



SSE 4313
Teaching Elementary (K-6) Social Studies
83566 001
Fall 2026

Instructor Name

Michael Berson

University Course Description

This course is designed to study techniques and strategies employed by social studies teachers that are effective in motivating elementary school-aged children to acquire the information, skills, and modes of reasoning unique to the social sciences.

Course Requisites

Prerequisite(s):

Corequisite(s):

Course Format

This course is delivered in a hybrid format, with weekly synchronous class sessions complemented by applied learning experiences connected to your field placement. The course is designed to support the integration of theory, inquiry-based instruction, and practice in elementary social studies.

Weekly Synchronous Class Sessions

Class meetings will take place in real time and are designed to extend—not repeat—the assigned readings. Sessions will focus on:

- Interactive discussions grounded in course readings and standards
- Inquiry-based exploration of social studies themes (e.g., history, geography, civics, economics)
- Small group collaboration and lesson design activities
- Analysis of primary sources and their integration into instruction
- Application of instructional strategies such as higher-order questioning, modeling, and cooperative learning

Active participation is essential. Students are expected to come prepared to contribute thoughtfully, engage in discussion, and collaborate with peers.

Observation and Applied Learning

You will engage in observation and applied learning through your field placement, which is central to your work in this course. These experiences will support your ability to:

- Analyze how social studies are implemented in elementary classrooms
- Gather information about learners, classroom contexts, and instructional practices
- Use assessment and contextual knowledge to inform instructional planning
- Apply course concepts to authentic teaching and learning environments

These field-based experiences directly inform major course assignments and are essential for developing meaningful, data-informed, and developmentally appropriate instruction.

Weekly Modules (Canvas)

Course content is organized into weekly Canvas modules that support your preparation for synchronous sessions. Modules may include:

- Assigned readings
- Videos and supplemental resources
- Reflection or preparatory activities

Students are expected to complete all readings **prior to class** in order to actively engage in discussions and collaborative work.

Student Learning Outcomes

Following completion of the course, students will demonstrate the ability to:

- A. Implement a variety of teaching methods (direct instruction, cooperative learning, concept formation, simulation, etc.) used in social science education, employing various examples from the social studies content
- B. Demonstrate knowledge of social studies subject matter as defined by the NCSS and Florida's State Standards.
- C. Construct social studies instructional approaches based on the Florida State Standards.
- D. Understand the centrality of social studies to "integrated lessons" in the elementary classroom; the interdisciplinary nature of social studies education; and use of other disciplines to enrich social studies (fiction from language arts, inventions from science, etc.
- E. Appreciate the special considerations of the social studies teacher in the context of enculturation, indoctrination, and dealing with controversial issues.
- F. Understand the role of social studies in the individual development of children and socialization into a democratic society, and
- G. Employ information and communication technology skills to become familiar with and assess the range of resources available through the Internet and social science journals, etc.

Course Objectives

1. **Facilitate active learning experiences** that model a range of effective instructional strategies (e.g., direct instruction, inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning) for elementary social studies teaching.
2. **Provide structured opportunities** for students to engage with key social studies concepts and standards (NCSS and Florida State Standards) through guided practice, discussion, and applied activities.
3. **Guide students in designing standards-based instruction** by scaffolding the development of lesson plans and curriculum materials aligned with state expectations.
4. **Model interdisciplinary teaching approaches** by integrating literacy, technology, and other content areas into social studies instruction.

5. **Create a collaborative learning environment** that encourages dialogue, reflection, and critical examination of complex and controversial issues in social studies education.
6. **Support the development of pedagogical decision-making** through feedback, peer review, and iterative improvement of instructional work.
7. **Incorporate the use of digital tools and primary sources** to enhance students' ability to locate, evaluate, and apply instructional resources in social studies contexts.

Required Texts and/or Readings and Course Materials

- Bober, T. (2019). Elementary educator's guide to primary sources: Strategies for teaching. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/usf/detail.action?docID=5597788>
- Florida Department of Education. (2023). Social Studies Standards. <http://www.cpalms.org/Public/search/Standard>
- NCSS. (2024). Teaching with Primary Sources to Prepare Students for College, Career, and Civic Life: Volume 1. <https://www.socialstudies.org/tps/teaching-primary-sources-vol1>
- NCSS. (2024). Teaching with primary sources to prepare students for college, career, and civic life Volume 2. <https://www.socialstudies.org/tps/teaching-primary-sources-vol2>
- Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov>
- Florida Memory <https://www.floridamemory.com/>
- National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/>
- Tampa Bay History Center <https://tampabayhistorycenter.org/>
- Laptop

How to Succeed in this Course

In order to be an active participant in classroom dialogue and activities, it is expected that each student will have a working knowledge of general U.S. and world history; basic geography; the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution—how and why they were created and their current applications; local, state, and federal government and the role of the citizen; the economy; and the effects of changing technology on society.

