

# Teaching Teaching while Teaching History: How College Faculty Can Help Their Students Become Better Secondary Social Studies Educators

John A. Shedd

*State University of New York at Cortland*

THE ESSAYS THAT FOLLOW this brief introduction started as papers for an American Historical Association panel in Washington, D.C., January 2008. They were presented by professional historians who believe that academics should seek to connect more effectively with their students enrolled in programs for grades 7-12 social studies education. Two of the essays are from faculty who provide both history and secondary education courses for their students. One essay is from a young professor who teaches only history courses, but also administers a Teaching American History grant, a project that has involved him in lesson planning with secondary teachers. Our fourth contributor is one who teaches only history courses as well, but who uses her historiography course to reinforce the pedagogical needs of the future secondary educators enrolled in the class.

Among the beliefs we four share is that teaching methods separately from teaching history content is a mistake. Studying methods for their own sake, outside the context of subject matter, is of limited value. No matter the grade level, the more knowledgeable a teacher is about the events of the past, as well as in the crafts and conventions connected with the writing of history, the better. Each of us teaches at an institution where future secondary social studies teachers are required to take a major in history along with their education courses. Our departments want to help create

teacher-scholars, professionals who are successful because they care for their subject as much as they care for their students.

This group of AHA panelists came together, in part, out of a concern about the gap between the way history is taught at the secondary level and the way it is taught at the undergraduate and graduate college level. Our essays, therefore, explore and suggest interconnections between the work of professional historians and their grade school counterparts.

Historians can and should take responsibility for producing better social studies teachers. Only a few teacher education candidates are headed for Ph.D. programs, making it especially important that we should not let them be set along a path that veers away from historiographical and methodological landscapes familiar to professional historians. We hope that these articles will challenge historians to further involve themselves in assisting the young people who are drawn to our college campuses in their quests to become good secondary school teachers.