

**Practical Issues in Secondary Social Studies
Education 2331/2335/4135**

Professor Michael Clapper
Course Meeting Time: Th6:15-8:55
Course Location: BE301
Office Hours: M3:30-4:30 W5:15-6:15
Th5:15-6:15

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My goal for the semester is to make sure that you are not a teacher who provokes the following reaction:

“You teach history? I hated history.”

Or

“History was soooo boring.”

Our discipline has long been characterized by chalk and talk, by spray and pray; ideas about teaching history are often predicated upon the star quality of the teacher. *Boston Public* or *Stand by Me* notwithstanding, it’s impossible to deliver a perfect class every day. What I hope to accomplish, then, is a course where you learn how to shape a day, a week, and then a unit, in a way that allows for maximum student learning.

Let me say one thing from the beginning: I believe in theory. I believe that it is important for teachers to know **why** it is they are doing what they are doing. I believe teachers have a responsibility to be deeply aware of their own pedagogy and its impact on students. Each of us has experienced the droning monotone followed by the deadly exam. That’s one popular theory of teaching. I hope that by the end of the semester you will have a new notion of what successful teaching can be.

While this is a methods course, much of our time will be spent developing an understanding of what you believe about “doing” history. Much of your reading will focus on shifts in American historiography; much of our class will be devoted to bringing those changes to life in your classroom. I believe that too many social studies teachers walk into their classrooms with a poor understanding of the ways historians work and as a result, they have no way of bringing a class to life. Furthermore, an understanding of how Americans perceive history, and how different generations have approached teaching, will help you figure out your own practice.

The course is set up in three distinct blocks. The first third of the course will be devoted to preparing daily lessons. We will examine the steps necessary to make sure that each day has a chance to be successful. The second third of the course will be devoted to creating a week of connected activities. Many teachers fall into the trap of the

disconnected days, where each day is totally independent of other work. Our final block will focus on the creation of unit plans.

Our class time together will be split as well. The opening portion of our class will center on what it means to be a teacher of social studies. Much of our time will be spent reflecting on the dilemmas confronting history teachers. How do we *include* everyone? How do we *cover* everything? Who should determine what a student learns and what a teacher teaches? We will devote the second half of our period to the ways in which these ideas help create a successful classroom. At no point will I give you a raft of activities that may or may not work; what I hope you discover is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that allows for the successful creation of good activities and assessments.

Required Texts:

- Barton, Keith C., and Linda S. Levstik. Teaching history for the common good. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.
- Carr, Edward Hallett. What is history? New York,: Vintage Books, 1961.
- Linenthal, Edward Tabor, and Tom Engelhardt. History wars : the Enola Gay and other battles for the American past. 1st ed. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Co., 1996.
- Meyerowitz, Joanne J. History and September 11th, Critical perspectives on the past. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003.
- Wiggins, Grant P. Educative assessment : designing assessments to inform and improve student performance. 1st ed, The Jossey-Bass education series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Wineburg, Samuel S. Historical thinking and other unnatural acts : charting the future of teaching the past, Critical perspectives on the past. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

Coursepack of Readings (not available yet but not needed until week three)

- Trioullot, Michel Rolphe, Chapter One of Silencing the Past. Ch. 1.
- Stokes-Brown, Cynthia, History Workshop for High Schoolers, Ch 2,3, and 6.
- Holt, Thomas, Thinking Historically: Narrative, Imagination, and Understanding.

On-line Readings (found on blackboard course site)

- Exchange between Jon Wiener and Diane Ravitch (slate.com)
- Robert Stahl, "Essential Elements of Cooperative Learning"
- Simon Schama. "Clio Has a Problem"
- Sean Wilentz, "The Past is Not a Process"
- Christopher Hitchens, "Goodbye to all thought-Why Americans Are Not Taught History?"

Assessments

(1) Unit Plan: At the end of the semester, you will each present a unit plan to the entire class. This unit plan will include the day-to-day plans as well as the assessments you will use to measure student learning. The plan should describe everything you would need to conduct a class for a month: the assigned readings and other audio/visual that you plan on showing, copies of each assessment, and any other relevant materials. During the first week of class you will rank your preferences for which era of American history that you would like to create a unit plan. **DUE: A lengthy presentation of this unit will occur during the last two weeks of class. Final copy is due the date of our final exam.**

(2) Response Papers: Each of you will write 500 to 750 words each week addressing either the readings (group one) or your lab experiences (group two). I am not grading for anything other than completion. I believe that writing is one of the best ways to figure out what it is you think, and it's crucial to reflect on your teaching as time goes by. Sometimes the best planned lessons bomb while the thing you pulled together in the shower that morning turns out to foster the most amazing conversation. Each of you has a blog created for you on blackboard; click on assignments and you'll see it. Part of this assignment will also be to read each other's papers and leave occasional comments.

