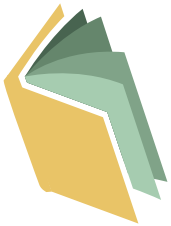

Teaching History

A Journal of Methods

Volume 44 • No. 1 • Spring 2019

TEACHING HISTORY: A JOURNAL OF METHODS

openjournals.bsu.edu/teachinghistory

Additional support from Ball State University Libraries

About the Journal

Founded in 1975 by Stephen Kneeshaw, Loren Pennington, and Philip Reed Rulon and first published in 1976, *Teaching History*'s purpose has been to provide teachers at all levels with the best and newest ideas for their classrooms. The journal is published twice yearly, in the spring and in the fall, and receives financial support from Ball State University and Emporia State University.

Print subscriptions are available for $12.00 a year for individuals, libraries, and institutions or $30.00 for three-year subscriptions. To subscribe, contact Chris Lovett, clovett@emporia.edu.

Visit the website to submit a manuscript or to contact the editors. **ISSN 0730-1383**

Volume 44 | No. 1 | Spring 2019

Articles

Book Reviews

THE OTHER SIDES OF HISTORY

Flannery Burke
Saint Louis University

In March 2015, three teachers, nine international secondary students, and I stood in the cold and wet of early spring looking at the St. Louis Gateway Arch on the other side of a short fence. We had spent the better part of an hour trying to get to a parking garage that would accommodate our van and the rest of the hour looking for a path to the Arch. Now, we could see our goal, and only the fence stood in our way. One of the teachers worked locally and had sacrificed a day of her spring break to tour a portion of the city with us. She and I felt embarrassed. Our city's foremost tourist attraction was almost inaccessible due to highway construction and, she noted, not a single sign had pointed us—or others we encountered—in any useful direction once we found parking.

Two of the teachers had accompanied the students from northern New Mexico, where they and the students worked and lived at the United World College—USA. They had all come, at my invitation, to investigate what I called the "roots of Ferguson." Although the students represented nine different countries, they had followed the news closely following the shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer in August 2014. I had told the teachers that visiting the city would be a deep education in American race relations and that Ferguson was part of the greater St. Louis metro area. No doubt they were wondering just what we were doing almost a dozen miles from the site of Brown's death. Stymied by the construction, the lack of signs, and my own insecurity about the endeavor, I was beginning to wonder myself. Did everyone really need background in the history of the city first? Should I even have taken on this project? While I fretted, a student said, "We could climb the fence." There were no signs forbidding it. We made it to the other side.

This article outlines how I came to be standing at that fence, what resulted from my time with the international students who visited St. Louis, and the promises and pitfalls of mindful integration of history and civics education in experiential learning. While students demonstrated increased engagement and depth of knowledge following their visit, I felt that they had not fully grasped the nuances of historical and civic thinking that I had intended the trip to teach. My pedagogical challenges exemplify many of the obstacles facing instructors grappling with projects that address contemporary racism and its history. These include: mastering interdisciplinary scholarship; engaging in personal, classroom, and community reflection; negotiating gaps between scholarly knowledge and current media coverage; and accepting the enormity and complexity of an issue like racism. Such roadblocks can prove discouraging to history and civics instructors, even ones dedicated to open and thoughtful conversation about difficult issues. As a whole, I found that civic thinking came no more naturally than historical thinking for students and that integrating the two required more attention and more aspects of experiential learning than many instructors assume. The article concludes by addressing how, despite such challenges, student learning ultimately encouraged me to persevere in the project.

The History Side

My side of this story begins in a common premise of history education. For over a hundred years, historians have insisted on the innate connection between learning history and civic participation. "Preparing citizens" served as the motivation for U.S. institutions committed to history beginning at least as early as 1892 with the National Education Association's Committee of Ten and continuing through the more recent AHA Tuning Project and the *C3 Framework for the Social Studies*.[1] Contemporary events

1 The 1892 History, Civil Government, and Political Economy Conference of the Committee of Ten contended that the study of history and civics

often serve as the inspiration for teachers who try to reveal the relevance of history to civic participation. Students, with teacher guidance, inquire into the roots of present-day circumstances, use the field of history to understand the issue under investigation, research more deeply, communicate their findings, and take action in response to their original question. Each step is an active one: from asking questions, to seeking solutions through guided research, through drafting a letter or a speech, to making a decision about how to be a national and global citizen.

The process does not always go smoothly. Teachers may lack adequate knowledge. Schools may lack the resources for a deep investigation. Students may struggle with the speaking and writing skills necessary to convey what they have learned. And there is always the clock. By tomorrow, student (and teacher) interest may have moved elsewhere, and writing a letter to one's city council representative or mapping a possible bus route or sharing news about a new health clinic in town falls by the wayside as teachers struggle to cover content and students juggle competing demands on their time. Beyond such logistical challenges are methodological

---

"counteract a narrow and provincial spirit; …and that they assist [the student] to exercise a salutary influence upon the affairs of his country." ("Report of the Committee on Secondary School Studies with the Reports of the Conferences," Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., July 9, 1892, 167). The American Historical Association Committee of Seven in 1898 took as a given that "one of the chief objects of study is to bring boys and girls to some knowledge of their environment and to fit them to become intelligent citizens," and that the study of history best accomplished that aim. See *The Study of History in Schools*, American Historical Association Committee of Seven, 1898 at: https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/archives/the-study-of-history-in-schools; *College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, https://www.socialstudies.org/c3; AHA Tuning Project, https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/tuning-the-history-discipline. Also see the Bradley Commission Report on History in Schools, 1987, at http://www.nche.net/bradleyreport, and Gary Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

ones. Assessing evidence, corroborating sources, assembling timelines, and constructing narratives all have their place in historical study and civic participation, but students do not intuit the connections without guidance, and guidance requires time, skill, and knowledge. In short, the connection between civics and history education might not be as natural or as self-evident as historians have, for the past hundred years, commonly assumed.

As I began the Fall 2014 semester in my Historian's Craft class, however, I still considered history and civics to be natural allies, joint teachers of future citizens.[2] The class is part of the major at Saint Louis University, a Jesuit institution dedicated to preparing "men and women for others." Instructors of the course endeavor to introduce history majors and minors to the fundamentals of historical thinking and research. The class encourages students to take what Keith Barton and Linda Levstik have called the academic historian's "analytical stance." I particularly emphasize the skills of context, change over time, causality, contingency, and complexity.[3] A close cousin of these skills is periodization, and in this semester I had included Ta-Nehisi Coates's "The Case for Reparations" on the syllabus to prompt a conversation about why we so rarely address redlining, housing segregation, and inequitable lending practices in discussions of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Prior to each class session, students completed a quick, written response on a shared document in answer to a

2 Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good* (Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004; Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008); Peter Levine, *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Promise of Civic Renewal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Meira Levinson, *No Citizen Left Behind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

3 Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*, 6-7; Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically?" *Perspectives,* January 2007, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2007/what-does-it-mean-to-think-historically.

question. The question for the Coates essay asked students: Why do so many history textbooks end their discussions of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965?[4] The question and the reading seemed like easy entries into a conversation about connecting the past with the present and historical analysis with civic participation.

Nonetheless, I was more unsettled than I would have expected of myself when Michael Brown was killed and sustained protest began in and around Ferguson. I pondered my responsibilities. What was appropriate civic action in this circumstance? How much attention in class should I give the protests? What if students didn't want to talk about it? How would I cover the material that I already had planned? My class, composed entirely of white students, avoided eye contact when I suggested at the semester's start that conversation might sometimes get heated given present events. They steadfastly bypassed contemporary analogies for the first month of class. Connecting current events to history came easily to me but remained opaque, even a little frightening, to my undergraduates.

I felt a calmer atmosphere after I casually introduced the findings of civics education scholar Diana Hess. Hess argues that secondary school teachers who conceal their political preferences risk modeling apathy for students.[5] For my own classes, I said, I followed her advice by maintaining a respectful environment for all political opinions but sharing my own when I felt them to be relevant. One student, a double history-political science major, said that he had observed just the phenomenon that Hess describes, even among his fellow political science majors. Another began regularly wearing relatively tasteful t-shirts critical of President Obama. All students began participating more. I felt that I had applied an aspect of civics education successfully and created greater space for conversation and expression in the classroom.

---

4 Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014.
5 Diana Hess, *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

Then, in early October, just as students began to relax, Vonderrit Myers Jr., the son of a Saint Louis University employee, was shot and killed by an off-duty police officer working as a security guard in St. Louis.[6] Following Myers's shooting, a group of activists occupied part of the Saint Louis University campus.[7] At that point, I decided to draw the connection between history and civics more overtly in class.

The occupation seemed like an excellent teaching moment. A current event, right on campus, closely tied to the international media attention that the city had received since Brown's death, seemed to beg for a conversation. Moreover, the occupation overlapped with our reading of Coates's essay. Because students were still learning the "historian's craft" and had not been inclined to raise current events, I drafted a question for them. I asked students to address the question: "Why has there been sustained and vigorous protest following Brown's shooting?" In addition to the Coates article, I gave students the added option of examining Colin Gordon's website, "Mapping Decline," which describes and explains segregation in St. Louis.[8] My intention was to direct students to a broader context for Brown's shooting, the protests, and the campus occupation. I did not ask students to memorize the events described in "The Case for Reparations" or the series of changes described on Gordon's website. Rather, I wanted students to use the sources to build their own interpretations of present-day events as they actively did history through class conversation and writing for our class GoogleDoc.[9]

---

6 Fred Barbash and Abby Phillip, "Fatal shooting of 18-year-old by off-duty police officer ignites protests in St. Louis," *Washington Post*, October 9, 2014.

7 Stefan Bradley, Jonathan Pulphus, and Joshua Jones, "A Scholar's Unforseen Connection and Collision with History," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 39 (Winter 2015): 273-280.

8 Colin Gordon, "Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the American City" http://mappingdecline.lib.uiowa.edu/.

9 For a somewhat similar approach, see David Neumann, "Solving Problems

I did not ask students to explain the cause of the *shooting*, for which we did not yet have any evidence aside from newspaper articles and rumors. Rather, I wanted students to identify the larger historical context for the *protests*, an activity consistent with the historical thinking skills at the heart of the class. My emphasis on immediate, mid-range, and long-term causes put a finer point on causality and periodization and would preempt (I hoped) an extended conversation of both slavery and the immediate circumstances of Brown's death. I wanted our emphasis to stay on mid-range causes, like red-lining, which had been the original topic of the class.

While I did not assign student work reflecting their responses to the discussion, as an instructor I felt students relax over the course of our conversation. Because all my students were white and had not introduced contemporary events in class themselves, I expected hostility to the topic. I did not encounter any, but I did feel like students were apprehensive that they might "say the wrong thing." I had told them in advance that we were going to apply all the skills we had reviewed so far: seeing an issue from more than one *and* more than two perspectives; applying the ideas of context, change over time, causality, contingency, and complexity; citing evidence to support our positions and conjectures; and distinguishing between primary and secondary sources. I regularly repeated (for my own benefit as much as for theirs) that historical analysis has the capacity to defuse tense situations and build capacity for mutual understanding by draining issues of clouding emotion and providing room for analysis.

As students did the work, I think that they lost some of their anxiety. Some were from Chicago, the center of Coates's investigation of redlining, and they spoke with eagerness about the neighborhoods that Coates describes. They wanted to know more about the role of Latinx communities in redlining and white flight.

---

by Creating Problems: Building Coherence in History Through Inquiry," *Teaching History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 83-96.

