

The Lutheran Middle

Social Studies Education in Lutheran Schools

June 14, 2022 – Professor Peter Baganz



Why does History/Social Studies Education Even Matter?

Thoughts About Our
Christian Schools
Overall

Hot-Button
Topics in
Education
Today – Relate
to Social
Studies and/or
Political
Philosophy

Mask mandates in schools

In-person vs. online learning

Critical Race Theory in schools

Who controls the curriculum? Do parents have input?

Real-life Scenarios

- Discussion with parents in Michigan
 - One mother a teacher in Detroit public school
 - Another parent a supporter of Republican governor taking over “failing” school system in Detroit
- Kindergarten family asked my wife if she taught critical race theory in her classroom
- President Gurgel received e-mails accusing MLC of teaching CRT
- Student views in class
 - Obama not born in US and brought Socialism to America
 - Presidents who lost popular vote and won electoral college not “legitimate”

Advice from God's Word – Share the Gospel Message with All – Don't Put up Obstacles to Minorities Hearing the Gospel

- Mark 16:15
 - *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.*
- Psalm 96:3
 - *Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.*
- Ephesians 3:8
 - *Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ*

God Asks Us to be Patient and not Quarrelsome with Others Who Have Different Views

- 2 Timothy 2:14
 - *Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.*
- 1 Peter 3:15
 - *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect*
- 2 Timothy 4:2
 - *Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*

Don't Put Stumbling Blocks in the Way of the Gospel Message

- I Corinthians 9: 19-22

- *19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.*

My Advice – Keep Your Politics out of Your Ministry

Avoid sermons of political beliefs

Avoid activism among students to the left or the right

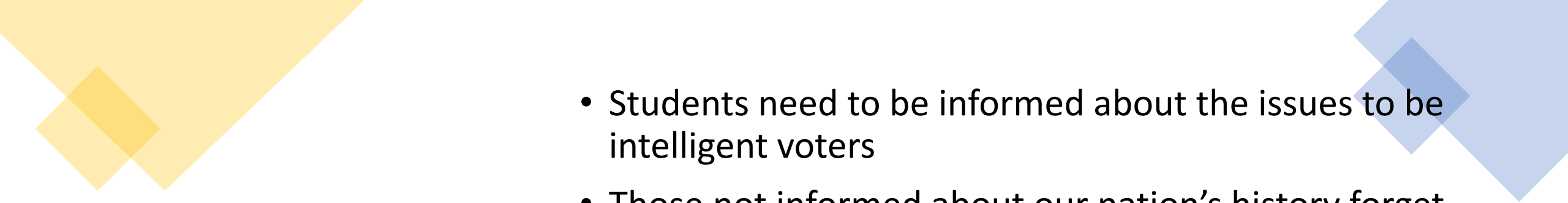
People know you are a church or school leader – avoid taking a “public” stance on issues that will drive some away

Avoid postings or likings on social media that some will associate with your position


Is a very public expression of your beliefs really worth losing the people who might be driven away from your church or school as a result?



The Teaching of History and Social Studies



In this STEM era,
History Education is
still a critical
component of
education

- Students need to be informed about the issues to be intelligent voters
 - Those not informed about our nation's history forget how richly God has blessed us
 - Students need to be prepared for the humanist teachings those attending public universities will face – 70% of all church-going young people who go to college fall away from the faith within four years
 - Teaching history beyond names and dates builds critical thinking skills as well as writing and speaking skills
 - In our classrooms students will learn how God guides history while at the same time “masking himself” through natural means
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Our lens of History should be a Christian lens

- R.G. Collingwood – History involves the study of logical decisions reached by rational human beings
 - This excludes any miraculous events caused by God
- We believe God is hidden behind a mask in the events of history
 - We cannot discern God's plans or understand God's purposes
 - However, God does give man the ability to make decisions within his plans
 - We can explore and evaluate those human decisions
- All of history is set within the context of sin and grace
 - God **allows** evil in this world because we have sinned and to call us to salvation

The Left Ditch of History Education

- Project 1619 (from their official website)
 - “Silence is complicity. We encourage you to step up, speak up, stand up and kneel for social and racial justice in America.”
- IL Representative LaShawn Ford introduced a bill
 - “to end History education in his state because it overlooks contributions by women and members of Jewish, black and LGBTQ communities”
- California, New Jersey, Colorado and Illinois all require the teaching of LGBTQ history
- Proposed new MN Social Studies standards

The Right Ditch

- 1776 Curriculum
 - “The Hillsdale 1776 Curriculum determines what students should learn in history and civics based on the answers to a single question: What ideas, words, and deeds have most significantly formed the world into which students were born?”
- Luther Classical College (website – what students will learn)
 - “Socialism is theft and wokism is bullying”
- Anonymous WELS pastor on July 4
 - “America was once a Christian nation. We need to return to the ideals of our founding fathers.”

