New York University
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development
Department of Teaching and Learning

SOCED-GE.2146
MA Seminar in Social Studies:
An Introduction to the Policy and Practice of Social Studies Education

Professor Sarah Bennison
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By Appointment

Course Objectives
This course is designed to introduce students to the history, policy, theory, and practice of social studies education. We will examine the social context of education and the impact of structural inequality on the social studies classroom, exploring questions of opportunity, access, and responsibility, and discuss how all of these matters inform the design of a social studies curriculum. The course will examine different concepts of democratic citizenship and multiculturalism in the contexts of U.S. societies and schools, and how these concepts relate to teachers’ and students’ social identities (race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.) and classroom pedagogies (curriculum, instruction, assessment approaches). Through readings, discussions, presentations, projects, and debates, students will be able to:

• Situate themselves historically, culturally, and socially within the field of social studies;
• Formulate solidly grounded beliefs about teaching philosophies, policies, and practices;
• Explain different conceptions of democratic citizenship, multiculturalism, and patriotism in the context of real-world U.S. society and schools
• Recognize the relationships between teachers’ and students’ social identities and classroom pedagogies
• Create and explain social studies pedagogies that promote democratic citizenship
• Develop and implement self-reflexive strategies and practices that enable them to regard teaching and learning as on-going, dynamic processes
**Grading and Requirements**

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<td>Response Papers</td>
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<td>Project Proposal</td>
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<td>Individual Analysis</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
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**Required Reading:**

All readings for this course are in the course packet with the exception of Herbert Kleibard’s *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge), 2004, which can be purchased at the NYU bookstore or online.

**Class Format:**

This class will be conducted in both seminar format and in small groups. These formats will place strong emphasis on active, experiential learning. Please note that all students are expected to read thoroughly the assigned readings for the week and to come to class prepared to discuss the ideas and positions raised therein. Every member of the class is expected to play an active role in discussions and exercises, both as a willing participant and, when others are talking, as an engaged listener. My aim is to create an academic environment that is both safe and yet challenging for every member of the class, a place where students feel pushed to take intellectual risks and comfortable enough to take them willingly. Respect, cultural awareness, reflexivity, tolerance, and commitment are all necessary ingredients to building this type of classroom setting, as are intellectual rigor, analytical thinking, and careful preparation.

**Requirements for Written Work:**

All written work should be typed and double-spaced. Assignments will be collected at the beginning of class on the days they are due and will be marked down one letter grade for each calendar day that they are overdue, unless an extension has been cleared with me in writing in advance. Papers handed in after class has begun on the due-date will be counted as one day late. All written assignments will be evaluated both on form and on content. If you are concerned about the quality of your writing, please let me know before you hand in any written work to be graded.

**Weekly Responses:**

Each of you will be responsible for bringing three written questions or comments with you to class. I will collect these at the end of each class.

**Presentations:**

Each of you will be responsible for giving a short presentation on the week’s readings. This presentation should not be a summary of the reading but rather should offer some critical analysis or focused inquiry into specific aspects of the assigned reading. You should also present several questions to help guide our class discussion.
Final Project:
Your final project is a 10-15 page research paper on a historical topic of your choosing. This paper should examine a particular historic event, moment, or idea from several different perspectives using 5-10 sources. One or two of these sources should be primary sources. Your paper should offer both an analysis of this historic event while also devoting a portion of the paper to discussing how you might teach about this event or period in history.

Attendance:
All students are responsible for all the material covered in each class period. Absences due to religious holidays or other valid reasons should be cleared with me in advance, and the students in question should arrange with me to make up missed work. Please note that response papers and in-class assignments missed due to unexcused absences may not be made up. Students who accumulate three or more unexcused absences will receive an F for class participation.

ALL STUDENTS MUST COMPLY AT ALL TIMES WITH ALL ASPECTS OF NEW YORK UNIVERSITY’S CODE FOR ACADEMIC HONESTY

COURSE SCHEDULE

What does it mean to Teach Social Studies?
Jan 30 – Introduction to the Course

American Educational History and the Curriculum
Feb 6 – Herbert M. Kliebard, The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958, chapters 1-3

Curricular Inquiries: Creative Approaches to Teaching Social Studies
Feb 13 – Reading To Be Assigned

What has National Curricular Reform Looked Like? What Should it Look Like?
Feb 20 – Kliebard, chapters 4-6

Feb 27 – No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Executive Summary
Also: The Education Trust, “ESEA: Myths versus Realities: Answers to Common Questions about NCLB” and EITHER Stan Karp, “Bush Plan Fails Schools,” in Rethinking Schools (Fall 2001) OR Wayne Au, “No Child Left Untested: The NCLB Zone,” in Rethinking Schools (Fall 2004)

Creating Standards: Who, What, Where, and When?
March 6 – “Rescuing Our Schools from ‘Tougher Standards,’” http://www.alfiekohn.org,
Where Does Social Studies Fit In? How Might the Social Studies Classroom be an Instrument for Social Change?

March 20 – NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

Identity Politics and the Social Studies Curriculum

How do Race, Class, and Gender Shape School Experiences – for Students and for Teachers?

What Does it Mean to Teach for Civic Engagement?

Similarities and Distinctions in the Education for Democracy, Moral Education, and Character Education Movements
April 17 – William Damon, “Good? Bad? Or None of the Above? The Time-Honored, Unavoidable Mandate to Teach Character,” in Education Next (3/22/05); and Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne (2003), “Reconnecting Education to Democracy: Democratic Dialogues,” in Phi Delta Kappan

Making Choices: Why Do We Teach?

Making Choices: How to Teach?

May 15 – FINAL PROJECTS DUE