FLIPPING THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM: A THREE YEAR ANALYSIS OF METHODS AND IMPACTS

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"So, is it worth it?" This is a common question my colleagues pose when I tell them about my efforts to "flip" General Education Preparation (GEP) United States history survey courses at my institution, the University of Central Florida (UCF). Over the past three years, with the assistance of my co-author and others, I have implemented a "Flipping the Classroom" model in these courses with heavy emphasis on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) strategies and the American Historical Association's (AHA) Tuning Project goals and outcomes. At both UCF and in other venues, I have disseminated my impressions of the process as well as statistical information regarding student course performance and perceptions of how they were learning in these situations.[1] Audience reactions to my conclusions have been mixed; many colleagues, both within and outside of my discipline, have eagerly embraced the model I have implemented and used derivations of it in their own courses. Others, however, remain skeptical, reluctant to abandon tried and true teaching methods and dismissive of what they perceive to be another trendy but fleeting pedagogical

1 Daniel S. Murphree, "'Writing wasn't really stressed, accurate historical analysis was stressed': Student Perceptions of In-Class Writing in the Inverted, General Education, University History Survey Course," *The History Teacher* 47 (February 2014): 209-221; Daniel S. Murphree, "Flipping the History Classroom with an Embedded Writing Consultant: Synthesizing Inverted and WAC Paradigms in a University History Survey Course," *The Social Studies* 106 (2015): 218-225; Daniel S. Murphree, "A Multidisciplinary Look at Flipping the Classroom," UCF Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning Summer Conference, May 9, 2013.

enterprise based on much flash but little substance.

The goal of this article is to provide a more systematic and longitudinal assessment of the strategies I have used to provide both advocates and skeptics further food for thought. The evidence presented here is the result of quantitative and qualitative data related to four GEP courses taught over the past three years. It involves course performance numbers and individual commentaries derived from IRB-approved investigations involving over 200 students. While far from exhaustive in factors analyzed and student numbers addressed, it serves as one of the broadest studies involving the use of Flipping/WAC/Tuning strategies in introductory history courses at the university level.[2] The information provided here addresses certain core issues that transcended the different course sections taught as well as section-specific information that pertains to significant differences in how material was taught and assessed. Overall, the data can be used in multiple ways to draw conclusions on the effectiveness and utility of the strategies used for both peer content instructors and administrators dedicated to curriculum innovation.

Based on the evidence accumulated and analyzed over a three-year period, I have determined that the Flipping model, regardless of the variations used in my classes, successfully enhanced fulfillment of course learning objectives by maximizing instructor-student interaction in the classroom. The format

2 To my knowledge, no other studies address the Flipping/WAC/Tuning format specifically, but works that address one of the three approaches for university history courses include Clayton D. Brown, "Proven Strategies for Blended Learning: Case Studies from Distance Teaching in History," in *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Distance Teaching: Connecting Classrooms in Theory and Practice*, eds. Alan Blackstock and Nathan Straight (New York: Routledge, 2016), 87-103; Dan Melzer, *Exploring College Writing: Writing and Researching Across the Curriculum* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2011); David Trowbridge, "Tuning, Teaching and Taking Care of Students," *Perspectives on History* 51 (April 2013), https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2013-x41241.

enabled students to obtain and demonstrate broad content knowledge through online activities while allowing them to use class periods for targeted questioning of their instructor and for debates with fellow students in a face-to-face setting. Students consequently became more active in the learning process and more sophisticated over time in how they approached their understanding of factual content and communication of evidence-based explanations of the past. By the conclusion of each Flipped class analyzed here, students had embraced historical reasoning in both written and verbal form to a greater degree than in any of the previous GEP courses I have taught at the college and university level over a fifteen-year period. In a higher-education environment where student engagement with their instructors is increasingly limited, the Flipping model, and its WAC and Tuning enhancements, helped re-establish a classroom space where educational interaction flourished and student learning improved according to multiple metrics.

