

Don't Mess with Us, Texas



I am driving off to the [Society for Historians of the Early Republic \(SHEAR\) annual meeting](#) in beautiful downtown Springfield, Illinois, this morning. Worthwhile national history conferences in easy ground transportation range of mid-Missouri are something of a rarity, so I would not miss it. Perhaps I will “live blog” some of the proceedings. Also, perhaps I won't.



Just one brief item before I go: Dan Mandell of Truman State called my attention to [a Wall Street Journal article](#) discussing the latest target for Texas shootin' irons in the educational culture wars: our own field of U.S. history. This kind of history standards debate is not new, of course – we can say a little prayer of thanks that Lynne Cheney never got her own CIA hit squad, or whatever Dick's most recently revealed scheme turns out to have been. Yet back in the day, it was usually conservatives complaining about what was left out of the [National History Standards](#); in present-day Texas, they are looking to put a tendentiously right-wing Christian view of American history *into* the public schools. The agenda seems to go considerably beyond LCheney-like complaints about the insufficient love given to George Washington. I will supply some key passages for myself or others to take up in the comments or later. The whole thing is worth reading, if you are feeling calm:

The fight over school curriculum in Texas, recently focused on biology, has entered a new arena, with a brewing debate over how much faith belongs in American history classrooms.

The Texas Board of Education, which recently approved new science standards that made room for creationist critiques of evolution, is revising the state's

social studies curriculum. In early recommendations from outside experts appointed by the board, a divide has opened over how central religious theology should be to the teaching of history.

Three reviewers, appointed by social conservatives, have recommended revamping the K-12 curriculum to emphasize the roles of the Bible, the Christian faith, and the civic virtue of religion in the study of American history. Two of them want to remove or de-emphasize references to several historical figures who have become liberal icons, such as César Chávez and Thurgood Marshall.

“We’re in an all-out moral and spiritual civil war for the soul of America, and the record of American history is right at the heart of it,” said Rev. Peter Marshall, a Christian minister and one of the reviewers appointed by the conservative camp. . . .

The three reviewers appointed by the moderate and liberal board members are all professors of history or education at Texas universities, including Mr. de la Teja, a former state historian. The reviewers appointed by conservatives include two who run conservative Christian organizations: David Barton, founder of WallBuilders, a group that promotes America’s Christian heritage; and Rev. Marshall, who preaches that Watergate, the Vietnam War, and Hurricane Katrina were God’s judgments on the nation’s sexual immorality. The third is Daniel Dreisbach, a professor of public affairs at American University.

The conservative reviewers say they believe that children must learn that America’s founding principles are biblical. For instance, they say the separation of powers set forth in the Constitution stems from a scriptural understanding of man’s fall and inherent sinfulness, or “radical depravity,” which means he can be governed only by an intricate system of checks and balances.

Colonial historians, would you like to take a guess about what figure some of the Texas reviewers wanted removed from the curriculum, apparently as part of this biblical program? From the specific suggestions listed at the end of the story:



- Delete Anne Hutchinson from a list of colonial leaders

Students learn about colonial history in the fifth grade, and three reviewers suggested that the standards not include Anne Hutchinson, a 17th century figure, among a list of significant leaders. Ms. Hutchinson was exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for teaching religious views at odds with the officially sanctioned faith.

So rebellious female Christians just don't count when it comes to America's biblical principles, and/or Puritan orthodoxy is alive and well deep in the heart of Texas. I don't think that's what Bob Wills intended, do you?

Now playing: [Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys – Cotton Eyed Joe](#)

This article originally appeared in issue 9.4 (January, 2009).

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