Dear Faculty,

The University of Kansas Libraries would like to invite you and your students to our spring exhibition, *Contested American Identities: KU Scholars Address the Challenge*, in the Haricombe Gallery in Watson Library. The *Contested American Identities* exhibition will take an interdisciplinary look at identity and the intersecting categories of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and ability.

The exhibitions in the Haricombe Gallery emphasize the discursive and collaborative elements of academic research. “Scholarship is a Conversation” is one of the six Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) threshold concepts in the new *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education*. Each exhibition displays the breadth of the scholarly conversation by highlighting library collections and KU scholars around evolving themes. Each exhibition shows only snippets of larger scholarly conversations, and provides an ideal opportunity for students to begin connecting the threads of that dialog, identifying elements they think would add value to the discussion, and considering what contexts would be needed to more fully comprehend the exhibition’s theme. *Contested American Identities* particularly encourages students “to investigate the diversity of human experience within the United States” as part of the KU Core (Goal 4, Learning Outcome 1).

The Haricombe Gallery is an ideal space to bring students where they can make connections across disciplines and participate in the practices of debate, exchange, and collaboration fundamental to the academic community. The questions provided below are meant to bring students into scholarly conversation. Our goal is to help students move from seeing and evaluating the scholarly conversation as it has evolved before them to a point where they will make their own connections between the resources displayed and their own ideas and experiences. Please send your students to the Haricombe Gallery and urge them to add their voices to the conversation surrounding Contested American Identities.

Best wishes -

Sarah Goodwin Thiel, Head of Community Engagement, Coordinator, KU Libraries Exhibits Program  
Tami Albin, Center for Faculty/Staff Initiatives and Engagement, KU Libraries Exhibits Advisory Board  
Stephanie Gamble, Undergraduate Learning Specialist, KU Libraries Exhibits Advisory Board  
Bayliss Harsh, Coordinator of Community and Student Engagement, KU Libraries Exhibits Advisory Board  
Jamie Rees, Community Engagement Intern, KU Libraries Exhibits Advisory Board
Conceptual Questions:

1) Are the components of this exhibition in conversation with one another?
2) Does this exhibition represent a conversation? If so, what is the conversation about?
3) What previous knowledge might be required to join the conversation? If not, what questions or points of entry might join them (the components) into a conversation?
4) Is there only one conversation or are their multiple conversations occurring at the same time?
5) How would you further your understanding of one of the conversations in the exhibition?
6) How does this exhibition connect or contribute to conversations beyond the university?
7) How does this exhibition connect to larger conversations happening around you, for example in your classes, on Facebook, or with friends? Does this exhibition connect to your personal life, if so how?
8) Activity: If you were a guest curator, what would you add to this exhibition and how would it fit with the conversation(s) represented by the theme?
   a. Consider what disciplines might also have something to contribute. Is your discipline represented? If not, in what ways could questions or concepts from your area of study contribute to this scholarly conversation?
   b. What kinds of resources might forward this conversation? Identify a few keywords from the exhibition’s theme and explore the KU Libraries catalog and databases to select an item you would add. Consider too, collections in Spencer Research Library, including the digitized University Archives.
   c. Does a research project or interest of yours connect to this exhibition? Explain your research questions and how your findings could contribute to or change the scholarly conversation around this theme.

These questions and other instructional materials can also be found on the Contested American Identities website.