History Education Goes far beyond Names, Dates, and “Facts” – How are these Presented?



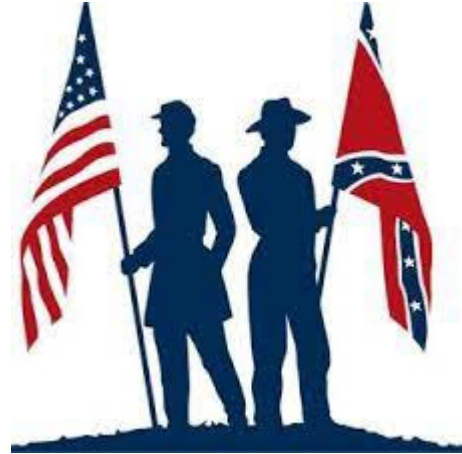
Controversial Topics in History

- Columbus
 - Discoverer of new world or exploiter of native people?
- Slave Trade
 - Was this just European exploitation of African people? How did American slavery differ from other forms of slavery? Were people brought to faith even through slavery?
- American Revolution
 - Patriots seeking freedom or revolting against government established over them?
- Constitution
 - Guarantee of a stable government or securing economic interests of the wealthy or destruction of the rights of African-Americans?



Other Controversial Topics

- Civil War
 - Caused by slavery? States' rights?
- Reconstruction
 - A real effort to rebuild or just a return of Blacks to near slavery?
- World War I – Sedition Acts
 - Patriotism or taking away Constitutional rights?
- Progressivism & New Deal
 - Are there benefits to bigger government?
- World War II
 - Japanese-American camps and dropping the bomb - Racism or doing what was necessary to win the war?
- Civil Rights Movement
 - How do we portray MLK, Malcolm X, Black Panthers?



Divergent Views of Critical Race Theory in Schools

- The Left says: “Critical race theory is used by academic scholars since the 1960s to describe how racism is embedded in all aspects of American life, from health care to housing, economics to education, clean water to the criminal justice system and more. (it is not taught in public schools)”
- The right says: “Components of critical race theory have permeated education in public schools across America as students are taught that they are granted special rights and privileges simply based on the color of their skin”
- How can both of these be true?

Facts - There has always been inequality in America based on race

- Slavery existed in the American colonies since 1619
- The Constitution counted slaves a 3/5 of a person for representation of states in Congress
- *Plessy v. Ferguson* legitimized Jim Crow legislation and created separate facilities for African-Americans that were seldom equal
- As of 1963, only about 5% of African-Americans were allowed to vote in several states
- Redlining forced minorities to live in poverty-stricken neighborhoods
- African-Americans still face increased rates of discrimination and at times are targeted by police

Areas where CRT is problematic

- Although in the Old Testament God had a clear division between Jews and Gentiles, we need to exercise caution in assigning guilt to any group of people simply based on race or characteristics
- Issues of racism and hatred are a result of sin, and will not be cured through some human theory or program
- Race is just one lens through which to examine issues in *critical theory* – there are also gender, social class, education and many other factors to consider
- Critical Theory has gone through three stages
 - A. Deconstruction of traditional terms and values
 - B. New definitions and values based on groupings, new truth based on individual experiences
 - C. If one is not part of the oppressed group, they have no voice to question their beliefs
- **Yet God does command us to love our fellow man, so we can't just ignore those not like us**


Advice on teaching history of racial and gender relations

- Minority students do need to hear their story also
- Heterosexual white males also need to learn about the greater world around them and develop empathy for others
 - MLC students self-report limited instruction of Civil Rights before college
- Teach sensitive topics in age-appropriate way
 - Holocaust
 - Civil War
 - Civil Rights
 - Women's rights movement
- This **does not** mean we are teaching these issues as stories of oppression

Thoughts about History Textbooks

- Realize that **Every** History book has a bias
- Textbooks take humanist bias and are now geared towards individual states
 - California – Large sections about housing discrimination vs minorities
 - Texas – Some people leave urban areas because of congestion or crime.
 - California – Impact of Levi Strauss, Jewish immigrant.
 - Texas – Impact of Great Awakening on the Founding Fathers.
 - Both have Harlem Renaissance, Texas book states “some critics dismiss the quality of literature produced”
 - California – “Rulings on the Second Amendment have allowed some gun regulations”
- Beware of “Christian” textbooks
 - Usher’s timeline is problematic
 - Decision theology
- Please give instruction beyond the textbooks!



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Your Thoughts and Questions

Direct your
support or
complaints to:



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