



# Glenn Loury: An Independent Mind

## Teacher's Guide

*This document is addressed to the instructor. Other documents in this lesson packet are addressed to students.*

This lesson provides an overview of the life and work of African American economist Glenn Cartman Loury, one of America's most provocative thinkers on issues related to race, poverty, and social policy. A technical economist by training, Loury is usually identified as a Black conservative, though his worldview has undergone a series of transformations since he first emerged as an outspoken Reaganite in the 1980s.

Born and raised in a working-class neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, Loury rose through the ranks of elite academia to become the first Black tenured professor of economics at Harvard in 1982, doing groundbreaking work on "social capital."

### Prompt

Present students with the questions posed in the "Opening Questions" document, either by circulating the document itself or leading an all-class discussion about some or all of the questions. Ask students to write down their answers or, for class discussion, record responses from the class so these answers can be reconsidered after the presentation.

Share the PowerPoint presentation with students. Select from the list of "Critical Thinking Questions" and "Multiple-Choice Questions" to engage students in dialogue and measure their understanding. If time allows, supplement the presentation with Loury's own writings or other resources listed below. The "Critical Thinking Questions" document also includes prompts for more in-depth research and writing assignments.

### Vocabulary

contentious, detractors, dissertation, dissident, fatalistic, flippant, laissez-faire, milieu, neoconservative, opportunists, pundit, rehabilitation, umbrage

## *Recommended Resources*

In addition to the PowerPoint presentation and three “Questions” documents, this packet includes three texts by Glenn Loury (“Social Capital versus Human Capital,” “Whose Fourth of July?,” and an excerpt of the preface to the second edition of *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*), and a guide to relevant “Woodson Principles.”

Media by and about Loury are widely available online. Brief clips and complete interviews from his long-running web series, *The Glenn Show* — hosted on [Bloggingheads](#) and on his personal [Substack](#) — can be found on YouTube. He discussed his life story on [Uncommon Knowledge](#) in 2021 and on [Conversations with Tyler](#) in 2023. Be sure to review the videos on these platforms before showing to students for language and topic appropriateness for your students.

Loury’s memoir, *Late Admissions: Confessions of a Black Conservative* (Norton, 2024) is appropriate for more advanced and mature readers, though not for typical high school classrooms. His two published books *Anatomy of Racial Inequality* (Harvard, 2003/2021) and *Race, Incarceration, and American Values* (Boston Review, 2008) are each adapted from a lecture series and accessible to more advanced students, though they reflect the more progressive phase of Loury’s intellectual journey. The 2021 forward to the second edition of *Anatomy* discusses how his ideas have developed since his original lectures.



## Standards and Learning Objectives

### The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

#### Civics

D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

D2.Civ.6.9-12. Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets

D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

D2.Civ.9.3-5. Use deliberative processes when making decisions or reaching judgments as a group.

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.12.9-12. Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.

D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

#### Economics

D2.Eco.1.9-12. Analyze how incentives influence choices that may result in policies with a range of costs and benefits for different groups.

D2.Eco.7.9-12. Use benefits and costs to evaluate the effectiveness of government policies to improve market outcomes.

D2.Eco.8.9-12. Describe the possible consequences, both intended and unintended, of government policies to improve market outcomes.

#### History

D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's



perspectives.

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

### Data Sources

D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

D3.4.9-12. Refine claims and counterclaims attending to precision, significance, and knowledge conveyed through the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

### ELA

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).

D4.4.9-12. Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

D4.5.9-12. Critique the use of the reasoning, sequencing, and supporting details of explanations.

D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

D4.8.9-12. Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms, schools, and out-of-school civic contexts.

## AP United States History

### THEMATIC FOCUS

PCE Debates fostered by social and political groups about the role of government in American social, political, and economic life shape government policy, institutions, political parties, and the rights of citizens

### SKILLS

1.B Explain a historical concept, development, or process.



4.B Explain how a specific historical development or process is situated within a broader historical context.

6.D Corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument using diverse and alternative evidence in order to develop a complex argument. This argument might, explain nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables, explain relevant and insightful connections within and across periods, explain the relative historical significance of a source's credibility and limitations, or explain how or why a historical claim or argument is or is not effective.

## KEY CONCEPTS

### Period 8: 1945–1980

KC-8.2.II Responding to social conditions and the African American civil rights movement, a variety of movements emerged that focused on issues of identity, social justice, and the environment.

KC-8.2.III Liberalism influenced postwar politics and court decisions, but it came under increasing attack from the left as well as from a resurgent conservative movement.

KC-8.2.III.C In the 1960s, conservatives challenged liberal laws and court decisions and perceived moral and cultural decline, seeking to limit the role of the federal government and enact more assertive foreign policies.

KC-8.2.III.E Public confidence and trust in government's ability to solve social and economic problems declined in the 1970s in the wake of economic challenges, political scandals, and foreign policy crises.

### Period 9:1980-Present

KC-9.1 A newly ascendant conservative movement achieved several political and policy goals during the 1980s and continued to strongly influence public discourse in the following decades.

KC-9.1.I Conservative beliefs regarding the need for traditional social values and a reduced role for government advanced in U.S. politics after 1980.

KC-9.1.I.A Ronald Reagan's victory in the presidential election of 1980 represented an important milestone, allowing conservatives to enact significant tax cuts and continue the deregulation of many industries.

KC-9.1.I.B Conservatives argued that liberal programs were counterproductive in fighting poverty and stimulating economic growth. Some of their efforts to reduce the size and scope of government met with inertia and liberal opposition, as many programs remained popular with voters.