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ABSTRACT

A strong case can be made for increasing the hours of the social studies methods course from three to six semester hours. One of the major problems of secondary social studies classes is the unimaginative, unexciting, and predominant practice of transmitting unexamined and unquestioned facts and information to the students. Social studies education majors typically take from 45 to 60 hours of social science courses compared to 3 or 4 hours of social studies courses. This is an insufficient amount of time to help students to learn how to teach. The social studies methods course should be used to facilitate change and to help potential teachers learn current practices and concerns and learn and understand the theories that support social studies education. After years of effort, a teacher at a southern university won acceptance for a 6-hour course consisting of 2 sequential 3-hour courses. The two sets of course outlines are presented in an appendix. The first course relates to the definition and purpose of social studies education, recent research, trends and issues, and instructional approaches. The second course is designed to develop skills necessary for effective social studies classroom instruction. (KWL)

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CHALLENGING THE TREND:
EXPANDING THE SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION COURSE

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After a long five year effort, I was recently successful in gaining university acceptance of a six hour social studies course. I was fortunate. When I first arrived at this institution seven years ago, the social studies course was two semester hours. There are exceptions, but three semester hours is the standard number of hours required for a social studies education major - one course. For many laypersons and educators alike, one three hour social studies education course seems adequate, if not clearly sufficient. It isn't. Accepting one course as adequate or sufficient, offers either a scathing commentary of the social studies course (can't make a difference anyway), or constitutes a very misinformed and unrealistic perception about the teaching of secondary school social studies.

Increasing the number of social studies education hours runs counter to the prevailing attitude of many academicians and state officials. Influencing this attitude is the back-to-basics trend. The back-to-basics trend is interpreted by many individuals in many different ways. At the college or university level, the interpretation often means more basic content, i.e., a core curriculum. In social studies education, basic content is frequently interpreted as meaning more "social science" hours. Clearly, more social science hours would increase the knowledge and awareness of the burgeoning social studies teacher. However, as it now exists in most colleges and universities, the comparison of social science courses (45-60) hours to social studies courses (3 hours) is highly disproportionate. When the critics attempt to identify the source of ill-prepared social studies teachers, they often overlook this imbalance of

social science courses to social studies education courses. And, ironically, it is often the social studies education course that reaps the criticism. Can one course possibly be that egregiously influential? I think not.

One of the major problems in secondary school social studies is the unimaginative, unexciting and dominant practice of transmitting unexamined and unquestioned facts and information to the student. The very respected and honored social science disciplines emerged from and receive their continuing validity from the process of fair and neutral inquiry. Yet many social science instructors are no more than living textbooks, handing down value-laden, and what appears to the student as fixed and unquestioned information. Evidently, many social scientists forget their inquire-based heritage as they walk from the library to the lecturn.¹ Do we want the incoming social studies teacher to simply emulate the social science instructor? There are certainly social science instructors worth emulating. However, the seeming preponderance of lifeless lectures and the widespread habit of transmitting "closed" information in college and university social science courses, combined with the persistently low student interest score received by our secondary school social studies students, suggests change is needed.

Curiously, the task of helping social studies education students learn or rather unlearn how to teach, becomes the responsibility of the three hour social studies education course. Again, can a three hour course accomplish the unlearning and learning task in addition to other important course expectations? The answer seems obvious. (In the long and frustrating defense of increasing the hours of the social studies education course, several colleagues, outside the college of education, made comments such as, "I'm not sure I really see any need for a methods course...I know I could

teach in the high school what I teach here at the university." This representative comment dramatically illustrates the misunderstanding of what is involved in good teaching at the secondary school level.)

The college or university social studies education course is largely responsible for the speciality training of social studies teachers. It is also one of the few formal vehicles used to facilitate change, the designated place for potential social studies teachers to learn what practices and concerns are current, learn about recent research findings and eventually progress into the profession with updated ideas and new knowledge. All this in three semester hours? Need we look further to identify at least one of the inhibiting factors to quality social studies instruction? I think not. To pretend or presuppose that a prospective social studies teacher can be adequately trained in three semester hours is unfair to the individual, the field of social studies education and the teaching profession. Surprisingly, such an unfair assumption seems widely accepted and/or tolerated by social studies educators themselves.²

Furthermore, the social studies education course traditionally includes only the words "materials and methods" in the title of the course. What about the theory that supports social studies education...the myriad issues of confronting social studies education...and what is social studies education? Shouldn't students preparing to teach social studies be privy to the issues and problems challenging their chosen field? After all, individuals who are entering the teaching field of social studies education eventually will define and, in a very real sense, become social studies education. How can such unprepared teachers possibly understand and make the necessary and critical decisions important to increasing the quality of social studies instruction?

To reiterate, the importance of the social sciences in preparing social studies teachers is clearly evident. But when judgements and decisions are made about improving the quality of social studies instruction, further investigation into the relationship between social studies, the social sciences and effective teaching seems warranted. The task of expanding the social studies education course is confronted both by a current and popular resistance to increasing the number of education hours, and by a misguided and naive evaluation of the challenges involved in educating social studies teachers.