Foundations: Flipping, WAC, and the Tuning Project

Flipping

While the term "Flipping the Classroom" has varied meanings, for the purposes of this work it is defined as creating and maintaining a learning environment in which students gain first exposure to new material outside of class via assigned readings and then use class time to question this content through instructor-guided discussion, debates, and writing exercises.[3] Until recently, researchers have produced relatively little scholarship in reference to the utility of Flipped classroom approaches at the college or university level. Primary and secondary school teachers have implemented and studied Flipped classrooms for at least a decade,

3 This definition closely corresponds to that of Cynthia J. Brame in "Flipping the Classroom," Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/flipping-the-classroom/.

but college and university instructors have only begun to test such models in recent years. While Flipping strategies in institutions of higher education may show promise, qualitative and quantitative evidence is still lacking. This is especially the case regarding the teaching of history. Instructors at the post-secondary level have largely left application of the practice to their counterparts in the sciences or related disciplines. As a result, the utility of Flipped classroom methodology in post-secondary history courses is largely unknown at this point.[4]

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

WAC programs are also fixtures at many colleges and universities today. Most emphasize the concept of "writing to learn": an approach to assignments in courses of all disciplines that encourages multiple student writing activities designed to promote learning of subject-area concepts and instill broader critical thinking skills. Proponents of WAC argue that students should not just write about the subject matter they are learning, but also write to better learn the subject matter. Accordingly, instructors design and coordinate writing assignments in a manner that encourages students to conceptualize writing as learning, thereby providing

4 Jeremy Adelman, "History à La MOOC," *Perspectives on History* 51 (March 2013), http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2013/1303/History-a- la-MOOC.cfm; Dan Berrett, "How 'Flipping' the Classroom Can Improve the Traditional Lecture," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (February 19, 2012), http://chronicle.com/article/How-Flipping-the-Classroom/130857; Maureen Lage, J. Glenn, J. Platt, and Michael Treglia, "Inverting the Classroom: A Gateway to Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment," *The Journal of Economic Education* (Winter 2000): 30-43; Steven Neshyba, "It's Flipping Revolution," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 4,2013), http://chronicle.com/article/Its-a-Flipping-Revolution/138259/; Robert Talbert, "Inverted Classroom," *Colleagues* (2012): 1-2, http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/colleagues/vol9/iss1/7; Audrey Watters, "Top Ed-Tech Trends of 2012: The Flipped Classroom," *Inside Higher Ed* (2012), http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/hack-higher-education/top-ed-tech-trends-2012-flipped-classroom.

them with an additional means of facilitating their education. In other words, "when students are given frequent and structured opportunities to practice writing, they become more engaged with their learning, think more critically, and communicate more effectively. They are also better able to transfer knowledge and skills between courses and contexts."[5]

Tuning

The Tuning Project is an American Historical Association-led effort "to articulate the core of historical study and to identify what a student should understand and be able to do at the completion of a history degree program." An initial cohort of sixty-five history educators from colleges and universities around the country agreed to collaborate in formulating core objectives, in the process clarifying the skills recipients of a history degree can use "in terms of personal development, civic engagement, and career potential."[6] Hundreds of others have participated in the endeavor over the past several years. Early fruits of the initiative's efforts included dozens of "core competencies" and "learning outcomes" that students pursuing history degrees should be able to demonstrate. Among these are engaging "in historical inquiry, research, and analysis," generating "significant, open-ended questions about the

5 See Daniel S. Murphree, "An Unexpected Bridge: The AHA Tuning Project and Writing Across the Curriculum," *Perspectives on History* 51 (April 2013), http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2013/1304/An-Unexpected-Bridge.cfm. For information on WAC philosophies in general, see John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2011), 17–21. For information on the UCF WAC program specifically (including quotation), see "Writing Across the Curriculum: University of Central Florida," http://wac.cah.ucf.edu (accessed May 27, 2013).

6 Julia Brookins, "Nationwide Tuning Project for Undergraduate History Programs Launched," *Perspectives on History* 50 (March 2012): 14; Julia Brookins, "The Tuning Project's Summer Meeting," *Perspectives on History* 50 (September 2012): 23.

past," devising "research strategies to answer them," and crafting "historical narrative and argument." Largely dependent on grant funding and voluntary participation of educators at the college and university level, the future of this initiative is unclear, but the efforts of Tuning project participants have resulted in a framework that is increasingly influencing history curriculum development across the country.[7]

Integrating Flipping, WAC, and Tuning

Synthesizing three models allowed me to revise my course to accomplish several goals. Flipping the course opened up additional instructor face-to-face time with students, allowing for discussions of the historical writing process and consideration of writing techniques history can provide in other disciplines and in post-graduation careers. WAC-inspired writing exercises were introduced more frequently via the Flipped format since initial engagement with historical content was taking place outside of the classroom. Tuning objectives could better be reinforced because students could broaden their understanding of the discipline and its value in collective discussions with the instructor and through consistently assessed handwritten essays in class. The integration of each model in a single revised course format aided the seamless inclusion of all in content delivery. Stated another way, Flipping the classroom facilitated WAC and Tuning innovations in my GEP courses; WAC and Tuning alone proved too time-consuming to implement in my traditionally formatted sections.

