

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| | institutions, including but not limited to education, healthcare, government, and industry.<br><br><u>Standard 2: Cultural Histories within the United States Context and Abroad</u><br>ES. 2.1: Students investigate the origins of various ethnic and racial groups, examining the historical influence of cultural, socio-political, and socio-economic contexts on those groups.<br><br><u>Standard 3: Contemporary Lived Experiences and Cultural Practices</u><br>ES. 3.1: Students identify and explore current traditions, rites, and norms of an ethnic or racial group(s) and how they have or are changing over time.<br>ES. 3.2: Students assess how social policies and economic forces offer privilege or systematic oppressions for racial/ethnic groups related to accessing social, political, and economic opportunities. |
| Module Objectives: | ● Students will create a Linguistic Autobiography.<br>● Students will learn basic Zulu vocabulary.<br>● Students will learn selected South African literary traditions.<br>● Students will develop a Social Justice Project Proposal based on local injustices.<br>● Students will determine and document perceptions of their community's evolution through Elder Interviews.<br>● Students will create an *Isibongo* celebrating their communities and themselves. |
| Essential Questions: | ● How do people define their communities?<br>● What is the value of communal storytelling?<br>● Why should youth promote social justice? |

*A Note from My Heart to Yours*

Greetings Esteemed Colleague!

We have the best job in the world! We get to expose our children to the beauty of global learning!

I had the amazing privilege of traveling to South Africa for an immersive experience, and I am thrilled to integrate some of my learning in this curriculum module. Whether

you teach Ethnic Studies, Social Studies, or sponsor a Pan-Africanaffinity group, this module will assist you with building global bridges and empathy within your school community.

In accordance with the Indiana Department of Education Ethnic Studies framework, the course objectives foster global learning, increase cultural awareness, and prepare your students to lead in forging a more just and equitable society. This module features 6 assignments which should be embedded in a larger unit about African cultures or *Zulu* culture. Although several of the assignments can be isolated for implementation, the final project, the *Isibongo*, cannot be completed as designed without completing the first five assignments. The first two assignments engage students in metalinguistic study, positioning them to compare and analyze language choice. The Social Justice Project Proposal challenges students to take inspiration from the South African youth who fought Apartheid in the Soweto Uprising. Their bravery and leadership are posited as springboards for your students to promote and exact social justice in their own communities. Students will also interview elders to gather and share their views on the evolution of their community, adding invaluable perspectives to students' understanding of their homes. Although based on the art tradition of an adjacent ethnic group, students will create their versions of San Tapestries, capturing visual representations of their community's social justice plight. The culminating *Isibongo*: My Community, My Song project will include a public performance of original praise poetry, engaging all in attendance in the power of communal storytelling.

The resources referenced are not exhaustive and will need to be paired with materials that help learners develop the background knowledge needed to access the content. Students should build prior knowledge based on the study of South African geography, political history, including Apartheid, and comparisons between the historic and current socio-economic and socio-political disparities in South African society across racial lines and those same disparities in American society. These disparities should be used as a base for understanding the need for social justice and inform students' preparation to design their Social Justice Project Proposals. Students should also have amassed baseline knowledge about *Zulu* culture, with particular emphasis on the concept of *Ubuntu*, the belief that a person is a person through other people, before beginning the tasks below. Targeted readings from the following texts should be used daily to introduce students to South African literary traditions and enhance knowledge about the lingering effects of Apartheid.

Chapman, C. (2018). The new century of South African poetry. AD Donker Publishers

Grainger, L. (2021). *Stories gogo told me*. Penguin Books Australia.

Radebe, M. J. (2025). *Apartheid did not die: South Africa's unfinished revolution*. Inkani

Optional Zulu language development resources include the YouTube channel, Zulu Lessons with Thando and Muller, B., & Ngubane, S. (1997). *Ninjani?: A zulu second language course for young beginners*. The graphic organizer and discussions can easily be expanded with additional fields and prompts respectively. You should develop rubrics consistent with your implementation of each project. You will also note that some directions include explicit references to *Teacher* and *Student* for clarity.

My hope is that you and your students broaden your capacity to engage globally, increase your linguistic skills, and are further poised to advance justice throughout the world. While the gravity of the featured topics is immense, each day should center joy. You and your students should leave with increased confidence in your purpose and power to change the world.

Happy Learning!

*Assignments*

1. Bilingual Community Glossary (60 min)

Create a *Zulu*-English bilingual glossary featuring 20 words. Include the 10 words listed below and 10 more words that you choose related to your community.
Use the Glosbe Translator for support.

Vocabulary

- Family
- Neighborhood
- Community
- Ancestor(s)
- Student
- School
- Voice
- Justice
- School
- Teacher

2. Linguistic Autobiographies (90 min)

Write 3 paragraphs reflecting on your use of language in various contexts. How do your language choices demonstrate your value system and identity? Consider the language you use when speaking to your parents/guardians, friends, and classmates. Is it the same? Do you use some words or phrases with some people that you do not use for others? Are your language choices influenced by the media you engage with and the community in which you live? If so, tell how. How do you use language to demonstrate *ubuntu*?

3. Social Justice Project Proposal (2-36 Weeks)

Teacher: Direct students to read the Soweto Uprising: June 16, 1976 article and watch the Soweto Uprising Changed South Africa's Political Landscape clip. Tell them to pay attention to the role students played in this political movement. Following the clip, discuss the students' role in calling attention to the injustices of Apartheid. Next, read the directions below.

