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REVIEWS

EXPLORING THE ATLANTIC WORLD: AN EXPERIMENT IN TEACHING AN EMERGING PARADIGM

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Why the Atlantic World?

"The Atlantic World" is an emerging perspective in early American history, one that blends nicely with contemporary interest in globalization.[1] This field is an exploration of connections that formed among Africa, Europe, and the Americas between c. 1500 and c. 1800, not only of the political and economic links engendered by colonization, but also the ecological, social, and cultural impacts of initial contact and subsequent interconnections. At the same time, scholars are exploring comparative history within the region, particularly through seminal topics such as gender and religion. Historians thus far have found the paradigm stimulating. For example, the model offers hope of rescuing English history from critics who accuse it of insularity and African history from those who would continue to ignore that vast continent's active role in world history. Yet it is also a conceptualization whose implications are only beginning to be worked out by European, African, and American historians.

While rising interest in the Atlantic World encouraged me to offer a class dealing with the subject, the course actually originated in my own investment as an historian in transatlantic issues. My research has focused primarily on religion, and specifically on the relationship between Anglican missionaries and their white parishioners in British America during the first half of the eighteenth century. Initially, I conceived of my scholarship within the model that Bernard Bailyn and others had developed for the British Atlantic, one that emphasized the influence of the metropolitan hub (that is, London) on the imperial periphery (in other words, the mainland British American colonies).[2] At first, my work occupied a fairly narrow corridor from Britain to the area that eventually would become the United States, ignoring continental Europe, Latin America, Africa, and even the nearby British West Indies. In 1997, however, this insularity began to be eroded. Encouraged by my colleague Cathy Skidmore-Hess, the resident African historian at Georgia Southern University, I expanded my research on Anglican missionaries to include a discussion of their relationship with Africans in the eighteenth-century South Carolina Low Country. The conventional wisdom that Africans had rejected Anglican Christianity made rather less sense when I learned that many Africans who were imported into early South Carolina hailed from the Kingdom of Kongo, where Catholic beliefs and practices had long before gained wide acceptance. In 1998, eager to learn more about African history, I attended "Roots: The

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[1]H-Atlantic at http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~atlantic, a H-Net Listserv focusing on the Atlantic World was set up in June 2001, in response to growing scholarly interest and activity in Atlantic World studies.

[2]For example, see Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

African Background of American Culture Through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade," a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for College Teachers at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities in Charlottesville. The Institute's lecturers stressed the utility of understanding that Africans were not merely victims in the Atlantic World, but full participants in shaping it.

Early American historians, perhaps most of all, benefit from the Atlantic World perspective. Colonial history has suffered (in the eyes of the public and perhaps other Americanists, if not in those of its practitioners) from a stodgy image, tied to visions of Pilgrims wearing belt buckles on their hats and stern white-wigged Founding Fathers waving quill pens. When undergraduates casually inquire about my field of specialization, the words "colonial America," or even the slightly euphemistic "early America," tend to elicit more polite feigning of interest than expressions of enthusiasm. Their interest was piqued, however, when I mentioned that I was mulling over the idea of a course focusing on "The Atlantic World." The only problem, I realized as I sat down to draft a syllabus, was what that meant in practice.

While the idea of teaching a course grounded in the Atlantic World was intriguing, I was as much intimidated as excited by the prospect. Would it be a narrowly topical course, focusing perhaps on religion, and, if so, would it either bring the innovative aspects of the paradigm to the fore or give students a larger sense of the connections of every aspect of life within the Atlantic World? Would it focus on comparative histories within the Atlantic World, or on the connections that created it? How would students with little or no background in any of the national traditions of history cope without the reassuring framework of a chronological national narrative? From the beginning, however, I was conscious of my commitment to a pedagogical as well as a scholarly goal: I wanted to offer undergraduates the same excitement that I experienced for the first time in graduate school, by stepping off the treadmill of unfolding narrative punctuated by exams, and presenting a subject not so much as a story to be told, as a theme to be explored. This has always struck me as an especially urgent goal at a large state university serving a large traditionally aged student body, where students not long graduated from high school might be forgiven for assuming that the acquisition of facts is the primary goal of education, and that upper-level history courses are the sole province of history majors. The course and the flyers advertising it were aimed explicitly at students of all class levels and majors, and eventually attracted several students from other majors, including International Studies and Anthropology.