Course Structures: Innovating the Flipping Model

I flipped two courses, one section of United States History from 1492-1877 (AMH 2010) and three sections of United States History 1877-2000 (AMH 2020). At the time of the study, all

7 AHA Tuning Project, "History Discipline Core: A Statement from the AHA's Tuning Project," *Perspectives on History* 50 (October 2012): 42-43.

undergraduates who attended UCF had to complete one GEP History requirement in order to complete their degrees (though many completed this requirement through prior community college coursework, high school equivalency courses, or AP exam credit). In addition to the courses above, students could also complete this requirement via comparable courses in "Western Civilization" or World History surveys. Students tend to enroll in AMH 2020 sections more frequently than the others, and all History GEP courses typically consist of undergraduates from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary majors; most students who enroll in these courses do so to meet curriculum requirements primarily, and it is difficult to assess how many also do so due to interest in the subject matter. I used three specific approaches (A, B, and C below) in my Flipped classroom.

Study A: Basic Flipping

Traditionally, GEP history course instructors have relied on the lecture-exam model to convey information and evaluate their students' understanding of content.[8] Until recently, I also employed this model in my courses. Lectures typically served as the centerpiece of my course instruction. Though I often interspersed student questions and impromptu discussions into class sessions, I delivered the bulk of course content through formal lectures supplemented by assigned readings from a core text. Evaluation of student comprehension of history content took the form of exams. Administered every five to six weeks, these

8 See Alan Booth and Paul Hyland, The Practice of University History Teaching (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000); R.W. Maloy and I. LaRoche, "Student-Centered Teaching Methods in the History Classroom: Ideas, Issues, and Insights for New Teachers," Social Studies Research & Practice 5 (2010): 46-61. Michael F. Mascolo, "Beyond Student-Centered and Teacher Centered Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning as Guided Participation," Pedagogy and the Human Sciences 1 (2009): 3-27; Daniel Trifan, "Active Learning: A Critical Examination," Perspectives on History 35 (March 1997), https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-1997/active-learning-a-critical-examination.

exams consisted of short answer identifications/key terms and one essay. Writing assignments for these courses varied over the years; some consisted of evaluations of primary documents, others took the form of historiographic debate analysis papers, and a few involved compare and contrast assessments of different portals for obtaining information on the past. Student grades wholly depended on their understanding of content (based on exams) and ability to analyze themes or processes via their outside-of-class writing assignments (usually two over the course of the semester).

The Flipped class structure I introduced to my two Spring 2013 AMH 2020 sections looked quite different. Both sections took place for 50 minutes, three days a week. Deviating from past practices, I delivered no formal, pre-packaged lectures in these courses. Instead, each week I utilized two 50 minute sessions for in-class discussion of content based on chapters in the assigned core text. The first class period typically consisted of what I labeled "Before and After" discussions. In these meetings, I would attempt to equip students with context for understanding the topic of the week by providing information on what chronologically took place in preceding and following years (usually decades) while prompting them to add their own perspectives and question my conclusions. These discussions largely consisted of questions I would ask the class as a whole, followed by their responses, my counter questions, and our collective transitions into discussion of other events, movements, and themes; I never formally lectured or provided previously created outlines or notes during these meetings. The next class period consisted of a "Thematic" discussion of the relevant chapter/section. In these class meetings, I would provide two to three key themes of the period and two examples of evidence to justify my claims. I then encouraged students to critique my arguments, offer additional themes and evidence, and relate our discussion to information discussed in the "Before and After" meetings. The final class session of the

week consisted of students' application of what they had learned in the previous sessions through in-class writing assignments.

For example, the first class session related to the module titled "The U.S. and World War II" consisted of a discussion about chronology and legacies. I asked students to explain how previously covered topics like World War I, the Great Depression, and New Deal might relate to the United States' role in World War II. Then I introduced several consequences of the latter conflict on the post-War world. The second class session in the module was devoted to themes of the conflict; I introduced concepts such as the "Good War," provided an evidence base for the interpretation, and asked students for alternate interpretations with evidence to support them. In both the first and second sessions, students could question the instructor's premises and offer different perspectives with the caveat that any evidence for them had to come from the assigned readings for the module. During the final class session on this topic, students wrote an essay in which they had to address the information covered in the previous two sessions (periodization, legacies, themes), though they could offer their own evidence-based conclusions that might differ from those offered by the instructor. In this third phase, students could ask the instructor (who roamed the room offering assistance) any questions regarding essay theses, structure, and use of evidence. In all three sessions, students determined much of what was discussed based on their questions about assigned readings and how best to communicate their interpretations in writing.