In a three hour course, difficult decisions need to be made and selective neglect becomes a major responsibility of the social studies education instructor. The determination of what to include in the social studies education course ranges from the history of social studies education to the current trends in the field, and from rationale building to instructional evaluation. During the continuous semesters of my teaching the three hour social studies education course, it became very apparent that a position had to be taken concerning course emphasis. I gradually and consciously moved toward stressing the building of rationales for the teaching of social studies education. This decision meant less time could be given to the teaching of instructional methods and strategies. Although this is not the time to defend this decision, I feel confident it was the correct response. Regardless of the decision, it was a forced response. As both my students and I labored under the pressure and stress of trying to learn and teach all about social studies education within the confines of a three hour course, I soon realized a six hour course was needed. (Frequently, students remarked or complained that they had registered for a three hour course but were actually experiencing a five hour course.) Five years later, the sequential two, three hour social

studies education courses are in place. The following outline gives an overview of the two social studies education courses (see Appendix A).

These course outlines are not meant to be permanent or serve as ideal models for course expansion. Obviously, as the courses are experienced, appropriate and necessary changes will be made. The task of selective neglect goes on, even with the expanded six hour course. The first course is essentially new and is clearly not a "methods" course. Thus in a sense, it is a break from the traditional social studies education curriculum. Finding and properly utilizing the important role of field experiences in both courses is especially challenging. Nevertheless, the above overview presents a sincere and systematic effort towards increasing the quality of social studies teaching. The expanded course will hopefully have a real and positive impact on the prospective social studies teacher - the individual who can realistically effect the most change.³ Better educating our incoming social studies teachers seems to be an important and worthwhile goal. Expanding the social studies education course seems to be an appropriate and needed change to help pursue this important and worthwhile goal.

NOTES

1. Shirley H. Engle. "Defining the social studies: what is the problem?" The Social Studies Teacher, Part 1, Vol. 3, No. 4, March/April 1982; Part 2, Vol. 3, No. 5, May/June 1982. Dr. Engle offers an important discussion on the "teacher vs. the scholar" dilemma.
2. "Standards for the preparation of social studies teachers," Social Education, Vol. 48, No. 5, May 1984, 357-361.
3. Robert W. Cole, Jr. "Filling the chairs," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 65, No. 10, June 1984, 658. Dr. Cole, commenting on the many 1983 educational studies, stresses this point - that people, the teachers in the classroom are the individuals who can make the difference.

Course Number and Title: EDCI 3260 INTRODUCTION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES
(Prerequisite to EDCI 3265) Three credit hours.

General Course Purpose:

This course is designed to investigate the definition and purpose of social studies education, understand recent research, trends and issues related to social studies education and introduce instructional approaches used in social studies education. Appropriate field experiences may be required.

Course Outline:

- I. Investigating social studies education
 - A. Citizenship education in a Democratic Society
 - B. Citizenship Transmission
 - C. Social Science as Social Studies
 - D. Reflective Inquiry and Social Issues
- II. Understanding Recent Trends and Issues in Social Studies Education
 - A. Current Research
 - B. Curriculum Development
 - C. Values Education
 - D. Multiethnic Education
 - E. Global Education
 - F. Social History
 - G. Materials Evaluation
 1. Ethnocentrism
 2. Racism
 3. Sexism
- III. Determining the Partnership Between Content, Attitudes and Skills in Social Studies Education
 - A. Content-based Social Studies
 - B. Understanding the Partnership Approach
 - C. Meeting Basic Requirements
- IV. Introduction to Social Studies Instruction
 - A. Exposition
 - B. Concept Development
 - C. Values Education
 - D. Inquiry Learning

Course Number and Title: EDCI 3265 TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION
(EDCI 3260 is a prerequisite to this course)
Three credit hours.

General Course Purpose:

This course is designed to develop the skills necessary for effective social studies classroom instruction. Included are skills related to planning instruction, using instructional strategies, dealing with classroom issues and problems, and assessing student achievement and teacher performance. Field experiences will be required.

Course Outline:

- I. Understanding and making decisions about social studies instruction
 - A. Reviewing the Different Social Studies Definitions
 - B. Understanding the Various Approaches and Traditions
 - C. Matching Theory and Practice
- II. Planning for Classroom Instruction
 - A. The Learning Environment
 - B. Classroom Management
 - C. Planning Goals and Objective
 - D. Competency-based Instruction
 - E. Individualized Instruction
- III. Practicing Instructional Approaches
 - A. Expository Instruction
 - B. Concept Development
 - C. Values Education
 - D. Inquiry Learning
 1. Closed and Open Inquiry
 2. Social Issues Inquiry
- IV. Evaluation of Student Learning
 - A. Premise for Evaluating Student Performance
 - B. Constructing and Using Tests
 - C. Assessing Instruction
 - D. Self-Evaluation
- V. Improving the Use of Social Studies Textbooks
 - A. Updating the Outdated Textbook
 - B. Making the Textbook a More Effective Tool for the Less Able Reader
 - C. Evaluating Textbooks
- VI. Skill Development in Social Studies Education
 - A. Observation and Communication Skills
 - B. Questioning and Discussion Skills
 - C. Listening and Speaking Skills
 - D. Individual and Group Skills
- VII. Strategies for Dealing With Controversial Issues
 - A. Academic Freedom
 - B. Identifying Controversial Issues
 - C. Working With Controversy in the Classroom