Successful students in this class complete all readings before coming to class. Our in-class time is designed to further and deepen the knowledge, concepts, and skills from the readings – not just repeat the information.

Grading Scale

Grading Scale (%)			
94-100	A	74-76	C
90-93	A-	70-73	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
84-86	B	64-66	D
80-83	B-	60-63	D-
77-79	C+	0 - 59	F

Grade Categories and Weights

Your learning will be assessed through:

- **Weekly Class Engagement and Professional Participation (30%)** –preparation through assigned readings, participation in class discussions, FTCE practice, and collaborative learning.
- **Social Studies Practice-Based Learning and Reflection (40%)** – instructional analysis, inquiry-based teaching experiences, instructional rehearsals, field-based teaching, and reflective practice.
- **Civics Lesson Plan (30%)** – development of a standards-aligned, inquiry-based civics lesson.

These assignments are designed to support your ability to plan, integrate, and implement inquiry-based, developmentally appropriate instruction that draws on primary sources and reflects the needs of diverse learners.

Major Topics and Course Schedule

Course Schedule		
Week	Course Content	Assignments Due

Week	Course Content	Assignments Due
Week 1	Introduction/Overview Perceptions and Perspectives • Community building and collaborative inquiry • Introduction to reflective instructional practice • Establishing discussion norms and classroom management routines for social studies inquiry • Introduction to higher-level questioning and evidence-based discussion • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	
Week 2	Planning and Assessment in the Social Studies NCSS Curriculum Standards Florida State Standards • Standards-based instructional planning • Formative assessment and instructional decision-making • Differentiation within social studies instruction • Academic feedback that advances student thinking • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Applied Social Studies Teaching Lab: Formative Assessment and Questioning FTCE Social Studies practice and review
Week 3	Labor Day Holiday—No Class	
Week 4	Teaching with Primary Sources in the Elementary Classroom • Inquiry-based pedagogy with primary sources • Differentiated primary source analysis strategies • Higher-level questioning using historical evidence • Checks for understanding and formative assessment • Micro instructional rehearsal with peer feedback • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	TPS Basics: Teaching with Primary Sources Applied Social Studies Teaching Lab: Primary Source Inquiry Facilitation

Week	Course Content	Assignments Due
Week 5	Field Based: Museum and Community Inquiry Activity • Community-based and experiential learning • Inquiry with cultural artifacts and historical sources • Micro instructional practice in museum spaces • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Community-Based Museum Site Visit
Week 6	Teaching History: Time, Continuity & Change • Historical inquiry and evidence-based reasoning • Higher-level questioning in history instruction • Differentiated discussion strategies • Formative assessment during historical inquiry • Peer instructional rehearsal and feedback • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Applied Social Studies Teaching Lab: Historical Thinking and Evidence-Based Discussion Facilitation FTCE Social Studies practice and review
Week 7	Teaching Geography: People, Places, & Environments • Geographic inquiry and spatial thinking • Population Education instructional activities • Higher-level questioning in geography instruction • Geography mini-microteaching and instructional rehearsal • Peer feedback and reflective practice • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Geography Enactment Reflection

Week	Course Content	Assignments Due
Week 8	Teaching Geography: People, Places, & Environments • Inquiry-based geography instruction • Collaborative instructional practice • Formative assessment and checks for understanding • Academic feedback during geographic inquiry • Differentiation for diverse learners • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Applied Social Studies Teaching Lab: Geography Instruction and Responsive Teaching FTCE Social Studies practice and review
Week 9	Teaching Civics: Power, Authority, & Governance Civic Ideals & Practices • Civic inquiry and discussion facilitation • Classroom management during civic discourse • Higher-level questioning and evidence-based argumentation • Differentiation during civic discussions • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Applied Social Studies Teaching Lab: Civic Discussion Facilitation and Classroom Management
Week 10	Field-Based: Social Studies Microteaching • Instructional rehearsal in field settings • Classroom management strategies • Formative assessment and instructional adjustment • Higher-level questioning • Academic feedback and discussion facilitation • Peer and instructor feedback • Reflective practice • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Classroom Inquiry and Learner Analysis FTCE Social Studies practice and review

