



Multidisciplinary Civics with Primary Sources

Educators with no foundational training in teaching inquiry with primary sources from the Library of Congress may wish to begin with the Inquiry with Primary Sources TPS micro-credential prior to completing this one.

Competency

Educator uses inquiry learning with primary sources to enhance students' civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions across one or more disciplines.

Key Method

Educator develops and analyzes a multidisciplinary civics lesson using inquiry and primary sources.

Method Components

Why Civics?

The American public education system was originally developed to create good *citizens*, not good workers, able to take part in shaping and determining the direction of the country. Civic education is getting more attention these days, but there is still a long way to go both in terms of access and funding. While some may argue that today's generation of students is increasingly more politically aware and energized, they often lack the basic understanding of civics and civic action to fully support our democratic traditions.



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In the *Guardian of Democracy: the Civic Mission of Schools* report (see Research), Lee H. Hamilton, founder of the Center on Congress and U.S. Representative from Indiana (1965-99), wrote:

“Citizenship requires both knowledge about government and the ability to be involved in governance. It means knowing how to identify and inform yourself about issues, explore and evaluate possible solutions, and then act to resolve problems. It demands that you know how to interact respectfully with others. And it asks that you accept responsibility for meeting your community’s and the nation’s challenges.”

Research over the past few decades consistently identifies three key components to civics education: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions.

Civic knowledge: an understanding of American government structure, including the purposes, values, and principles of democracy it embodies; government process as carried out at home in America and in its relationships with other nations in both historical and contemporary contexts; and the roles of ordinary citizens in American democracy as active participants in the political process working to help improve the quality of life locally, nationally, and globally.

Civic skills: the ability to employ investigative, critical thinking, and informational literacy skills to use one’s voice and to collaborate to affect change. Specific skills include the ability to identify, describe, interpret, and analyze functions, processes, patterns, and trends; evaluate, take, and defend positions; and collaborate and communicate with others.

Civic dispositions: commitment to adopting attitudes, traits, and behaviors that support both personal voice and agency along with respect for others and concern for their welfare; creating community through compromise; and accepting the rule of law.

It is of primary importance to begin teaching and fomenting civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions at a young age and to continue that education across the years. To best do this, civics education must be multidisciplinary, cutting across all disciplines just as civic life does.

Inquiry, Primary Sources, & Preparation for Civic Life

Inquiry is a process of active learning that is driven by questioning and critical thinking that leads to increased student engagement and deeper understanding of content. Inquiry learning is a recursive and reflective process.



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Primary sources, [as described by the Library of Congress](#), “are the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study. Primary sources represent authentic voices and images that engage students both emotionally and personally, naturally engaging them in inquiry as they question, make inferences, interpret different points of view, use critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate, draw conclusions and build bridges between past and present.

Teaching with primary sources, no matter the content focus, provides students with the skills necessary to be competent and active citizens. Digging into primary sources and grappling directly with different perspectives provides students practice in information literacy skills that they will employ in numerous contexts throughout their lives.

When students work with primary sources they learn how to think more holistically about people, events, and issues. Analyzing primary sources to investigate competing viewpoints while considering bias and purpose helps students to better contemplate complex themes and topics and draw conclusions about them. Because these skills help develop the ability to make connections across time and disciplines, students end up better prepared to consider the significance of their learning to contemporary life.

Supporting Rationale and Research

The Case for Civics

Gould, Jonathan, et al. “Benefits of Civic Learning,” *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*, The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011.

<http://civicmission.s3.amazonaws.com/118/f0/5/171/1/Guardian-of-Democracy-report.pdf>

Suggested reading: pp. 16-22

Lee, Carol, et al., editors. “Recommendations for Practice,” pp. 401-406 in “*Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse*,” National Academy of Education, 2021.

<https://naeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NAEd-Educating-for-Civic-Reasoning-and-Discourse.pdf>



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Levine, Peter and Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg. "What Works: The Republic is (Still) at Risk—and Civics is Part of the Solution," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University, 2017.

<https://www.civxnow.org/sites/default/files/resources/SummitWhitePaper.pdf>

Suggested reading: pp. 1-11

Mouritsen, Per and Astrid Jaeger. "Goals of Civic Education," Designing Civic Education for Diverse Societies, Migration Policy Institute Europe, February 2018.

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/CivicEducationDiverseSocieties-FINALWEB.pdf>

Suggested reading: pp. 10-12

[Research Highlight — Civic Education Landscape Analysis](#) CivXNow Q&A with Raj Vinnakota, Medium, October 29, 2019.