In devising the course, I decided upon what seemed to me the riskiest but also the most interesting approach. My course was titled simply "The Atlantic World." It was not a lecture course, but a seminar, in which students would discuss readings at almost every session. The focus would be on defining its subject—in effect, within the parameters set by the readings, students would be invited to develop their own creative syntheses and a collective (and individual) conception of the new paradigm and its significance to their thinking about past and present. We would do so as a class in our twice-weekly discussions, and as individuals in written assignments. The course would

not attempt to be comprehensive, but rather would sample sub-themes through which we explored developing connections within the Atlantic World. I emphasized to my students that the process was the important thing; that the course's goal was to have them think for themselves about historical themes that have a direct relevance in this era of globalization, while anchoring their opinions in the assigned texts. I pushed students to reference the umbrella theme of the Atlantic world as much as possible in their comments and—especially—in their writings.

The emergent nature of the field was both a blessing and a curse in selecting topics (or, as I termed them in the syllabus, "units," in an effort to impose at least a semblance of order on the spaghetti strands of the themes). On the one hand, I had great freedom to explore subjects that I found interesting, and that I anticipated that students would too. On the other, I was concerned that, unless I selected the units carefully, the course would be utterly incoherent. The themes that emerged were (1) The Formation of the Atlantic World, (2) The Atlantic World and the Slave Trade, (3) Intercultural Contact and Conceptions of Conversion, (4) Consumption, and (5) Revolutionary Connections.

Although I wanted readings and discussions to give students a sense of the broad sweep of the impact of the rise of the Atlantic World, I most especially wanted them to gain a sophisticated understanding of the experiences and active agency of people throughout the region. Consequently, I conceived of each unit as moving from the general to the specific or, as I presented it to the students, as a camera zooming in. The readings limited my ability to follow an identical format for each unit, but in general we began with a reading that dealt broadly with the subject and then moved to a discussion of it within a particular region or nation. We ended each unit by studying what I termed biography, but which was prosopography, or group biography, when relevant and accessible biographies focusing on a single person proved either unsatisfactory or nonexistent. Altogether, I assigned 32 articles and chapters, as well as three books. This was a challenging reading load for students at a comprehensive regional university, many of whom hold down part-time jobs while attending classes full time, and whose academic abilities vary widely. I was nonetheless confident that most could be persuaded to read the majority of the assignments.

We began with several readings dealing broadly with the Atlantic World, including Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power*, which served as a useful (albeit rather challenging) introduction to the course, having the value of highly complex and theoretical arguments grounded in the wonderfully mundane subject of sugar.[3] Our discussion of sugar, which was produced in the New World by enslaved Africans and consumed in the Old World (increasingly by the proliferating industrial proletariat), led the class to consider the roles of increased material consumption and the exploitation of

[3]Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking Press, 1995).

labor in the expanding economy of the Atlantic World. The book thus provided both the focus for specific study and an introductory overview of the larger themes of the course. Although students grumbled about the density and length of Mintz's arguments, they referred repeatedly to the book and its themes throughout the course.

Two Sample Units:

(1) The Atlantic Slave Trade

I decided to take an unusual (and potentially controversial) tack by exploring the Atlantic slave trade using West Africa not only as a starting point but also as the main focus. African historians often are frustrated by the reluctance of American historians to discuss African agency (as opposed to victimhood) in the Atlantic World. The problem, of course, is that such agency included involvement in the slave trade. The reluctance is understandable: A lack of training in African history has, I suspect, caused American historians to fear that they will be unable to handle discussions of the "They did it too, so how can they blame us?" variety. It seems to me that the only effective solution to this quandary is to tackle it directly, without hesitation, and to give students the opportunity to understand how and why Africans, like Europeans, became (and remained) involved in the selling of people across the Atlantic.