Once I mentioned some local events that may have contributed to the protests, such as conflict over school accreditation in St. Louis City and North St. Louis County schools, areas with majority African American populations, they were able to add to our timeline other events such as the 2012 death of Trayvon Martin and the 2013 neutering of the Voting Rights Act. They seemed relieved to assemble a timeline of events that included the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts as well as *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Selma march. They made a list of causes, just as they had done with U.S. entry into World War I and Cherokee Removal. In the same way that we might call the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand the "triggering event" of World War I, we isolated the shooting and death of Michael Brown as a breaking point in a much longer chain of events. The students were doing history, just as they did history when discussing other less-sensitive subjects, and the work was the same. They were expanding their understanding of the events. Among these were new pieces of knowledge that I provided, such as: "There are ninety municipalities in the county of St. Louis." They made new observations, such as: "How we draw the boundaries of school districts seems to make a big difference." Some expressed resigned sentiments such as: "There's nothing we can do, especially if we're not from here," and "St. Louis is really messed up."[10] I saw such observations and feelings as a product of the historian's analytic stance as well as an open and generally respectful conversation, and I thought that I did well in remaining calm during what I had feared would be tense exchanges. Doing the work of history was an activity familiar to students, and applying their historical skills helped students distance themselves emotionally from a highly charged topic.

10 These statements are drawn from my memory and are not direct quotes.

The Civics Within History

History grounded my work with my undergraduates, but, with the exception of my brief mention of Hess's work, civics did not. Although I had held many conversations with civic education specialists in my work for other projects, including the *C3 Framework*, I was still inclined to take history's value to civics for granted.[11] "Of course students will apply the same critical thinking skills to the social media platform Yik-Yak that I have taught them to apply to primary sources," I thought.[12] "Of course students will understand that an event happening in the present—be it a new Metro line or a conflict between civilians and police—is a product of immediate, mid-range, and long-term causes."[13] "Of course we can all learn from history how to suspend some of our own ideological fervor when weighing a contemporary issue, even one as fraught as racism."[14] "Of course we ask ourselves what action would be for the common good."[15] "Of course we consider the fact that there will be far more than one and even far more than two perspectives on any given contemporary issue."[16] "Of course

11 See *College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* http://www.socialstudies.org/c3.

12 I had not yet read information from the Stanford History Education Group on how students respond to online information. See, for example, Sam Wineburg and Sarah McGrew, "Why Students Can't Google Their Way to Truth," *Education Week*, November 1, 2016, http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/11/02/why-students-cant-google-their-way-to.html.

13 I draw the language of "triggering events" from a teacher profiled in Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 167.

14 In retrospect, I find this assumption extraordinarily naïve, but I had only just begun to explore resources about implicit bias such as Harvard's Project Implicit; https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/. Facing History and the News Literacy Project later tackled this issue directly in their Facing Ferguson lesson, available here: https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/facing-ferguson-news-literacy-digital-age/introduction-unit.

15 Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good,* 34.

16 David Wrobel, "Historiography as Pedagogy: Thoughts about the Messy

solutions will not be obvious to us. When have they ever been in the past?"[17] It did not occur to me that I had to spell out each one of those connections between historical understanding and civic participation. After all, we had been practicing the skills of doing history every day. We had just applied those skills to a contemporary event. Students had just expressed (or so I thought) some of those very connections. I assumed that we hardly needed to outline how historical analysis can aid civic action. I did not see the oversight as a major flaw in the discussion. In fact, I did not see it as an oversight at all.

The Experiential Side

The campus occupation ended after a series of discussions between occupiers and the university president. The president, Fred P. Pestello, was in his first year and had already stressed the need for a renewed commitment to the university's Jesuit mission. He noted during and after the discussions that many of the occupiers' requests—bridge programs with area schools, more resources for African American studies, and a stronger relationship with the area's communities of color—were already priorities of his administration. The occupation ended cordially with a set of shared commitments to the university's future called the Clock Tower Accords.[18] No property damage occurred. None of those involved in the occupation, some of whom were Saint Louis University students, were arrested, tear gassed, or otherwise harmed. Former Attorney General Eric Holder later called Pestello's handling of the situation "nothing short of exemplary."[19] Nonetheless, some families of students expressed

Past and Why We Shouldn't Clean It Up," *Teaching History* 33, no. 1 (2008): 3-11.

17 Wrobel, "Historiography as Pedagogy," 3-11; Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*, 85-86.

18 Clock Tower Accords, https://www.slu.edu/about/key-facts/diversity/clock-towers-accords.php.

19 Koran Addo, "Attorney General Eric Holder praises SLU president for

extreme criticisms of the occupation, and I heard rumors that some parents had withdrawn their children from the university.[20] SLU is a tuition-driven university, and I was concerned that the university would be negatively affected and that relationships with the surrounding community would suffer. "If only," I worried, "I could *do* something."

Later, I remembered that history is something that I do. Was there a way to get more students interested in doing the kind of history my undergraduate students and I had done when discussing Coates's essay? Wasn't that connecting the past with the present? Wasn't that doing history for the common good? Wasn't that what history teachers did? Maybe, I thought, we could even attract some students to the university because of how we had historicized the events on campus.

My musings were driven by two pivotal moments in my education. First, I'm an enthusiastic alumna of the United World College—USA, a two-year, international high school for students usually aged 16-19, located in Montezuma, New Mexico. The school is one of a consortium of seventeen campuses located all over the world and has its origins in the same kind of experiential learning employed in Outward Bound programs. Each campus hosts students from over eighty different countries to further the UWC mission of fostering international peace, understanding, and sustainability.[21] The mission is intended as a lifelong endeavor, and I view myself as a UWC-er still, although I graduated years ago. Second, in 2013-2014, I served as a Fulbright Roving Scholar in Norway. Rovers visit high school English classrooms across the country over an academic year.[22] I visited almost fifty different schools and spoke with thousands of Norwegian students about

handling of campus protest," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 6, 2014.

20 Bradley, Pulphus, and Jones, 273-280.

21 The United World Colleges' mission is described at: www.uwc.org. Its foundations in experiential education are described here: "What is experiential education?" at: http://www.aee.org/what-is-ee.

22 The Fulbright Roving Scholars program is described at:

American culture. I got much quicker on my feet and learned to adjust to a wide range of student abilities, last-minute schedule changes and technological difficulties, and my own shortcomings as an instructor. The experience increased my comfort working with secondary school students and also gave me an opportunity to visit the UWC in Norway, the Red Cross Nordic United World College. In conversation with the headmaster and his family, I was reminded of my own resolution following my graduation from UWC to bring the spirit of the school to my own country, the United States.

Inspired by my own UWC experience, my recent work as a Roving Scholar, and my discussion with my Historian's Craft class, I began thinking about how UWC students themselves might have an opportunity to investigate St. Louis and the racial segregation that had contributed to the Ferguson protests. The United World College curriculum requires students to complete a Project Week in lieu of spring break each year, and through the UWC alumni coordinator I invited a group of students to come to St. Louis for Project Week. My plan was to expand the 75-minute lesson that I had done with my university students to a weeklong "project." Students would *do* history for a week and discover, I thought, how the Ferguson protests had emerged. I assumed that the implications of the history we would learn would be obvious.

UWC—USA accepted the invitation, and nine students, both first- and second-years, of multiple races, and from countries in North America, eastern Europe, northern Europe, southern Asia, the Caribbean, western Africa, and the Middle East participated.[23] Student and UWC Project Week funds covered travel and food expenses. The group drove to St. Louis from New Mexico, so that

https://fulbright.no/grants/grants-to-norway/us-scholars/roving-scholars/.

23 I would like to be more precise in describing the students, as several of their insights and mine came from the intersection of their previous experiences with the events that occurred in St. Louis, but to protect their privacy I have chosen not to identify students by gender, race, or national origin.

local travel was covered as well. I contacted my fellow faculty, area high school teachers, a local organization called EdPlus that provides curriculum services to St. Louis County public schools, a local artist who had completed work with community input in North St. Louis, an activist I knew through other UWC-ers and who had been a regular protester in Ferguson, and a legal observer of the protests who I knew through our neighborhood elementary school. Those whom I contacted connected me with another area activist and with Amy Hunter, then the Director of Racial Justice at the Metro St. Louis YWCA, whose Tedx talk, "Lucky Zip Codes," proved remarkably timely for St. Louisans seeking to understand Ferguson's wider context.[24]

The curriculum for the week proved to be an ongoing negotiation among the faculty advisors, the students, and those who had offered their time for the project. Students had a Google folder of readings, documentaries, and other resources compiled by their advisors and some of our speakers. I also contributed to these discussions. Few students did any of the reading before arriving in St. Louis, but almost all of the students (usually with some prompting from their advisors) completed the reading or viewing by the day it was relevant to our activities. In fact, the list of readings grew as the students, their faculty advisors, the people with whom we were meeting, and I added to it.[25]

Student independence and leadership flowered over the course of the week. Students toured the city with a member of the North St. Louis Catholic Worker community, an artist who had completed a public work addressing racism, and me. They toured the St. Louis Art Museum with a representative of the Anti-Defamation League. They observed a protest, visited a North County school with a predominantly African American student population, and met with students and faculty at Saint

24 Amy Hunter, "Lucky Zip Codes," TEDxGatewayArch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdX8uN6VbUE.

25 See the appendix for books, articles, and video resources.

Louis University. They heard one of their faculty advisors and me argue about a news story and its reliability. At the students' request, at the last minute, I also approached a police officer, who graciously agreed to come to the house where they were staying for a conversation. Throughout, I observed that when I sat back and let the students ask the questions (and invite the speakers!), adults responded to them as if they were adults themselves. It was affirming to see how experiential learning allows students to lead their own learning.[26]

Students leading their own learning did not mean that I was not teaching history. By the end of the week, students were regularly saying: "It's in the bricks and mortar."[27] I had taught them the phrase, and it had become a shorthand for redlining, racial covenants, and gated communities that built racial segregation into the landscape of the city of St. Louis. Students also had rapidly picked up on the lesson that I had tried to teach my undergraduates: that Brown's shooting was only the proximate cause of the protests and that long-term and mid-range causes were equally if not more important for the students to consider as they began to turn their thoughts toward solutions. One student also remarked to me "You sure know a lot of historians," which I took as a sign that historical thinking had led the week's activities.

The students were not the only ones learning. Our first day had been a sort of St. Louis history boot camp that began with scaling that sad little fence. The day included a discussion of the *Dred Scott* decision; a discussion of the effects of highways on the urban landscape; visits to the site of the now-demolished Pruitt-Igoe public housing project; the Shelley house, the focus of the 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* Supreme Court decision, which prohibited

26 See "What is experiential education?" http://www.aee.org/what-is-ee.
27 For the value of teaching history from places, see David G. Vanderstel, "'And I Thought Historians Only Taught,'" *OAH Magazine of History* 16 (Winter 2002): 5-7; Beth M. Boland, "Historic Places: Common Ground for Teachers and Historians," *OAH Magazine of History* 16 (Winter 2002): 19-21.

court enforcement of racial covenants on real estate; and the Arch, which activist Percy Green had occupied in 1964 during its construction to protest discriminatory hiring practices. As a result of this crash course, students were well versed when they met protesters, residents of North St. Louis County, and the speakers with whom I had arranged visits. I watched many of my colleagues and other adults with whom students spoke boost the level of discussion as they realized how well educated the students already were and how curious they were to learn more. Was Ferguson an example of history repeating itself or rhyming, asked one student, who credited the idea to Mark Twain. Because most of the students were from outside the United States, they also frequently asked unexpected and insightful questions about daily life that Americans in St. Louis might take for granted. And because I had recently taught outside the United States myself, I was able to alert speakers to qualities of the city and nation—such as public school funding through property taxes or the identification of residents by race in the U.S. census—which might be opaque or confusing or even shocking to non-Americans.[28] Such questions from the students educated those with whom students met about how the international community perceived Brown's death, Ferguson, and American race relations more broadly.