In terms of student assessment, my Flipped class structure deviated significantly from the traditional assessment I had used in previous courses similar in content. Students took no formal exams. Instead, I assigned a combination of online, in-class, and out-of-class-assignments designed to progressively encourage student content retention while improving their overall research and writing abilities. To gauge student understanding of basic content covered in the designated chapters, I assigned eleven

objective quizzes over the course of the semester. Students had a three-day window to complete each of these online, multiple choice, "ten questions in ten minutes" quizzes. Students also had to demonstrate their interpretive ability related to historical content on eleven occasions through in-class writing assignments, as noted above. In each of these sessions, students would have 50 minutes to address an essay prompt according to the following template: "Based on class discussions and assigned readings, write an essay in which you address the Origins, Themes, and Legacies of X (X being the topic covered in that section and discussed during the previous two class meetings)." Students could bring any resources to class to help them write these essays (textbooks, notes, online resources) but could not simply transcribe an essay written outside of class. During these writing sessions, I encouraged students to ask me any questions regarding content or writing. The goal of these writing assignments was not to test student retention of specific content but to foster their skills in applying historical interpretations in a written format.

I also assigned both low stakes and high stakes out-of-class writings assignments to supplement online quizzes and in-class writing exercises. Both types of out-of-class assignments centered on an online compilation of resources familiar to many historians, "The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database."[9] This site provided opportunities for my students to learn about the process of historical research and writing via assignments created to progressively improve their capabilities. I devoted three weeks of the semester to these assignments, again dividing student tasks into three components. On the first day, students did not meet in the classroom but were encouraged to schedule individual appointments with me to discuss the assignment. For each week of content devoted to the database, I required students to post to an online discussion forum a 250-word synopsis of the resources

9 "The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database," http://www.slavevoyages.org/ (accessed August 6, 2016).

they viewed and their personal perspectives on the sources' utility. Depending on the week, these sources consisted of essays, images, statistics, maps, or timelines on the site, and fellow students could post responses to others' assessments and question each other about the databases' features. During the next class session, I collectively discussed the online postings and with student input, navigated the database site so that they would better understand the tools at their disposal and my expectations for the final out-of-class writing assignment for the section. This final assignment required students to write a 3-5 page formal paper along the lines of their discussion forum (again, depending on the week, this could be a summary of a secondary source, a compare and contrast analysis of two primary sources, or a response to an interpretive question using three forms of database evidence on which to base their arguments) in which they properly cited the materials they used. Students would not be required to attend class in order to research and write these papers which they submitted electronically.

Study B: Flipping with an Embedded Writing Consultant (EWC)

During the Spring 2014 semester, I utilized the Flipped course design for my AMH 2010 course in which I also was able to employ an Embedded Writing Consultant (EWC). Since I had never had the assistance of an embedded consultant in my classes before, I decided to be cautious in how I integrated the individual into my course design and daily class activities. Consequently, I changed very little in terms of format or assignments from my previously taught Flipped courses. The major changes involved statements in the syllabus and online course management system pages regarding the presence and role of the EWC in the course. After I introduced the EWC to students on the first day of class, I informed them that this person (an MA student in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing with undergraduate training in History who also worked in the university Writing Center) would be available to students primarily in reference to the in-

class essays. Like me, the EWC would be present in class during writing sessions to answer student questions about their papers and provide suggestions on essay structure, readability, and use of evidence. Outside of class, the EWC would hold regularly scheduled office hours solely for students enrolled in the course to discuss their in-class essays that I had graded (the EWC was responsible for no formal grading in the course). The EWC would also be available to schedule individual meetings with students upon request. I envisioned the EWC as a bonus and supplement to students in the course; the EWC would duplicate my in-class efforts to assist students in their writing while being available outside of class to help students better understand their writing problems and improve their efforts.