We began the unit with an excerpt from African historian Paul Lovejoy's *Transformation in Slavery*, which not only gave a concise and useful explanation of the origins and nature of slavery in West and West Central Africa, but also suggested a working definition of slavery.[4] This led to interesting class discussion on what was—and was not—slavery and whether comparing traditional domestic slavery in West Africa with Atlantic World plantation slavery was useful or even valid. The discussion also focused on the frequently overlooked fact that Africa is not a country, but a continent: Those who sold slaves were not selling "each other" but rather prisoners of war, criminals, and political prisoners. It was then that the conversation took a particularly interesting turn: How were criminals defined? Was the enslavement and deportation of people justifiable just because they were prisoners of war? Such questions expanded our discussions of the economic exploitation of the powerless by those with power (and those who aspired to it) as a central component of the Atlantic World. Subsequent readings also gave evidence of the impact of the Atlantic trade on societies in West and West Central Africa, including on politics and culture. Among these readings was Robin Law and Kristin Mann's fascinating study of the connections between the Slave Coast and Brazil that included discussion of former slaves who returned to West Africa from the New World and became slave traders.[5]

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[4]Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), xii–22.

[5]Robin Law and Kristin Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast,"

The biography section dealt with two specific cases that allowed us to examine both slave traders and slaves. One introduced the Signares of Senegal, African women who used their profits from slave-trading to enhance their own attractiveness and thus power, while the other focused on Olaudah Equiano, an obvious choice for the course. This was my best experience ever of teaching Equiano's autobiography. The students were deeply engaged by the story of how Equiano unshackled himself from slavery by harnessing Christianity and the commercial opportunities of the Atlantic World into which he was thrust. One student later commented: "It helped to link the various socio-economic aspects of the Atlantic World together in a very thorough manner." Equiano was also unshackled from national histories—none of which he fits comfortably—and helped form a useful segue from our intensive discussion of West Africa to our next unit dealing with cultural conversion. The students found Equiano's cultural chameleonism absorbing and thought-provoking.

What I enjoyed most about this unit was that it made great strides in convincing students that Africans were—and are—people with histories as diverse and complex as those of any other continent. Most of the students who took this class would never have considered studying African history, and they had had only the most limited contact with the subject in the world history survey. The unit worked well in introducing them to West African history and proved to me that, despite the ambitious sweep of this course, its structure, focusing on a small set of topics, and using readings to move from broad overview to specific regional examples and finally to individual people, promoted students' deeper understanding of subjects and their significance than I had ever observed in more traditionally taught courses.

(2) Intercultural Contact and Conceptions of Conversion

In this unit, which was the longest of the course, we considered the nature of cultural, and particularly religious, "conversion" within the Atlantic World through several different cases. While our "stage" for the unit on the slave trade had been West Africa, our main "stage" for this discussion was North America. We focused especially on European efforts to convert both Native Americans and Africans to Christianity. Looking at attempts to proselytize Indians, for example, we began with the view from Italy with an essay by Italian scholar Luca Codignola on the Vatican's perspective on the conversion of North American Indians. We considered the particular problems of directing an extensive missionary enterprise in an age of poor communications and initial encounters with Indian peoples and beliefs. Our focus then shifted across the Atlantic to the actual experiences of Catholic missionaries in Canada. Watching *Black Robe* breathed life into the themes and subjects we were discussing.[6] In the biography

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William and Mary Quarterly 56 (April 1999): 307–34.

