The POINT!

E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators
Vol. 12 No. 4 April 2019

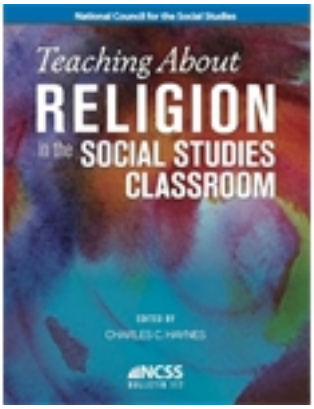
Teaching about Religion in the Social Studies Classroom

NCSS Bulletin 117. 248 pp., 2019. Edited by Charles C. Haynes

The study of religion is essential for understanding the past and present, and critical for global citizenship in a religiously diverse country and world. This book provides advice, recommendations, and resources to help social studies educators know what to teach about religion and how to do it.

The U.S. Supreme Court has made clear that teaching about religion is constitutional in public schools, as long as the approach is academic, not devotional. The contributors to this book offer guidelines for classroom instruction that is both constitutionally and academically sound. They clarify the First Amendment issues that impact teachers and schools, and emphasize that the study of religion in schools is an essential part of a good education.

NCVSS has provided a great guide for teaching about religion in a social studies classroom. Years ago, I faced this problem.



As a world cultures teacher, I faced the task of introducing students to ideas and customs with which they were not familiar. The variety of religious beliefs around the world offered quite a challenge. In most classes there were students who saw any religion other than the one to which they belonged as superstitious nonsense. Then there was the student who stated that religion and superstition were one and the same. This student prompted an opening for discussion. If religion and superstition are both the same, why do we have two words? The discussion led to an exercise that could show the difference between the two words.

The class was asked to make a list of every superstitious practice they could think of. Each student was to name one common superstitious act or practice which would be written on the board. This got everyone involved as each and every student named a superstitious act or practice. Everyone participated. When this list was finished, the class was asked to make a list of practices or actions that were deemed to be religious.

Religious practices included prayer, commandments, charity, and church attendance. Each of the these practices were examined closely by finding examples in wording of the commandments and prayers.

Noted were the the wordings of prohibitions or avoidances and prayers. **Thou** shalt not… Bless **us**… Let **us** pray… Help **us**… **We** ask..

When this list was completed, a question arose. Comparing the two lists, who is to get the benefit of the act that is performed or the belief?. Rabbits foot? Horseshoe? Coin? Black cat? Walking under a ladder? The individual performing the act is the beneficiary.

When religious acts were examined, who is restricted? Who is to be the beneficiary? Superstitious acts were selfish while religious acts seemed to be all inclusive or unselfish.

Religions formed to benefit the group and insure that the group would survive.

While this exercise was originally developed for a junior high school class in the 1960s it was later used in world cultures classes in high school and shared with some college sociology and history instructors.

Leo West

Soldiers & Sailors Hall!

Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum houses a vast collection of primary and secondary documents and military artifacts. It is their mission to promote the use of these educational items and create an understanding for all groups who visit the museum. They provide a rich learning experience for all people by exploring the deeds and sacrifices of ordinary citizens during extraordinary circumstances.

The Education Dept. 412.621.4253 Tim Neff x 219
http://www.soldiersandsailorshall.org/education.html

Apply for a FREE Summer Institute Today!

Teachers from all over the U.S. travel to participate in ICS's two-day intensive professional development events on "Teaching the Arab-Israeli Conflict with Primary Sources." They return to their classrooms with the pedagogical content knowledge and curricular resources they need to effectively teach this challenging topic and to foster the development of their students as global citizens.

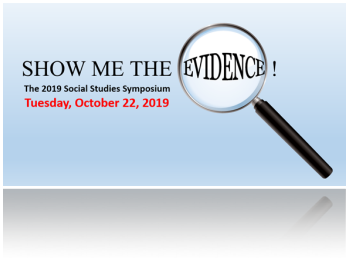
The 2019 Summer Institutes will be held in **Frisco, TX (June 3-4); Kansas City, KS (June 3-4); and King of Prussia, PA (June 19-20). Each participant will receive a stipend of $250 for attending.** Space is limited

Can't attend? Learn with ICS free ONLINE

ICS also offers an online professional development seminar on "Teaching the Arab-Israeli Conflict & Peace Process" that is **free, self-paced, and video-based**. Upon completion, participants receive a certificate for **five professional development hours.** **REGISTER HERE**

Second Biennial AIU Social Studies Symposium

Show Me The Evidence



I am excited to announce the date for the second biennial **Social Studies Symposium** at the *Allegheny Intermediate Unit*! Stay tuned for more information but please save the date for the morning of Tuesday, **October 22, 2019**. Our last symposium in 2017 totaled nearly 200 K-12 educators and 20 partners from around the region. This symposium is **free** for all so please plan to have your organization host a table to share your Social Studies offerings. Please contact me if you have any questions.

