

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

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The purpose of teaching social studies in middle and high school (grades 5-12) is three-fold:

1. To provide middle and high school students a broad foundation in what is known about human social experience, interaction, and behavior;
2. To provide students with perspectives that will assist them in understanding self and others; and
3. To provide students a foundation for appreciating and critically evaluating claims of knowledge about human social experience, interaction, and behavior.

Overview of the Major

Social studies education is an interdisciplinary major involving seven disciplines: economics, education, history, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology/anthropology. It is a necessary component for a license to teach social studies in middle school and high school.

The field of social studies education demands reflective practitioners with a broad foundation in the liberal arts and specific knowledge in each of the seven disciplines. The social studies education major equips students with this core content knowledge while also providing multiple opportunities for critical thinking about the various ways we construct knowledge and communicate the human experience. Students may consider a double major with one of the six disciplines listed above (a major in geography is no longer offered by St. Olaf) or combine the major with a concentration in racial and ethnic studies or other interdisciplinary concentration. Students may graduate with a social studies education major without completing requirements leading to a license to teach (see additional requirements on the Requirements tab).

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Major

Special Programs

Students may choose from a wide number of study abroad and away opportunities within each of the various disciplines to complement the major. They can also participate in various January terms offered off campus through the Education Department provided they meet all prerequisites. Students who pursue a teaching license may consider student teaching in an international setting at one of our partner schools in India. Further information on field experiences, mentoring and tutoring opportunities, and independent study options are available in the Education Center.

Requirements

Special Note: All prospective students should read the material in the Education Department section of this catalog and must meet with an Education Department faculty advisor.

Requirements for the Major

Social studies education is a 12-course major consisting of nine prescribed courses and three electives. Students may

graduate with a social studies education major without completing requirements leading to a license to teach (see the following additional requirements). Up to a maximum of two courses either taken off-campus with non-St. Olaf faculty or transferred from other institutions may be included in the major. No more than one course graded S/U may count toward the major.

Code	Title	Credits
HIST 191	Colonialism & Europe: 1492-Present	1.00
HIST 199	American History Since 1865	1.00
	History area course elective (Level II or III) on Africa, Asia, or Latin America	1.00
ECON 121	Principles of Economics	1.00
EDUC 295	Foundations of Education	1.00
EDUC 365	Teaching of Social Studies, 5-12	1.00
ID 234	Human Geography	1.00
PSCI 111	American Politics	1.00
PSYCH 125	Principles of Psychology	1.00
	Select one of the following:	1.00
SOAN 128	Introduction to Cultural Anthropology	
SOAN 264	Race and Class in American Culture	
	Global environmental elective ¹	1.00
	Race and ethnic studies elective ¹	1.00
Total Credits		12

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See department for course choices

**By completing this major, the student also satisfies the OLE Core Writing in the Major requirement.*

Requirements for the Social Studies Major with Grades 5-12 Teaching Licensure

Students must take all twelve courses required for the major described above plus HIST 198 American History to 1865, RACE 121 Introduction to Race and Ethnic Studies, and a prescribed set of education courses and experiences required for licensure. Students must meet with the Director of Social Studies Education, to plan their program. Students are encouraged to take additional coursework in economics, history, political science, psychology, ethnic studies and sociology.

The licensure program extends student development in disciplinary content and in pedagogy, which meets or exceeds Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board Rules 8710.4800: Standards for Teachers of Social Studies. In addition to courses and student teaching, requirements include observations and teaching in classroom settings, including one in a diverse setting. For complete information about the teaching license, see Education.

Courses

EDUC 295: Foundations of Education

This course explores educational experiences in the United States from political, historical, sociological and philosophical lenses. Students also explore their own intersecting identities, cultivate racial literacy, and develop the mindsets and skills of antiracist and culturally responsive-sustaining educators. Students gain practical experience in an educational setting through a required 20-hour field experience. Strongly recommended to be taken fall of sophomore year to begin the licensure sequence; not open to first-year students. Offered during fall semester.

Prerequisite: Not open to first-year students.

EDUC 365: Teaching of Social Studies, 5-12

Students acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes to become successful teachers in the secondary social studies classroom. They use the curriculum standards of the National Council for Social Studies and those identified by the State of Minnesota to develop goals, outcomes, and assessments for the various content areas. Students acquire the knowledge, skills, and understandings necessary to address appropriate skills development in 5-12 social studies classrooms. Required 20-hour field experience component. Offered annually in the spring semester.

Prerequisite: EDUC 330.

See the Education department page in this catalog for more information.

Plan of Study
Social Studies Education Major - Plan of Study

This is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements for the Social Studies Education major at St. Olaf. This tool is meant as a guide and does not replace working closely with the student's academic advisor.

Special Note: All prospective students should read the material in the Education Department section of this catalog and must meet with an Education Department faculty advisor.

See the first year registration guide for more information.

Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
Fall Semester		
FYS 120 or WRIT 120	First-Year Seminar (or Conversation Program) or Writing and Rhetoric	1.00
HIST 199	American History Since 1865	1.00
PSYCH 125	Principles of Psychology	1.00
World Language		1.00
Credits		4
Spring Semester		
WRIT 120 or FYS 120	Writing and Rhetoric (or Conversation Program) or First-Year Seminar	1.00
ECON 121	Principles of Economics	1.00
RACE 121	Introduction to Race and Ethnic Studies	1.00
World Language		1.00
Credits		4
Sophomore Year		
Fall Semester		
EDUC 295	Foundations of Education	1.00
HIST 198	American History to 1865	1.00

PSCI 111	American Politics	1.00
Credits		3
Junior Year		
Fall Semester		
ID 234	Human Geography	1.00
SOAN 264 or SOAN 128	Race and Class in American Culture or Introduction to Cultural Anthropology	1.00
Global Environment Elective		1.00
Credits		3
Spring Semester		
EDUC 365	Teaching of Social Studies, 5-12	1.00
HIST 191	Europe: 1492-Present	1.00
Multicultural Elective		1.00
Credits		3
Senior Year		
Spring Semester		
EDUC 381	Senior Seminar (0.50)	0.50
EDUC 382	Human Relations (0 Cr)	0.00
EDUC 389	Student Teaching (3.0)	3.00
Credits		3.5
Total Credits		20.5

NOTE: Students who wish to complete the Social Studies Education major with Grades 5-12 Teaching Licensure must take all twelve courses required for the major described plus HIST 198 American History to 1865, RACE 121 Introduction to Race and Ethnic Studies, and a prescribed set of education courses and experiences required for licensure. For complete information about the teaching license, see Education. Students must meet with education faculty to plan their program.

Students must successfully complete the equivalent of 35 St. Olaf credits through a combination of full-credit and fractional-credit courses to earn the Bachelor of Arts.

Visit the Social Studies Education department webpage for more information.

Faculty

Director, 2025-26
Courtney A. Humm

Social Studies Educator in Residence and Director of Social Studies Education
social studies education; urban and multicultural education