[6]*Black Robe* (1991), 101 min. Available on DVD ($19.98) and VHS ($5 to $18.98, depending on the source).

section, we looked at Native Americans who adopted Christianity, in this case Indians living in eighteenth-century Martha's Vineyard, and explored how they adapted it to their own cultural requirements. The students were struck by the similarity to African adaptations of Christianity in the Kingdom of Kongo, and we reflected on how, contrary to prevailing wisdom, religious "syncretism" was also very much a part of popular religion among Europeans. Finally, we examined another type of conversion, that of English settlers in North America to Native American cultures. These two themes were amply showcased in John Demos's *The Unredeemed Captive*, the complex story of the kidnaping of a young English girl, the daughter of a Massachusetts minister, in the early eighteenth century, and her subsequent adoption of an Indian identity.[7] This had the added advantage of depicting events from the French and Indian points of view as well as from the English, thus reiterating our theme of multiple perspectives. Although the students found the book tough reading at times, several cited their exposure to the idea of "white Indians" as one of their most enjoyable experiences in the course.

Assignments

There were no in-class exams. Seventy percent of the grade derived from take-home essay assignments. Four of these were short (two to three-page) response papers, in which students wrote about specific reading assignments before these were discussed in class. They were encouraged to identify specific ideas in the reading, to describe how these enhanced their understanding of both the Atlantic World theme and the unit sub-theme, and to explain what questions the readings raised in their minds. The three longer papers (five to six pages each) were grand, open-ended questions about unit themes. One, for example, asked students what the readings revealed about the nature of conversion in the Atlantic World. Another, which was an option for the final essay, asked them to write about what they understood to be the most important themes and significances of the rise of the Atlantic World. Given the scope of the course, and unused to constructing their own syntheses, the students approached these long essays with considerable trepidation. I encouraged them to submit rough drafts and allowed those who had encountered difficulties to rewrite the first essay. Almost all came to understand that, given the emerging nature of the paradigm and its scope, it would have been rather artificial for me to have handed them a packaged synthesis. Even more importantly, they came to appreciate that they learned most when they learned it for themselves.

A few weeks from the end of the term, I attended a workshop at the Atlantic History Seminar at Harvard University, "Gender Issues in Atlantic History, 1500–1800: Sources and Interpretations." My students were delighted to learn that many of the themes and subjects we had discussed in class surfaced during the discussions in Cambridge: It seemed to give them a sense of participating in a shared intellectual

[7]John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

enterprise, rather than as simply conceiving of themselves as passive and unimportant consumers of knowledge.

Student Responses to the Course

Twelve of the thirteen students in "The Atlantic World" completed the university's evaluation form, and eight responded to my request to write an extensive evaluation, which was held in confidence by the department secretary until after the submission of grades. Among the twelve who completed the university's quantitative evaluation, there was general agreement that this course had been challenging, both intellectually and in terms of the amount of work required. Asked about the workload, ten responded that it was either "much more" or "more" than other courses of similar credit value. Two responded that it was about the same. Nine said that they had put "more" or "much more" effort into the course than into others of a similar value, while only one admitted putting in less. Nine said that they had been intellectually challenged "more" or "much more" by this course, while three thought the challenge was about the same as that of other courses.

I had wondered how students would respond when asked, "How much did you learn in this course?" given the course's emphasis on exploring issues rather than the mastery of facts. Eight thought they had learned "more" or "much more," three thought "about the same," and only one said "less" (I was relieved to see that the response had not been "much less").

In the open-ended portion of the official evaluations, students lauded what one described as "the open no lecture style of the course. It gave students the chance to ask questions, and/or feed off of what other students' thoughts were." Another remarked that I "explained what we read, but let us come to our own conclusions about the things we discussed." Several expressed appreciation of the all-essay, no-test format: "This helped us to explore our understanding of the material and to express our own conceived opinions."

The responses to the written evaluations that I requested of the students were especially revealing about the students' reactions to the content of the course. The unit that they agreed they enjoyed most was "Conversion," a fascinating subject for students living in the Bible Belt. "I especially enjoyed the unit on conversion," one student wrote, "mostly because I learned so much about the true nature and degree of conversion, particularly between the Europeans and the Native Americans." Several also mentioned "Consumption" as a favorite unit. One wrote: "Discovering why my diet is the way it is was very fascinating. It also interested me to see the lengths people would go to satisfy their appetites."