Study C: Flipping and Randomized Grading of In-Class Writing Assignments (RGIWA)

During the Spring 2015 semester, I returned to my 2013 Flipped format absent an EWB but introduced a new wrinkle in terms of assessment: randomized grading of in-class writing assignments (RGIWA). This innovation resulted from two interrelated issues: 1) This section of AMH 2020 was much larger in size, with an enrollment cap of 120, than those previously taught using the Flipped format; 2) In discussions with colleagues about the previously Flipped courses, several faculty members questioned grading in-class writing assignments on a weekly basis and returning them to students in a timely manner with helpful feedback, especially instructors who taught large sections and hundreds of students. Thus, in the Spring of 2015, I decided to employ the Flipped model in what was considered a "large" course and introduce a means of reducing extensive grading commitments. Specifically, I revised the in-class writing assignments into "In-Class Essay (Completion)" and "In-Class Essay (Progression)" assignments. Regarding the former, according to my syllabus "Over the course of the semester, you are required to write and submit 11 in-class essays based on assigned readings and class

discussions, ten of which (the lowest score will be dropped) will be averaged for a Final In-Class Essay Completion Grade which will comprise 10% of your Final Course Grade." Fulfillment of the assignment's requirements simply called for a student to take part in the writing assignment and submit an essay of some type at the class session's conclusion. In terms of the "In-Class Essays (Progression)," the syllabus stated:

Over the course of the semester, 3 of the 11 in class essays you are required to write and submit will be graded based on the following criteria: Introduction and Thesis Statement, Quality of Ideas and Argument, Use of Evidence, Organization and Clarity, and Editing and Manuscript Form. Grades for each of these categories will be averaged to determine each paper's Final Essay Grade; the Final Essay Grades for 2 of the papers (the lowest score will be dropped) will be averaged to determine your Final In-Class Essay Progression Grade which will comprise 20% of your Final Course Grade….The instructor will choose the papers that comprise your In-Class Essay Progression Grade at random; students will not know which essays will be selected until they receive a grade for the assignment.

Though not the focus of this article, the teacher-oriented goal of these assignments was to reduce the number of papers an instructor would be responsible for grading extensively and still provide ample feedback to facilitate students' improvement as writers.

Grade Distribution and Assessment Results

In terms of final student grades, differences are evident between the non-Flipped and varied Flipped courses, though the role played by the contrasting models in precipitating the differences is unclear. Over the duration of this study, the steady increase in overall final course grade averages for Flipped courses is notable (See Table 1). Between 2013 and 2015, the average score of students in the Flipped course sections increased progressively

from 74.1 to 81.5, a difference of 7.4 points. Again, while interesting in an anecdotal sense, this course average increase cannot be definitively attributed to any single or collection of factors.

Table 1: Final Student Grades Comparison

Course and Semester	Average Student Final Grades	Student Enrollment
AMH 2020 (2 sections) – Spring 2012 (Not Flipped)	74.1% (C)	106
AMH 2020 (2 sections) – Spring 2013 (Flipped)	79.7% (B)	107
AMH 2010 (1 section) – Spring 2014 (Flipped with EWC)	81.1% (B)	49
AMH 2020 (1 section) – Spring 2015 (Flipped with RGIWA)	81.5 %(B)	103

Pre/Post-Test Scores

Another tool for interpreting overall student learning of content in these courses came in the form of Pre- and Post-Tests administered to enrolled students. Inspired by legislative agendas and departmental efforts to evaluate student grades in relation to learning objectives, these twelve-question quizzes are made available to students online during the first and last two weeks of each semester. Course instructors have no role in the design or grading of these tests, and students are not required to take them (though they are strongly encouraged by university officials). Therefore, several students who completed the course did not take either or both of the tests. Unfortunately, no comparable data for the Non-Flipped courses I taught prior to 2013 is available at this time.

These outcomes may cause concerns in terms of student history content knowledge both before and after the courses' conclusion. Regardless, and again recognizing the limitations of this analysis, students' scores improved in all three sections.

Table 2: Pre/Post Test Scores Comparison

Course and Semester	Percentage of Pre-Test Questions Answered Correctly	Percentage of Post-Test Questions Answered Correctly	Student Enrollment
AMH 2020 (2 sections) – Spring 2013 (Flipped)	54	67	107
AMH 2010 (1 section) – Spring 2014 (Flipped with EWC)	53	61	49
AMH 2020 (1 section) – Spring 2015 (Flipped with RGIWA)	52	63	103

Student Perceptions (Constructed Response)

I obtained more specific information on student perceptions of Flipped course structures and intensive in-class writing assignments in these courses from IRB-approved surveys administered to students taking the course sections at the conclusion of each semester (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015). Students answered multiple-choice and free response questions addressing instructional techniques, required assignments, and student engagement. Specific questions addressed effectiveness of the course in terms of student learning of history content and student improvement in writing (in-class and out-of-class).[10]

