

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Secondary Education (SEED)

EDUC 597.B01/EDCI 597.B02

Special Topics in Education: Teaching & Learning Difficult History

3 Credits, June 7-July 31

Mondays and Wednesdays

4:30 to 7:10 PM

Horizon Hall 4010, Fairfax Campus

Faculty

Name: Dr. Mark Helmsing
Office Hours: Mondays/Tuesdays/Wednesdays/Thursdays 3:00 to 4:00 PM
Also by appointment to meet after class on Mondays and Wednesdays
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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 SOE permission. Offered by School of Education. May be repeated within the degree.

Course Overview

In this graduate 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 using a face-to-face lecture format.

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

Required Texts

(note that all required texts will be available on Blackboard as either .pdf or .epub format to freely download from Mason Libraries; readings are subject to change with advance notice)

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, L. (2018). Ethical judgments about the difficult past: Observations from the classroom. In M. Gross & L. Terra (Eds.), *Teaching and learning the difficult past: Comparative perspectives* (pp. 81-116).
- 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.
- Kitamura, H. & Stoddard, J. (2018). The bomb and beyond: Teaching nuclear issues through popular culture texts. *Social Education*, 82(3), 149-150, 151-154.
- 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.
- Levy, S.A. & Sheppard, M. (2018). “Difficult knowledge” and the Holocaust in history education. In S.A. Metzger & L.M. Harris (Eds.), *The Wiley International Handbook of History Teaching and Learning* (pp. 365-387). Wiley.
- Manfra, M. M. and Stoddard, J. (2008). Powerful and authentic digital media and strategies for teaching about genocide and the Holocaust. *The Social Studies*, 99(6), 260–64.
- Marcus, A.S., Metzger, S.A., Paxton, R.J., & Stoddard, J.D. (2018). *Teaching history with film: Strategies for secondary social studies* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Marks, M.J. (2017). Teaching the Holocaust as a cautionary tale. *The Social Studies*, 108(4), 129-135.

- 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 Blackboard or email if noted.

- **Assignments and/or Examinations**

1. Curriculum Analysis Papers (2 at 25 points = 50 points; 50% of final grade)

Students will choose two of the nine course topics to analyze in depth by writing a paper that discusses the contexts, controversies, and ideas associated with the selected course topic in relation to teaching middle and/or high school social studies. The paper will discuss ideas the student has for how they will plan and design instruction around the topic in their classrooms and discuss a minimum of two resources selected for use about teaching this topic. Each paper should be approximately 6 to 8 double-spaced pages.

2. Teaching Demonstrations (2 at 25 points = 50 points; 50% of final grade)

Students will prepare a 10-15 minute activity to lead with the class on a topic selected to correspond with the student's chosen day for teaching. The student will submit a written outline and discussion of the teaching demonstration activity to be submitted on the day of the teaching demonstration. The two teaching demonstration topics *must be different from* the two topics chosen for the curriculum analysis.

- **Other Requirements**

Full attendance and participation to each class session is expected. If a student must arrive late, leave early, or miss a class session, the need should be discussed with the instructor. Missing multiple class sessions may result in an Incomplete and/or failing grade.

- **Grading**

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

Professional Dispositions

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

Class Schedule

Wednesday June 8	Introduction to Course and Classmates
Monday, June 13	Theories and concepts of difficult history (ASYNCHRONOUS)
Wednesday, June 15	Strategies and approaches for handling sensitive curriculum
Monday, June 20	No class in observance of Juneteenth (University Closed)
Wednesday, June 22	Conquest, colonization, and Christopher Columbus (Topic 1)

Monday, June 27	Slavery and enslavement in the United States (Topic 2)
Wednesday, June 29	The Trail of Tears and genocide of Indigenous peoples (Topic 3)
Monday, July 4	No class in observance of Independence Day (University Closed)
Wednesday, July 6	Whose war? The U.S. Civil War and Lost Cause histories (Topic 4)
Monday, July 11	Immigration, nativism, and U.S. imperialism (Topic 5)
Wednesday, July 13	The Holocaust, antisemitism, and Jewish backlash (Topic 6)
Monday, July 18	The Second Reconstruction and Black Liberation (Topic 7)
Wednesday, July 20	Stonewall, AIDS, and LGBTQ resistance and rebellion (Topic 8)
Monday, July 25	From difficulty to joy: Culturally Sustaining History Education
Wednesday, July 27	Where do we go from here? Final course session

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

Your First Curriculum Analysis Topic (Circle one)

Topic 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Due Date:

Your Second Curriculum Analysis Topic (Circle one)

Topic 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Due Date:

Your First Teaching Demonstration Topic (Circle one)

Topic 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Due Date:

Your Second Teaching Demonstration Topic (Circle one)

Topic 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Due Date:

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 <https://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 VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments> . Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- 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, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, 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 or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

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