

**George Mason University  
College of Education and Human Development  
Secondary Education Program**

EDCI 597.A02– **Special Topics in Education: Teaching & Learning Difficult History**  
3 Credits, June 1-July 3, 2020  
Online, Asynchronous Sessions

**Faculty**

Name: Dr. Mark Helmsing  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 4:30 to 5:30 on Blackboard and also by appointment  
Office Location: Thompson Hall 1801 [note that Thompson Hall is currently closed]  
Office Phone: Not available during Summer 2020  
Email Address: [mhelmsin@gmu.edu](mailto:mhelmsin@gmu.edu)  
WebEx Address: Available upon request  
Zoom Address: Available upon request

**Prerequisites/Corequisites**

None.

**University Catalog Course Description**

Provides advanced study on selected topic or emerging issue in American or international education. May be repeated for credit with GSE permission. Offered by School of Education. May be repeated within the degree.

**Course Overview**

In this Masters level course, students will explore the issues, concepts, and problems of practice related to what is called *difficult history*, the study of traumatic historical events and moments “that reverberate in the present and surface fundamental disagreements over who we are and what values we hold” (Gross & Terra, 2018). Difficult histories can be upsetting, infuriating, shameful, and painful for both learners and teachers encountering the narratives, artifacts, and legacies that help constitute their history. This course equips students with the abilities to (1) appraise the importance of teaching difficult histories; (2) evaluating curricular resources and pedagogical strategies to teach difficult histories; (3) support the teaching and learning of historical thinking skills with specific difficult history curriculum content; and (4) creating instructional materials for the teaching of difficult histories.

**Course Delivery Method**

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using an asynchronous format via Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on June 1, 2020.

**Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.**

### *Technical Requirements*

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see: [https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support#supported-browsers](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers)

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see:

[https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems)

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students will need a headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
  - Windows Media Player: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
  - Apple Quick Time Player: [www.apple.com/quicktime/download/](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)

### *Expectations*

- Course Week:  
Because asynchronous courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week will start on Monday and finish on Sunday. Our course week will begin on the day that our synchronous meetings take place as indicated on the Schedule of Classes, June 1, 2020.
- Log-in Frequency:  
Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least two times per week.
- Participation:  
Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.

- Technical Competence:  
Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues:  
Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- Workload:  
Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- Instructor Support:  
Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues with the instructor via web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- Netiquette:  
The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.* Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.
- Accommodations:  
Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

### **Learner Outcomes or Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. appraise the importance of teaching difficult history
2. evaluate curricular resources and pedagogical strategies to teach difficult history
3. support the teaching and learning of historical thinking skills with specific difficult history curriculum content
4. create instructional materials for the teaching of difficult history
5. interpret the research literature on teaching and learning difficult history

### **Professional Standards**

Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following professional standards for educators established by the National Council for the Social Studies:

- Standard 1. Content Knowledge
- Standard 2. Application of Content Through Planning
- Standard 3. Design and Implementation of Instruction and Assessment
- Standard 4. Social Studies Learners and Learning
- Standard 5. Professional Responsibility and Informed Action

### Course Texts

(note that all required texts will be available on Blackboard as either .pdf or .epub format to freely download from Mason Libraries)