The 2013 survey included thirty-two questions (six of which required a written answer, with the remainder consisting of multiple-choice responses), the 2014 survey included forty-two questions (nine of which required a written answer, the remainder consisted of multiple-choice responses), and the 2015 survey included forty-two questions (eight of which required a written

10 The surveys were administered by a colleague with no direct connection to the courses taught. Students who completed the survey earned extra credit points.

answer, the remainder consisted of multiple-choice responses).[11]

Table 3: Structured Response Student Survey: Do you feel that the in-class essay assignments improved your understanding of course content?

Course and Semester	Survey Respondents*	Student Enrollment
AMH 2020 (2 sections) – Spring 2013	85	107
AMH 2010 (1 section) – Spring 2014	42	49
AMH 2020 (1 section) – Spring 2015	87	103

*Some respondents did not answer all questions.

Comparing student responses to certain questions administered in all surveys provides information by which to evaluate teaching strategies across semesters and courses.

The data in Table 3 appear to validate the WAC-centered objectives of the Flipped format used in these sections, specifically, the goal of having students "writing to learn." By writing an essay in class following two days of class discussion and debate and out-of-class directed readings, students articulated history content in a manner that enabled them to better understand it. Doing so on a weekly basis also allowed them to build their essays on information foundations successively expanded over the course of the semester. When I remarked in one of the class sessions mid-way through the semester that as a result of this exercise the students were in effect writing their own textbooks on the course material, many in the classroom responded with looks and comments of surprise and disbelief. Others claimed to have already realized this and planned to pass on the finished products to friends who might later take the course. Their reactions to my remark notwithstanding, the fact that over 90% of the students surveyed in each section saw value

11 In the 2014 survey, nine questions specifically focused on the role of the EWC in the course; in the 2015 survey, nine questions focused on the role of RGIWA in the course.

in the in-class writing assignments reinforced my commitment to the format changes and time devoted to the exercises.

A separate question addressed student writing improvement specifically (see Table 4). Student responses indicate that students in all sections believed that in class and out of class writing assignments improved both understanding of course content and student writing skills, though support for the latter declined significantly after the first year.

Student acknowledgment that the in-class writing assignments improved their writing overall is notable for its seeming refutation of long-standing beliefs among many faculty members that students would rather do anything than write essays. According to the above responses, students believed the exercises enhanced their writing skills and seemed not to object to the amount of class time devoted to the assignments; their in-class essay writing comprised almost one-third of total course time over the semester, or thirteen of the forty-five contact hours mandated by the university. Also of significance, almost seventy percent of the students overall embraced the WAC-oriented exercises of the course despite having been provided no information on WAC by the instructor.

Table 4: Structured Response Student Survey: "Do you feel that the out of class essay assignments improved your writing skills?"

Year	Yes	No	Student Enrollment
2013 (Flipped)	88%	12%	107
2014 (Flipped with EWC)	74%	26%	49
2015 (Flipped with RGIWA)	74%	26%	103
Three-Year Averages	79%	21%	NA

Other questions sought greater insight into these issues. One question (see Table 5) inquired, "What was the least effective assignment category in terms of your learning of history content?" A clear conclusion from student responses to these questions over the three years surveyed is that almost half, on average, found out-of-class discussion postings least effective in helping students learn history content, whereas the vast majority believed that in-class essays and discussions had the greatest impact on content learning. These responses indicate that students in the courses believed they learned more through in-class discussions than in online discussions with their classmates, a conclusion that should give advocates of on-line learning pause but seems to validate the time opened up for such use in the classroom as a result of incorporating the Flipping format.

Table 5: Structured Student Response Survey: "What was the least effective assignment category in terms of your learning of history content?"

Year	Out-of-class discussion postings	Out-of-class essays	Online quizzes	In-class essays	In-class discussions	Student Enrollment
2013 (Flipped)	51%	34%	15%	0%	0%	107
2014 (Flipped with EWC)	37%	20%	34%	10%	0%	49
2015 (Flipped with RGIWA)	53%	29%	6%	2%	5%	103
Three-Year Averages	47%	28%	18%	4%	2%	NA

To better gauge student impressions on content learning, I asked the question another way (see Table 6): "What was the most effective assignment category in terms of your learning of history content?" These answers indicated that most students found in-class essays and discussions to be most effective, whereas the vast majority believed out-of-class discussion postings and out-of-class essays to be less effective in learning history content. Again, student respondents appeared to value the writing-intensive exercises and discussion-centered class interaction facilitated by the Flipping structure as a means of better understanding the past and the history discipline.