Asked about how the course affected the ways in which they thought about history, student responses included the following comments: "This course has given me a broader concept of the social, political, and economic factors that shaped the way a global community developed.... My grasp of the state of international affairs throughout

this time period has been greatly increased as I can now recognize and appreciate the motivations and goals that tied the Atlantic World together."

"This course has broadened my view on the title of Atlantic World. It helped [me] to think of it as more than just America and Europe, which is the conventional way of thinking. The studying of Africa was especially good at getting this point across."

"History during this time makes much more sense now because traditionally the classes do not touch on this material. This class has made several connections and answered many questions about this time period."

"It explains more of why institutions and cultures were able to spread more widely ... beyond country borders. I also learned more about Africa's role in this time period."

"This course has shown me the views, not just of Europeans and Americans, but of the cultures that they interacted with, and why colonization was so important."

In both evaluations, students praised the course for its emphasis on critical thinking: "The course really challenged me to think." "The material provoked critical thinking on the subject matter." "I enjoyed learning about issues that I've never even thought about." "Thanks for making me think! It is really refreshing to have a class where you have to dig, think, and search to find possible answers.... This has been the most refreshing history class I've taken."

Conclusion

"The Atlantic World" succeeded in its primary goals: First, virtually every student ended the course with a good (and in several cases, very good) understanding of the nature and significance of the rise of the Atlantic World. They were aware that this understanding was shaped by the readings they were assigned, but they were also cognizant of the extent to which their interaction with and discussion of the readings allowed them to create their own syntheses. Students often questioned the "hub" and "periphery" model of Atlantic history: Most strikingly, the readings revealed how Indians and Africans selectively adopted European ideas and tools and made them their own. Similarly, the students enjoyed reading about how the Atlantic World and its non-European inhabitants influenced the lives of European people. Most of all, they saw the rise of the Atlantic World, whether conceived of in economic, social, or cultural terms, as the product of interaction between different peoples, and not simply the product of European expansion. Second, the readings enhanced students' understanding of modern globalization and its cultural and social impact. All but one agreed that the course was highly relevant to their comprehension of the present.

There are several improvements that I wish to implement in future versions of the course. First, I will provide advance discussion questions for every set of readings, along with short statements of introduction. The students needed this sort of guidance for some readings more than others, but they were less apprehensive when they had these tools available to them for an assignment. I will also occasionally break the class into small discussion groups; although I am not convinced this would necessarily prove

advantageous to discussion, I recognize that varying the class format can help avoid it falling into a rut. I am interested in using more primary sources and biographies: The students very much enjoyed Equiano and also a selection from the diary of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, offering an eighteenth-century American travel account that shows clearly the growing links between consumption and rising gentility. The largest question for the future, perhaps, is whether I will continue to teach such a comprehensive course. I suggested to the students that I might instead focus on one or two themes. They insisted, however, that they liked the smorgasbord approach, because it gave them a much better sense of the meaning and extent of the impact of the rise of the Atlantic World than they would have gained in focusing on a specific aspect of it. Moreover, I appreciated the diversity of the students who were attracted to the larger theme, and noted that many of them might not have been attracted to a more narrowly defined course. Last but not least, I will reduce the number of readings based on North America, and expand the course's coverage of Europe and Latin America.

Selected Resources

Books and Articles

I have found the following readings especially successful in the course.

Allison, Robert J., ed., *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1995).

Bolster, W. Jeffrey, "An Inner Diaspora: Black Sailors Making Selves," in Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). This provides illuminating context to Equiano's life, showing how black sailors served as agents of news and change throughout the Atlantic World.

Breslaw, Elaine, "A Perilous Climb to Social Eminence: Dr. Alexander Hamilton and His Creditors," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 92 (1997): 433–55.

Bridenbaugh, Carl, ed., *A Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948). A selection from Hamilton's diary, used in combination with Breslaw's article, helped to illustrate the growing importance of material objects and gentility to the emerging gentry of the Atlantic World.

