

# **TEACH ME, I DARE YOU**

*Taking up the Challenge of Teaching Social Studies*

by Ron Sima and David L. Moguel, Ph.D.

Many colleagues, conferences, workshops, summer institutes, and university classes have added invaluable to the ideas presented in this book. For those unknown names whose sources of inspiration and ideas are within the covers of this book, we the authors, and our past students, give many thanks and credit.

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# About the Authors

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**Ron Sima's** name and work are widely recognized in the field of social studies education, and he is a much sought-after speaker for gatherings of educators.

He taught for 40 years as a social studies teacher with the Los Angeles Unified School District, and over the years has conducted innumerable workshops and in-services for teachers across the district. He is a long-standing member of both the California Council for the Social Studies and the National Council for the Social Studies, as well as a regular attendee and presenter at their annual conferences.

Ron has reviewed and consulted on teaching materials for the well-known Social Studies School Service for almost 30 years. He has taught social studies methods and other courses for decades as a part-time lecturer at a number of colleges and universities in the Los Angeles area. He has also provided professional development services and conducted workshops for organizations such as the Center for Civic Education, the League of Women Voters, the Urban Education Partnership, and the Anti-Defamation League.

Ron currently serves as a field supervisor of student teachers for the California State University at Northridge, a board member of the Don Perryman Fund for the Social Studies, and a consultant to the Center for Civic Education and the Urban Education Partnership. He continues to travel extensively to many part of the globe, as curious as ever about the world and its history.

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At Stanford he studied under education scholars Michael Kirst and David Tyack. At Harvard he was a student of education economist Richard Murnane and reading specialist Jeanne Chall. Before starting a career as a teacher educator, he was an assistant to then-Superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District Ramon C. Cortines (most recently the Superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District). He also served in the federal government for three years as a Presidential Management Intern for the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., under two presidents and three secretaries of education.

At UCLA he was a doctoral student of Professor Jeannie Oakes, now at the Ford Foundation. Moguel has been at CSU Northridge since 2000, participating in, among other reforms, the Carnegie Corporation's Teachers for a New Era Initiative.

His current work is in teacher preparation, supervising student teachers in the field, and teaching social studies methods courses.

# Introduction

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*Teach Me, I Dare You: Taking up the Challenge of Teaching Social Studies* is a practical and intellectually rich handbook that provides new and veteran middle- and high-school social studies teachers with a wealth of ideas and solutions in a compact format.

The book is not meant to be an exhaustive review of everything known about teaching social studies, nor does it try to “cover” content best left to social studies textbooks. We have reviewed textbooks that try to do this, and the result is ponderous volumes seldom read and used by teachers.

The book strikes a solid balance between practice and theory:

- It is not so heavy on the “practical” that it becomes an intellectually lightweight collection of clever tricks and tips.
- At the same time, it is not so heavy on the “theory” that it becomes a weighty but inaccessible tome of academic scholarship.

The social studies content, methods, and theory in this book will be familiar to you, but are presented in a new and original manner.

This handbook is based on:

- the 40 years of classroom experience of its first author—a valuable piece of craft wisdom
- the research-based work of its second author—an exploration of modern and future perspectives on teaching social studies
- the near-forgotten voices of philosophers and historians of the past—a look back on ancient and historical perspectives on teaching history.

The table of contents allows you to quickly find a topic you need, or an answer to an urgent and pressing question. The book puts forth:

- five basic elements, including lesson planning and teaching students to read
- seven sets of best practices and methods
- four sets of solutions to address the challenge of classroom management
- brief treatments of four special topics, including teaching English Language Learners.

Then, for the reader who has found the book so useful and intriguing that they are willing to spend a few more minutes with it before planning lessons, we end with some voices from the past and present: philosophers and historians on the subject of teaching history.

# Lesson Planning: The Long and the Short of It

*You can spend ten minutes or three hours planning a single lesson.*

*How can you get a quick handle on effective lesson planning?*

## Long-Range Planning

Your road map for the coming year or semester should begin with the state curriculum framework in your subject matter, state content standards, textbooks, supplemental resources, and any school-district or school-pacing plans. All of these on the kitchen table and a few hours of work will benefit you and your students for the entire school year.

1. On large paper, block out the beginning and end of each semester, all holidays, testing dates, special school-wide programs, and anything else that will impact your instructional time.
2. Use your curriculum framework and text chapters to estimate where you want to be at key points of the semester.
3. Group chapters into logical larger units and think about the following for each unit:
  - ♦ What primary sources, or other readings (or perhaps video, music, or other digital resources) might fit into the unit?
  - ♦ Is there a long-term project that will ask the students to delve deeper into a topic?
  - ♦ What new critical thinking skills can be introduced, and which other higher-order skills need to be reviewed and practiced?