Table 6: Structured Student Response Survey: "What was the most effective assignment category in terms of your learning of history content?"

Year	Out-of-class discussion postings	Out-of-class essays	Online quizzes	In-class essays	In-class discussions	Student Enrollment
2013 (Flipped)	0%	1%	4%	38%	7%	107
2014 (Flipped with EWC)	2%	0%	5%	39%	55%	49
2015 (Flipped with RGIWA)	1%	9%	10%	41%	34%	103
Three-Year Average	1%	3%	6%	39%	49%	NA

I also asked students to consider the most and least effective assignment categories in terms of improving their writing (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7: Structured Student Response Survey: "What was the least effective assignment category in terms of improving your writing?"

Year	Out-of-class discussion postings	Out-of-class essays	In-class essays	In-class discussions	Student Enrollment
2013 (Flipped)	52%	12%	5%	31%	107
2014 (Flipped with EWC)	49%	12%	5%	34%	49
2015 (Flipped with RGIWA)	59%	10%	5%	24%	103
Three-Year Averages	53%	11%	5%	30%	NA

Almost three-fourths of students, on average, believed that in-class writing assignments played the most effective role in improving their writing in the courses surveyed. Once more, the Flipped format created time and space for assignments that students clearly valued in terms of their writing and learning development.

Table 8: Structured Student Response Survey: "What was the most effective assignment category in terms of improving your writing?"

Year	Out-of-class discussion postings	Out-of-class essays	In-class essays	In-class discussions	Student Enrollment
2013 (Flipped)	4%	14%	74%	8%	107
2014 (Flipped with EWC)	2%	19%	74%	5%	49
2015 (Flipped with RGIWA)	5%	24%	68%	3%	103
Three-Year Averages	4%	19%	72%	5%	NA

Student Perceptions (Free response)

The survey also allowed students to respond in their own words to both the writing requirements for and structure of the course. Over the three-year period of sections surveyed, students offered a variety of perspectives. In response to the question, "What are your opinions on the ways that writing was covered in this course?" some students had mixed feelings. One student in a 2013 (Flipped) section wrote, "The in-class essays were difficult for me to finish but ultimately increased my skills as a writer." Responding to the same question, another from the same section remarked, "Although tedious, it challenged me as a writer and encouraged me to use the [University Writing Center]." A student from my 2014 section (Flipped, EWC) offered "Although writing was extensive, it definitely helped in improving my writing skills...." whereas a counterpart from the 2015 section (Flipped, RGIWA) simply stated, "There was a lot of writing & I don't feel

as though that's the best way to run a course." Another student from the 2015 section also seemed to doubt the effectiveness of the class structure, stating "The writing was okay. I still feel as though it's my weakest subject."

Similar themes surfaced in response to the question, "Do you believe the writing exercises you completed in this course will benefit you in other UCF courses? Why or why not?" One student in the 2013 sections (Flipped) simply wrote, "I don't feel like my writing has improved." Another from the same section responded, "No, I am not a history major." A classmate in the same section offered, "Maybe. I'm a business major, so writing in this format or this content isn't particularly relevant in my opinion." One's chosen major seemed to have an impact on the writing exercises' perceived utility. Some 2014 (Flipped, EWC) students echoed these sentiments. In response to the same question, one stated, "No, because not much of my major is writing based." Another offered "No because writing about history cannot be applied to my other courses." Students in the 2015 section (Flipped, RGIWA) continued the theme. An aerospace engineering major wrote "No I'm already a good writer [sic] this class was just a practicing tool" and an electrical engineering major explained "No, I don't need history anymore and am not in a major that'll require well written papers."