I was learning too. I began to articulate some of the issues of race in the region more concretely. After the visit, I was able to explain more clearly how individual municipalities had incorporated specifically to exclude African Americans, a process contributing to the patchwork of city governments that my SLU undergraduates had identified. I also learned aspects of the history of the region that I was surprised that I hadn't known previously. Ferguson was

28 The sensitivity to "self-understanding" and "understanding of others" that emerges from international instruction and "historical consciousness" is well described in Sabine N. Meyer, "Transcending Intellectual Nationalism: Teaching U.S. History in German Universities," *Journal of American History* 96, no. 4 (2010): 1094-1099.

once known as a "sundown town," meaning African Americans could work in the town but had to leave by sunset. I did not learn about "sundown" Ferguson from archival or library research or even from James Loewen, the author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me* as well as *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*.[29] Rather, I learned about it from a woman observing a protest whom students questioned eagerly for more information. It was just one of the many moments that caused me to think about how experiential learning can activate historical knowledge that allows students to address contemporary controversies effectively.

The student learning also stuck. Although my university's IRB office did not allow any formal survey of the students' experiences, I was able to follow up with them informally. Two students participated in a podcast about their Project Week experience when they returned from St. Louis. Two students chose to study race relations in the United States for their Extended Essays, a summer research project required for the UWC's International Baccalaureate curriculum. Two were considering describing the week for their college application essays. When I reminded them of what I meant by "reading the landscape," two mentioned that they had noticed for the first time in their hometowns places and public transportation systems unwelcoming to people of color. One student applied and was admitted to Saint Louis University. In all, the experience met virtually all my initial goals for the project and validated my confidence in experiential learning for history instruction.

The Civics Side

None of my goals, however, had explicitly addressed civic learning, and the flaws in the project emerged from that oversight.

29 James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1995); James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005).

Because I assumed that history and civics would naturally connect, I did not make my civic learning goals overt in the same way I did my history learning goals. I was unaware of work that trained students in how to participate in the civic realm—how to speak at a public school board meeting, for example.[30] I had not delved deeply into the literature on deliberation and generally used the term to describe anything that was not acrimonious discord.[31] Given the experiential learning that underlies UWC education, however, a clear conversation about our civics goals should have been part of our preparation. We never engaged in measured reflection about why we were engaged in the project. We never considered the advantages and disadvantages of potential policy responses to the Ferguson protests or to state violence. While our historical understanding of causality and context grew, our civic understanding of how to frame the variety of perspectives that we were encountering languished.

For example, I had initially envisioned students volunteering at area schools. I cared less about the students "helping" than about the students witnessing the vast disparity that exists in St. Louis public schools, a product of a system that funds schools through property taxes. Few St. Louisans expressed surprise when conversation shifted, sometimes within the same sentence, from the Ferguson protests to area schooling. Immediately after her son's death, Lesley McSpadden, Brown's mother, expressed her grief in part by asking: "Do you know how hard it was for me to get him to stay in school and graduate? Do you know how many black men graduate? Not many. Because you bring them down to this type of level."[32] The school district from which Brown graduated,

30 Ben Kirshner, *Youth Activism in an Era of Education Inequality* (New York: New York University Press, 2015.)

31 I am drawing my definition of "deliberation" from the work of the Kettering Foundation; see, for example, David Mathews, *Naming and Framing Difficult Issues to Make Sound Decisions* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation, 2016).

32 KMOV-TV, August 2014.

Normandy, had lost its accreditation in 2013. The decision provoked a hostile and racially charged public meeting in Francis Howell, a predominantly white district designated to accept the Normandy students under a state law. Normandy's accreditation and the state law generally received only local attention until the Ferguson protests began. Then, nationally, many learned of the law and the public forum in an article by journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones in December 2014.[33] Excerpts from the school board meeting aired on a July 2015 episode of "This American Life" that showcased Hannah-Jones's article.[34] To me, then, getting the students into area schools was key to the whole project. How would students understand mid-range causes and how would they recognize the depth of the region's frustration if they only examined community-police relations?

The faculty advisors, however, were very wary about the students appearing as volunteers. They had rejected those students whose applications for the Project Week stressed "helping." Rather, they wanted the students to witness and learn.[35] The advisors and students had been inspired, I think, by a visit to the UWC campus of a group of activists who had been very involved in the Ferguson protests. I understood their reluctance to have students volunteer, but I feared that students would be sitting around in between brief conversations with locals. And I was genuinely anxious that students would be arrested (and for those non-Americans, risk deportation) if they were perceived as participating in a protest. We were working so quickly, however, that the students' faculty

33 Nikole Hannah-Jones, "School Segregation: The Continuing Tragedy of Ferguson," *ProPublica* with *The New York Times*, December 19, 2014 ; https://www.propublica.org/article/ferguson-school-segregation.

34 "The Problem We All Live With," *This American Life*, broadcast July 31, 2015. The episode had not yet aired at the time of the UWC students' visit.

35 Reflection is a key part of experiential education, an educational philosophy with strong roots in the work of one of the United World College founders, Kurt Hahn. See, for example, "What is experiential education?" http://www.aee.org/what-is-ee and http://www.kurthahn.org/writings/.

advisors and I never deliberated as to our shared values or our desired outcomes for the week or even what action we wanted students to take. Had we done so, we might have realized that the students and their advisors were framing Brown's death as an example of state violence whereas I saw it as a product of long-term racial segregation and inequality.

Similarly, my reactions to emotion and its value varied dramatically from those of the students. I hadn't visited the memorial to Mike Brown at the Canfield apartment complex where he was shot because I didn't want to sentimentalize what I considered an issue that required serious analysis. Nor did I want to objectify African Americans in North St. Louis County. As I had told my undergraduates, a benefit of history is that it can "drain" events of clouding emotion. The students, however, really wanted to go to the memorial. And one of our speakers even asked later: "I assume the students have already made the pilgrimage to Canfield?" I didn't even know the memorial's location, which indicated to me just how shallow my own knowledge of the "bricks and mortar" of the city actually was. My historian's analytical stance had only gotten me so far in understanding race and segregation in St. Louis.[36]

In fact, after the most emotional of their investigations—the visit to Canfield and our observation of a protest—students told me: "This *is* history." Knowing that such places and events had been headline news for months made the significance of the events palpable to students in a way that I had not considered. It had, if anything, enhanced their analytical stance. Students observed how cameramen converged on a conflict between a motorist and protesters such that the conflict, its drama, and the size of the crowd were exaggerated. In effect, they "sourced" their observation in real time, noting how the medium of their information affected the content of their information. Students not

36 On the limitations of the historian's "analytical stance," see Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*, 44-125.

only actively did history; they also felt that they were participating in the making of history by witnessing such encounters. While I think my reservations about emotion had merit, I also saw how I had almost shut down possible avenues of curiosity for students not yet even in college. If the historian's analytical stance "drains" an issue of emotion, no wonder so many students consider it dry and boring!

In such moments, I attributed any uneasiness or shakiness that I felt to the experiential nature of the project, but upon reflection, I realized that inattention to civics underlay most of my concern. The events that had the greatest impression on the UWC students unfolded in real time, and I could not plan them. The UWC students experienced events more deeply than did my SLU undergraduate students because they experienced those events in the public realm. Had my undergraduates undertaken a similar project, they likely would have felt equally engaged. Had they been so, it's unlikely that our conversation would have been as calm as it was without more deliberative framing. I suspected that most of the UWC students supported the protesters. I very much did not want to insist on any kind of political action on their part, but I did not ask for their political views as we began the project. Nor did I introduce the idea, as I had with my undergraduates, that we could productively share differing political viewpoints with one another.

This oversight emerged most clearly when students met with a police officer. I thought that I had introduced students to many different people with many different perspectives on the topic: black, white, and Latinx people, people who had and had not participated in protests, people who lived in the city of St. Louis and in the much larger county surrounding the city, people who lived in both the north and south of the county, as well as people who had and had not encountered what they considered racially motivated policing. Nonetheless, the students felt that until they spoke with a police officer, they had only heard "one side." And

even after our conversation with the officer, students said that they were glad that they had heard "from the other side."

Months later when I checked in with the UWC students, I asked what they had meant when they said they heard from "the other side" and explained that the phrase implied to me the idea that there were only two sides to the story. Perhaps because we were in more of a seminar environment, students replied that such thinking was "too dualistic." In this particular case, they said that they were referring to police and citizen protesters, not to black and white residents or to people who did and did not share their views. I was mollified, but the conversation gnawed at me.

With more reflection, I realized that aside from the active steps like querying evidence and constructing narratives that accompany the historian's analytical stance, I had provided few tools to students for pivoting to other stances, ones better suited for civic expression. Even these (the "identify" and "moral" stances outlined by Barton and Levstik, for example) would have been incomplete without conversation about students' positioning of themselves as non-Americans and as moral actors.[37] When it came time to act—when the students decided to invite one of the speakers—they chose someone from "the other side." They did not ask to speak with a real estate developer or a school superintendent or a county commissioner or any other "mid-range" or "long-term" actor who might have provided an alternate perspective on segregation, who might be equally if not more responsible for the events that had drawn the students to Ferguson in the first place. Had all of us—students, their advisors, and I—had an open and deliberate conversation about our expectations for the week, I might have seen their invitation coming.

I, at least, would have been prepared to raise and address the issues of state violence and segregation as linked, but distinct problems, that likely require different responses from

37 Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good,* 45-68; 91-109.

different individuals. One month after the students visited, the Organization of American Historians met in St. Louis, and in a plenary session historian Eric Sandweiss referred to officer Darren Wilson's decision to shoot Brown as "personally unpredictable and historically overdetermined." I wish I'd had that language when hosting the students as they groped toward their own personal responsibility in the modern world and the history that had brought them there. It is possible that what students really meant when they asked to speak with someone "from the other side" was someone from the side of the personal, rather than the historical, from the side of the unpredictable, rather than the side of the overdetermined. They wanted to know how to position themselves, personally, in the sweep of history.

In fact, when I met with them following the project, they had dozens of ideas of next steps for the St. Louis region. "What should the people of St. Louis do?" I asked. "Integrate!" responded one. "Um, how exactly?" I asked. "Whatever worked last time," was the reply, one I had a hard time hearing as anything other than discouraging. Hadn't we spent a whole week on what did *not* work last time? The students, however, quickly jumped to unite what they had learned about the history of the city and its race relations to what they had found out for themselves about contemporary lines of action. They hardly hesitated to offer suggestions: fund mixed income housing, increase funding for schools where students perform poorly on tests, include recent history in textbooks, take down the gates surrounding gated neighborhoods, end the property tax-funded school systems, target the prison industrial complex for reform, and start conversations among people who "don't want to be involved."

Despite the project's flaws, history had come to mean doing something for this group of students. It meant forming questions, applying historical tools, researching problems in a variety of different sources, communicating findings, and taking action, action that I most certainly had not prescribed. It meant reading the landscape. It meant processing raw emotion into a cogent

opinion about modern race relations. How they arrived at such bold and far-reaching agendas after my mish-mash of historical lessons and timid caveats cautioning restraint is still astonishing to me. That they did so gives me hope that historians can learn to articulate the connections between our discipline and civic action despite the fact that such work is intimidating and challenging.

Conclusion

The challenges are substantial. As the footnotes to this article attest, experiential education and probing the connections between history and civics are nothing new. As pleased as I was with the students' enthusiasm following the project, I wondered if it bore repeating. I was unlikely to reach any new major research conclusions; IRB prevented me from publishing many details of the students' reactions; and the work was in addition to my existing teaching and service obligations. Why do this project when there was nothing tangible in it for me, and the benefits to the students were impossible to pin down?