4. Unit by unit, organize all your resources and see where you need additional ones. Now is the moment to consult instructional-materials catalogs; materials from professional conferences, colleagues and peers; and relevant Internet Web sites.
5. Make decisions about what you will be doing week-by-week in each of the units.
6. Sort out what you have done in the past and what you need to do or replace for the future.

## Daily Lesson Planning

1. Plan on three activities to make for an effective 55-minute period—students' attention spans can best accommodate this middle ground between too few or too many activities, either of which allows students to lose focus and attention. Of course, certain activities may take longer, such as tests or group projects.
2. Include time and components in each lesson for the students to employ the fundamental skills of listening and talking, reading and writing.

For example, students read for 15 minutes, listen to your mini-lecture for ten minutes, discuss the reading and the lecture for 15 minutes, then write a memo to the president detailing whether and how the United States should become involved in a particular global conflict.

There are many types of lesson-plan formats. (We've included some basic versions in the "Reproducibles" section.) While we do

not include versions of, for example, the Seven-Step Lesson Plan, or the Into-Through-Beyond lesson plan, or other well-known formats, *do not* become intellectually paralyzed by any format. Instead, from the models available here (or others), create the formats that best serve your needs. You can take any format we have provided, adapt it, make 180 copies of it (a school year is typically 180 days of instruction), and complete one each day, as necessary.

3. Plan at least three activities or options for students who “finish early.”

Remember to verify whether students are indeed finished; circulate and check their work. If necessary, direct them to revise or complete the assignment.

We suggest that you have a classroom library of interesting historical resources for students to read and look through when finished with the day’s assignment. Some teachers find or create crossword puzzles or word searches that are relevant to the subject at hand. Alternatively, students can work on any long-term assignment they had been previously assigned.

## **Backwards Planning**

Backwards planning starts at the end, by looking at the desired results first (e.g., standards, objectives, or goals) and the evidence that the results have been obtained. Your curriculum and teaching are then derived from the results. The logic of backwards planning suggests a sequence for curriculum in three stages: identifying desired results, determining acceptable evidence, and planning learning experiences and instruction.

**Stage 1:** You have to know what students should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of

a lesson or unit. Teachers must establish *curricular priorities, enduring understandings, or the big ideas* they want students to learn. Students need to go beyond mere facts and focus on larger concepts, principles, or processes.

Teachers need to distinguish the enduring understanding—what is important to know and do—from what is only worth being familiar with. Too often teachers begin with the latter, the “low-level factoids” used to measure learning.

**Stage 2:** This step involves determining acceptable sources of evidence of the above. How will you know students have learned what they needed to know, understand, or be able to do? What will you accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?

Backwards planning asks a teacher to think about a unit or lesson plan in terms of the evidence to be collected, evidence that will then document and validate that the desired learning has been achieved. This avoids a unit or lesson simply composed of content to be covered or a series of learning activities.

**Stage 3:** The last stage involves deciding what learning activities and materials will enable students to get that big idea, or learn those enduring understandings.

These learning activities depend on the decisions made during the first two stages, rather than the traditional method of starting from the activities and deciding goals and assessments later.

As one example, let’s say your lesson or unit objective or goal is for students to prepare a one- to two-page letter to a foreign-born person interested in emigrating to the U.S. that explains how American attitudes toward and policies on immigration before and after 1965 changed in some ways, and remained the same in others.



The assessment instrument is thus the letter to a prospective immigrant.

*Working backward, the students would need one or more lessons in which to:*

- search and read various information sources
- make decisions about which information to include in the letter
- prepare a word or a bubble map of key ideas, to be used to write the letter
- write condensed versions of long stretches of text from textbooks or newspaper articles
- correctly cite statistics, and articulate different arguments or positions on key issues.

## ***Student-Proofing Lessons***

As you prepare your lesson plan, think about how the students might derail or sabotage a lesson, then formulate strategies to counter possible snags in the lesson. For example, the lesson might call for students to bring their own graph paper, and of course some students will not. The solution: bring graph paper.

# Student Grouping Lesson-Plan Format

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Course/subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit in progress: \_\_\_\_\_

Standards to be met or addressed (curriculum, content, academic, language):	Notes:
Skills to be learned (historical thinking, social science analysis skills, etc.):	
Learning objectives (academic learning goals, content and language goals, understandings, key concepts, essential questions, knowledge and skills):	
Differentiated instruction, or accommodations for EL, ELD, or special-needs learners:	

Lesson Phase	Time	Teacher Actions	Student Tasks and Activities	Resources (readings, materials, prior/prerequisite knowledge)	Student Grouping
Warm-up, journal, review of previous class, or other introduction					
1st major activity					
2nd major activity					
3rd major activity					
Summary, look-ahead, or other lesson wrap-up, integration, or closure					
Homework and announcements					