Other students placed greater value on the writing assignments in the course. Responding to the same question as those in the above paragraph, one enthusiastic student from a 2013 section (Flipped) wrote "Absolutely! I have written so much now that I feel like I will be able to structure essays for other classes better and write efficiently and effectively." Another from the same group stated "Yes," reasoning "While not all classes require a brief overview of content like history does, some forms of writing such as summaries & analysis papers have overlapping qualities w/history-based writing." Students in the 2014 section (Flipped, EWC), expressed comparable opinions, at times with matching

enthusiasm. "Yes it pushed me to read and study more so it sticks in my mind," wrote one student. Another from the same section wrote "yes, the course helped me become a better writer and would be useful in other classes." Some students in the 2015 section (Flipped, RGIWA) echoed these sentiments, with one mechanical engineering student answering the same question, "Yes, any improvement/practice in writing can be used later." A civil engineering major in the same section contended, "Yes, the writing assignments forced me to elaborate on certain topics," and a psychology major wrote, "They will because they help you learn how to support an argument and writing skills that carry over to other classes." Some students connected course assignments to the content of their current and future academic endeavors. One from the 2013 sections (Flipped) stated, "Yes, I have more knowledge of history for the future and now know how to write a better and more effective essay." A classmate added, "Yes, I do because writing is required in many courses and the more someone rights [sic] in different circumstances the better they become."

Some questions focused more on what students thought about the course structure and how they learned historical content in general. Overall, student comments indicated they preferred the Flipped format to traditional lecture/exams formats. In response to the question, "What are your opinions on the ways that history content was covered in this course?" a student from the 2013 cohort (Flipped) wrote, "The discussions helped organize my thoughts for Friday's essays and gave me a reason to care about the context of that time period," an indication that the course format and content facilitated Tuning project goals. Another student from the same section stated, "I thought it was both unique and helpful, providing many avenues for a student to both learn and succeed." Responding to the same question, a student from the 2014 section (Flipped, EWC) commented, "I feel that I learned a lot more because of the way the class was taught." A classmate offered "The style of discussions were spaced out well and I prefer

this style of learning for sure." Some students disagreed, however. Answering the same question, one from the 2015 course (Flipped, RGIWA) contended, "It was okay, felt like I didn't learn much." Another, in regards to content, believed, "It seemed a little bit rushed and not too in detail." Nevertheless, many from the 2015 section shared comments similar to those from the 2013 and 2014 sections. "I thought it was very innovative the way the class was set up, it allowed for more intelectual [sic] thinking," stated one misspeller. Another student remarked that the format "Allowed you to understand the content instead of memorizing facts," and a third added, "I want to emphasize that I really felt I was able to get more out of this course by not having regular exams where facts were just memorized." Again, both seemed to be realizing the objectives of Tuning advocates. A fourth stated what every historian wants to hear, "I loved it, never have I learned this much in a history course."

In this last regard, it is also worth considering the impressions of the graduate teaching assistant (GTA) assigned to the Spring 2015 AMH 2020 class. This GTA was charged with grading all of the out-of -class writing assignments and addressing student writing issues in general. He observed that over the course of the semester, many students took a vested interest in these assignments and worked to improve their analysis and paper structure via in-class discussion and office hours strategy sessions. In the GTA's opinion, compared to other classes in which he had worked as a grading assistant over a two year period, students in the Flipped class seemed to have a better grasp of the requirements for a sophisticated history paper after completing the various writing exercises. By the end of the semester, many students had expressed to him that despite the amount of writing expected in this type of class, they felt the assignments were fair and encouraged them to improve their writing ability. While the motivations for student comments in this context are questionable, the comments themselves appear to substantiate other information noted above.

Conclusions

The Flipping/WAC/Tuning model for History GEP courses is not ideal for all instructors. In addition to some students' negative perceptions of the model and its ramifications, as illustrated above, numerous other factors associated with teaching courses in this fashion may lead many history professionals to prefer teaching classes based on conventional lecture/exams models with which they have had success. Nevertheless, those looking for new approaches to teaching introductory history courses should consider the Flipping/WAC/Tuning model based on some of the findings described above. Though admittedly based on a small sample, final student grades steadily improved during the three-year study, as did student content understanding based on the Pre- and Post-tests administered. Over ninety percent of students surveyed believed that the in-class essays that formed a core part of this model improved their understanding of course content, and over seventy-five percent believed that these essays improved their writing skills. More specifically, about half of student survey respondents believed that out-of-class discussion postings were least effective in helping them learn class content or improve their writing whereas in-class discussions were most effective in helping them learn class content. Finally, while student free response survey remarks offered varied assessments of the Flipping/WAC/Tuning model, the majority in the sample above, as well as the collective responses overall, seem to suggest that students valued the format for different reasons, with course expectations and individual majors guiding viewpoints, at least in part. Said another way, students in the four Flipped sections evaluated over a three-year period not only appeared to learn content and improve their writing skills but believed that the model helped improve their knowledge and abilities. So, is it worth it? Based on the above evidence and conclusions, yes.