# Social Justice Project Proposal Directions

Now that you have learned about the Soweto Uprising and the role students played in fortifying the fight against Apartheid, think about a social justice issue in your community that you and other students could address. The issue should feature limited access to education, healthcare, government, and industry in your local community. After determining the cause you all want to fight for, prepare for a *lekgotla*, a class discussion about each project, and corporate selection of a single social justice issue to target by documenting a short description including the following:

- Name of the issue
- A 5-7 sentence description of the problem featuring key stakeholders involved including people, places, things, etc. and their relationship within the context. Tell why the class should choose the issue and the dangers of inaction. How do policies and economic forces create barriers to fair access? What will happen if our class does not act to bring justice to this cause?

Teacher: Divide students into groups of 3-4 for initial issue identification and practice proximity while monitoring group discussions. Ask probing questions pointing the students toward fulfilling the description criteria. After groups have finalized their description, instruct them to create a poster (digital or paper) with their description. Inform students that they will present their posters, observe the presentations of the other groups, and then engage in a *lekgotla* to determine which issue the class will address. Before the presentations begin, inform groups that they must complete the Social Justice Project Proposal Notes graphic organizer below for each group represented to ensure their proper preparation for the *lekgotla*.

Social Justice Project Proposal Notes

| Project Topic | Why is the Topic Urgent? | Questions for the Group | Urgency Rating |
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Once the presentations are finished, display the posters from each proposal. Tell students that the *lekgotla* will now commence and involve 3 phases. In the first phase, students will discuss the similarities and differences amongst the projects and vote to consolidate projects as appropriate. In the second phase, students will debate the value and urgency of the remaining projects. In the final phase, students will vote for their preferred project. If there is a tie, your vote will be the tie breaker.

After the *lekgotla,* inform students that they will continue the path of resolution of the designated social justice issue through partnering with internal and external stakeholders to develop solutions. Ensure that school administration is aware of the project and seek resources from your school district or corporation to support project completion

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4. Participatory Action Research: Elder Interview (60 min.)

Teacher: Build a directory of elders that students can contact for the assignment interviews. Reach out to community members to prepare them for participation and request their contact information. Recommended participants include local librarians, members of historical societies, city and county representatives, clergy, leaders of community organizations, and business owners. Encourage students to reach out to their older relatives and neighbors as well. Before students start the assignment, send a message to parents and guardians indicating that their student will be expected to complete an interview with a community member for their project.

Once students have determined an interviewee, document interview participants' contact information and the anticipated dates for interviews. Discuss the norms of conversation confidentiality and courtesy with students before their interviews. Direct students to conduct the Elder Interview Protocol. Create space for students to share highlights from their interviews with the class. Follow up with participants after the interviews offering gratitude and the opportunity to attend the *Isibongo*: My Community, My Song performance night and to review excerpts of their interviews with attendees.

5. San Tapestry Overview and Production (180 min)

Teacher: Overview the San Tapestry Introduction with your students to introduce your students . Ask students about the role of visual art in telling local stories and in highlighting what local people believe is important. Instruct students to read each caption and listen to each audio file on the website. Next, tell students that they will create their own digital or physical work of art to represent the social justice issue selected and its implications for the surrounding community. The piece must include representations of the people, places, and things affected by the issue. Advise students that their art will be on display for the general public and accompany their presentations about their learning.

6. *Isibongo* Creation and Performance (6 Weeks)

Teacher: Determine a venue for the *Isibongo*: My Community, My Song performance night. Consider partnering with local cafés, bookstores, libraries, art galleries, community centers, or universities to host the community wide event. Ask students for suggested locations as well. If a public venue cannot be booked, try scheduling at your campus. If no site is available, host the event in your classroom during the school day. After you have decided on a venue, introduce the concept of *Isibongo* to your students as a form of praise poetry capturing the story of a clan, family, or historical figure in Zulu culture. Play a clip of the Shaka Zulu Isibongo and of the Nelson Mandela Isibongo as exemplars. You may also want to share translated excerpts of Shaka Zulu's Isibongo to ensure students' appreciation of the text.Tell students that they will now write a praise poem or song about themselves and their community. Share the Isibongo Instructions with your students.

*Isibongo* Instructions

Write a poem or song celebrating you and your community. Your writing must contain at least 20 lines and at least 3 Zulu words from your Bilingual Community Glossary, at least 2 references from your Linguistic Autobiography, at least 2 references from our Social Justice Project Proposal, and at least 3 references from your Elder Interview. Your writing will be shared during our *Isibongo*: My Community, My Song performance night and should reflect the beauty of our collective triumphs and struggles.

Teacher: Design the event to include an introduction to the *Isibongo* as a form of praise poetry capturing the story of a clan, family, or historical figure in Zulu culture. The audience should be informed of the culminating nature of the project, with influence from students' surveys of their community's history, present, and most importantly, their unique role in protecting its future through acts of justice. Work with students to develop introductions for each performance and ensure that their San Tapestry artwork is displayed while they are sharing. Include interview excerpts and make space for elders in attendance to add additional comments. Interlace the evening with poetry and prose from the books listed in the unit overview and consider showing the Shaka Zulu *Isibongo* at the beginning of the event to provide context for the audience.

# References

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