We need to become, as it were, ecologically literate. Being ecologically literate, or “ecoliterate,” means understanding the principles of organization of ecological communities (ecosystems) and using those principles creating sustainable human communities. We need to revitalize our communities – including our educational communities, business communities, and political communities – so that the principles of ecology become manifest in them as principles of education, management, and politics. – Fritjof Capra (1992)

The course will explore the following questions and others as they arise during our mutual inquiry:

• What is Social Studies, and what should it be?
• Why do we teach Social Studies?
• What are the foundational elements of content and instruction?
• How is Social Studies presented in the BC curriculum?
• How are instructional strategies designed and implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the elementary classroom?
• What are appropriate assessment and evaluation procedures that best meet the needs of elementary students?
• What instructional resources are available and how are they assessed?
• How does Social Studies inform other curriculum areas and vice versa?

This course will explore these philosophical perspectives within the context of a school. We will enact our thinking through observing teaching, instructing children yourselves, and hearing the perspectives of practicing teachers.

This leads us to another purpose of this course. You will have opportunity to develop and articulate your beliefs, understandings, and skills in order to plan, teach, and evaluate a project-based, integrated program

Complexity Thinking is offered as a practical and realistic way of thinking about the study of social systems and serves as an extension to current popular approaches to social studies instruction. Emergent from the Complexity view is an Enactive approach to teaching. An Enactivist approach provides learning experiences through interacting with actual real life objects, events, and context. For example, if a class were to study recycling, they would engage in actually recycling within the school. Rather than only study a concept detached through reading, video, or worksheets, students interact directly with the actual concept. In this way, students create their own personalized understandings which are shared in a social forum.

The main project for this course is a functional project-based, naturally integrated project plan overview that is intended for actual use in your practicum or later teaching. A portion of class time will be allotted so that we can work on this project together.

Rather than the standard unit plan, this project will be developed with a project-based approach and an Enactivist focus. As such, the idea of integration is subtly, yet profoundly different. The world is already integrated. We can discover the interconnections. To try to artificially contrive connections through mixing curriculum among subject areas with some predetermined intent, can result in a loss of relevance. We hope to address curriculum through students’ own interpretation of real world experiences that teachers facilitate and classmates discuss. Emergent understandings are publicly shared.

This will often be seen as a paradigm shift for practicing teachers immersed in PLOs and standard practices. We will have to negotiate a common ground.
1. Weekly Readings

Students are responsible for at least two readings per week. "Readings", for the purpose of this course are defined as relevant articles, text chapters, TED Talks or videos, audio books, or podcasts.

Many of these resources are available from the Social Studies website, but students are welcome to explore sources beyond these recommendations. If such is the case, students should discuss these choices with instructors.

These readings can also be a source of discussion for their online responses which is another professional task of this course described elsewhere.

Required Texts:

- [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/sintro.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/sintro.pdf)
- Other readings as assigned by instructors.

Supplemental Texts:


2. Group or Individual Presentations

The course is designed to reflect the teaching philosophy of Complexity and Enactivism.

Much of the instruction will come from students themselves with instructors taking a role of facilitation. It is model that we will promote for your own teaching philosophy.

As such we will attempt to reduce lecture style teaching and we hope that students will emulate this practice in group and individual presentations on course themes.

We encourage students to motivate their peers to engage in topics that they have researched and have been guided on with instructors. This means a departure from the standard lecture format. We anticipate that students will use their creative talents to present or interact with their classmates through interactive activities, role play, art, music, digital media

We hope students will make critical professional choices in how they will best motivate learning among their peers.
3. Online Responses

You will respond to class discussion, readings, and investigations in order to clarify your beliefs, expand your understanding, and critically reflect on the topics and issues of the course. This will enable you to personalize your learning and help you build a foundation for your teaching. This response journal will take the form of e-mail messages to the instructors who may respond in kind to address your personal interests, questions, and issues.

4. Project Plan

It is intended that this Project Plan or parts of it will be used by you in your practicum and/or subsequent teaching.

Begin your Project Plan with a description of the children that you will be teaching!

Think Big Picture! What is the big project that your students will be enthusiastic about investigating? It doesn't have to come from Social Studies IRPs - that comes later. You will discover that elements of other subject areas will naturally emerge in a meaningfully integrated way.

Plan a sequence of eight to twelve lessons or activities with evaluation strategies, which are intended to develop one concept.

You are encouraged to work with others who are working with a similar grade level or topic. These groups are not necessarily permanent nor are you expected to develop exactly the same project. There may be overlap. You will get feedback. You can share ideas. You may develop a common template with different content.

The overview will include a rationale, objectives, strategies, activities, resources, and assessment criteria with a variety of methods.

At least 3 lessons should be fully developed.

Include a Resource Critique:
  • A brief, one sentence description
  • Availability (i.e. where you can get it)
  • Cautions and strengths

Create a hands-on kiosk display of the project (and resources) for the Project Expo on the last day of class.

The criteria for passing this course include:
  • Completing all tasks, and
  • Making positive contributions to class activities and discussions.
Appendices

Appendix A: Complexity and Social Systems--An Example

Growing a Community

For students to be able to understand and to participate in a community, they need to first develop a sense of community which provides the context in which learning can be enacted.

*Where is the Democracy Kit?*

Our society expects solutions, quick cures, concrete methods, formulas, ready-made techniques, and transferable programs. “...Something practical that I can use on Monday morning.”

Dynamic, “living” systems cannot be assembled, they must be grown. This means each system is different. What works in one may not work in another.

Applying Complexity Thinking to Community:

If community is regarded as a living system, we cannot “build” communities from parts or programs (the kids, teacher, classroom, methods, curriculum, administration). Rather than building communities, we must grow communities from small beginnings:

• takes time (and patience)
• unpredictable
• continuous growth, rather than a final product
• each community is unique, elements are not necessarily transferable

We cannot answer the *How to* question in specific terms but, by using complexity as a metaphor, general principles can be offered as guidance:

- **Disequilibrium** - process, dynamic, continual change, reflection
- **Order and Chaos** - edge of chaos - the changing ‘space’ where responsibility and autonomy intertwine
- **Self-Organization** - each community creates itself based on its unique strengths and styles through interaction among its members and its environment
- **Emergent Properties** - characteristics, activities, repeating themes unique to that group which are features of the community as a whole but not present in its individual members.
- **Ecology** - a concern for the interconnectedness of all community members with each other and with its environment
- **Evolution** - continuous growth, change - not endings, resolutions - community members and the environment co-evolve
- **Consciousness** - shared consciousness, shared values

Appendix B: Lesson Preparation

An inclusive curriculum is “constructed” on the basis of required content and student needs, rather than simply “delivered” in a standard way. From this perspective the notion of “lesson planning,” which either ignores or presupposes learner response, is replaced by “lesson preparation,” which provides a clear framework of intents but assumes that actual classroom activities must be adapted or even initiated on the fly according to student responses, both individual and collective. (Beairsto, J.A.B. (2001). A Framework for Learning in the Richmond School District. Publication of the Richmond School District. Richmond, British Columbia, Canada., p. 6)

Possible headings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Lesson Closure (Summary, Review,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Celebration, What comes next?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objective</td>
<td>Development of Lesson (What</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IRP, Student Needs/</td>
<td>does the teacher do? What do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests,</td>
<td>the students do? What are</td>
<td>Adaptations/Extensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Professional Choice)</td>
<td>potential problems?)</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>