Secondary Education: History and Social Studies

Your Career and Your Future

1. The rewards of teaching are numerous—happiness, satisfaction, and self-fulfillment in helping young people to make new discoveries, untangle old problems, acquire new skills, gain new understanding. Teachers shape the future by making a difference in the lives of individuals.

2. You will be hired and promoted on the basis of multiple teaching certifications and multiple college degrees. Entry-level positions require a bachelor’s degree (2.75 GPA in major and minor courses), passage of at least two certification exams, and a criminal background check. Passage of additional certifications will allow you to teach English as a Second Language (ESL), dual language instruction, and other subjects, or to occupy administrative and counseling positions. Early college, dual credit, or AP teaching will require graduate-level training in the subject. School-level administrators and counselors now typically have master’s degrees in education or administration; district-level leaders now often hold doctoral degrees in education. Continuous learning and test-passing will be a central part of the rest of your career life.

3. The job outlook for secondary school teachers is mixed. It is projected that through 2016, job growth for teachers is projected to increase by 12 percent, which is in-line with average expected job growth in other industries. Growth for teaching jobs is expected to increase quickest in Georgia, Texas, Arizona, and Nevada. Teachers willing to move and become licensed in multiple subjects will enjoy more job opportunities. Moreover, there are generally more openings in math, science, and bilingual education than in social studies and language arts. While there are fewer open positions in El Paso, districts outside of the city and state recruit here at an annual job fair held each April. You should be prepared to teach multiple subject areas and to find work in communities other than El Paso.

4. Becoming a teacher requires teaching experience. You will visit local schools and spend time in an internship. Outside of your training, look for positions with teaching components, such as tutoring, substitute teaching, peer advising, or teaching assistantships. Cultivate relationships with people who will be able to write letters of recommendation about your teaching ability.

5. Entry-level teaching jobs are often challenging. New teachers are typically assigned to settings that involve long hours, less affluent schools, poorer administrative support, larger classes, less prepared students, and poorer classroom conditions (sometimes not even a classroom). Nationally, 40-50% of newly hired teachers quit within the first five years.

6. There are several ways to begin a career in secondary education. Universities build teacher training into bachelor’s degree programs; a variety of private and for-profit programs also offer alternative certification programs for adults who already have a degree. As of 2011, two out of every five new teachers hired since 2005 had been trained in an alternative program.

7. Some useful resources for keeping up-to-date in this career field include:
   - Education Week (http://www.edweek.org)
   - Relevant Texas Education Agency mailing lists (http://miller.tea.state.tx.us/list/)
GETTING STARTED AT UTEP

8. Use your undergraduate coursework to prepare for as many teaching certifications as possible. You will choose a major field that will prepare you for one content area certification—for example, the History 8-12 degree plan will prepare you to teach U.S. and world history; whereas, the Social Studies 8-12 degree plan will prepare you for history subjects plus geography, government, and economics. You will be tested on all of these subjects so keep course books for future study (especially from freshmen-level survey courses). Once you certify in one subject area you will be able to challenge the certification exams in other areas (even unrelated areas). Use your university core courses and electives to prepare for additional certifications. Use your minor field coursework in secondary education to gain experience in school settings, to learn classroom management skills, and to prepare for the required certification exam in pedagogy and professional responsibilities (PPR).

9. You must apply for admittance to the teacher education program by completing 60 credit hours, maintaining a 2.75 GPA, and passing the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA).

10. In order to complete the UTEP teacher education program you must pass two internal qualifying exams administered by UTEP. The exams prepare you for the two state certification exams in your content area (for example, history or social studies) and in pedagogy and professional responsibilities (PPR). You may take and pass the exams at any time. Most students take them 3-4 times before passing. Note that you will not receive credit for your internship (and therefore be ineligible to graduate) unless you pass both of these exams.

11. In order to obtain a job in secondary education you must pass two certification exams administered by the state (content area and PPR). You may take each exam as soon as you pass the corresponding qualifying exam and some are only offered as few as three times per year. Your application for a job will not even be considered without passing these exams (no matter your grades or experience). You should aim to pass these exams before graduation.

12. In addition to your university tuition, fees, and books be prepared for the following associated costs: $29-50 for the THEA exam, $15 for each qualifying exam attempt (plan for 6-8 attempts), $120 for each certification exam (content and PPR), $52 for background check, $77 for application for state certification, $5 for each copy of your transcript you send to a possible employer. Furthermore, during your internship semester it will be nearly impossible to hold an income-producing job, so plan ahead!

13. You will receive advising assistance from the Academic Advising Center (0-45 credit hours), from professors in your major field (after 45 credit hours), and from the college’s secondary education advisor (at any time in the process). For additional information visit:
   - History and Social Studies teaching (http://academics.utep.edu/historyteaching)
   - Center for Arts and Science Education (http://academics.utep.edu/case)
   - Academic Advising Center (http://academics.utep.edu/advisingcenter)
   - History Teaching listserv (http://listserv.utep.edu/mailman/listinfo/historyteaching)