

Reviews

From the Reviews Editor

Teaching history is one of my most favorite things to do. As a former high school teacher and now an assistant professor of history at the University of Colorado Boulder, I feel privileged to teach students important stories about the past that help explain the present, something that remains increasingly relevant and urgent each semester. Witnessing students arrive at an “aha!” moment after reading a primary source I’ve carefully selected to provoke that precise reaction *never* gets old and is always so gratifying—if you know, you know.

Teaching history is also intellectually rewarding for me. Teaching is where I attempt to solve persistent pedagogical puzzles I see in my courses. How can I make dense and complicated narratives legible to the novice historians in my undergraduate classroom? What precise skills do they need to be successful in developing an evidence-based answer to a historical question, and what opportunities can I give them to practice this regularly? How can I empower my students to ask critical questions about the past, especially at the risk of being discomforted by the answers they may find? This aspect of teaching makes my job worthwhile because of the possibilities it yields for helping students understand the complexity and nuance of both the past *and* the present.

Any history educator reading this is likely nodding along, knowing all too well the pedagogical obstacles we face, as well as the joy we feel, when teaching historical literacy to our students. In these first few years on the tenure-track at CU-Boulder, I have found these challenges—despite how frustrating it is at times to overcome them—as intellectually satisfying as working on a scholarly article or chapter in my manuscript. I turn to history education research, such as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in History, to help me devise potential solutions to these problems. I implement these in my courses and gather information about what did and did not work. I adjust my course material, assignments, and instruction accordingly—and then try again the next semester. Sometimes I talk with colleagues to help me reflect and decide what precise changes I can make that will work with our student body at CU-Boulder. Notwithstanding some variations, I know that I am not alone as a history teacher in following this inquiry process into solving a puzzle via course design and instruction.

Teaching History Editor Jessamyn Neuhaus and I, as the new Reviews Editor, hope to produce a “Reviews” section that cultivates this intellectual work we all do in our teaching. We seek to provide our history educator colleagues with reviews that will help them locate materials and resources for developing both content *and* pedagogy. We envision a section of scholarly reviews that is expansive in the type of materials under review, moving beyond the standard history monograph to include texts such as documentary films, graphic novels, and online exhibits. Our revised Reviews section will also address a fuller range of teaching and learning contexts, across the K-16 continuum and beyond.

The three reviews in this issue of *Teaching History* illustrate our mission: a book for elementary school teachers interested in anti-oppressive social studies instruction and curriculum design; a graphic novel on queer history in the World War II era; and a four-part documentary series on the history of hip hop. We hope you find these reviews, and those in future issues, thought-provoking, insightful, and most of all, an inspiration to your work as a scholarly teacher of history.

Natalie Mendoza

Reviews Editor, *Teaching History*

Teaching History 48(1)

DOI: 10.33043/TH.48.1.152

© 2023 Natalie Mendoza.

Distributed with CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 License.