Brooks, George, "The Signares: Entrepreneurial African Women," in Robert O. Collins, ed., *Problems in African History: The Precolonial Centuries* (New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, Inc., 1993), 213–21.

Codignola, Luca, "The Holy See and the Conversion of the Indians in French and British North America, 1486–1760," in Karen O. Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Pres, 1995), 195–242.

Demos, John, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

Law, Robin and Kristin Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast," *William and Mary Quarterly* 56 (April 1999): 307–34.

Lovejoy, Paul, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), xii–22.

Mintz, Sidney, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking Press, 1995).

Thornton, John, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). A wonderful corrective to Eurocentric conceptions of the Atlantic World, this book argues convincingly and knowledgeably for the active agency of Africans.

Websites

International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, 1500–1800: http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~atlantic/

This center at Harvard University is developing several online resources for the study of the Atlantic World. While much is under construction, preliminary bibliographies are currently available. Its workshops offer the opportunity for all interested faculty and graduate students to discuss aspects of the Atlantic World theme with leading scholars.

The Roots Institute Home Page: http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~roots/site/home.html

This page was constructed by the NEH Institute, "Roots: The African Background to American Culture Through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade," held at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities in 1998. The most useful links, including the Institute's reading list, may be found at http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~roots/seminar/pedagogy/

Syllabus for Erik Seeman's graduate course: "Culture and Contact: The Atlantic World, 1400–1800": http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~seeman/534syllabus.html

Seeman, who teaches at SUNY Buffalo, offers a pioneering graduate-level course. His detailed syllabus offers an extensive list of readings, several of which I used for my own course.

H-Atlantic: This H-Net listserv, which has operated since mid-2001, is for those interested in the scholarship of the Atlantic World. It draws a diverse membership in terms of both geography and emphasis. For subscription information and archives, see http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~atlantic

Videos

Wonders of the African World with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: Episode 3: The Slave Kingdoms (PBS) website: http://www.pbs.org/wonders/

This provocative and entertaining program, part history and part travelogue, allowed students to get a better sense of the geography of West Africa as they read about it. The program also stimulated much discussion about Africa and the slave trade, as well as about Americans' understanding of African history.

Black Robe (1991) 101 min. Available on DVD (List Price: $19.98) and VHS (at time of writing prices ranged from $5 to $18.98 online). Based on Canadian author Brian Moore's novel of the same name, this is one of the finest films yet produced about early America. The film looks mostly through the eyes of a young priest traveling to revive a mission among the Hurons in the early seventeenth century. His encounters with the peoples and the landscape of North America reshape his understanding of the world and his own religion.

A Son of Africa: The Slave Narrative of Olaudah Equiano (1996). Available from California Newsreel, 149 9th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 621-6196, http://www.newsreel.org. This BBC-produced film based on the life of Olaudah Equiano has the advantage of brevity (it lasts only 30 minutes), so that it can be discussed in class on the same day that it is shown. Dealing with Equiano as a figure in British history, it features short interviews with several British historians, interspersed with well-produced dramatized vignettes of episodes from Equiano's life. Several of the incidents depicted were composites, and some of the interpretations were questionable, but such problems only created more discussion among the students who had, of course, read the book.

USING LOCAL HISTORY TO UNDERSTAND NATIONAL THEMES: THE YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMIC IN PHILADELPHIA IN 1793

Susan Westbury
Illinois State University

College teachers of American history cover national themes such as the nature of the American Revolution and the establishment of the federal government because students must understand them if they are to gain a reliable knowledge of America's past. On the other hand, local history topics can be extremely valuable when they show larger historical themes from the ground up, so to speak. In addition, local topics offer manageable and focused research projects for students taking a variety of courses. As one example, the study of Philadelphia and its people during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 illustrates both important local issues and larger national themes. Using Philadelphia as a microcosm, students can discern race and gender at work in American society, as well as discovering how medicine and politics interacted in the early Republic's political party system. The epidemic also shows the tension between strict and loose construction of the Constitution as President George Washington struggled with constitutional problems caused by the outbreak of disease in Philadelphia. These topics provide useful material to supplement lectures and spark discussion among students and offer abundant sources and opportunities for undergraduate research.

