

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

EDCI 597.B02– Special Topics in Education: Teaching & Learning Difficult History

3 Credits, June 1-July 3, 2021

Online, Asynchronous Sessions

Faculty

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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 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, 2021.

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 supported operation systems on different devices see:
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/

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. Readings are subject to change with instructor notice)

- Alter, G.T. (2017). Discovery, engagement, and transformation: Learning about gender and sexual diversity in social education. *Social Education*, 81(5), 279-285.
- Cruz, B.C., & Bailey, R.W. (2017). An LGBTQ+ inclusive social studies: Curricular and instructional considerations. *Social Education*, 81(5), 279-285.
- Duckels, G. (2020, March 24). (Re)turning to AIDS in queer young adult fiction. *The Polyphony: Conversations across the medical humanities*.
<https://thepolyphony.org/2020/03/24/returning-to-aids-in-queer-young-adult-fiction/>
- 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.
- Fleming, T., Darrow, R., & Oculito, R. (2019). Teaching LGBT History: An educator’s guide.
http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TeachingLGBTHistoryEducatorsGuide_14Feb2019.pdf
- 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.
- Helmsing, M., & Porter, A. (2021). Teaching the history of the AIDS Crisis: 40 years of HIV/AIDS in American life. *Teaching Social Studies*, 21(1), 11-17.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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*.
- Pearcy, M. (2021). There is no end to remembering: Teaching about memorials through truth and reconciliation. *Ohio Social Studies Review*, 57(1), 1-16.
- Reich, G.A. (2020). Monumental refraction: Monuments, identity, and historical consciousness. *Historical Encounters*, 7(1), 1-23.
- 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).

Course Performance Evaluation

- **Assignments and/or Examinations**

1. Lesson Plans with Written Annotation (5x 10 points = 50 points)

Students will create a lesson plan for each of the five modules that incorporates new understandings and knowledge about the difficult history topic aligned to address specific content and skills outlined in the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). Each lesson plan will be accompanied by a 500-word Written Annotation discussing how the content of the module informed the framing and design of the lesson plan.

2. Teaching Video (5x 10 points = 50 points)

Students will create a teaching video (approximately ten minutes) that showcases the student teaching a difficult history concept related to the module. The video will showcase a component or segment from the lesson plan created for that module.

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

- **Grading**

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**

1. All assignments are due by 8:00 am each Monday over the following five Mondays. No late work can be accepted without prior written permission.
2. The official course end date is Saturday, July 3. Due to the Independence Day weekend, and providing an equal amount of days for each module, the final module can be completed as late as 8:00 am Monday, July 5. However, it can be completed sooner if the student wishes to complete all course content by the posted course end date of July 3.

Before 8:00 am June 7: Reflection Video #1, Lesson Plan #1, & Teaching Video #1

Before 8:00 am June 14: Reflection Video #2, Lesson Plan #2, & Teaching Video #2

Before 8:00 am June 21: Reflection Video #3, Lesson Plan #3, & Teaching Video #3

Before 8:00 am June 28: Reflection Video #4, Lesson Plan #4, & Teaching Video #4

Before 8:00 am July 5: Reflection Video #5, Lesson Plan #5, & Teaching Video #5

Class Schedule

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

Module	Topic	Readings
Week 1: June 1-June 7		
1	Teaching and Learning Difficult History on the Holocaust	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gross & Terra (2018) 2. Gibson (2018) 3. Totten & Feinberg (2016) 4. Levy & Sheppard (2018) 5. Manfra & Stoddard (2008) 6. Marks (2017)
Week 2: June 8-June 14		
2	Teaching and Learning Difficult History on enslavement and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. King & Woodson (2017) 2. Explore <i>The 1619 Project</i> website 3. Teaching Hard History Key Concept Videos 4. Teaching Hard History Framework 5. Teaching Hard History Inquiry Design Models
Week 3: June 15-June 21		
3	Teaching and Learning Difficult History on Settler Colonialism and Native American Genocide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kreikemeir (2020) 2. Morris (2019) 3. Shear et. al. (2015) 4. Stanton (2019)
Week 4: June 22-June 28		
4	Teaching and Learning Difficult History on the Civil War and Confederate Monuments in Virginia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finkelstein (2020) 2. Gibson & Reich (2017) 3. Reich (2020) 4. Percy (2021)
Week 5: June 29-July 5		
5	Teaching and Learning the Difficult History of the AIDS Crisis in the United States	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Helmsing & Porter (2021) 2. Duckels (2021) 3. Cruz & Bailey (2017) 4. Felming et. al. (2019)

Professional Dispositions

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

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