

**University Of Georgia**  
**Fall Semester, 1999**  
**ESS 4400/6400: Teaching Social Studies in the Middle Grades**

**Professor Pat Nickell**  
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**Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 9:30-12:00 & 2:00-3:30**  
**And by appointment**

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**Required Texts and Materials:**

1. TEXT: National Council for the Social Studies, Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies
2. Readings Packet: Bel-Jean

**Course Description:**

This is a course in reflecting on, planning for, and preparing to teach social studies effectively in the middle school. It emphasizes issues related to the needs and interests of early adolescents; state and national standards for teaching social studies; the relative importance of social studies and civic learning; lesson, unit, and assessment development; and effective strategies for teaching social studies.

**Expected Outcomes:**

(Prerequisite knowledge expected: a general and accurate grounding in U.S. and world history; a general and accurate grounding in geography of your home state or country, the U.S., and the world; an understanding of the U.S. Constitution - how and why it was created and its current applications; a general and accurate understanding of local, state, and federal government and the role of the citizen; a general and accurate understanding of our economy; and understanding of the effects of changing technology on society; an understanding of the tension created by valuing both diversity and unity; and a general understanding of the various cultures that make up our nation and world.)

- Students will be able to define social studies
- Students will be able to describe and use state and national standards appropriate to the middle school social studies curriculum, incorporating these standards in model lessons
- Students will be able to explain the role and importance of social studies and civic education
- Students will be able to explain and demonstrate the appropriate teaching of democratic values and ideals in the social studies classroom
- Students will be able to describe our pluralistic society and design lessons, units, and assessments that are culturally sensitive and inclusive
- Students will be able to make connections between social studies and other subject areas for purposes of integration, demonstrating these connections in a model unit of study
- Students will be able to recognize and incorporate multiple approaches to teaching effectively, making designed instruction challenging, relevant, and interesting
- Students will be able to discriminate what is critical knowledge from what is not, thus developing model lessons that focus first on what is most important
- Students will demonstrate the ability to develop model lessons that are standards-based, creative, age appropriate yet challenging to a variety of learning styles and levels of achievement, and which teach critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions
- Students will demonstrate the ability to develop model assessments that show variety, high expectations, and alignment with unit objectives

**How to make an A in this course:**

11. Fully participate in each class – activities, discussions, group efforts – just as you would hope all of your future students will participate. Further, it is my expectation that you behave and speak professionally at all times during this class. (Ask yourself, would a master teacher say/do this?) “Participation and professionalism” require that you complete all readings (when they are assigned!) to a level of full understanding (if something isn’t clear, ask questions). They also require that you demonstrate the skills of a teacher, including leadership, initiative, creativity, flexibility, compassion, a predisposition to help others learn, a commitment to democratic ideals, and enthusiasm. *NOTE: Class begins promptly at 12:20 and lasts only 50 short minutes. Tardiness and absences will be treated as a lack of participation and professionalism. Just as will be expected of you when you student teach, absences should be explained either before class via email or as soon as possible after class. A physician’s excuse will carry the greatest weight. More than two absences will likely result in the loss of a letter grade in the “participation and professionalism” category. Tardiness will be treated similarly. 33%*
1. Carefully craft each writing assignment and turn it in when due. These should be well written (in advance of class!), thoughtful, and, when appropriate, rich and expressive of your own ideas and beliefs. They **MUST** be completed on a word processor, double-spaced, and within the stated page limit. 33%
2. Average at least 90% or “excellent” on all additional assignments and exams. There may be a few “check-ups” on basic concepts, and there will definitely be a mid-term and a comprehensive final. These will be based on the “Expected Outcomes” listed above. In other words, you can turn them into questions and have a good idea about what will be asked of you. They will be short-answer and open-ended. 34%

**Topics, Readings, and Tentative Assignments**

**Week One (Aug. 23, 25, 27): Whom are we teaching and how do they learn?**

Readings due Aug. 25: Two articles from Dr. Nickell

**Week 2 (August 30, September 1): What is social studies and how important is it? What is all this about character and values education and where do they fit into civic education? Skill: Using “role-play.”**

Readings for Week 2: Expectations of Excellence (hereafter, EE), pp. xix-30; 152; Bel-jean pp. 1-35

Writing Assignment due August 30: Describe yourself as you were as a middle school student and then describe a classmate who was very different from you. Did teachers treat the two of you the same, or differently? Discuss. Limit: 2 pages

*Note: For Friday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, you have an out-of-class assignment: Reread EE pp. 21-30. Become familiar with the ten themes and pick three or four that you would be willing to study in depth so as to prepare to teach the class about it. Make notes to bring to class on September 8 to help you as you begin planning with your eventual group.*

**Week 3 (September 8, 10): Understanding and using the NCSS Standards. Skill: Cooperative Learning**

Readings for Week 3: EE, pp. 79-107; Bel-jean pp. 37-49

*During these two days, we will divide into ten groups. Groups will work together to prepare to teach the class one of the ten standards themes in depth as it applies to middle level teaching. Audio-visual support is strongly urged as is thorough preparation. We will work in class together for both days, but groups are welcome to meet outside of class as well. Presentations will last up to 15 minutes each and should include a thorough description of the theme, its importance, an explanation of the performance expectations, and lesson and assessment ideas particularly appropriate to the theme.*

**Week 4 (September 13, 15, 17): Understanding and using the Curriculum Standards for Social Studies. Skill: Teaching adults**

