

Geography

Timestamp	Email Address	Name	What I Liked	Concerns I Have	Questions I Have
5/16/2025 15:02:37		Chris and Bob Thelen	<p>We appreciate the attempt to provide more opportunities to challenge advanced students with more AP class topics, as that is a need that has been discussed at prior Board meetings.</p>	<p>First, we have to admit we had never heard of this subject matter, and it seems a bit of a narrow focus which makes us question how many college bound students would benefit from it and how much interest there will be in this class or the ROI for the school. Second, we question the neutrality of the publisher, Cengage/National Geographic Learning, which says it partners with National Geographic Society, a nonprofit org with a well known political perspective and an entertainment focus. While reviewing the material we were told that Cal does not have a regular "physical" geography course, perhaps that would be a more appropriate way to go.</p> <p>That said, although this textbook has interesting subject matter concerning cultures, societies, geography, environment and human migration patterns, it is wholly framed in an elite Globalist progressive world view. If this AP curriculum is meant to represent a college level class, it is an indictment on the university system because it's as if this entire field exists to promote one particular ideological agenda. The authors have obvious politically motivated opinions about controversial issues like illegal immigration, border walls, climate change, and even gender ideology. This textbook presupposes answers to ethical controversies which the authors do not back up with evidence but still expect the student to accept as fact. To their credit, the authors, at one point tell the students to examine government policy and "what unintended effects may have resulted", but then go on to make moral judgements and lay blame without examining root causes of the problems. But by NOT providing different, equally valid perspectives, they are not enabling "critical thinking" skills in the students. There is ample evidence of the authors' biases. In one particularly disturbing anti-semitic passage called Walls that Divide Us the authors state, "The wall (built by Israel) is a reminder of Israel's OCCUPATION of the region and can provoke anger, resentment, and violence against Israelis". First of all, Israel is not an 'occupier' of it's own country and, second, the existence of a wall should never be seen as justification of "violence" against Israelis. Another problematic reference is to HRC's definition of "gender identity". HRC (Human Rights Campaign) is a radical activist lobbying group that has been extorting corporations with a Corporate Quality Index rating based on their adherence to HRC's radical social justice beliefs. They are not an unbiased source nor experts at anything. The textbook goes on to validate use of pseudo-scientific and discriminatory terminology like 'sex assigned at birth', and 'safe spaces'. Given the current Executive Orders and US Dept. of Ed interpretations of Title IX and Title VI violations, this textbook may not meet federal nondiscrimination standards. It definitely does not meet the Board's own policy (2510) to ensure textbooks are free from bias. Finally, some chapters in this textbook end with an activity called Geo Inquiry. It directs the students to engage in social justice activism by a process of Ask, Collect, Visualize, Create and Act (meaning speak out on the issue thru social media and government meetings). Even though this form of "critical pedagogy" which promotes social justice activism has become accepted practice in K12 education, (in fact it was also in the Economics textbook purchased in 2022), I'm not sure all parents would be on board with their child engaging in activism related to contentious social and moral issues in a Geography (or Economics) class. For all these reasons, and many more not mentioned, we recommend against approval of this textbook.</p>	<p>Is there really enough interest in this niche topic to justify the expenditure? Does it fall into a 'general' college requirement in either the Humanities or Sciences?</p> <p>Is this a purchase of only textbooks or would teachers use online versions as well (and does that allow content revisions or additions without notification)? Are there other online resources that we were not able to review that come along with this purchase?</p> <p>NOTE: After writing this review, we attended the Board Committee meeting where a member suggested that maybe Cal should try a different textbook publishing company. We don't believe that will really solve the bias issue as it was stated at the Board meeting that this textbook was approved by the AP organization and teaches to the AP test standards. As stated previously in the review, Human Geography overall appears to be a highly politicized college "course of study" that belongs at the University level where parents and students can choose to buy into the agenda. But since the Board's own policy (2240) says that controversial issues are allowed only if they do not "tend to indoctrinate or persuade students to a particular point of view.", this AP college level curriculum does not meet that standard.</p>