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Curriculum, Instruction, & Professional Education

We speak of educating our children. Do we know that our children also educate us? Lydia Sigourney, poet

The Point

For
Western Pennsylvania
Social Studies Educators
EDITORS
Leo R. West
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***The Point* is the**
e-newsletter
of the former WPCSS
issued monthly via e-mail.
WPCSS was a non-profit 501c organization dedicated to promoting the teaching and learning of social studies in Western Pennsylvania

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Opinion: Students need 14 years of education

Instead of emphasizing free college, politicians and advocates should embrace the idea that "14 is the new 12," says Anthony Carnevale, director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Emphasizing 14 years of education establishes that workers often need more than a high-school diploma, but less than a four-year degree, he asserts in this commentary.

The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (3/4)

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Educator: Comic books support struggling readers

Florida middle-school literacy coach Nicole Jobin plans to use comic books to help struggling middle-school readers build skills. The illustrations in comics help stimulate older struggling readers who need more visual information for reading comprehension, said Jobin, who has used comics in the past to help English-language learners.

WFTS-TV (Tampa, Fla.) (3/7

How to teach students to paraphrase

Students should learn to paraphrase to avoid copying -- or plagiarizing -- and to develop key literary skills, Jennifer Davis Bowman, an adjunct professor of education, writes. Bowman shares several tools to help teach paraphrasing, including prompts that help students check their work. Edutopia online (3/4)

Map: Where Have There Been Teacher Strikes and Protests?

Between 2018 and 2019, teachers organized large-scale strikes and labor actions in more than a dozen states and big cities. See the teacher activism hotspots on this map. Read more.

These Governors Are Calling for Teacher Pay Raises

Amid threatened teacher strikes and budget surpluses, more than 20 governors so far this year have recommended that their state boost teachers' pay, according to an *Education Week* analysis of State of the State addresses. Read more.

Listen to Native People': What K-12 Curricula Leave Out (Q&A)

Educators still have a lot to learn from the now-infamous videos of Covington Catholic High School students, says Rebecca Nagle. Read more.

I never did understand the trick of doing things like you were "supposed to."
Karen Uhlenbeck, mathematician, professor, 1st female winner of the Abel Prize (2019)

Pa. students learn history from Holocaust survivor

WFMZ-TV (Allentown, Pa.) (2/11)

ALLENTOWN, Pa. - Middle school students in Allentown have spent the last few weeks studying the Holocaust.

They learned why that study is so important Monday.

Allentown middle school students eagerly surrounded Marion Blumenthal Lazan.

"It was a very good feeling, it meant that I reached them," Lazan said.

"When we get older we can tell our kids we hugged a part of history," student Christopher Reiss said.

Students learn how social movements have changed history

Students at one New Hampshire high school are learning about the changes brought about by social movements such as the fight for civil rights. The course also explores the role of social media in modern movements, especially in the "Never Again" campaign started by the student survivors of the Parkland, Fla., school shooting.

Concord Monitor (N.H.) (tiered subscription model) (2/10)

Art helps Ark. students learn about Islam

A class of Arkansas high-school students learned about Islam by interviewing community members and creating art projects for an exhibit. Students also wrote a one-page statement about their work and what they learned in the Advanced Placement World History course.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (Little Rock) (free registration) (2/11)

Survey finds poor understanding of US history

Four out of 10 Americans could pass a US citizenship exam and possess a basic understanding of US history, according to a survey by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. The highest passing rate was among residents of Vermont, 53% of whom passed the exam, while Texas ranked 40th among the states, and data show that nationally just 27% of people younger than age 45 showed a basic understanding of US history.

The Greenville News (S.C.) (tiered subscription model) (2/15), The Burlington Free Press (Vt.) (tiered subscription model) (2/15), KYTX-TV (Tyler, Texas) (2/20)

Alexa, can you help students learn?

Some teachers are using voice-activated devices, such as Alexa, in the classroom to boost engagement, and help students develop listening and speaking skills. Patrick Hales, an assistant professor of education at South Dakota State University, who has studied the use of the devices in education, says they are tools for the classroom, but they do not replace teachers.

District Administration magazine (2/2019)

Truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.
-Flannery O'Connor, writer (25 Mar 1925-1964

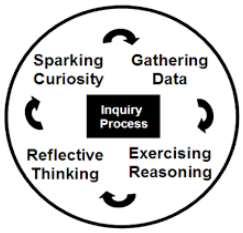
Teacher sets up mock classroom economy

Daily Hampshire Gazette (Northampton, Mass.) (free registration) (1/8)

On an afternoon in late December, fifth-grade students at Fort River Elementary School gather around and write their rent checks.