<https://medium.com/civxnow/research-highlight-civic-education-landscape-analysis-3e07437c7a04>

Suggested reading: review the researcher's answer to the following question: What are the most important themes from your research and this paper?

Vinnakota, Raj. "From Civic Education to a Civic Learning Ecosystem: A Landscape Analysis and Case for Collaboration," Red & Blue Works, November 2019.

https://rbw.civic-learning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CE_online.pdf

Suggested reading: review the chart, Civic Education to Civic Learning, on p. 11

Strategies for Multidisciplinary Civics

"The Arts as Civic Commons," Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/arts-as-civic-commons>

Blevins, Brooke and Karon LeCompte. "I Am Engaged: Action Civics in Four Steps," *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 27 (4), March/April 2015, pp. 23–26, National Council for the Social Studies.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Brooke-Blevins/publication/281639180_I_am_engaged_Action_civics_in_four_steps/links/55f1b07908ae0af8ee1f6261/I-am-engaged-Action-civics-in-four-steps.pdf

Fraker, Jennifer et al. "Can the Civics Test Make You a Good Citizen? Reconciling the Civics Test with Inquiry-Based Instruction," *Social Education* 83(6), November/December 2019, p. 343–349, National Council for the Social Studies.

https://www.socialstudies.org/system/files/2020-06/se_8306343.pdf



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Potter, Lee Ann. "Teaching Civics with Primary Source Documents," *Social Education* 69(7), November/December 2005, pp. 358–359, National Council for the Social Studies.

<https://www.socialstudies.org/teaching-civics-primary-source-documents>

"Science & Civics: A Guide for Collaborative Action," The Aspen Institute, February 2, 2017.

<https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Science-and-Civics-Report-2.pdf>

Stotsky, Sandra. "Connecting Reading and Writing to Civic Education," *Educational Leadership*, Volume 47, Number 6, March 1990, ASCD.

http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_199003_stotsky.pdf

Swan, Kathy. "Why Inquiry Part 1," Making Inquiry Possible Project, C3 Teachers and the University of Kentucky's College of Education.

<https://vimeo.com/505959565/168664106a>

Suggested watching: to minute 3:07

Swan, Kathy et al. "Questions, Tasks, Sources: Focusing on the Essence of Inquiry," *Social Education* 82(3), May/June 2018, pp. 133–137, National Council for the Social Studies.

https://www.socialstudies.org/system/files/publications/articles/se_8203133_1.pdf

"Why Teach with an Interdisciplinary Approach?" Starting Point: Teaching & Learning Economics, Science Education Resource Center at Carleton College.

<https://serc.carleton.edu/econ/interdisciplinary/why.html>

Resources

The Case for Civics

[News for Students & Parents: Why Civics?](#)

[Why Civics?](#)

[The Insurrection Highlights the Need for Civics Learning \(Opinion\)](#)

[Culturally Sustaining Civics: Questioning the Civic Achievement Gap](#)

[Equity in Civic Education — Improving How We Teach Black and LatinX Students in Low-Income Areas | by CivXNow](#)



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[Primary Source Learning: Information Literacy & Inquiry](#)

[Unpacking Civic Engagement](#)

[Civic Knowledge Skills Dispositions Summary](#)

[Political Typology Quiz, Pew Research Center](#)

Strategies & Tools for Multidisciplinary Civics

[A Cornucopia of Multidisciplinary Teaching | Edutopia](#)

[3 Ways to Improve Civics Education | EDC](#)

[Critical Literacy, Civic Engagement and Connected Learning in the Classroom](#)

[Finding Support for Teaching Civic Literacy Skills in the Common Core Standards](#)

[Math: The Most Powerful Civics Lesson You've Never Had](#)

[ArtC Handbook | Project Zero](#)

[15. Interdisciplinary Lessons : Civics for All](#)

[Lesson Plans Archive - Citizen U®](#)

- [Lesson Plan Criteria](#)

[Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson Planner Template](#)

[Peer Review Template for Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson](#)

[Analysis of Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson Template](#)

[Analyzing Primary Sources: Strategies & Activities](#)

Note: Please do not feel like you must review all the resources contained in this blog post, rather use those most pertinent to you and your situation.

[Primary Source Analysis Tool](#)



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[Analyzing Primary Sources: Tools & Guides](#)

Note: Please do not feel like you must review all the resources contained in this blog post, rather use those most pertinent to you and your situation.

