

Review

Ross, E.W. (Ed.) (2014). *The Social Studies Curriculum: Purposes, Problems and Possibilities* (4th ed.) Albany, NY: University of New York Press.

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This offering is the 4th edition of a successful formula that presents chapters from leading Social Studies scholars, theorists and educators coalescing them around the central themes of purposes, issues and pedagogical application. This edition has twelve new contributions with current cache, such as ecological democracy, patriotism and islamophobia in the classroom, while repeat appearances from 3rd edition have undergone revision and updating. The aim of the collection “to challenge readers to reconsider their assumptions and understandings of the origins, purposes, nature, and possibilities of the social studies curriculum” (Ross, 2014:xi) is explicit and remains constant since the first iteration in 1997. The target market for this book is educators from all sectors, with the overarching assumption of the vital role of the teacher in curriculum development and change but the appeal of this, at times, provocative edition extends to a general reader interested in the uses, challenges and potential of Social Studies education. It is organized into four parts.

The first, "The Purposes of the Social Studies Curriculum," examines some of the tensions and challenges within social studies education. C. Gregg Jorgensen begins the section with an historical overview of the field that uses the focus questions, "What are the origin of social studies?", "What is the purpose, theory and practice of social studies as we enter the 21st century?", and "How can social studies be vibrant and in the emerging era of social media?" For Jorgensen, the answer lies in the evolution and adaptive nature of the discipline. "Social studies ...has been refined and redefined to encompass aspects of human rights education, multicultural education, global education, issues-centred education, holocaust education – disciplines posed to embrace the 21st century" (Jorgensen, 2014:3) while remaining true to the Deweyan philosophy of engagement, relevance and societal value. E.Wayne Ross, Sandra Mathison and Kevin Vinson examine the interconnected facets of Social Studies curriculum and decry the limitations imposed on teacher autonomy and reflectivity, as well as and student engagement and understanding, by high-stake testing and state-imposed accountability regimes. They call for a central re-positioning and empowering of teachers and their students. Likewise the contributions of Christopher Leahy and Abraham DeLeon call for emancipatory action, for "ambitious teaching" (Leahy, 2014, 63) with a utopian transformative vision. "Once we release our imaginations by embodying an insurgent approach to social studies, we can theorise and act toward possible potentials that emerge, and fear will dissipate toward hope"(DeLeon, 2014:86).

The second part, "Social Issues and the Social Studies Curriculum," contains seven chapters drawn together by their progressive tone and critical pedagogy propositions for re-assessment of the status quo and call for reform. The first two chapters, one by E.Wayne Ross and Kevin Vinson and the other by Joel Westheimer, highlight the

irony of transmission models in citizenship education and call for participatory democratic classrooms, which are bold in their disruption of prescribed agendas. The chapters of Neil Houser on ecological democracy and Four Arrows on indigenous wisdom and teaching, call for a return to ancient understandings in the treatment of the education, and ultimately planet. Curry Stephenson Malott and Marc Pruyn, who argue that a Marxist lens on Western capitalism in a social studies curriculum would serve to foster deep questioning of the inherent power dynamics so revealing the negative impacts on social justice, sustain the case for radical change. The last two chapters of this section point to the gap between the rhetoric of equality and inclusion with the reality of racism, prejudice and heteronormativity in U.S. society. Jack Nelson and Valerie Ooka Pang focus on strategies for social studies education to address issues of racism and prejudice, while Lisa Loutzenheiser's chapter criticises many current practices which try to address issues of gender, sexuality and homophobia as tokenistic and lacking contextualisation. She advocates for integrated community-based programs, which critical examine of issues of gender and sexuality.

The third section, "The Social Studies Curriculum in Practice," utilises various lenses to examine classroom praxis and practice in social studies education. Sandra Mathison presents a revision of assessment beyond standardised testing and suggests performance assessment as a suitable vehicle for assessment for and of learning. Along a similar line, Doug Selwyn provides a convincing rationale and a staged "how-to" guide for teachers wishing to engage their students in real world inquiry. As Selwyn concludes, "We can best serve them [the students] by introducing them to skills that they can bring to whatever they encounter in the future. They will learn by doing, by reflecting, by sharing..."(Selwyn, 2014: 287). The next three chapters are centred on emancipatory discourses - freedom from: religious bigotry (Ozlem Sensoy); class division and inequity (Gregory Queen); and media manipulation and acquiescence (Paul Orłowski). Sensoy's chapter on Islamophobia is a stark and timely reminder of the power of the media and impact of racial and religious stereotyping on students and teachers alike. Sensoy envisions school, and more particularly the social science classroom, as fertile ground in which to redress misinformation and injustice and bring about social transformation. Both the Queen and Orłowski contributions call for a progressive educators and a critical social studies agenda with the goal of deconstructing and countering hegemonic discourses. The last chapter in this section from Joseph Kahne and Joel Westheimer presents a rationale and strategy for promoting the teaching of democracy and presents useful best practice principles as a guide for teachers.

In the "Conclusion," E. Wayne Ross (2014) seeks to bring together the diverse strands of thought, the "variety pathways" (Ross, 2014:385), presented in this progressively orientated collection. This book may be criticised by some as utopian in its belief in the power of insightful teachers and students to change society for the better, but this volume provides scholarly analysis of current trends and issues and speaks to the idealist in us all, and as such should be a welcome addition to the libraries of teachers, scholars, policy makers and interested citizens. Ross and his contributors make a convincing case for the possibilities of social studies to foster "broad participation in a democratic community of inquirers" (Ross, 2014, 385) examining the present with a critical eye and enacting a more just and generous future.