

Good afternoon:

I am Christopher Collier, Professor of History Emeritus, University of Connecticut. For twenty years I was the official Connecticut State Historian. For forty-five years I was a classroom teacher at the secondary and college levels. For a year I taught methods of teaching history at Columbia's Teachers College. I have published many scholarly and popular books and articles, including eight historical novels and a 23-volume history of the United States used in middle and high school classrooms all across the country. In association with my historical novels I have visited, over the past thirty years, hundreds of classrooms and observed hundreds of teachers teaching American history.

I have recently published a 900-page history of Connecticut's public schools from their beginnings in 1650 to 2000. In that work I pay a great deal of attention to the development of pedagogical theory and practice over the centuries.

If there is one observation that I can make with great confidence, it is that today a very high proportion of our teachers, grades 7 – 12, are not adequately grounded in the substance of history – American and World. This is especially the case at the 7th and 8th-grade levels. (At the lower grades it is even more marked.) I have been appalled at the naivete and lack of historiographic sophistication evinced by (especially young) teachers in high school classrooms.

What the overwhelming majority of social studies teachers teach is straight forward history. What they need is far more formal study of history than they are now getting. I suggest that at least six one-semester courses beyond the four semesters of survey courses that are now required should be minimal. It is not just hard facts that are wanted; it is a sound grounding in historiography that trains students to think like historians, master the techniques of historical research, and learn how to analyze and synthesize historical materials.

Very few social studies teachers in Connecticut high schools teach economics, sociology, psychology, geography, etc: They teach history. They should know what they are talking about.

Thank you.

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