Week	Course Content	Assignments Due
Week 11	Teaching Civics: Power, Authority, & Governance Civic Ideals & Practices • Civic literacy and instructional planning • Primary source integration in civics instruction • Academic feedback during civic discussions • Differentiated supports for civic inquiry • Instructional rehearsal and peer feedback • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	
Week 12	Teaching Economics: Production, Distribution, & Consumption • Economics inquiry in elementary classrooms • Higher-level questioning in economics instruction • Formative assessment and checks for understanding • Differentiation and responsive instruction • Applied instructional strategies • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Applied Social Studies Teaching Lab: Inquiry, Assessment, and Feedback in Economics Instruction FTCE Social Studies practice and review
Week 13	Field-Based: Social Studies Microteaching • Instructional rehearsal and implementation • Classroom management and student engagement • Formative assessment and instructional adjustment • Academic feedback and questioning techniques • Peer and instructor feedback • Reflective practice • FTCE Social Studies practice and review	Social Studies Microteaching and Reflective Practice

Week	Course Content	Assignments Due
Week 14	Consultation Meetings for Civics Lesson Design • Lesson planning conferences • Assessment alignment and instructional refinement • Differentiation planning • Questioning and discussion design • Individualized pedagogical feedback	FTCE Social Studies practice and review
Week 15	Civics Lesson Microteaching • Applied instructional practice • Classroom management and discussion facilitation • Higher-level questioning and academic feedback • Formative assessment and instructional responsiveness • Reflection on inquiry pedagogy and student engagement • Professional collaboration and peer feedback	Civics Lesson Plan and Microteaching
The schedule, assignments, and points are subject to change, based on the needs of the course and at the instructor's discretion.		

USF Core Syllabus Policies

USF has a set of central policies related to student recording class sessions, academic integrity and grievances, student accessibility services, academic disruption, religious observances, academic continuity, food insecurity, pregnancy and related conditions, and sexual harassment that **apply to all courses at USF**. Be sure to review these online:

<https://www.usf.edu/provost/faculty-success/resources-policies-forms/core-syllabus-policy-statements.aspx>

Student Recordings

Florida Statute 1004.097 Free Expression on Campus

Students may, without prior notice, record video or audio of a class lecture for a class in which the student is enrolled for their own personal, educational use (USF Policy 10-048).

A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach enrolled students about a particular subject. Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to lab sessions, student presentations (whether individually or part of a group), class discussion, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty member is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation and class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the USF Student Conduct Code.

Course Policies: Grades

Assignments will be evaluated using the University grading system and the scoring guidelines provided for each assignment. Work is expected to be thoughtful, reflective, and of high quality in both content and presentation. Successful work will demonstrate an understanding of social studies content, inquiry-based pedagogy, instructional planning, assessment, and evidence-based teaching practices discussed throughout the course.

Because this is a professional teacher preparation course, all assignments should reflect professional communication skills, including appropriate grammar, spelling, organization, and academic writing conventions. Points may be deducted for writing errors that interfere with clarity or professionalism. Assignments containing substantial writing issues may be returned for revision prior to grading. Students seeking assistance with writing are encouraged to utilize resources available through the USF Writing Studio.

Assignments should demonstrate engagement with course readings, class discussions, field experiences, instructional rehearsals, and social studies teaching practices explored throughout the semester. Candidates are expected to connect course concepts to elementary classroom instruction, inquiry-based learning, primary source pedagogy, assessment, differentiation, and reflective professional practice.

Unless otherwise specified, written assignments should be prepared using Microsoft Word, double-spaced, 12-point font, and standard one-inch margins. Assignments

submitted through Canvas should be uploaded as .doc or .docx files whenever possible to facilitate instructor feedback and commenting.

Late Work Policy: Assignments will be given a letter grade based on the University of South Florida grading system and the scoring guidelines that accompany each assignment. Assignments may not be revised for resubmission after the due date, so it is strongly recommended that students arrange to meet with the instructor in advance to receive feedback and additional guidance regarding progress on submissions.

All assignments are due on the date specified on the course calendar. Assignments will be considered turned in on-time if they are submitted to Canvas on the due date by the specified time. Late assignments are accepted, but with a late penalty. Papers received up to 48 hours late will be evaluated using the criteria in the syllabus, and the earned grade will be calculated as follows: Up to 5 hours late, 5 percent deducted; Between 5-24 hours late, 10 percent deducted; between 24-48 hours late, 20 percent deducted. Any student who does not turn their work within 48 hours of the due date will earn a grade of F on the respective assignment. This means that the highest grade you can earn is 59% for the late submission. Under extenuating circumstances, the professor will review circumstances on a case by case basis and make decisions accordingly. If an emergency arises that prevents you from completing your work on time, please email the professor as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for you to keep up in the class. The late penalty may be waived at the professor's discretion in case of an emergency. Emergencies are defined as anything which is serious and unexpected. Emergencies cannot be written on the calendar in advance. Examples of non-emergencies are: family weddings, vacations, conferences or any other event that can be planned around.