Primary Source Repositories

[Library of Congress](#)

[About this Collection | World Digital Library](#)

[Chronicling America](#)

[American Archive of Public Broadcasting](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and receive a proficient score for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview

(300-600 words)

Please copy and paste the following contextual prompts and questions into a document and respond to them without including any identifying information.

1. The civic temperature at your school
 - Take no more than 2 minutes to write down the first 8-10 words that come to mind when you hear the word “government.”
 - Repeat this exercise for the word “politics.”
 - Repeat this exercise for the word “community.”
 - Ask some of your grade-band colleagues to do the same, and collect the lists.
 - Enter the words generated in the first into two separate word clouds (e.g., Wordle, WordItOut, Tagxedo, etc.).
 - Insert the word clouds into the document and write a short reflection of this exercise and any insight/impact your findings might have on teaching civics in your school.



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2. Knowing your political self
 - Take the Pew Research Center [Political Typology quiz](#).
 - Reflect on what you learned from completing the quiz by answering the following questions (be sure to leave out any self-identifying information): Were the questions difficult to answer? Do you think your placement was more or less accurate? Were you surprised in any way?
3. Civic education in your classroom
 - What do you believe is your responsibility for civic education in your classroom, and how have you taken action to live this responsibility?
4. Civics for your students
 - Reflect on your students' identities and their unique lived experiences. Make a list of key civics skills and dispositions you would like to teach your students.

Passing: Responses provide reasonable and accurate information that justifies the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address specific needs of both teacher and students, including areas of instruction that could be enhanced through inquiry learning with primary sources to foster civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Part 2. Artifacts

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **4** artifacts as evidence of your learning. *Do not include any identifiable information.*

Artifact 1: Lesson Planning Document

The ways to connect your curriculum to civics content are really endless and will just take a bit of creative thinking to identify. Topics with local relevance or about current events are especially engaging to students. Consult the [Citizen U Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson Library](#) in your subject area or others in the Resources on Strategies for Multidisciplinary Civics to spark some ideas.

Keeping in mind the topics involved in your own curriculum, first do some thinking. Do you have an existing lesson plan you'd like to revamp? Is there a particular content strand you'd like to target? Brainstorm a civics connection and relevant primary sources you might consider. Are there laws on the books or up for debate around issues related to your content? Are there controversial issues in your subject area or issues on which students can take a position? This is the place for those stories you hear on the news and want to share with your students because



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of their contemporary relevance and curricular connections. Then consider different kinds of primary sources that might spark and deepen inquiry. Download or make a copy of the [Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson Planner Template](#) and use it to sketch out your initial ideas and begin your research and lesson preparation. Take notes as you conduct research on the background of your chosen topic, and be sure to cite your sources in the Resources section of the planning document.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Upload your completed lesson planning document.

Artifact 2: Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson Plan

Using the work you noted in your lesson planning document, design a lesson plan for use with your own students. You may use your preferred lesson plan format as long as it includes all of the criteria listed in the rubric.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Upload your Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson Plan.

Artifact 3: Lesson Evidence

If possible, implement your lesson plan with your students, and submit 4-6 examples of student work or a video of lesson implementation (follow your district's privacy policies, procedures, and guidelines when recording video of students).

If lesson implementation is not possible, identify 2 colleagues willing to complete a peer review of your lesson plan. Provide each with a copy of your lesson plan and a copy of the [Peer Review Template for Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson](#). Be sure to point out any specific areas where you'd like targeted feedback.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Combine each piece of evidence into one document for uploading.

NOTE: To submit handwritten student work or completed peer reviews, simply take pictures of each piece of evidence and insert the files into a single document. To submit video evidence, load it to a shareable platform and enter the shareable link in a document along with a brief description of the evidence. Make sure that the video is not set to Private, as it will need to be accessed by members of our Assessment Team anonymously. If the video is set to require a password to access



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it, please include the password below the link in the document. Click the linked site names for step-by-step instructions on uploading and sharing a video on [YouTube](#) or [DropBox](#).