(3) Reflective Essay: This 2000 word essay is your chance to reflect on the theory vs. practice dilemma so often faced by teachers. The books we will read this semester should be incorporated into your essay. There is no hard format here, I merely ask you to consider some of the following questions:

1. What responsibilities do history teachers have?
2. How does your theory about teaching impact on your practice?
3. What are the dilemmas facing history teachers? How will you address them?
4. What makes a successful history teacher?

Due: April 26th

(4) Book Review: During the first third of the semester, you will read a recent synthesis from a period of American or World history you are particularly interested in teaching. I have gathered a list of potential texts. You will turn in a 3-4 page book report that outlines the key debates the author assesses from their era of study. I ask you to do this for one reason – the running disputes of historians, anthropologists, sociologists will spark similar interest for your students. Are the 1960s truly a radical era? Did humans evolve in one place or in several regions? What causes violent revolutions? We will collect and post these book reports on the class website, so that you will have a resource base to draw upon as you make your way into your teaching career. **Due: February 8th**

(5) Book Proposal: Bedford St. Martin's published a wonderful series of books entitled "The Bedford Series in History and Culture." These slim volumes feature an interpretive essay and a collection of relevant documents from a wide range of topics in American history. After looking over their titles, you will put together a proposal for a new volume in this series. The proposal needs to include a 3-4 page introductory essay and a tentative list of some of the documents you would like to include. **Due: March 2nd.**

(6) Contributions and Participation I expect each of you to be present each week. I expect each of you to be reading each other's response papers and lab reports. I expect you to facilitate class once during the course of the semester.

PART ONE OF THE COURSE

Section One of the Course: For these four weeks, we are going to consider the options available for setting up each day in a social studies classroom. We will travel from pre-class to daily assessment and consider the various ways a teacher can shape their classes.

Week One: What does it mean to be a Historian? January 22nd

- A: Class Expectations; Syllabus overview; Student Introductions
- B: The state of the profession: Presidential Addresses of the OAH 1960-

Readings for next week: E.H. Carr, What is History?

Week Two: The Historical Profession January 29th

- A: Brief Talk: “Flashpoints within the Historical Profession”
- B: Activity: Adopting Flashpoints to the High School Classroom
- C: Discussion of Readings (Instructor Led)

Readings for next week: Exchange between Wiener and Ravitch, Schama, Wilentz, Hitchens

Week Three: What does it mean to teach “Social Studies?” February 5th

- A: Brief Talk: “History vs. Social Studies
- B: Activity: Debate—Social Studies vs. History
- C: Discussion of Readings

Readings: (history) Trouillot (coursepack)
(education) Wineburg, Intro, Ch 1-3.

Week Four: Managing a Day: Engagement February 12th

- A: Brief Talk: “Hooking Students”
- B: Activity: Four units, four group supplied hooks
- C: Discussion of Readings

Here we look at approaches to ‘hooking’ students, to grabbing and holding the initial excitement that all students possess. We’ll also consider ways to focus student attention onto the proposed area of study. We’ll spend a portion of this class figuring out ways to extend that engagement. How can opening classes help to make sense of the coming unit? How do you mesh daily activities with the entire week? How do you help students discover their interest in topics? How do you connect the boundless energy children possess with your curriculum?

Readings for Next Week: (history) Wineburg, Ch 4-5
(education) Wiggins, Ch 1-3

Week Five: Managing a Day: Assessing a Day's Work February 19th

- A: Brief Talk: "Checking in with Students"
- B: Activity (pairs): assessing a student text
- C: Discussion of Readings

Who hasn't suffered through a pop quiz? Aren't there other, better ways to figure out if students are making progress? On the other hand, isn't it possible to design assessments that allow students to learn something from the process?

Readings for next week: Primary Source Docs in Meyerowitz, 223-262

PART TWO OF THE COURSE

Week Six: Student Week February 26th

- A: Brief Talk: "The Perfect Lesson?"
- B: Lesson Plans: Off of Meyerowitz documents
- C: Discussion of Readings

Each individual or group (depending on the size of the class) will design a single lesson to be presented to the class briefly. You will post copies of your lesson for the other students to discuss, reflect upon, or even...use.

