

### Teaching Arkansas Students to Be Good Citizens: Research on Civic Education

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### The State of Civic Education

- ☞ Rogers notes a combination of factors have combined to weaken *informal civic education (ICE)* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:
  - Decline of the nuclear family
  - Increased television consumption
  - Women joining the workforce
  - Language of authority in media
  - Decline in public trust (Watergate, Vietnam)
  - Checkbook membership of interest groups has replaced grassroots membership
  - Decline of partisan identification and rise of independents in the U.S. electorate

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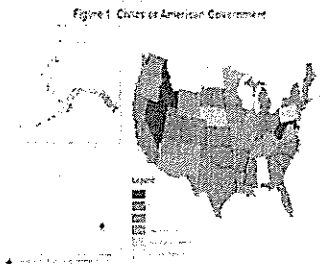
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### Formal Civic Education (FCE)

- ☞ Rogers: What is the state of *formal civic education (FCE)* in public schools?
- ☞ civic mandates by states for secondary education reveal:
  - Most states average 1 semester or .5 Carnegie units (CU) of U.S. government
  - 22 (\*24) / 50 states
  - \* States adding req.



Map created by Joseph Swain & Michael Rogers using data from Dennis Jenifer, 2007. "Standard High School Graduation Requirements (50 States)," Education Commission of the States 2007. <http://www2.ecs.org/reports/Report.asp?r=125>.

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### Secondary FCE: State and Local Politics

☒ Rogers finds secondary-level FCE **LACKS** mandated coverage of state and local politics

☒ Only 1 state (WA) mandates any CU

☒ 5 (\*6) states mandate some coverage (no CU)

☒ 84% of states fail to mandate coverage

Figure 2: State Government

Map created by Joseph Girvin & Michael Rogers using data from Deary, Jennifer. 2007. "Standard High School Graduation Requirements (50 States)." Education Commission of the States. 2007. <http://mb2.ectes.org/reports/Report.aspx?R=735>.

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### Public Opinion on a High School Civics Exam

☒ Ash and Stewart report a 2006 survey of 403 Arkansans found:

- 75% of participants supported, or strongly supported, passage of a citizenship exam by high school students for graduation
- Only 20% opposed, or strongly opposed, such a measure

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### Recommended Additions for Secondary Education

1. **Mandate 1 CU of civics** (.5 U.S. national government & .5 Arkansas state & local government)
  - Only 16% of states mandate coverage of both
  - Only 10% approach 1 CU of civics
  - Arkansas: Norm WAS 1 CU but only .5 CU mandate
  - Recent addition of .5 CU of economics forced schools to CUT civics back to .5 CU mandate
  - *Recommend adding a mandate for .5 CU of Arkansas state and local government*
2. **Move civics requirement to 12<sup>th</sup> grade only**
  - Best practice: Most states time civics requirement right before students become voters but norm in Arkansas is 9<sup>th</sup> grade

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## Recommended Additions for Secondary Education

3. *Require passage of civics exam for graduation*

4. *Mandate two consecutive years of U.S. history between grades 9-11*

- Would enable history teachers to spend sufficient time on the Founding and there would be an incentive to do so if Arkansas required a civics exam for graduation

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## Recommendations for Teacher Preparation

1. **Eliminate social studies licensure for high school history and U.S. government teachers**

- Require history or political science as their majors

2. **Develop a teacher preparation program for US government and US history (not Social Studies)**

- Social science approach dilutes content coverage of history and government too much
- Praxis II exam inadequate as too many extraneous subjects (Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, etc.)
- Require specific licensure tests for US gov't and US history (to include world history)

3. **Require all U.S. government and history teachers to participate once every five years in a five-day We the People summer institute.**

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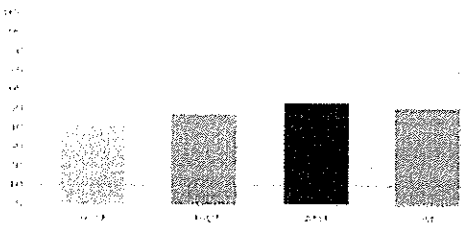
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## Collegiate Civics Assessments in Arkansas and Nationally (ISI)

• Gooch and Rogers find average student scores on civics assessments well below 60% requirement for naturalization



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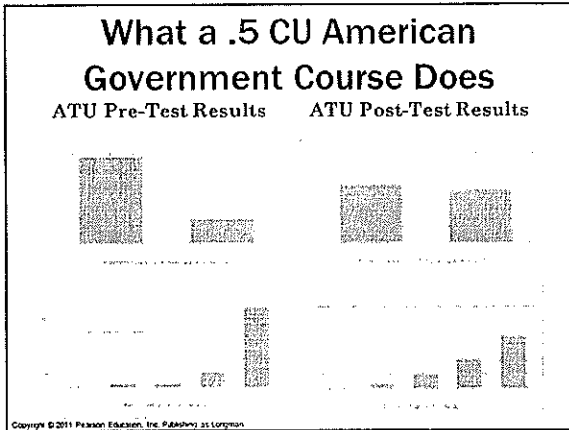
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### Survey of Arkansas Colleges

43 Warner and Sebold contacted 44 coordinators of American national government (ANG) for colleges and universities in Arkansas

- 17 coordinators completed a survey that revealed colleges and universities in Fall 2009:
  - Collectively averaged 8 sections of ANG
  - Collectively averaged 43 students/section
  - Had greatly varying section sizes as small as 1 section with 20 students (Ouachita Baptist College), to 11 sections with 100 students (University of Arkansas-Fayetteville)
- *Two four-year private universities and one two-year college did not offer any ANG classes.*

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### Recommendation for Higher Education

1. *Mandate study of U.S. government and Arkansas State Government*
  - Recommend same standard as secondary education (1 CU with .5 CU for U.S. government and .5 for state and local government)
  - Minimally, mandate coverage of each
2. *At minimum mandate students study U.S. Constitution and Arkansas State Constitution*
  - Follow standard set by IL, MO, TX and WY

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### Recommendation for State Department of Education

1. Regularly review collegiate course offerings to ensure prospective teachers of U.S. history and government have had course content that addresses the National Standards for Civics and Government published in 1994 by the Center for Civic Education (CCE 1994)

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### Conclusion: State Emphasis of Civics Does Matter!

- Warner and Sebold emphasize the example of Georgia
  - 2006 ranked highest among states in college-degree completion
  - Georgia emphasizes pre-college level civics and even gives students a text designed to prepare them for a Georgia Government Exam
  - Georgia Text notes, "Ours is not a spectator government but a participatory one. We must become knowledgeable and participate if we are to maintain our Republic as created by the Founders."

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