Extra Credit Policy: There are no extra credit assignments.

Grades of "Incomplete"

The current university policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. For undergraduate courses: An "I" grade may be awarded to a student only when a small portion of the student's work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade. The time limit for removing the "I" is to be set by the instructor of the

course. For undergraduate students, this time limit may not exceed two academic semesters, whether or not the student is in residence, and/or graduation, whichever comes first. For graduate students, this time limit may not exceed one academic semester. “I” grades not removed by the end of the time limit will be changed to “IF” or “IU,” whichever is appropriate.

Campus Free Expression

It is fundamental to the University of South Florida’s mission to support an environment where divergent ideas, theories, and philosophies can be openly exchanged and critically evaluated. Consistent with these principles, this course may involve discussion of ideas that you find uncomfortable, disagreeable, or even offensive.

In the instructional setting, ideas are intended to be presented in an objective manner and not as an endorsement of what you should personally believe. “Objective” means that the idea(s) presented can be tested by critical peer review and rigorous debate, and that the idea(s) is supported by credible research.

In this course you may be asked to engage with complex ideas and to demonstrate an understanding of the ideas. Understanding and engaging with an idea does not require you to believe it or to agree with it.

Course Policies: Technology and Media

Technology plays an important role in this course as a tool for communication, collaboration, and learning. Students are expected to use technology in ways that support engagement, professionalism, and respect for others.

Use of Devices During Class

During synchronous class sessions, you are expected to use your device (laptop or tablet) to actively participate in course activities such as discussions, collaborative work, and accessing course materials. Use of phones or other devices for non-course-related purposes is discouraged, as it can disrupt your learning and the learning of others.

Online Participation and Professionalism

For live online sessions, students are expected to:

- Join on time and remain present for the full session

- Use their name as listed in Canvas for identification
- Participate actively in discussions and breakout groups
- Maintain a professional and respectful tone in all interactions

When possible, cameras should be on to support community building and engagement. If this is not possible, please communicate with the instructor.

Canvas and Course Communication

Canvas will be the primary platform for course materials, announcements, and assignment submissions. Students are responsible for:

- Checking Canvas regularly for updates
- Monitoring their USF email for course communication
- Submitting assignments in the required format

Use of Digital Tools and Media

This course may include the use of digital tools (e.g., Perusall, collaborative platforms, AI-supported tools) to support learning. Students are expected to use these tools responsibly and in alignment with course expectations and academic integrity policies.

Recording and Sharing Course Content

Students may not record, share, or distribute class sessions, course materials, or peer contributions without explicit permission from the instructor. This includes posting content to external sites or sharing recordings with individuals outside the course.

Respectful and Ethical Use

All technology and media use in this course should reflect professionalism, respect for privacy, and ethical conduct. This includes maintaining confidentiality when discussing classroom observations or field experiences.

Course Policies: Student Expectations

Health and Wellness

Your health is a priority at the University of South Florida. We encourage members of our community to look out for each other and to reach out for help if someone is in need. If you or someone you know is in distress, please make a referral at www.usf.edu/sos so that the Student Outreach & Support can contact and provide helpful resources to the student in distress. A 24-hour licensed mental healthcare professional, offered through the counseling center, is available by phone at 813-974-2831, option 3. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, please dial 9-1-1.

Title IX Policy

USF is committed to fostering a safe and respectful learning environment, free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment, in accordance with Title IX and USF Policy 0-004. If a student shares an experience of sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, or relationship violence with a USF employee (including faculty), that employee will notify the Title IX Office. This allows the Title IX Office to send the student an email with information about support resources and options—if it is safe to do so. Students are not required to respond to this email. The Title IX Office is a private resource. Information is shared only on a need-to-know basis to provide students with support measures. To speak to a confidential resource, students may contact USF Center for Victim Advocacy at 813-974-5757. Confidential resources do not notify the Title IX Office unless the student requests it. For more information about Title IX, available resources, or to make a report, please visit www.usf.edu/title-ix.

Course Hero / Chegg Policy

The USF Policy on Academic Integrity specifies that students may not use websites that enable cheating, such as by uploading or downloading material for this purpose. This does apply specifically to Chegg.com and CourseHero.com – almost any use of these websites (including uploading proprietary materials) constitutes a violation of the academic integrity policy.