Readings for next week: Holt (coursepack); Wiggins (Ch. 4-7)

Week Seven: Managing a Week Setting up a week March 5th

- A: Brief Talk: "Connecting the Days"
- B: Activity: TBA
- C: Discussion of Readings

The important thing about building an effective week is to ensure that the engagement produced by your pedagogy is matched by the quality of your content. We'll talk this week about how to design diverse lessons that ask students to use different skills.

Readings for next week: Meyerowitz (Intro, Hunt, Prados, Rosenberg, McAlister, Clark, Makdisi, Appleby) Wineburg, ch 6-8.

SPRING BREAK NO CLASS MARCH 12th

**Week Eight: Managing a Week Connecting the Days/ Short Term assessments
March 19th**

- A: Brief Talk "Getting Past the Quiz"
- B: Activity: TBA
- C: Discussion of Readings

The glue to your classes will be your short term assessments; it's the way you'll know if your students are progressing or whether you need to double back. Assessment, though, does not just mean quiz.

Readings for Next Class: Linenthal and Engelhardt, pp.1-139

Week Nine: March 26th Ways of Connecting

- A. Brief Talk: Modes of Connection
- B. Discussion of Readings

Readings for Next Class: On-line: Robert Stahl, "Essential Elements of Cooperative Learning"; Cynthia Stokes-Brown (Coursepack) Linenthal and Engelhardt 140-

PART THREE OF THE COURSE

Week Ten: Managing a Unit Cooperative Learning **April 2nd**

- A: Brief Talk: "Cooperative Learning"
- B: How to design a group (Instructor supplied topics)
- C: Discussion of Readings

This week, we will think and learn about ways of structuring short and long term group projects effectively. I find Jorgensen's notion of a history workshop to be a compelling approach, one readily adaptable to many different situations.

Readings for next week: Barton Ch 1-2 + Wiggins (Chapters 8-11)

Week Eleven: Managing a Unit Big Assessments **April 9th**

- A: Brief Talk: "The Big Things"
- B: Activity: How to scaffold a speech, a simulation, a drama, and a museum.
- C: Discussion of Readings

This week we will consider how to build projects that allow students to showcase diverse talents and how to evaluate them fairly. We'll also consider the forces at work in education that allow for so many badly constructed tests- after all, how closely do you really feel that the SAT predicted your performance as first year student?

Readings for Next Week: Barton 3-6;

Week Twelve: Setting up a School Year **April 16th**

- A: Brief Talk: "The Year"
- B: Essential Questions/Thematic Divisions
- C: Discussion of Readings

Readings for Next Week: Barton 7-12

Week Thirteen: **April 23rd**

- A: Brief Talk: Management
- B: Activity: Deliberative Forum
- C: Discussion of Readings

Week Fourteen (Last Class)	Final Portfolio Presentations	April 30th
A:	Student Presentations	
B:	Student Presentations	
C:	Discussion of Readings (Student Driven; Instructor Led)	

Note on Student Presentation Weeks

Rather than a week off, you should see these weeks as a way to integrate your thinking about these topics with your practice. To this end, each of you will be writing a short (1-page response) to the presenter -- a copy will go to me and to the person -- that offers thoughts, suggestions, compliments on their work. In addition, all of the lesson plans, the week plans and the final units will be available on-line on our class website. Password protected, you should consider this website a resource for your teaching career.

Class Requirements

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Attendance

*Because this class meets once a week, it is vitally important that you attend all sessions. If you know your schedule will not permit you to attend all classes, you should probably drop the course. If you miss the class for any reason, please submit a 750-1000 word reflection on the readings. To be honest, I'm not interested in the reasons why you're not here – I'm sure they're reasonable. Submit the essay within one week of your absence. Excessive absences (e.g. more than 2 absences) may result in a grade of "FA" (failure due to excessive absences.)

Tardiness

Students are expected to arrive for class on time. A combination of two occasions involving tardy arrivals or leaving class early will be counted as one class absence.

Cell Phones

Unless you might be needed in surgery, please keep your cell phones off.

Email

I will try and return all emails. Please allow me twenty four hours to respond. **You are responsible for checking your email on a regular basis as it is my primary mode of communication between classes.**

Academic Honesty

Saint Joseph's University has adopted and enforces an official academic honesty policy. Please review this policy in the catalog. Plagiarism is a key part of academic honesty and is always, always unacceptable. **ANY INCIDENCE OF PLAGIARISM WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE. THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Students with Disabilities: For those who have or think that you may have a disability (learning, physical or psychological), are encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities, Room 113, Science Center, 610-660-1774 or 610-660-1620 as early as possible in the semester. Accommodations can only be provided to student with current (within 3 years) documentation.

Students are encouraged to discuss their instructional and accommodation needs ("reasonable academic adjustments") with their professors early in the semester.