What ultimately persuaded me to persist that day at the Arch was my realization that the obstacles facing us paralleled those that scholars face when discussing racism. The project required integrating findings from historians, political scientists, geographers, and sociologists; identifying those moments that required individual, class, and community reflection; leaving the classroom to read the landscape and talk with members of the community; determining when emotion fed further inquiry and when it shut down participation; and, ultimately, accepting that complex problems do not have quick solutions. In short, the project required thoughtfully and intentionally negotiating those difficult places where history and civics meet.

Following these insights, I began to incorporate what I had learned in my undergraduate Historian's Craft class by explicitly outlining the connections between history and civic action. The class opens with a sourcing exercise that shows students how the

skills that they apply to historical sources also help them to parse contemporary media. I overtly highlighted those moments when we pivoted from the historian's analytical stance to other stances that engage the past. In a discussion with an area high school teacher whom I invited to meet with the class, I raised Hess's theory about expressing political views in the classroom. At the outset of the semester, we addressed specifically how to facilitate the classroom as a civic space. We returned to the idea in a unit on civics and discussed how we might frame topics such that all parties feel included. We did an entire unit on maps as historical sources and as historical narratives. I offered extra credit to students who visited a place in the city and wrote about reading the landscape. When we engaged in a deliberative exercise about Ferguson, students felt prepared to consider the trade-offs of different policy responses. Every student in the class participated. The topic was difficult, but it was not taboo.

Our class discussion hardly solved all problems. I hold no illusions about what the next generation is up against as it confronts American racism. I do not believe that anyone has all the answers to the thorny problems that St. Louis faces. Indeed, a central lesson of my classroom has become the importance of recognizing a long view and having patience with efforts to overcome the seemingly intractable problem of racism. I would like to say that I arrived at this lesson on my own, but the students taught it to me. We can learn from the young people who are willing to take up the work of connecting the past, the present, and the future even if, as one student commented, "It's going to take a lot longer than we think."

APPENDIX

Reading List as Compiled by Faculty and Students

1. The Pruitt-Igoe Myth Documentary at: http://www.pruitt-igoe.com/
2. BBC spot on the "Delmar Divide" about segregation in St. Louis https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeDFnZlBo0A
3. Website accompanying *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the American City* http://mappingdecline.lib.uiowa.edu/
4. Article explaining how racism was built into the urban landscape of St. Louis: http://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/how-racism-became-policy-in-ferguson
5. Amy Hunter's Gateway City Ted Talk at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g36ijwr3wc8
6. Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic* https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/
7. "What MLK can teach Ferguson," Stefan Bradley, http://www.stlamerican.com/mlk/article_47e6e31c-9d9e-11e4-89a0-9307affa27b5.html
8. *The Washington Post,* "How St. Louis Profits from Poverty" http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/09/03/how-st-louis-county-missouri-profits-from-poverty/
9. Audio interview with Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness:* http://www.npr.org/2012/01/16/145175694/legal-scholar-jim-crow-still-exists-in-america
10. The Making of Ferguson: http://prospect.org/article/making-ferguson-how-decades-hostile-policy-created-powder-keg
11. Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights Law: http://billmoyers.com/2014/05/21/living-apart-how-the-government-betrayed-a-landmark-civil-rights-law/
12. Brittney Cooper, "White America's Scary Delusion: Why Its Sense of Black Humanity is so Skewed," http://www.salon.com/2014/12/03/white_americas_scary_delusion_why_violence_is_at_the_core_of_whiteness/
13. Kara Brown, "Most White People Think Race Played No Factor in Ferguson & Garner Cases," http://jezebel.com/most-white-people-think-race-played-no-factor-in-fergus-1668476797
14. Stacey Patton, "In America, Black Children Don't Get to Be Children," http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/in-america-black-children-dont-get-to-be-children/2014/11/26/a9e24756-74ee-11e4-a755-e32227229e7b_story.html

15. Kara Brown, "Ferguson: Injustice Still Hurts When You See It Coming," http://jezebel.com/ferguson-injustice-still-hurts-when-you-see-it-coming-1663209747

16. Kara Brown, "This Is Why We're Mad About the Shooting of Mike Brown," http://jezebel.com/this-is-why-were-mad-about-the-shooting-of-mike-brown-1619522935/+KaraBrown

17. Brittney Cooper, "In Defense of Black Rage: Michael Brown, Police and the American Dream," http://www.salon.com/2014/08/12/in_defense_of_black_rage_michael_brown_police_and_the_american_dream/

18. The Ferguson ArtRising (includes writeup of Artivist Elizabeth Vega): http://temporaryartreview.com/the-ferguson-artrising/

19. Activists offering services for students to fulfill during spring break: https://www.riverfronttimes.com/newsblog/2015/02/10/alternative-spring-break-aims-to-connect-students-to-healing-efforts-in-ferguson

20. Video of St. Louis Symphony action organized by Elizabeth Vega and Sarah Greisbach: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_7ErkQFduQ

21. National police perspectives at http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/547/cops-see-it-differently-part-one

"I DON'T WANT TO BE A HISTORIAN! I JUST WANT TO BE A HISTORY TEACHER!": A WEST TEXAS HISTORICAL METHODS ODYSSEY

Byron E. Pearson, Bruce C. Brasington, and Timothy Bowman
West Texas A&M University

While standing on the front steps of his university's modest-sized library on a lovely September morning in 2016, a West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) history professor found himself confronted by a bright, talented, and very angry student. In response to his query about her poor performance on several of the initial papers assigned in his department's junior research methods class, she glared at him and said through clenched teeth:

"I resent you."

Stunned by her candor, the professor asked, "Why?"

"Because," she continued, "I hate having to write all of these different kinds of papers for you. I resent you forcing us to learn how to do archival research."

"I don't understand," he replied. "You're a history major. Surely none of this comes as a surprise to you, does it?"

"You are teaching us to be historians," the student said. "I don't want to be a historian! I just want to be a history teacher!"

They set a time for her to come by his office to talk further and went inside. And once again, as he has done hundreds of times during his teaching career, the professor asked himself what he could do to improve his classes in historical methods to give students the best chance to succeed in the difficult history major.

History, at least bad history, is virtually everywhere: from political candidates' misuse of it and "historical" films churned out by Hollywood, to political, social, and moral positions grounded in competing—and largely unsubstantiated—foundations of "alternative facts." Is there still a reason to teach

students the techniques of meticulous, time-consuming, archival research, formal grammar rules, and writing skills when most people believe research begins and ends with an internet search, and world leaders respond to global crises in 280-character increments? When students communicate via emojis and cyber-slang, does it matter whether a semicolon or period is properly placed or that the apostrophe has become the *de facto* means to designate plurality at the expense of the oft-neglected possessive? In the following essay, three WTAMU history professors share their twenty-year struggle to build an undergraduate historical methods/capstone course sequence designed to give their history majors the formal writing, research, and analytical skills still required by the historical discipline that will enable them to succeed in an increasingly ahistorical world.

Identifying Needs and Finding Solutions

The history department at West Texas A&M University added the "Senior Seminar" capstone course in 1996. The faculty soon found the seminar problematic for a variety of reasons. The course, which was intended to allow students to demonstrate the skills they had acquired while progressing through the history major, had the unintended consequence, in many cases, of magnifying students' lack of those skills instead. A faculty consensus soon emerged that some sort of "methods" course was needed. Thus, only two years later—an extraordinarily short time, given the byzantine nature of the curriculum process—the WTAMU history department added the junior-level "Historical Methods" class to its existing curriculum.

Now that Historical Methods was in place, we had to figure out how to teach it. Although the department had agreed that such a course was necessary, there was little consensus about how it should be taught. At that time there were few existing methods courses at other universities that could be emulated. The course took shape from the bottom-up largely in response to what skills

we thought the students needed to succeed. Meaningful student feedback became an indispensable part of this process.

The faculty already knew from experience that many students who major in history lack basic skills in reading, writing, and research. There are many reasons for this, from the standardized tests required by the state to the very uneven instruction students receive prior to coming to the university—the latter exacerbated by the state's "dual credit" program, where high school students can take English courses that, in theory, are the equivalent of composition courses at the university. Generally, they are not. Thus, while the academy, administrators, and policymakers have chanted the mantra of "critical thinking" over the last two decades, faculty have encountered waves of students who struggled with the fundamentals of writing.

Additionally, although one might expect that the required freshman college English courses would address the issues of basic writing mechanics and grammar, the English department at WTAMU—reflecting recent national trends in that field—has deemphasized teaching these foundational skills in favor of a more creative writing approach. There was little hope that our students would learn the fundamentals of formal writing and research outside of the history department. As we tried to address these deficiencies over several years, the scope of Historical Methods broadened until the sheer amount of content bordered upon the ridiculous.

Fortunately, the students in the spring 2007 methods class made a remarkable, *unanimous* suggestion: that our department split Historical Methods into a sophomore writing and historiography course and retool the existing junior-level class to focus almost exclusively upon research methodology. Students the following fall also overwhelmingly favored implementing this proposal. The majority of the faculty supported the creation of a sophomore-level historical writing class as well. By the fall 2008 semester the department's current three-course undergraduate methods/

capstone sequence—The Historian's Craft, a sophomore class covering writing and historiography; Junior Research Methods; and Senior Seminar—had become part of the required curriculum for history and history/education certification majors.

Though in theory a sophomore class in historical writing fundamentals sounded promising, once again the devil of developing it was in the details. An exhaustive search of history curricula revealed that no other institution offered such a course in 2008. Organically, and at scheduled "Methods Summits," faculty discussed, debated, and mostly disagreed about what the course should include. Other that a consensus that it could not just be a "junior methods lite" and that it needed to both stand on its own as an entry into the historical discipline and connect to the junior and senior courses, once again the faculty were faced with the task of breaking new curricular ground with very little to guide them.

The Historian's Craft evolved in a manner similar to that of the original Historical Methods class, restricted only by the overarching objectives of focusing upon writing fundamentals and introducing students to the concept of historiography. Faculty who teach it are free to innovate and refine based on their own fields of expertise and experiences in the classroom. Several different approaches emerged; some faculty elected to build the course around a workbook while others created exercises using materials available in the public domain to teach students the basics of how to write the different types of papers unique to the discipline of history. Gradually after much discussion, the faculty reached a consensus that the following "common core" of remedial objectives must be taught in the sophomore Historian's Craft.

First, faculty members demand that students take responsibility for writing correctly. This means, at the most basic level, correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Second, students must learn to polish their writing style. In this, there is likely the greatest variation among the faculty; however, the consensus is still that, at a minimum, students must learn to rewrite their work.

For most, this is a completely new concept, for they have been used to doing assignments and turning them in with no further thought of editing or refinement. More recently, students have turned increasingly to online services such as Grammarly, which many now see as yet another convenient way to save time and energy. The faculty, through this course, remains committed to challenging students to take personal responsibility for what they have written.

Finally, students must learn to cite sources correctly in *Chicago* style. As with the mechanics, students often push back and question why the minimal amount of technique they have learned does not suffice. "Why do we have to do footnotes and works cited?" is a common complaint. Experience has shown, however, that requiring the students to learn a new form of citation reveals which students are willing and able to learn new things, to think critically, and adapt.

The creation of the sophomore Historian's Craft class also necessitated the reconfiguration of the existing junior-level course so that it emphasized research methodology and thesis development. As both classes were integrated into the curriculum, it became clear that although they each needed to have a unique focus, they must also connect to each other with respect to certain fundamentals. For example, it would be impossible to teach a meaningful course in writing and historiography without also discussing some basic principles of how to conduct research and interpret primary sources. So, rather than attempt to create and teach courses that stood completely alone, it became apparent that each of these classes would focus upon a particular emphasis while reinforcing the aggregate set of skills indispensable to the practice of history. After a surprising amount of debate—or perhaps it is *not* surprising given that we are historians after all—a faculty consensus emerged that these courses should also be sequential, with the Historian's Craft as a prerequisite to Junior Research Methods.