Professionalism Policy

Per university policy and classroom etiquette; mobile phones, iPods, etc. must be silenced during all classroom and lab lectures. Those not heeding this rule will be asked to leave the classroom/lab immediately so as to not disrupt the learning environment. Please arrive on time for all class meetings. Students who habitually disturb the class by talking, arriving late, etc., and have been warned may suffer a reduction in their final class grade.

Turnitin.com

In this course, turnitin.com may be utilized. Turnitin is an automated system which instructors may use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. Accordingly, you may be expected to submit all assignments in both hard copy and electronic format. After the assignment is processed, as instructor I receive a report from turnitin.com that states if and how another author's work was used in the assignment. For a more detailed look at this process visit <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Netiquette Guidelines

- Act professionally in the way you communicate. Treat your instructors and peers with respect, the same way you would do in a face-to-face environment. Respect other people's ideas and be constructive when explaining your views about points you may not agree with.
- Be sensitive. Be respectful and sensitive when sharing your ideas and opinions. There will be people in your class with different linguistic backgrounds, political and religious beliefs or other general differences.
- Proofread and check spelling. Doing this before sending an email or posting a thread on a discussion board will allow you to make sure your message is clear and thoughtful. Avoid the use of all capital letters, it can be perceived as if you are shouting, and it is more difficult to read.
- Keep your communications focused and stay on topic. Complete your ideas before changing the subject. By keeping the message on focus you allow the readers to easily get your idea or answers they are looking for.
- Be clear with your message. Avoid using humor or sarcasm. Since people can't see your expressions or hear your tone of voice, meaning can be misinterpreted.

Email and Discussion Board Guidelines

- Use the subject line effectively by using a meaningful line of what your email or discussion is about.
- Keep your emails and postings related to the course content. You should not post anything personal on a discussion board unless it is requested by the instructor.
- Any personal, course or confidential issues should be directly communicated to the instructor via email. The discussion boards are public spaces; therefore, any issues should not be posted there.

End of Semester Student Evaluations

All classes at USF make use of an online system for students to provide feedback to the University regarding the course. These surveys will be made available at the end of the semester, and the University will notify you by email when the response window opens. Your participation is highly encouraged and valued.

Food and Drink Policy (for in-campus sessions only).

Please adhere to the firm policy of no beverages (other than bottled/capped water), food, tobacco products, or like items in the classroom. Your understanding of the necessity for this policy and cooperation will be greatly appreciated. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Learning Support and Campus Offices

Academic Accommodations

Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in order to receive academic accommodations. For additional information about academic accommodations and resources, you can visit the SAS website.

[SAS website for the Tampa campus and Sarasota-Manatee Teachout site.](#)

[SAS website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

Academic Support Services

The USF Office of Student Success coordinates and promotes university-wide efforts to enhance undergraduate and graduate student success. For a comprehensive list of academic support services available to all USF students, please visit the [Office of Student Success website](#).

Canvas Technical Support

If you have technical difficulties in Canvas, you can find access to the Canvas guides and video resources in the “Canvas Help” page on the homepage of your Canvas course. You can also contact the help desk by calling 813-974-1222 in Tampa or emailing help@usf.edu.

[USF IT Services](#)

Center for Victim Advocacy

The [Center for Victim Advocacy](#) empowers survivors of crime, violence, or abuse by promoting the restoration of decision making, by advocating for their rights, and by offering support and resources. Contact information is available online.

Counseling Center

The Counseling Center promotes the wellbeing of the campus community by providing culturally sensitive counseling, consultation, prevention, and training that enhances student academic and personal success. Contact information is available online.

[Counseling Center website for the Tampa campus and Sarasota-Manatee Teachout site.](#)

[Counseling Center website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

Tutoring

The Tutoring Hub offers free tutoring in several subjects to USF undergraduates. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information, email asctampa@usf.edu.

[Tutoring website for the Tampa campus and Sarasota-Manatee Teachout site.](#)

[Tutoring website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

Writing Studio

The Writing Studio is a free resource for USF undergraduate and graduate students. At the Writing Studio, a trained writing consultant will work individually with you, at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, email: writingstudio@usf.edu.

[Writing studio website for the Tampa campus and Sarasota-Manatee Teachout Site.](#)

[Writing studio website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

Student Ombuds Office

Florida Statute 1006.51 and Florida Board of Governors Regulation 6.011 require that all public institutions provide ombuds services to students. The Student Ombuds Office at USF is a confidential, impartial, informal, and independent resource for students experiencing challenges related to the university. Ombuds can help students safely explore options, clarify processes, and consider next steps. [Learn more or make an appointment at usf.edu/student-ombuds.](https://usf.edu/student-ombuds)