It seems incongruous that Philadelphia, the new nation's capital, its leading city, the center of the American Enlightenment, the focus of Benjamin Franklin's efforts to do good for his community, should have succumbed in 1793 to a vicious outbreak of yellow fever that killed as many as 5000 people. Since doctors had no idea of the disease's cause, they were unable to prevent its spread. People who could afford to leave fled the city to avoid contagion. National, state, and local officials abandoned Philadelphia, leaving the sick to die in squalor. Citizens were so distraught that they fired guns in the streets to clear the air of the miasmas some believed caused yellow fever, burned tar and tobacco in their houses, and carried garlic with them wherever they went. In this crisis Mayor Matthew Clarkson stayed at his desk and called for volunteers to bury the dead and succor invalids and orphans. A small band of altruistic white men and members of the free black community came forward to perform those loathsome tasks.[1]

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[1]For a scholarly overview of the epidemic that is also a good read, see J.H. Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949, reprinted 1993).

European traders had unwittingly spread yellow fever from Africa to the New World where its historical significance can hardly be exaggerated. Philadelphia suffered terribly in 1793, in the second of three outbreaks the city endured in the 1790s, but Philadelphia's troubles were repeated elsewhere. The 30,000 French soldiers Napoleon sent to Haiti in 1802 to recapture the former colony from rebel slaves were devastated by yellow fever. Consequently, the French emperor gave up his ambition of re-establishing the French empire in the New World and offered to sell Louisiana at a bargain rate to the United States. Success at preventing outbreaks of yellow fever even made possible the building of the Panama Canal in the early twentieth century, a project that the French had abandoned years earlier because of the enormous toll tropical diseases had taken on workers.[2]

Yellow fever is spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which spawns in stagnant water and carries the disease by biting a victim and passing on the virus to someone else. In 1881, Dr. Carlos Finlay of Havana, Cuba, made the connection between mosquitoes and yellow fever, but his conclusions were untested. However, after the Spanish-American War, the Yellow Fever Commission, led by U.S. Army physician Walter Reed, came to Havana and the two doctors met. Reed tested the Cuban doctor's hypothesis and found that when the city was cleared of stagnant water, the disease did indeed disappear. In 1905, yellow fever appeared in New Orleans, but U.S. Public Health Service workers successfully curbed it by eliminating mosquitoes from the city. But in the early years of the Republic, when Dr. Benjamin Rush announced on August 19, 1793, that yellow fever was in Philadelphia, neither he nor the other doctors knew any effective means of combating it.

The city's founder, William Penn, had designed Philadelphia as the center of his holy experiment. In keeping with the tenets of Quakerism, he assumed that inhabitants would be at peace with the Indians; their town, therefore, would not need the protective walls of contemporary European cities. But Penn did design Philadelphia in such a way as to protect it from two catastrophes he had experienced in England: the outbreak of bubonic plague in London in 1665 and the great fire that devastated the city the following year. He drew up a plan for a large town stretching east and west between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, with home lots large enough to prevent fires spreading and to keep the air wholesome. But to the merchants and craftsmen who settled in the city, Philadelphia's commercial possibilities were far more important than sticking to the founder's plan. They built their businesses close together facing the Delaware, intending to export Pennsylvania's produce and import whatever the Old and New World had to offer. These people spread out along the riverbank and declined to move west toward the great plaza that Penn had designed as the center of his city.[3]

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[2]William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), 266, 281.

[3]Mary Maples and Richard S. Dunn, "The Founding, 1681–1701," in Russell F. Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1982), 3–16.

