

Ron DeSantis, Black History and CRT

Florida has a point in rejecting AP African-American Studies.

By [The Editorial Board](#)

When parents complained that Critical Race Theory was creeping into their children's classrooms, the left argued that CRT is strictly college material and isn't actually taught in K-12 schools. So how can progressives object now that Gov. Ron DeSantis is blocking a new high-school AP course in Florida on grounds that it's stuffed with CRT?

Florida rejected a planned Advanced Placement class in African-American Studies because it "lacks educational value" and "is a vehicle for a political agenda." In response, NPR quoted an academic "involved in creating the curriculum," who explained again that CRT is too advanced for high-school students. "There's nothing particularly ideological about the course," [he added](#), "except that we value the experiences of African people in the United States."

The chattering class had already committed to that narrative by the time a draft of the AP framework leaked. It starts innocuously enough, with topics on Africa's linguistic diversity and the history of the Songhai Empire. But [keep reading until Unit 4](#), which includes:

- "The Reparations Movement," a topic that "explores the case for reparations," in which students "may examine House Bill H.R. 40 and a text by Ta-Nehisi Coates."
- "Movements for Black Lives," which "explores the origins, mission, and global influence of the Black Lives Matter movement," some of whose adherents have called for the abolition of prisons and police.
- "Black Queer Studies," which "explores the concept of the queer of color critique, grounded in Black feminism and intersectionality, as a Black studies lens that shifts sexuality studies toward racial analysis."
- "'Postracial' Racism and Colorblindness," which "explores concepts such as postracialism, colorblindness, racecraft, or inequality."
- "Intersectionality and Activism," which "examines intersectionality as an analytical framework and its connection to Chicana and Asian American feminist thought." Students "may explore a text" by Kimberlé Crenshaw, whose official Columbia Law School bio says that her work is "foundational in critical race theory."

The political dispute over such coursework sometimes devolves into a tedious semantic debate over whether asking teens to contemplate intersectionality and read Ms. Crenshaw

technically constitutes “teaching CRT.” In any case, Florida’s complaint about an underlying political agenda hardly looks frivolous.

Does an AP class that’s exploring “the case for reparations” also discuss the case against, including the fact that 21% of black Americans [are first or second generation](#), and 18% of black newlyweds in 2015 [married someone of a different race](#) or ethnicity? The AP document has a topic on exploring the “diverse experiences and identities of Black communities in the U.S.” Somehow we doubt that this involves readings from Thomas Sowell or Clarence Thomas.

More to the point, does anybody think that if this kind of curriculum were put to a vote in Florida, it would get anywhere close to majority support? Mr. DeSantis’s administration is responsible for overseeing what happens in the state’s public K-12 schools. “We believe in teaching kids facts and how to think,” the Governor said, “but we don’t believe they should have an agenda imposed on them.”

Florida’s Education Department told the College Board, which runs the AP program, that it would “reopen the discussion” if the curriculum were revised. The College Board said Tuesday, without mentioning Florida, that it soon will release an “official” course framework to supplant the current pilot version. Meantime, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker has urged no changes, [saying his state expects](#) history lessons that cover “the role played by black queer Americans.”

Critics of Mr. DeSantis argue that there’s an AP course in European History, which he apparently doesn’t mind. Maybe that’s because it appears to cover, uh, European history: the Reformation, the Congress of Vienna, the Iron Curtain. At a rally in Tallahassee, meantime, a chant rings out: “Black history is American history!”

That last sentiment is exactly right, which is why black history *isn’t* an elective. Florida [mandates instruction](#) on “the enslavement experience,” “the civil rights movement,” and the contributions of black Americans. Three years ago, Mr. DeSantis [signed a law](#) to teach the 1920 Ocoee massacre, in which a white mob [killed dozens of black Floridians](#).

The K-12 curriculum is always a work in progress, but the right approach is to resist Balkanization, not to demand it. African-American history is indeed American history, and that’s how schools should teach it.