- Alter, G.T. (2017). Discovery, engagement, and transformation: Learning about gender and sexual diversity in social education. *Social Education*, 81(5), 279-285.
- Blight, D.W. (2001). *Race and reunion: The Civil War in American memory*. Harvard University Press. (selected chapters)
- Brundage, W.F. (2005). *The Southern past: A clash of race and memory*. Harvard University Press. (selected chapters)
- Cruz, B.C., & Bailey, R.W. (2017). An LGBTQ+ inclusive social studies: Curricular and instructional considerations. *Social Education*, 81(5), 279-285.
- Doppen, F. H. (2000). Teaching and learning multiple perspectives: The atomic bomb. *The Social Studies*, 91(4), 159-169.
- Finkelstein, A. (2020). Lost cause “ocean to ocean:” Memory, space, and the Jefferson Davis Highway in the West. In M. M. Bender & K. S. Szlezák (Eds.), *Contested commemoration in U.S. history: Diverging public interpretations* (pp. 73-93). Routledge.
- Gibson, M. T. & Reich, G.A. (2017). Confederate monuments: Heritage, racism, anachronism, and who gets to decide? *Social Education*, 81(6), 356-362.
- Gross, M.H. & Terra, L. (2018). What makes difficult history difficult? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(8), 51-56.
- Hubbell, B. (2019, February 9). Less scrambling, more reflecting: Unpacking simulations of imperialism and how we can better teach about the Berlin Conference, the European Colonization of Africa, and African resistance. *Liberating Narratives*: <http://www.liberatingnarratives.com/2019/02/09/less-scrambling/>.
- King, L.J. & Woodson, A.N. (2017). Baskets of cotton and birthday cakes: Teaching slavery in social studies classrooms. *Social Studies Education Review*, 6(1), 1-18.
- Kreikemeier, A. (2020). Whose heritage? U.S. history textbooks, American exceptionalism, and hispanophobia. In M. M. Bender & K. S. Szlezák (Eds.), *Contested commemoration in U.S. history: Diverging public interpretations* (pp. 131-148). Routledge.
- Mayo, J.B. (2018). Physical and symbolic violence imposed: The difficult histories of lesbian, gay and trans-people. In T. Epstein & C.L. Peck (Eds.), *Teaching and learning difficult histories in international contexts: A critical sociocultural approach* (pp. 209-221). Routledge.
- Morris, A. (2019, January 22). What is settler-colonialism? *Teaching Tolerance Magazine*.
- Pyle, K.B. (2015). Hiroshima and the historians: History as relative truth. *Asia-Pacific Review*, 22(2), 14-27.
- Reich, G.A. (2020). Monumental refraction: Monuments, identity, and historical consciousness. *Historical Encounters*, 7(1), 1-23.

- Salinas, C., Blevins, B., & Sullivan, C.C. (2012). Critical historical thinking: When official narratives collide with *other* narratives. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 14(1), 18-27.
- Seixas, P. & Peck, C. (2004). Teaching historical thinking. In A. Sears & I. Wright (Eds.), *Challenges and prospects for Canadian social studies* (pp. 109-117). Pacific Educational Press.
- Shear, S.B., Knowles, R.T., Soden, G.J., & Castro, A.J. (2015). Manifesting destiny: Re/presentations of indigenous peoples in K-12 U.S. History standards. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 43(1), 68-101.
- Southern Poverty Law Center (2018). *Teaching hard history: American slavery*. Southern Poverty Law Center.
- Stanton, C. (2019). “Now you can’t just do nothing”: Unsettling the settler self within social studies education. *Social Education*, 83(5), 282-289.
- Teaching Tolerance (2019). *Teaching hard history: A 6-12 framework for teaching American slavery*. Southern Poverty Law Center.
- Totten, S. & Feinberg, S. (Eds.). *Essentials of Holocaust education: Fundamental issues and approaches*. Routledge. (selected chapters).
- Varga, B.A., Beck, T.A., & Thornton, S.J. (2019). Celebrating Stonewall at 50: A culturally geographic approach to introducing LGBT themes. *The Social Studies*, 110(1), 33-42.

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time via the course Blackboard page.

- **Assignments and/or Examinations**

1. Introductory Video Post (10 points)

Students will record a 5-minute presentation introducing themselves to each other in the course. The video will be posted on Blackboard for other classmates to view.

2. Curriculum Artifacts (7 x 10 points = 70 points)

Students will create an artifact for Modules 2 through 8 that synthesizes the assigned content for that module. The artifact should explain how the content shapes the student’s pedagogical content knowledge and provides examples of ideas the student has for their future history teaching demonstrating their new knowledge.

3. Final Reflective Video Post (20 points)

Students will record a 10-minute presentation reflecting upon the course’s themes and synthesizing responses to prompts for this video post. The video will be posted on Blackboard for other classmates to view and provide feedback.

