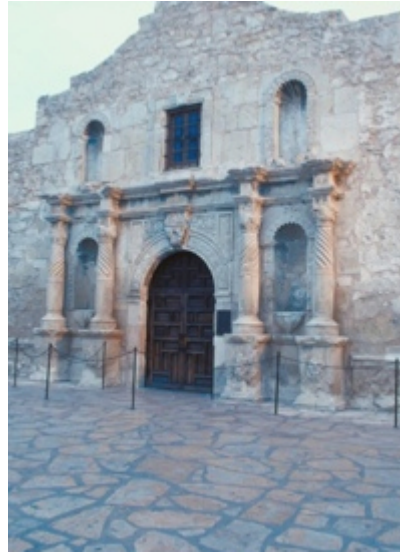




Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 17, 2010

Texas Textbook Massacre

New textbook standards approved in Texas are poised to revolutionize public-school curricula nationwide, and liberal educators are furious. Every year the Texas State Board of Education revises a particular subject curriculum, outlining rules that school districts must follow in purchasing teaching materials with state money. Since Texas is the single largest purchaser of textbooks in the country, it holds sway over content of books available on the market to all states.



This year's revisions focus on the social studies curriculum and promote a more patriotic position than current texts endorse, according to Cynthia Dunbar, one of 10 Republicans on the 15-member board. The revisions were codified at a [full board meeting](#) in Austin, Texas, last week and are up for a final vote in May.

"I think [the standards] are pro-American, but not to the extent that the other side is saying we're whitewashing history," explained Dunbar in a March 15 [Fox News](#) interview. A [Wall Street Journal](#) editorial belittled her for calling public education "clearly tyrannical" and a "subtly deceptive tool of perversion" in her 2008 book *One Nation Under God*. The article said critics view the school board as "a sort of Texas inquisition, in which buffoons who believe they're authorities hand down half-baked opinions from overstuffed chairs."

The new social studies revisions include:

- an "America is exceptional" theme;
- changes in the Middle East curriculum;
- broad use of terms like *free enterprise* and *expansionism* instead of *capitalism* and *imperialism*, respectively;
- a requirement to "analyze any unintended consequences" of 1960 reforms such as affirmative action;
- inclusion of information about "communist infiltration in the U.S. government," vindicating Senator Joseph McCarthy;
- use of the term "constitutional republic" rather than "democratic" or "representative democracy" in reference to the U.S. form of government;
- de-emphasis on the history of the civil rights movement and on the concept of separation of church and state;
- emphasis on the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms;



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- use of traditional date references as B.C. and A.D. rather than B.C.E. and C.E.;
- removal of the term “Enlightenment ideas” from reference to political revolutions;
- exclusion of art work involving nude figures; and
- analysis of devaluation of the dollar since the inception of the Federal Reserve and abandonment of the gold standard.

Dunbar explained the board’s efforts as necessary “clean-up” of a curriculum tainted with a “subtle trend” toward negativity about America, which explains their reason for using terms like *free enterprise* in place of *capitalism*. “We wanted to make sure ... there was a patriotic position promoted, because America, after all, is still the greatest nation on Earth.”

Critics view the changes as part of a right-wing conspiracy. “Religious conservatives began a concerted effort to take control of the state board beginning in 1992” when it became a “culture war battleground” bewails the Texas Freedom Network ([TFN](#)), which bills itself as an organization founded “to counter the religious right.” It accuses the board of poor scholarship in enacting “numerous and outrageously foolish, intolerant and ignorant changes based on little more than their own (limited) knowledge and personal beliefs.” TFN spokesman Kathy Miller complained in a [Fox News](#) broadcast, “This is not a good way to make sound education policy.”

The [Washington Post](#) quotes one textbook author, Paul S. Boyer, expressing his uneasiness. “I’m made uncomfortable by mandates of this kind,” said the University of Wisconsin-Madison professor. He worries the changes might make him reluctant to endorse his own work.

Yet others are less quick to judge. “If the textbooks are shifting right, is that a departure from accuracy or a move toward it?” queried [Dallas Morning News](#) columnist Mark Davis.

Jonathan Saenz with the conservative think-tank Free Market Foundation (FMF) told *Fox News*, “What [critics] support is a review committee that took out Independence Day, a review committee that took out Veterans Day, a review committee that took out Christmas, took out Rosh Hashanah, took out Neil Armstrong and Albert Einstein.” Saenz explained FMF’s involvement in the textbook wars, saying, “We’re trying to make sure that any religious heritage of our nation is not censored.”

As to rumors the Texas school board stripped Thomas Jefferson from the school curriculum, Dunbar chuckled, “Thomas Jefferson is still in.”

The board adopted new science standards last year after an equally controversial battle over creationism versus evolution, acknowledged as a conservative victory. In 2008, updates to language arts standards were enacted. A full webcast of last week’s board meeting about the social studies curriculum is available at [this link](#).

Photo: The Alamo



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