By fall 2018, the department had identified the following objectives that must be covered with varying degrees of emphasis in the two methods courses as well as the senior capstone. First, students must learn to work with primary sources. For students accustomed to writing papers based on *Wikipedia* and other online sources, the idea that one must actually find, interpret, and integrate historical evidence into an essay marks a decisive moment in their education. Second, students must learn to find, critically evaluate, and integrate secondary sources into their papers. This objective often meets resistance ranging from questions about why they need to consult anything beyond the internet or a textbook to bafflement and irritation when they find out that historians, looking at the same evidence, do not just simply agree about what it means. Finally, students must learn to develop a thesis based on the evidence of primary sources and the interpretation of secondary works and write a substantial paper. Moving students' work from a mere description of their sources to the type of critical thesis we expect in senior-level work remains the greatest challenge confronting the faculty.

The Historical Methods/Capstone Sequence at West Texas A&M University

With the foregoing as context, the remainder of this essay will discuss the development and structure of our sophomore-, junior-, and senior-level historical methods/capstone courses generally; include an in-depth discussion of a specific assignment for each—and how these exercises relate to the 2016 AHA History Discipline Core (AHA Core); draw some conclusions; and identify ongoing challenges. We hope that history faculty at other colleges and universities who have faced—and continue to face—similar concerns will benefit from our suggestions and experiences.

History 2302: The Historian's Craft (Tim Bowman)

A soundless security-camera system rolled while a warm September sun shone brightly over a parking lot in Hammond, Indiana, as a freight train came speeding down some nearby railroad tracks. Suddenly a relatively nondescript, dark-colored minivan accelerated parallel to the train, increasing in speed as the conglomeration of parked cars thinned out to reveal empty parking spaces. For a brief moment the minivan outpaced the train; suddenly, the driver swerved hard to the left in order to overcorrect for a sharp turn to the right—the driver hoped to beat the train to a railroad crossing. Some trees obscured the driver's vision to his or her right, masking the appearance of a second train coming from the opposite direction on a doubled set of tracks. The two trains crossed the intersection at the same time. The driver floored it, needling in between them, kicking up a cloud of dust from the gravel encircling the intersection of the tracks and the street, obscuring the minivan and leaving anyone observing from behind the safety of the security cameras wondering what had happened to the busy and stressed out driver who had made such a foolish decision.[1]

So ends the first day of the aforementioned sophomore methods course, The Historian's Craft. The above description is from a YouTube video. My charge to the students is a simple one: write a one-page response paper for the next class meeting, telling me, to the best of their abilities, what happened. The point is to get them to think creatively about doing research: Who was the driver? Why was he or she driving so fast? Why did the driver try to outpace a train? Was anyone injured, or killed? Finally, what larger conclusions can be drawn from this situation?

Students are thus asking fundamental questions from a limited source before realizing that they are actually "doing" history. This first in the sequence of methods courses gives students the "nuts

1 CaptainAmerica2006, *Mom in Van Tries to Outrun Train. Train Wins*, September 7, 2007, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMvtDNATP04.

and bolts" of historical practice. I begin by exposing the students to the idea of "history as reconstruction," reflected in a series of short exercises in a workbook titled *The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide*.[2] Students reflect on the notion of history as a conversation among people; as such, this particular course contains a heavy element of in-class group exercises, many of which are drawn from end-of-chapter exercises in *The Methods and Skills of History*.

One element of crucial importance in teaching methods is ingraining students with a sense of change over time and narrative flow, which is not only reflected in the actual writing of historical narratives but also can be effectively built into the structure of any history course. As such, what follows from any discussion of history's fundamental existence as an endeavor of reconstructing the past based on historical evidence is questioning the degree to which the historian is present in any given written work. Students are thus introduced to the dual-sided meaning of the word "historiography."

Different scholars, naturally, approach teaching historiography based on their own philosophies of studying the past. One way to break this down is by devoting an entire day to the "objectivity question"; a useful way to make this digestible is by assigning the introduction to Peter Novick's 1988 classic *That Noble Dream*, wherein the author likens the historian's quest to attain objectivity to "nailing jelly to the wall." My own discussion of objectivity next follows the lead of Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, whose construction of "historical objectivity" fuses the empirical with the postmodern to argue that the term "objectivity" itself requires redefinition.[3] Perhaps the best example would be

2 Michael J. Salvouris and Conal Furay, *The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

3 Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995).

a fictitious YouTube video of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The postmodernist would say that a video is simply a recording that contains no real "capital-T Truth"; we could not know, for example, how cold it was in Gettysburg on that November day in 1863. Nonetheless, Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob's approach allows for certain fundamental truths to be taken from the video: Lincoln gave a speech, said certain words, and a crowd watched him on November 19, 1863. Many historians would agree—*some* empirical truths are reflected in historical evidence. Such an approach to studying the past is logical and pragmatic.

Discussions of causality and context follow a week in the library with our history reference librarian, who reviews with the students the basics of utilizing library resources and databases like JSTOR. Causality and context, I find, admittedly, difficult to teach, but the course workbook contains easy-to-understand exercises on these topics. Other important related ideas merit discussion. For example, Stephen Jay Gould's *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* illustrates the importance of historical contingency.[4] These ideas paired with in-class discussions about familiar subjects illuminate contextual issues for students by taking examples from what is, to them, an unfamiliar world of studying the past. One example regarding historical context is the Cold War, which naturally explains the diplomatic history of the United States for the second half of the twentieth century.

Of course, even some of the greats can get it wrong. The class next transitions into a different section on historiography, which begins with a discussion of Edmund Morgan's 1942 classic published in the *New England Quarterly*, "The Puritans and Sex." Morgan utilizes various primary sources to demonstrate that the Puritans were not as prudish as many people (allegedly) suppose them to be, a problematic argument given that Morgan situates

4 Salevouris and Furay; Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989).

it within no secondary literature on the subject.[5] Next, we move on to how bodies of literature on any given topic can change over time. A perfect example of how this occurs in my own field, borderlands history—which changes rapidly and begs for historiographical reassessment every few years—can be found in the introduction to *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories*.[6] Finally, a readable and interesting demonstration of the rigors of historical research as well as a sensitivity to historiography is James Crisp's *Sleuthing the Alamo: Davy Crockett's Last Stand and Other Mysteries of the Texas Revolution*, in which the author details *how* he addressed numerous fundamental flaws in nineteenth-century Texas history. Truly, there is no better book to assign to students in the state of Texas that demonstrates the importance of careful research and understanding what other historians have written on a given topic.[7]

One critical element woven into the fabric of the course is an emphasis on writing. Students spend one week doing in-class exercises on the basics of historical writing and another crafting historical narratives. One of the more helpful in-class exercises consists of students correcting a pre-circulated essay submitted by another student (author's anonymity protected, of course), containing numerous basic writing errors. Showing students what a poor essay from one of their peers looks like illustrates the basic challenges that people face in writing. The two weeks devoted specifically to writing culminate with a full day of discussion that focuses upon footnoting and bibliographic citations according to the *Chicago* style.

---

5 Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritans and Sex," *New England Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (December 1942): 591–607.

6 Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, eds., *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

7 James E. Crisp, *Sleuthing the Alamo: Davy Crockett's Last Stand and Other Mysteries of the Texas Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

The class ends with a variety of activities. First, students meet with me individually about their semester project, an historiographical essay (more details below), preferably on a topic that can be revisited as the framework for a larger research essay in either an upper-division content class, Junior Research Methods, or Senior Seminar. This demonstrates to the students the ultimate importance of mastering any given literature on a topic and how to advance it through original research. The rest of the course, prior to students giving short presentations on their historiographical essays, is devoted to a smattering of topics, including various types of primary-source evidence, interpreting sources, and how to read history books. On a personal level, I feel that it is incumbent upon me as the instructor to spend some time in class discussing with students career possibilities for history majors, including the many potential difficulties that could await them should they pursue a master's degree or a PhD.

Assignment and Application: Why I End This Course with Historiographical Essays

The major assignment for History 2302 is a fifteen- to twenty-page historiographical analysis of a topic of the student's own choosing. The majority of the class is devoted to the aforementioned "nuts and bolts" approach: first assuming that students know nothing about history, teaching them the so-called "basics," and ending the course with them mastering the historical conversation on a particular subject. The historiographical essay is an effective measure of how well they have learned these writing basics and whether they have gained an appreciation of how the "history of history" (i.e., how historians have written about events over time) is as important to our discipline as individual examples of primary source-based research.

Although they are usually intimidated by the assignment, the course is designed to guide them into writing historiography papers. Numerous exercises during the semester are devoted to reading and interpreting books and articles, as well as writing

about them. For example, students spend one week early in the semester with the history reference librarian at WTAMU, which culminates in them selecting a book of their choosing by utilizing the library catalog. I encourage the students to select a topic about which they would like to learn more. For example, students during the spring semester of 2018 selected books on a diverse array of subjects, such as the Vatican's stance (or lack thereof) on the Holocaust during World War II; a transpacific history of baseball; and the historiography of the battle of the Alamo.

Students next learn about mining footnotes, or, scanning through a secondary source's references in order to generate more sources on a topic. From this point, the students select a small grouping of sources on their subject (about ten to twelve) in order to analyze the scholarly conversation in a short essay that is worth twenty percent of their semester grade. Naturally, ten to twelve books and articles almost never constitute the *entire* discussion on any given subject. Nonetheless, encouraging the students to treat their body of works as such allows them to understand the inner-workings of historiography and scholarly discussions in microcosm without becoming overwhelmed.

Finally, during the last few days of the semester, students give short, ten- to fifteen-minute presentations about their historiographical essays with the understanding that these papers constitute works in progress. Having an oral presentation attached to such an assignment is essential to the process of mastering historiographical discussions. Historiography, by its very nature, is a foreign concept to non-practitioners, many of whom tend to operate under certain assumptions about history, i.e., historians simply "report the facts," or distill information from shards of evidence and present their findings in narrative form. Even after the class discussion about Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream*, and the completion of in-class exercises regarding the somewhat elusive nature of the aforementioned "capital-T Truth," such misconceptions of historical practice can be so deeply engrained

in students that it is only through practice and discussion with others that students learn to speak what might be termed a new language—that of the historian. History is, at its finest, a discussion, whether that discussion takes place between teachers and students, among peers, or between the historian and her or his sources. Once students come to fully appreciate the conversational nature of good historical practice they are ready to take the next step—doing original research in the archives.

The exercise of writing an historiographical essay fits naturally within the 2016 AHA Core "Competencies" in a multitude of ways. This assignment speaks particularly well to the "Methods" section of the AHA Core, in that it "recognizes history as an interpretive account of the human past;" it "teaches students to interpret complex material;" and it teaches "the practice of ethical historical inquiry" as well as encouraging intellectual engagement with "scholars who have interpreted the past." These core competencies can be found in "Methods" sections 2a, b, and c.[8]

Writing historiographical essays also speaks to all of the subsections in the "Provisional Nature of Knowledge" section of the AHA Core, given that students are exposed to the reality of history being an interpretive discipline that is made up of multiple, oftentimes contradictory, interpretations of the past. These skills can be found in sections 3a, b, c, and d. Finally, historiographical essays speak directly to the section of the AHA Core regarding "Historical Arguments in Narratives." In keeping with section 5a, historiographical essays can lead students to "generate substantive, open-ended questions about the past and develop research strategies to answer them." Indeed, this latter point is the most important reason why I end the course with a historiographical essay and encourage the students to advance the literature they have analyzed through original research in Junior

8 American Historical Association, 2016 History Discipline Core, https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/tuning-the-history-discipline/2016-history-discipline-core.