Current events, Trump feed teachers' curricula

Teachers in this article share how current events and President Donald Trump come up during classes covering other topics of history, civics and social studies, causing educators to adjust their lessons. Some educators say they are teaching research skills, critical thinking and how to discern among news sources. Quartz (1/13)



How to build critical inquiry in history lessons

History instruction should shift away from textbook-guided lessons to instead focus on critical inquiry about history, asserts Sam Wineburg of Stanford University. Will Colglazier, a US history teacher in the San Mateo Union High School District, says this approach should include a focus on teaching digital literacy skills. KQED-TV/FM (San Francisco) (3/24)

Ill. high-schoolers use media skills in documentaries, newscasts

WREX-TV (Rockford, Ill.) (3/21)

MACHESNEY PARK (WREX) – Kyra Newnam's classroom at Harlem High School seems more like a college course, or a newsroom, than a high school class.

Newnam teaches AP U.S. History, African American History, Media Studies and Veteran Project class.

In her Media Studies class, students create a newscast for the school that's posted on YouTube completely from scratch. It gives students hands-on experience

8th-graders learn speaking skills in TED-Ed class

Teachers at a New Jersey middle school collaborated to help eighth-grade students build their public speaking and research skills while exploring their passions in a TED-Ed elective course. Students researched topics of their choice, crafted a speech and visual aids, and then presented in front of an audience and video camera.

MyCentralJersey (Somerville, N.J.) (tiered subscription model) (3/22)

Mass. students write stories about diversity

The Sun (Lowell, Mass.) (3/22)

LOWELL -- Lowell High English as a Second Language Social Studies teacher Jessica Lander has been teaching her semester-long Seminar on American Diversity for the past three years and has seen her students blossom into assured, intelligent and thoughtful leaders who engage each other in academic debates about various social justice issues that have been significant in American history.

Read more: http://www.lowellsun.com/todaysheadlines/ci_32529458/lowell-students-pen-we-are-america#ixzz5jIL3aNp3

'I Felt More Traumatized Than Trained': Active-Shooter Drills Take Toll on Teachers

School safety trainings, especially those that simulate shooting scenarios, can be physically and emotionally painful for educators, and can leave districts open to lawsuits. Read more.

Indiana Teachers Shot With Plastic Pellets in Active-Shooter Drill, Raising Concerns

In an active-shooter training, Indiana elementary teachers were asked to kneel down and face a classroom wall before being shot, execution-style, with plastic pellets by local law enforcement.

2 apparent suicides rock Parkland school community

Two students who survived the shooting at a Parkland, Fla., high school last year appear to have taken their own lives recently in the same week. Their deaths have been attributed, in part, to effects of the shooting, including "survivor's guilt" and post-traumatic stress disorder.
The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (3/24), \Miami Herald (tiered subscription model) (3/24), CNN (3/25)

After Two Suicides of Parkland Survivors, Here's What Educators Should Know

Two students who survived the mass shooting last year in Parkland, Fla., have killed themselves in the last week. *Education Week* spoke to two suicide experts about supporting students in crisis. Read more.

Making School a Safe Haven, Not a Fortress

With deep concerns about safety, schools look for ways to blend security features that students hardly notice with welcoming learning environments for them. Read more.

Social studies teacher rewrites songs for history

A middle-school social studies teacher in Nebraska is rewriting popular songs to highlight historical events, such as when he sings about the Black Plague to an Ariana Grande song. Cody Thatcher says his songs and YouTube videos have increased both student engagement and performance in class.
Lincoln Journal Star (Neb.) (tiered subscription model)

Out With Textbooks

History instruction should shift away from textbook-guided lessons to instead focus on critical inquiry about history, asserts Sam Wineburg of Stanford University. Will Colglazier, a US history teacher in the San Mateo Union High School District, says this approach should include a focus on teaching digital literacy skills.

KQED-TV/FM (San Francisco) (3/24

High Style on the Frontier

Saturday, April 13 3:00-4:30 PM

90 minute tour focusing on Antique Furniture in the Bradford House Collection led by Tripp Kline

William M. "Tripp" Kline III is a retired auctioneer, appraiser and antiques dealer. During his 30 year career in the antiques business, Mr. Kline has been featured on the *Antiques Roadshow* and *ABC Primetime Live*, and has led many antique tour and study groups in the tri-state area.

This tour will focus on the types, designs, and styles of furniture featured at the museum.

Photos courtesy of Jim Zaccone Photography

$25 per person – reservation required

Tickets are available at

https://www.bradfordhouse.org/event/high-style-on-the-frontier-tour

Bradford House Museum
175 South Main Street
Washington PA 15301