*This week will be devoted to your presentations of the ten standards themes. Each student is expected to listen carefully to presentations, take really good notes, ask questions for clarification, and end the week confident in his/her knowledge about the ten themes – what they mean, what they have to do with social studies, and how to develop lessons to teach to the performance expectations.*

**Week 5 (September 20, 22, 24) The Georgia QCCs: What are they? How important are they? How do they relate to the national standards?**

Readings for Week 5: Bel-jean pp. 51-81

Writing assignment due September 20: Based on your reading of the NCSS Curriculum Standards and the Georgia QCCs, how are they different? Are they alike in any way? Critique both in terms of usefulness, relative importance to students' futures, relevance to the real world, and anything else upon which you wish to comment. Limit: 3 pages

**Week 6 (September 27, 29, October 1) Theme: Culture. Skills: Examining textbooks and using primary sources**

Readings for Week 6: EE pp. 79-81; Bel-jean pp. 83-91

**Week 7 (October 4, 6, 8) Theme: Time, Continuity, and Change. Skills: Understanding and using constructivist methodology**

Readings for Week 7: EE pp. 82-84; Bel-jean pp. 93-114

Writing Assignment due October 6: Design a social studies lesson based on the standard that you taught to the class that incorporates at least one performance expectation and one QCC. The lesson can last no more than one one-hour class period. Use the lesson plan format provided. **BE SURE TO SAVE THIS LESSON ONCE IT IS GRADED AND RETURNED. YOU WILL USE IT AGAIN!** Limit: two pages

**Week 8 (October 11, 13, 15) Theme: People, Places, and Environments. Skills: Selecting and using electronic media, using simulations (Guest instructor: Pamela Roach 10/11/99)**

Readings for Week 8: EE pp.85-87; Bel-jean pp. 115-127

**(This week will also include a take-home mid-term exam)**

**Week 9 (October 18, 20, 22) Themes: Individual Development and Identity AND Individuals, Groups, and Institutions. Skill: Developing units of study to increase meaning in social studies**

Readings for Week 9: EE pp.88-93; Bel-jean pp. 129-131

Out of class assignment for October 22 – due October 25: Pick a middle level grade and look at the QCCs once again for that grade level. Pick any topic that fits that grades' requirements and **OUTLINE** a two-week unit of study for your topic. What would be your focus for each of ten days and what could you do to teach each focus? Do not worry about the unit format or adding any detail. This should be your very first step in designing a unit – outlining one. **BE SURE AND SAVE YOUR UNIT OUTLINE WHEN YOU GET IT BACK. YOU WILL USE IT AGAIN!** Limit: 3 pages

**Week 10 (October 25, 27, 29) Theme: Power, Authority, and Governance. Skill: Developing Effective Lessons**

Readings for Week 10: EE pp. 94-95; Bel-jean pp. 132-135

Writing Assignment due October 29: Write a two-page critique of the lesson you designed for October 6. Include a copy of the lesson. Based on what we've discussed the past two weeks, what are both its strengths and weaknesses? Limit: 2 pages

**Week 11 (November 1, 3, 5) Theme: Production, Distribution, and Consumption. Skill: Developing Meaningful and Fair Assessments**

Readings for Week 11: EE pp. 96-98; Bel-jean pp. 137-165

Writing assignment due November 5: Create an assessment and rubric to go with the unit you outlined. Be sure it follows the principles discussed this week. Limit: 2 pages

**Week 12 (November 8, 10, 12) Themes: Science, Technology, and Society AND Global Connections. Skill: Understanding and using curriculum integration**

Readings for Week 12: EE pp. 99-104; Bel-jean pp. 169-201

Special assignment due November 12: Surf the web! Find and download an interesting lesson for middle school that has to do with the performance expectations for science, technology, and society. Bring it to class to share on the 12<sup>th</sup>. If you make six copies, you'll get five lessons in return (I think I have the math right).

**Week 13 (November 15, 17, 19) Theme: Essential skills taught in social studies.**

Readings for Week 13: EE pp. 148-149 (REALLY examine these two pages!) and Bel-jean pp. 203-216

Out of class assignment for November 17, 19, 22, & 24 (Due November 29): Check out of CMC or obtain from a school a copy of a current social studies textbook for grade 5, 6, 7, or 8. Examine those pages identified as teaching skills. Critique. Are the skills essential ones? (When did you last use each of the skills taught?) Are they taught effectively? (What else would you have to do to get kids to master the skills?) Which of the essential skills from EE pp. 148-149 are NOT taught in your textbook? Do you think they are probably taught at another level, or might they not be taught at all? If not at all, what could you do to make sure mastery occurs? Limit: 4 pages, double-spaced.

**Week 14 (November 29, December 1, 3) Theme: Civic Ideals and Practices. Skills: Using drama and literature to teach social studies**

Readings for Week 14: EE pp. 105-107; Bel-jean pp. 217-233; also, from CMC, the public library, or a local bookstore, acquire a children's book that you feel teaches social studies concepts or values and be prepared to share it with the class.

**Week 15 (December 6, 8) Powerful Teaching and Learning in Social Studies**

Readings for Week 15: EE pp 155-177 (Read this at least twice!)

**Final Examination: You will have a take-home final that will be due Friday, December 17, at 12:00 noon, our regular final exam time. If you prefer to reschedule the due date and time, they are certainly negotiable, but all students must agree to any changes or they may not be made.**