Research Methods and/or Senior Seminar.[9]

History 3301: Junior Research Methods (Byron Pearson)

History 3301 is a course that focuses almost entirely upon teaching students how to do archival research and to write original historical interpretations based upon that research. Rather than spend the majority of the time listening to lectures and talking about research in a traditional classroom setting, the students actually conduct research during class time in various troves of primary documents such as the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum archives, government documents, and a digitized collection to which the WTAMU library subscribes called Archives Unbound. I do not assign any books for Junior Research Methods save for Mary Rampolla's *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, which is a nice, short, entry point into *Chicago*-style citations.[10] The readings for the course consist entirely of the primary sources the students discover as a result of their research into various topics and related secondary interpretations. The course is designed to expose students to archival research as quickly as possible and to encourage them to interpret sources and to formulate arguments based upon them.

A variety of short papers and exercises incrementally builds towards the final research project. I start with having students: (1) evaluate a finding aid for an archival collection; (2) glean historical information from non-documentary sources such as maps and photographs using handouts partially based upon National Archives and Records Administration worksheets[11]; (3) develop a systematic method of analyzing documentary sources using Rampolla as a guide; and (4) explain how to identify, critique, and eventually develop thesis statements. My goal is to

9 Ibid.

10 Mary Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing History*, 9th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018).

11 National Archives, "Educator Resources," https://www.archives.gov/education.

show them how the building blocks of research, source analysis, and thesis formulation will enable them to write the article-length papers they will be expected to render in their upper-level classes and in Senior Seminar.

Approximately seventy-five percent of the scheduled class periods are spent in the archival spaces and as a result, my teaching has become almost completely individualized. Once the students are busy searching the stacks of government documents or reading old newspapers on microfilm, I can spend a few minutes with them one-on-one during each class period. The dialogue between professor and student in the archival spaces consists largely of me answering individual, unique questions about the assignments the class has in common.

Every moment brings a new query, a new set of problems to be solved. One minute I might find myself showing a student how to do a subject search in the card catalog at the museum (really!), and the next I might be explaining the meaning of the symbols found on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from the 1920s or helping a student figure out how to cite an unusual type of document for which the *Chicago Manual of Style* has no model citation. It becomes literally impossible to prepare for my teaching time in the archives in advance. My fifty years of playing improvisational jazz piano have served me well in these instances. We meet in our assigned classroom every fourth class period or so to: (1) discuss the challenges of research; (2) introduce and apply new research concepts; (3) allow students to offer critiques of whether the exercise just completed was useful or not; and (4) share suggestions that I might incorporate into the course the following semester.

As I reflect upon how I am developing Junior Research Methods, the parallels to how my first methods class evolved over twenty years ago are unmistakable. The students are showing me the way, as they have been showing me all along. Although I have taken classes to the archives for twenty years, we had never gone until two-thirds of the way through the semester because of the

amount of basic material I believed we needed to cover in the classroom first. However, thanks to a series of remarkable student experiences with the Remnant Trust,[12] a document collection WTAMU fortuitously held from 2010 to 2015, and reacquired in 2017, I determined that in the reconfigured History 3301, students needed their hands on the primary sources quickly—no later than two weeks into the semester if possible. One class, and one student in particular, forced me to reframe twenty years of teaching historical methods as it relates to primary sources. Here is a snapshot of that experience:

"Do you feel the magic?" I asked my class of history majors. The students, worn down by weeks of generating papers for my historical writing class, sat benumbed in the archives of the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum as I prepared to introduce them to my unit on primary source analysis titled "Fun with Rare and Very Expensive Documents."

Our archivist retrieved some of the better-known Remnant Trust documents and I gave the students a list of texts they might wish to examine. Out came copies of the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Connecticut version of the U.S. Constitution (a 1787 copy, older than the copy under glass at the National Archives), an 1863 handbill that was used to post the text of the Emancipation Proclamation, and the November 1863 program for the dedication of the national cemetery at Gettysburg that included some brief remarks made by President Abraham Lincoln.

"These are not just the artifacts of history," I reminded them. "These documents *are* history. *These* texts have been out there working." I explained that people learned of President Lincoln's transformation of the Civil War from a war for union to a war for liberty from *this* Emancipation Proclamation handbill. The people of Connecticut read, debated, and ultimately ratified *this* copy of

12 For more information about the Remnant Trust, please see their website at http://www.theremnanttrust.com/wordpress/.

the U.S. Constitution. *This* 1350 copy of Magna Charta has been used to educate people about the foundations of English law for over 660 years, and *this* 1870 first-printed edition of the Koran helped to open the doors of enlightenment and stimulate religious debate in the East as did *this* 1611 copy of the King James Bible 250 years earlier in the West. I even mentioned that the Remnant Trust's first edition copy of the *Federalist Papers*, with copious margin notes scrawled by generations of lawmakers from the prominent Virginia family that owned it for 150 years, had caused me to covet so intensely that for the only time in my life I briefly considered stealing a historical artifact, a confession that elicited nervous titters of laughter from the students.

Soon the history majors were eagerly poring over the rare texts they held in their hands. I interrupted the happy energy now buzzing about my class and intoned in my most serious professorial voice—"Do you feel the magic? If you don't feel the magic you need to change your major…TODAY!" They nodded as one, and immediately dove back into the documents. I moved from table to table now, answering eager questions about hermeneutics, etymology, Guttenberg, and seventeenth century English script, stumped more oftentimes than not, thankful that my colleague Dr. Brasington, a specialist in medieval Latin and canon law was there to answer questions of this ilk that I could not. After forty-five minutes I had almost worked my way through all twenty students, when I arrived at the table at the very back of the room. And that's when I encountered "Haley."

She was sitting by herself at the end of the table holding a small white leather-bound book and she had not moved for probably fifteen minutes. When I sat down next to her she was crying softly, tears flowing down her cheeks. I saw that she was holding a 400-year-old copy of Niccolo Machiavelli's masterpiece, *The Prince*. I asked her if she needed my help and she shook her head no.

I spoke briefly with another student, and when I turned her

way again she whispered, "Dr. Pearson, I can't write. I can't even speak. I don't know why I am so overwhelmed by this but I can't do your assignment. All I want to do, all I CAN do right now is to hold this book."

I smiled at her and asked, "Do you feel the magic?" She said yes, so quietly that I had to lean forward to hear. And I said, "Then just hold the book, Haley. Just hold the book. That is all you need to do today. Come back tomorrow and write my paper." And then I walked away.

Haley's class had felt the magic of engaging with primary sources and I wanted every class I taught from that point forward to have the same experience. Allowing students the opportunity to hold and interpret the primary sources *on their own* makes history come alive and inspires mere students of history to become historians. If they are to succeed in their content courses and to be ready for Senior Seminar, they *must* understand the difference.

Assignment and Application: Dr. Pearson's "Soul Crushing" Thesis-Writing Exercise

In addition to its focus on research methods, History 3301 provides an opportunity to step out from the fundamentals of historiography, writing, and historical thinking taught in History 2302 and conceive of creative assignments to reinforce basic concepts with which students struggle. Many students from a typical standardized testing background do not know how to write argumentative (as opposed to synoptic) thesis statements. I designed the following two-part exercise two years ago to address this issue, and it has proven very effective.

The classroom layout and semester chronology are very important to the success of this assignment. I always have Junior Research Methods meet in a circle so the students quickly become comfortable with each other (and me) because robust discussions are indispensable to most of my assignments. The thesis-writing exercise is scheduled about one third of the way into the semester, after the students have learned how to analyze primary source

documents using the short outline in the Rampolla writing guide discussed above.

Part I of the exercise is designed to address the 2016 AHA Core "Methods" sections 2a, b, and d, and "Skills" section 4b.[13] The students are assigned a collection of five short articles about the causes of the American Civil War. They write a one-page paper about each of these secondary sources in which they: (1) identify and summarize the thesis; and (2) explain whether the argument is convincing (or not), and why. They must also come prepared to argue their case in class. On the day the papers are due we have a no-holds-barred debate where I actively play the devil's advocate and encourage them to do the same. Part I teaches students how to find flaws in others' interpretations, to avoid these weaknesses when crafting their own arguments, and to defend well-written and well-supported theses.

Part II is a bit unconventional. It is designed to address the 2016 AHA Core "Skills" sections 4a and c, and "Arguments" section 5b.[14] The WTAMU library subscribes to Archives Unbound, an amazing array of digitized, fully-searchable primary sources. One of the collections is a 14,195-page set of FBI documents related to the American Indian Movement's (AIM) occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. The students must use ten FBI documents *to write a completely biased pro-FBI argument* to rebut two pro-AIM articles and a pro-AIM PBS documentary titled *The Spirit of Crazy Horse*.

These five-page papers also require them to: (1) analyze their admittedly biased primary sources; (2) identify and assess the theses of three very biased pro-AIM secondary sources; and (3) write their own arguments based upon the only evidence I will allow them to use. I also ask them to address important questions such as "Was AIM a civil rights organization or a terrorist group?" in their papers. The students really struggle because they must go against everything they have been taught about avoiding bias in

13 AHA Core.
14 Ibid.

addition to arguing a position many of them find abhorrent. But it is in this "evidence of the struggle," as I call it, that the real learning occurs.

The classroom discussions that result from this exercise are compelling because they force the students to step out of themselves. For example, in fall 2017, one of my students who culturally identifies as American Indian, resolutely defended the FBI's position to the astonishment of the Anglo American students in the class—thereby demolishing the idea of treating people-groups as monolithic in thought—a serendipitous consequence of the assignment. Other students have commented that they found the assignment "soul crushing" as they were forced to consider the historical events of 1973 from what they believed was a "racist point of view." A student in spring 2018 told the class flat-out she could not do the assignment as herself and so she created an alternative identity and wrote it as someone else. Of course, I rewarded her for completing the assignment while figuring out a way to avoid personal responsibility for it.

Despite their discomfort, students have commented positively about this exercise for four semesters and they have consistently identified several positive learning outcomes. First, by restricting the sources and telling the students what position they must take, the assignment forces them to think of the art of historical interpretation as argument rather than synopsis. Second, they like that the exercise requires them to combine several skills by: (1) applying the thesis identification/analysis learned in Part I to Part II; and (2) grounding their own interpretations in that brief historiography of the topic. Finally, they learn to be intellectually honest since they must craft their arguments from the admittedly incomplete evidence they have. They have also indicated that the assignment illustrates how important it is to conduct comprehensive research as it leaves them wanting to find more sources so they can rectify their biased theses.

Every semester I have required this difficult exercise, I have

asked my students to tell me whether I should assign it in future methods classes. The students have overwhelmingly shared that the assignment is the most effective thesis-writing exercise they have ever completed because it shows them how to write argumentative theses and recognize the biases in their work for other classes. My former students who take Senior Seminar often thank me for teaching them how to write argumentative theses in History 3301. Sometimes, as this assignment demonstrates, inserting a little discomfort into the classroom can be a very effective teaching strategy.

History 4301: Senior Seminar (Bruce Brasington)

Capstone courses in history became popular during the 1990s. While many reasons undoubtedly could be given for their widespread acceptance, the nascent "assessment" movement embraced by administrators and politicians played a particularly important role in convincing departments to introduce the capstone. West Texas A&M, however, may well have been an outlier here. Rather than a response to the pressure of assessment, the decision to create the Senior Seminar in History course in 1996 was more a function of a generational divide in the department. Senior members of the department, the youngest having been tenured more than two decades earlier, did not oppose the seminar, although once it became part of the curriculum, none of them contributed to its formation or volunteered to teach it. It was, instead, faculty hired after 1989 who felt that a seminar was vitally necessary, both to increase the rigor of the major and enable—perhaps better put, compel—the students to take a wider view of history than what had been offered in their earlier courses, which were overwhelmingly in American history.