Artifact 4: Lesson Analysis

After reviewing student work, lesson implementation video, or the peer reviews, next download or make a copy of the [Analysis of Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson Template](#) and use it to discuss what the process was like for you to teach or receive feedback and how you'll modify your lesson plan as a result.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Upload your completed lesson analysis.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Lesson Planning Document	<p>Lesson planning document includes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explanations of ties to curriculum, civics, and primary sources ideas for initial plans for using primary sources and classroom activities that engage students with inquiry and action links to relevant articles, websites, news sources, and other reliable 	<p>Lesson planning document includes most, but not all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explanations of ties to curriculum, civics, and primary sources ideas for initial plans for using primary sources and classroom activities that engage students with inquiry and action links to relevant articles, websites, news sources, and other reliable 	<p>Lesson planning document includes some of the following::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explanations of ties to curriculum, civics, and primary sources ideas for initial plans for using primary sources and classroom activities that engage students with inquiry and action links to relevant articles, websites, news sources, and other reliable



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	sources related to the chosen topic	sources related to the chosen topic	sources related to the chosen topic
Artifact 2: Multidisciplinary Civics Lesson Plan	<p>Lesson plan includes all of the following:</p> <p>has a multidisciplinary subject focus: civics + at least one other discipline</p> <p>identifies the civics knowledge, skills, or dispositions the lesson supports</p> <p>is targeted towards appropriate grade band(s)</p> <p>includes tasks/ activities using 1 or more primary sources from the Library of Congress or an affiliated repository</p> <p>begins with a task/activity that sparks inquiry</p> <p>follows up with tasks/ activities to deepen inquiry through further student investigations</p> <p>concludes with a task/ activity that</p>	<p>Lesson plan includes most, but not all, of the following:</p> <p>has a multidisciplinary subject focus: civics + at least one other discipline</p> <p>identifies the civics knowledge, skills, or dispositions the lesson supports</p> <p>is targeted towards appropriate grade band(s)</p> <p>includes tasks/ activities using 1 or more primary sources from the Library of Congress or an affiliated repository</p> <p>begins with a task/activity that sparks inquiry</p> <p>follows up with tasks/ activities to deepen inquiry through further student investigations</p> <p>concludes with a task/ activity that</p>	<p>Lesson plan includes some of the following:</p> <p>has a multidisciplinary subject focus: civics + at least one other discipline</p> <p>identifies the civics knowledge, skills, or dispositions the lesson supports</p> <p>is targeted towards appropriate grade band(s)</p> <p>includes tasks/ activities using 1 or more primary sources from the Library of Congress or an affiliated repository</p> <p>begins with a task/activity that sparks inquiry</p> <p>follows up with tasks/ activities to deepen inquiry through further student investigations</p> <p>concludes with a task/ activity that</p>



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	has students applying their learning by taking action that makes contemporary/ personal connections	has students applying their learning by taking action that makes contemporary/ personal connections	has students applying their learning by taking action that makes contemporary/ personal connections
Artifact 3: Lesson Evidence	Lesson evidence includes 1 of the following 3 options: 4-6 examples of student work with primary sources, at least 1 for each primary source used video of lesson implementation 2 completed Peer Reviews	Lesson evidence includes 1 of the following 3 options: 3-4 examples of student work with primary sources video of lesson implementation 2 completed Peer Reviews	Lesson evidence includes 1 of the following 3 options: 2-3 examples of student work with primary sources video of portion of lesson implementation 1 completed Peer Review
Artifact 4: Lesson Analysis	Lesson analysis (400-800 words) includes all of the following: function and impact of selected primary source(s) function and impact of inquiry in promoting civic knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions key takeaways from	Lesson analysis (400-800 words) includes most, but not all, of the following: function and impact of selected primary source(s) function and impact of inquiry in promoting civic knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions	Lesson analysis (400-800 words) includes some of the following function and impact of selected primary source(s) function and impact of inquiry in promoting civic knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions key takeaways from



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	student work or peer feedback changes or adjustments for the future	key takeaways from student work or peer feedback changes or adjustments for the future	student work or peer feedback changes or adjustments for the future
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Part 3. Reflection

(300-600 words)

Please copy and paste the following reflective prompts and questions into a document and respond to them without including any identifying information.

Consider how inquiry-based learning with primary sources across the curriculum supports the development of students' civics knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions.

Then address the following:

1. Describe how you used, or will use, inquiry learning with primary sources to enhance students' civics knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions across disciplines. How did the lesson work, or how do you anticipate it will work with your students?
2. How did you adjust your work throughout the process of developing and analyzing the student work or peer reviews? How might you improve your teaching of multidisciplinary civics using inquiry and primary source analysis with students in the future?
3. Write a note to parents about your lesson specifically and/or the idea of multidisciplinary civics education generally as a beneficial pursuit for students and the community.

Passing: Reflection provides evidence that this lesson has had a positive impact on both educator practice and student success. Specific examples are cited directly from personal or work related experiences to support claims. Also included are specific actionable steps that demonstrate how new learning will be integrated into future practices.



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Credits

This micro-credential was developed with content and expertise from Citizen U as part of the Barat Education Foundation Library of Congress TPS program grant.

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