- **Other Requirements**

1. Students are expected to read all assignments, actively participate in all course activities, and to treat one another with respect, both in class and on-line.
2. Students can participate in a weekly synchronous “check-in discussion” session on Thursdays from 4:30 to 5:30 held on Blackboard Collaborate Ultra (posted office hour time)
3. All papers must be typed and formatted according to the *APA Manual of Style, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed.*

- **Grading**

Grading Scale:

A	95-100%	B+	87-89	C	70-79%
A-	90-94%	B	83-86%	F	Below 70%
		B-	80-82%	IN:	Incomplete

**Due Dates**

Introductory Video Post	10 points	June 7 by 11:59 pm
Curriculum Analysis Post 1	10 points	June 7 by 11:59 pm
Curriculum Analysis Post 2	10 points	June 14 by 11:59 pm
Curriculum Analysis Post 3	10 points	June 14 by 11:59 pm
Curriculum Analysis Post 4	10 points	June 21 by 11:59 pm
Curriculum Analysis Post 5	10 points	June 21 by 11:59 pm
Curriculum Analysis Post 6	10 points	June 28 by 11:59 pm
Curriculum Analysis Post 7	10 points	June 28 by 11:59 pm
Final Reflective Video Post	20 points	July 2 by 11:59 pm

**Class Schedule**

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

Module Number	Module Topic	Assigned Readings
<b>Week 1: June 1-June 7</b>		
1	What is Difficult History? What is Historical Thinking?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gross &amp; Terra (2018)</li> <li>• Salinas, Blevins, &amp; Sullivan (2012)</li> <li>• Seixas &amp; Peck (2004)</li> </ul>
2	Historical Thinking Skill 1- Establishing Historical Significance when Teaching the Holocaust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Totten &amp; Feinberg (2016)</li> <li>• Sample lesson plans for teaching the Holocaust</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2: June 8-June 14</b>		
3	Historical Thinking Skill 2- Using Primary Source Evidence when Teaching American Slavery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King &amp; Woodson (2017)</li> <li>• Explore <i>The 1619 Project</i> website</li> <li>• Teaching Hard History Key Concept Videos</li> <li>• Teaching Hard History Framework</li> <li>• Teaching Hard History Inquiry Design Models</li> </ul>
4	Historical Thinking Skill 3 – Identifying Continuity & Change when Teaching about the History of the Confederacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blight (2001)</li> <li>• Brundage (2005)</li> <li>• Finkelstein (2020)</li> <li>• Gibson &amp; Reich (2017)</li> <li>• Reich (2020)</li> </ul>

Week 3: June 15-June 21		
5	Historical Thinking Skill 4 – Analyzing Cause and Consequence when Teaching about Settler Colonialism and Native American Genocide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kreikemeir (2020)</li> <li>• Morris (2019)</li> <li>• Shear et. al. (2015)</li> <li>• Stanton (2019)</li> <li>• Sample lesson plans for teaching about settler colonialism and Native American genocide</li> </ul>
6	Historical Thinking Skill 5 – Historical Perspective-Taking when Teaching about U.S. Imperialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hubbell (2019)</li> <li>• Listen to “How to Hide an Empire” podcast</li> <li>• Explore Spanish-American War Web Inquiry</li> <li>• Stanford History Education Group sample lesson plans related to imperialism</li> <li>• Choices Program Inquiry: <i>Beyond Manifest Destiny: America Enters the Age of Imperialism</i></li> </ul>
Week 4: June 22-June 28		
7	Historical Thinking Skill 6 – Ethical Dimensions of Historical Interpretations when Teaching the Bombing of Hiroshima & Nagasaki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doppen (2000)</li> <li>• Pyle (2015)</li> <li>• Watch <i>White Light &amp; Black Rain: Hiroshima &amp; Nagasaki</i> (2007)</li> <li>• Choices Program Inquiry: <i>Ending the War Against Japan: Science, Morality, and the Atomic Bomb</i></li> </ul>
8	Historical Thinking Skill 7 – Periodization & Temporality when Teaching Stonewall, ACT UP, & LGBTQ+ History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayo (2018)</li> <li>• Varga, Beck, &amp; Thornton (2019)</li> <li>• Alter (2017)</li> <li>• Cruz &amp; Bailey (2017)</li> <li>• <i>Teaching LGBT History: An Educator’s Guide</i></li> </ul>
Week 5: June 29-July 5		
9	Course Reflection & Imagining Next Steps for Teaching Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>

### Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>

### Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

### GMU Policies and Resources for Students

#### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/> ).

- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

#### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

#### **Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:**

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.**