From the outset, all faculty followed several tacit rules. First, the seminar was not to be "owned" by anyone. This differed from other departments at the university, for example English and Modern Languages, where the same senior professor taught the

capstone for many years. There was also no "template" as to how to teach the seminar. However, from the first offering, a seminar on the Crusades, we have generally agreed that broad topics accessible to a variety of students' interests would work best and that the seminar should require weekly readings, discussions, essays, and, above all, a major assignment. Most have required the last item to be a lengthy research paper based on primary and secondary sources; a few have allowed students preparing for secondary teaching to develop and present detailed lesson plans either with a shortened research paper or even as a substitute.

As with any course, the curriculum of Senior Seminar has changed over time. Faculty have come and gone; "assessment" has gained a foothold through required "embedded" assignments measured, in theory, numerically. However, the most important change has been in the students themselves. For most of its two-decade history, the seminar included not only history and history education majors (the latter far outnumbering the former) but also students pursuing a "social studies composite" degree. In theory, this major made them "more marketable" by allowing them to take a wider variety of social studies courses. These students, however, were among the weakest in the seminar; not only did they often have poor reading and writing skills but they also lacked sufficient historical knowledge of any period or subject to cope with the demands of the course. The decision to no longer require these students to take Senior Seminar was difficult. Faculty recognized that it would greatly reduce the number of students taking the course, thus jeopardizing the seminar "making." This concern has also proven to be true. While evidence is anecdotal, it is also likely that this contributed to some students abandoning the history certification altogether in order to pursue the "social studies" option, which they perceived as easier. At the same time, we remain convinced that the decision was correct.

As for my own teaching, there have been several "pivot points" over the last decade. Early on, I structured Senior Seminar around

very broad themes that also covered a considerable expanse of time, for example "Crime and Punishment in England from the Later Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century." Such choices reflected my desire, as a medievalist, to include at least a little of my own period. While the seminars went well enough, I gradually realized that I had to take a more focused approach to a topic and also recognize that most students had a stronger background in more recent history. However enthusiastic I might be about the medieval component—and more than a few students were interested as well—the subject was simply too broad and remote for the majority.

In recent years, I have offered seminars broadly considering the cultural and social history of the West from 1870 to 1914. I have also chosen topics that draw upon the resources available at our university. A recent seminar on "microhistory" enabled students to take advantage of the unique resources of the Panhandle Plains Museum. For example, a student did a very interesting history of a small town in New Mexico based entirely on a close reading of vintage postcards. While small, the museum's collection of paintings from the Gilded Age has enabled several students to write interesting papers on fashion and gender. I have thus learned the same lesson with Senior Seminar as my colleagues have learned from teaching the sophomore Historian's Craft and Junior Research Methods: The course must engage students through immersion in primary sources. No matter how interesting, diverse, and accessible digital resources may be, there is no substitute for the raw, physical material found in libraries, archives, and collections.

Another "pivot point" concerns how the students present their work. There was a particular incident that prompted this change, for early on I had simply followed the pattern of my own undergraduate and graduate seminars: a single, formal presentation at the end of the semester. One day a couple of years ago, midway through the semester, a student asked to speak with

me after seminar. She was one of the very best students, and thus I was surprised to learn that she was worried about her paper. She got to the point: "I'm having problems because I'm not finding what I am looking for." I explained to her that, rather than a problem, this was a very good thing indeed. First of all, she was looking for evidence to *support* her thesis. Even more important, she was *questioning* her thesis. Rather than trying to fit evidence to an argument, she was recognizing that the thesis needed changing. I assured her that she had now given me even greater confidence in her promise as a scholar, for she had demonstrated both her intellectual honesty and a desire to actually improve her work, as opposed to merely "getting it done."

That conversation profoundly changed how I teach Senior Seminar. Her willingness to share her "problem" with me has led me to require weekly, brief presentations from the students. I explain that I do not want presentations that "tell me what I want to hear." On the contrary, I want to hear about failure as much as success as they research and write. I want students to get past the culture of perfection in which so many have been trained, a way of teaching that has reduced learning to finding the single, "right" answer which, inevitably, has created the fear of "getting it wrong" in front of peers and professors. I contribute as well, by discussing my weekly frustration in my own research. Experience has shown that, after weeks of discussing both the progress and the setbacks in their research, the students are, by semester's end, far more comfortable in critiquing themselves and one another in a supportive way.

Assignment and Application: "Dr. Brasington, What's a Riot?"

As noted earlier in this essay, the senior capstone became part of the history curriculum before the creation of the two required methods courses. As the sophomore and junior methods courses were added, and the process of integration begun, faculty were committed to the senior-level class being about the process of historical creation to which the students had been introduced in

previous methods and content courses. Experience shows that this works best when the seminar is structured around a comparative theme no earlier than the nineteenth century, as the majority of our courses treat the world since 1800.

I have always developed a new topic for each seminar. I want to be fresh so I can challenge both myself and my students anew. I also learned that polling students the semester prior to offering the seminar has been a very good idea. Most recently, per the AHA Core "Provisional," and "Complexity," sections 3a, c, and d, I offered "Western European Urban Life: 1880–1914: London, Vienna, Paris, Berlin," whose primary assignment was a research paper—minimum length of 8,000 words—based on both primary and secondary sources, prefaced by a historiographical essay. I allowed students to venture outside of Europe, provided that at least one of the cities chosen for their research was European. I also encouraged the use of non-textual sources, something the AHA Core "Decode" section 4a also recommends.[15]

One student took this very much to heart, and compared and contrasted the photography of crime scenes, above all murders, in Paris and New York. She investigated what these photographs revealed about social and cultural history, in particular their "intentional" and "unintentional" messages. The varying techniques employed by French and American photographers highlighted the images' "intentionality." The American crime photographers confined their work to the *crime scene*, thus focusing on the victim in a very confined context. The French, on the other hand, understood the *context* of crime far more broadly. From the work of the French photographer Bertillon, the student noticed how the French photographs began first with the street, then the front of the house, and inside, through hallways and passageways if necessary, to the crime scene itself. To her, these photographs created a social narrative not found in the American pictures. She also then discussed the "unintentional"

15 Ibid.

social and cultural information gleaned from the background of the pictures, for example food items and cans in pantries, and the types of furniture and furnishings. This comparative approach touched upon several of the AHA Core Competencies including "Knowledge" sections 1b and c, "Methods" sections 2a and b, and "Create" section 5a.

In addition to the major research paper, I also gave embedded assignments throughout the semester. These connected with weekly readings, both primary and secondary. Each assignment required a short, 300- to 500-word paper and class presentation. For example, students were required to pick a neighborhood from the famous "Booth Poverty Maps," a series of maps of London from the late nineteenth century that plotted social and economic conditions, along with the prevalence of crime, in a color-coded scheme.[16] At the same time, students had to read journal articles on English society and culture in the period that focused, for example, on racial and gender stereotypes. Along with analysis of the neighborhood, the student also had to transcribe, to the best of his or her ability, and integrate the written report by the investigator and police officer, which the website also provides.

While this assignment connected in multiple ways to the AHA Core,[17] it was particularly congruent with the "Competencies" sections 2b, 3c, and 4a requiring the student to consider a wide variety of historical sources. In the sophomore and junior courses, students had already become familiar with historical maps; this prepared them for the Booth maps of London. For example, the junior class requires students to interpret and discuss the social and economic information presented on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Amarillo archived in the museum. Dating from the early twentieth century, they are roughly contemporaneous with the Booth maps.

Many students struggled when critically comparing what

16 https://booth.lse.ac.uk/map/14/-0.1174/51.5064/100/0.
17 AHA Core.

they learned from the maps and reports with arguments made by modern scholars.[18] Taking a critical stance proved the greatest challenge, the discomfort Dr. Pearson mentioned in his thesis-writing assignment. An exasperated student, whose question I chose to head this section, likely spoke for the majority of the seminar. The Booth map assignment had inspired this student to investigate the posh West End of London. His reading of both modern scholarship and contemporary primary sources had led him to accounts of working-class protests in the 1880s. Whether it was the *Illustrated London News* from the 1880s or a historian writing a century later, the many different ways an event was described as a riot bothered him. In his case, however, he came to terms with the discomfort, and began to distrust the reification of an event. He discerned instead that it was better to think of riots as individual events—each taking place in a particular moment in time, each the result of specific social, economic, and cultural circumstances—before attempting to find some sort of overarching category into which they all had to fit.

Perhaps this is the most important lesson learned from the Senior Seminar. It matters not whether one is the professor or the student: Historical research and creation are process, not product. The syllabus and AHA Core do not exist for their own sake. They serve better, I believe, as signposts, not objectives. The ambiguities, contradictions, even silences of the sources, whether visual or written, cannot be avoided. To keep asking questions of them is what makes a historian, whether student or teacher.

Conclusion

We now return to our angry student who wanted to be "just" a history teacher. The scheduled discussions between student and professor did take place. By the end of the fall 2016 semester she

18 For example, one of the assigned essays was Nils Roemer, "London and the East End as Spectacles of Urban Tourism," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99, no. 3 (2009): 416–434.

had become one of the most driven undergraduate researchers we have ever taught. Her passion for research was ignited when, while mining the collections in the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum archives, she discovered a journal written by the wife of a prominent Texas Panhandle rancher, an Englishman who died aboard the *Titanic*, a topic in which she had been interested since childhood. In the blink of an eye, she became a historian, and, although she does not know it yet, a better history teacher because of it. All it took was for someone to create an opportunity for her to get her hands on the sources and to show her how to analyze and write about them. Her own love of history and innate curiosity did the rest.

We live in a world where most people believe that convenient, instantaneous access to information is the same thing as knowing. Our three-course sequence subverts that comfortable assumption. They are neither convenient nor "quick"; nor do they pursue mere information. Instead, their slow, difficult journeys through the "cultural debris," to quote Russell Kirk,[19] of dusty, forgotten volumes of government docments, diaries, letters, and faded photographs, invite the students to wonder. From that wonder may even come amazement. Once amazed, as in the case of the young woman above, they will embrace and apply both the skills and ideas we teach in historical methods and the senior capstone. Instead of wanting to become mere history teachers, they will want to become historians.

From a faculty perspective, developing and teaching these ever-changing courses is an ongoing exercise in experiential learning. These courses are the heart of our major; however, they are also required. Thus, student apathy and even hostility is common, at least at the outset. Faculty enthusiasm is indispensable to success;

19 Russell Kirk, "Cultural Debris: A Mordant Last Word," in *The Intemperate Professor and Other Cultural Splenetics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 160–163.

one must teach like his or her hair is on fire to capture and hold students' attention. How else can one teach the intricacies of creating proper *Chicago* citations or communicate to students the importance of writing with precision? One can never become too comfortable when delivering these courses because *any* degree of complacency, *any* lack of enthusiasm on the part of the faculty member, even for only one class period, can result in the loss of the entire class for the semester due teaching that is stale, or worse—irrelevant. In order to convince the students that these courses—and the principles we teach in them—matter, they have to matter to us, perhaps even more so than the classes we teach in our respective areas of expertise.

Thus, despite our ongoing revisions to these courses, certain challenges remain: How do we smooth out the carryover from one class to the next? How do we (or can we) break through to students who simply do not have the ability to improve their writing? How do we account for the fact that some students can get deeply into the sophomore course (or, perhaps even pass it) without really understanding something as simple as what a thesis statement is? How do we persuade administrators to care more about these courses, which are (truly) the heart of our major? Finally, how do we convince budding historians to understand the most important thing—that having a personal standard of excellence is what separates the good historians from the mediocre ones? Can that even be taught?

The struggle, of course, will always continue. Teaching our students how to write formally and to think like historians in a world where history is constantly derided as a "pointless profession" and standardized testing has won the day sometimes seems a Sisyphean task. Nonetheless, it is the reliance upon student feedback and the *continued* conversations among the faculty who believe that these three courses are indispensable to our students' success that will ultimately benefit them in the long run. In many respects, history is more about asking the right questions than it is about providing the right answers. Much the same can be said about teaching.

Book Reviews

Tony Fels, *Switching Sides: How a Generation of Historians Lost Sympathy for the Victims of the Salem Witch Hunt*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. Pp. 262. $29.95

Many year ago, as a graduate student, I remember reading David Hackett Fisher's *Historians Fallacies: Towards a Logic of Historical Thought* (1970). My fellow students and I were amazed and terrified by the book – amazed at the numerous flaws Fisher was able to detect in the work of major scholars, and terrified that we might sometime be subject to a similar dissection of our work. Those feelings came back to me as I read Tony Fell's *Switching Sides.* This is a study of how the "Salem witch hunt" (as Fels prefers to call it), has been interpreted by students of the subject from Marion Starkey's 1949 *The Devil in Massachusetts* to the present day. Fels closely investigates what he considers the most influential studies of recent decades – Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (1974); John Putman Demos's *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (1982); Carol F. Karlsen's *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (1987), and Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (2002). In the process he offers a detailed analysis of their methodology and use of sources that uncovers flaws and raises important questions about certain aspects of those works. As with Fisher's work, there is much to learn from Fels' in-depth exploration of these books both in the text and in the extensive annotation. It is an important work for anyone teaching historiography and/or Salem witchcraft.

While the detailed dissection of the works examined by Fels are insightful, his own broad interpretation of the historians and their approaches are themselves questionable. Subjecting this work to the same close analysis that he employs leads to

several issues. The title, *Switching Sides*, conveys his belief that the authors of these books have neglected and in some respects dismissed the sufferings of those tried, convicted, and executed of witchcraft. But to focus attention on the factors which led to those individuals being identified and accused does not mean that one lacks sympathy for the victims. While it is true that Chadwick Hansen (*Witchcraft at Salem* [1969]) suggested that some of the accused might have actually been guilty of seeking to call down harm on others, this view has been an outlier among scholars and not something endured by the four authors whom Fels focuses on. While reading the works of Boyer and Nissenbaum, Demos, Karlsen, and Norton, I never felt that the authors lacked sympathy for the victims.

Fels categorizes the approach of the historians he focuses on as part of a "New Left" perspective. He refers to "a New Left era in Salem scholarship." But I fail to see the sharply politicized perspectives found in the works of scholars who embraced that label such as Howard Zinn and Jesse Lemisch. If by "New Left" merely he means a desire to pay attention to groups in the past who had long been neglected – groups such as women, blacks, and Native Americans – most historians would see this as a salutary development. Fels does give them credit for some of their insights, but the thrust of his categorization is to tar them as extremists, which few would agree with. The labeling distracts from the methodological critique he offers rather than enhancing it.

In the introduction Fels bemoans that recent scholarship on Salem has neglected the religious dimension. I would concur with this, but while recognizing that the author is more focused on critiquing existing scholarship than offering a well-reasoned interpretation of his own, I am not impressed by the references to religion that he does make. He throws out phrases such as "the hyper-strenuous religious ideology of Puritanism," (125) and "Puritanism and its propensity for intolerance" (131) which

suggests little awareness of the extensive reevaluation of the nature of Puritanism that is suggested in but not limited to works on English Puritanism by Patrick Collinson and Petr Lake, and on American Puritanism by Michael Winship. And he does not look at the works on witchcraft by Puritan writers such as William Perkins and John Winthrop's kinsman John Cotta. His analysis would be enhanced by more exploration of what such writers meant by possession and affliction, a critical difference in how the events of 1692 unfolded. This being said, an open-minded reevaluation of the role of religion would be welcome.

This is a book that will stir controversy. But it is also a book that will be a useful tool in introducing students to how history is studied and written.

Millersville University of Pennsylvania Francis J. Bremer

Joshua B. Freeman. *Behemoth: A History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018. Pp. 427. $27.95.

Joshua Freeman's *Behemoth* is an insightful introductory text for anyone interested in learning more about what he calls "industrial gigantism" and the influence of large factories across the globe since the Industrial Revolution. It is a surprisingly simple summation of 300 years of history spanning three continents that leaves the reader amazed at the enormity of the size and scope of these institutions. From the mills in eighteenth-century England up through the modern giants in Asia, Freeman spends 300 pages illuminating the connection between these wonders and the human spirit, making it clear that what began as an enlarging force now sadly appears to exist only in a diminishing capacity. In this regard, Freeman's book reads almost like a tragedy of human ingenuity, an elegy for a once-great idea now turned on its head without hope for renewal. As he poignantly states in one of the

final chapters, "The giant factory no longer represents a vision of a new and different world a-coming, of a utopian future or a new kind of nightmare existence…The future has already arrived, and we seem to be stuck with it" (313).

Behemoth tells the story of giant industrial factories and the towns that emerged with them such as Lowell, Magnitorgorsk, and Foxconn, among a number of others. It is rich in primary source research which provides the reader many opportunities for extended understanding through a simple review of the reference pages. It is and should be read only as a survey of the topic rather than an insightful inquiry about the individuals whose lives came to be dominated by these industrial giants. If one is looking for stories of factory workers and their personal struggles and stories, this is not the book to read. If rather one is interested in the larger picture of how industrial gigantism has helped shape the world in which we live today, particularly as a social force, this is the book. It is, according to the author, "a study of how and why giant factories became carriers of dreams and nightmare associated with industrialization and social change" (xiv). In this regard, it fulfills its aim well.

For history teachers looking to enhance their general knowledge and understanding of industrialism in the United States, the book is valuable and should definitely be considered. For those looking for a historical interpretation to bring into their classroom, it has many excerpts that would enhance lessons on the subject of industrialization. Passages such as the following can be used to help students think more critically about mechanization and the beginnings of industrialism in America:

> "The concentration of mechanical marvels and industrial bounty measured how much views of national greatness and progress had changed during the half century since the Lowell mills opened. With little dissent, Americans had come to see machines and mechanical production as central to the

meaning of national experience, as integral to modernity" (82).

Although such general assertions are common throughout the book and can easily accompany multiple choice questions or essay prompts, it is in some of the side stories about historical figures not often taught about that history teachers might find tasty additions to their curriculum. One in particular is Margaret Bourke-White, a photographer who, according to Freeman, "did more than any other to disseminate images of giant industry" (149). Bourke-White was one among many visual artists whose work helped shape public perceptions of global industrialism in the twentieth century. Her story alone is well worth reading the book as she is rarely if ever mentioned in a high school history text. *Behemoth* is a simple yet informative work that should easily make its way into any U.S. history teacher's library.

University High School, Illinois State University Robert Fitzgerald

Matthew F. Delmont. *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation.* Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. Pp. 304. $29.95

Matthew Delmont's *Why Busing Failed* corrects the common narratives about the failure to desegregate northern schools in the 1970s. Conventional histories present it as a case study in the limitations of educational and governmental reform, but Delmont marshals the cultural and historical context of desegregation to make the case that this narrative of failure is a false one that excuses complacency and discarding the goal of educational equity. Delmont's claims hinge on dispelling three myths clouding the memory of busing: First, the crisis was about busing. Second, the North was innocent of segregation. Third, news media was a civil rights ally. In exposing these myths, Delmont argues this is not a historical failure of policy, but of will. The busing crisis

teaches us little about education reform, but illuminates much about American culture.

The first myth Delmont takes on regards the term "busing." Delmont places "busing" within quotation marks to draw attention to its artificial nature and show how segregationists used the term to draw debate away from its goal, integration, to its method. This semantic change allowed northern White opposition to oppose integration without explicit racism and obscured the fact that there were multiple viable desegregation options being discussed in the 1970s.

The second section deals with Northern segregation. In contrast to *Brown v. Board*, cases like *Swann v. Board* and *Milliken v. Bradley* are not known by the average American, but, Delmont argues, these are the cases that govern schooling today. They limited the scope of *Brown v. Board* and provided a legal basis to oppose school desegregation in the North by reifying a distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation, between segregation enumerated by law and that which occurs without legal imprimatur. Delmont demonstrates this distinction carries two pernicious implications. First, it implies that segregation can occur without being caused. This preposterous notion, which requires ignoring that segregation in Northern cities was underwritten by housing policies, governmental spending, and other legal forces, seems to absolve large swaths of the population from ameliorative social justice work. Second, it implies that segregation is not an inherent evil. Focusing on the cause of segregation suggests that "unintentional" *de facto* segregation is somehow better for people than its articulated *de jure* twin.

The third section of the book takes on the role of news media. The news, particularly televised news, is often credited with being a major contributor to the success of the Civil Rights Movement because it broadcast images of police brutality and affected public opinion. Delmont's argument is that television broadcasts were driven by ratings, not altruism. He details the working of news stations in the 1970s, when only six cities had permanent TV crews,

all fact-checking was done by a single employee, and production times made it essential to *anticipate* rather than react to the news. In this context, planned protests and marches made for reliably good TV, and cameras were drawn to the spectacle regardless of whether they were for or against segregation. Segregationists knew this and consciously patterned their protests after Martin Luther King's. Delmont insists we remember TV crews going to Boston with the same zeal and regularity with which they once went to Birmingham.

These three theses offer a much-needed correction to the available narratives surrounding busing. Delmont traces the roots of the movement to and reaction against integrating schools and supports his thorough historical work with engaging portraits of key characters such as Irina McCabe, the anti-busing housewife, and Clay Smothers, the "most conservative Black Man in America." This story, of the cynical appropriation of Civil Rights tactics for segregationist ends and the broad complicity of Northern White society, ought to be known by all, particularly as America's public schools continue to resegregate. Delmont persuasively argues that "school officials, politicians, courts, and the news media valued the desires of white parents over the rights of black children" (212).

Unfortunately, Delmont's tale is not as compelling as it is persuasive. The organization of the book is driven more by Delmont's argument than by chronology, and the frequent changes in geographic focus sometimes make the narrative hard to track. It is difficult to portray a national phenomenon with both depth and breadth, and the clarity of his theses are occasionally bogged down with detail and repetition. Despite these shortcomings, *Why Busing Failed* is an admirable book that brings historical clarity to an issue too often reduced to a talking point. It is recommended reading for anyone interested in education policy and the modern history of American racism.

University of Pennsylvania Lightning Jay

Call for Reviewers

Teaching History has a continuing need for reviews of monographs, textbooks, teaching materials, general books, and various digital resources. We welcome book reviews in all areas of history. Please direct inquiries to:

Richard Hughes

Department of History

Illinois State University

CB #4420

Normal, IL 61790-4420

Email: rhughes@ilstu.edu

Teaching History:
A Journal of Methods

Founded in 1975
First Issue Published in 1976

Founders:
Stephen Kneeshaw, College of the Ozarks
Loren Pennington, Emporia State University
Philip Reed Rulon, Northern Arizona University

Editor:
Stephen Kneeshaw, College of the Ozarks (1976-2016)
Sarah Drake Brown, Ball State University (2016-present)

Book Review Editors:
Ronald Butchart, SUNY College at Cortland (1976-1981)
William Mugleston, Georgia Highlands College (1981-1991 and 1993-2004)
Bullitt Lowry, University of North Texas (1992-1993)
Robert Page, Georgia Highlands College (2005-2013)
C. David Dalton, College of the Ozarks (2014-2015)
Richard Hughes, Illinois State University (2016-present)

Publication Directors:
Loren Pennington, Emporia State University (1976-1980)
Samuel Dicks, Emporia State University (1981-2002)
Christopher Lovett, Emporia State University (2002-present)