By the mid 1700s, floods of immigrants had settled the city's hinterlands, and Philadelphia prospered. Wealth and the inclinations of its proud citizens made Philadelphia the cultural and social center of North America,with the Library Company of Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Society, the College of Physicians, and two colleges. Great buildings went up—the State House, Christ Church, and the Pennsylvania Hospital—while wealthy men built magnificent mansions. After the American Revolution, the city retained its reputation as a place that valued scientific experiment, though its scientists did not attain to the wonders of Franklin's investigations of the natural world.[4] But these glories must be judged beside the fact that the city was filthy, that it lacked both a sewer system and a source of safe water.

Even after the city received a charter, it remained in a disgusting state: The city's streets "presented a scene of dirt, mud, garbage, animal excrement, and general disorderliness all pervaded by the odor of decaying garbage and seething in accordance with the season with flies, mosquitoes, and roaches."[5] Many people dumped refuse into the street where it putrefied or was eaten by animals. By 1750 sidewalks existed, and there were efforts at building underground drainage channels, though the latter were private, not public, efforts. Water was pumped from either private or public wells, but no attempt was made to test its quality. The cause of this neglect was an underpowered, underfunded city government with little revenue for public improvements. In these circumstances the coming of fall meant the outbreak of disease, usually in the form of fevers and, less frequently, in the form of yellow fever.

In Philadelphia, in the fall of 1793, yellow fever spread rapidly while doctors argued over its cause and treatment. Some physicians believed that the disease originated in miasmas given off by a putrefied cargo of coffee abandoned on a city wharf. No one knew what treatment would cure yellow fever's horrible symptoms of black vomit, yellow skin, and bleeding from the nose. Students find it interesting to investigate the state of medical knowledge at the time. The humoral theory, popular since ancient times, attributed sickness to an imbalance of the humors of blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile; medical treatment attempted to redress that balance. In the 1700s, doctors had come to believe that illness was also caused by the over- or understimulation of blood vessels and nerve channels. Doctors saw this theory, called "solidism," as supplementary to the humoral theory.[6] Even with an understanding of the state of medical theory, students find it hard to explain why Dr. Benjamin Rush began

[4]Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 212.

[5]Edwin B. Bonner, "Village into Town: 1701–1746," in Weigley, *Philadelphia*, 57.

[6]J. Worth Estes, "Introduction: The Yellow Fever Syndrome and its Treatment in Philadelphia, 1793," in J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene of Desolation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic* (Canton, MA: Science History Publications/USA for the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1997), 8–9.

to use extreme, even harmful measures to combat the epidemic. Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a leading doctor in Philadelphia, adopted a remedy that involved harsh purging with five times the usual dose of mercurial purgatives which had the effect of turning patients' teeth gray and permanently harming their intestines. He also engaged in "copious" bloodletting, even to the extent of unknowingly draining patients of four-fifths of their blood. Students will want to understand what forces in Rush's personality, in the state of medical knowledge, or in the fearsome situation in Philadelphia led him into this dangerous two-pronged treatment. It is helpful here to have students draw a timeline showing the progress of the epidemic and changes in the severity of Rush's treatments.

By way of contrast, the best treatment, since no one knew of a cure, was one employed by two doctors who had come to the city from the West Indies where yellow fever was rampant. Dr. Jean Devèze and Dr. Edward Stevens fed patients wine and quinine bark and advised bed rest and utter cleanliness. Stevens successfully treated Alexander Hamilton and his wife by these means, though Thomas Jefferson churlishly questioned whether Hamilton had even contracted the disease.[7] Students might want to reflect on the inter-penetration of political differences and personal dislikes in the 1790s to see how they shaped Jefferson's view of this situation.

Hamilton and Jefferson certainly sparred over a question posed to them by President Washington. Would it be constitutional to call Congress to meet somewhere other than pestilential Philadelphia? Predictably, Jefferson, backed by James Madison, argued from a strict constructionist position that the president did not have the power to change the place where Congress met. Equally predictably, Hamilton argued that if the Constitution did not specifically allow the president to call Congress to meet in another city, the chief executive could recommend that Congress assemble away from the stricken city.[8] Instructors might want to use this incident as a further example of the contest over interpreting the Constitution in the early national period.

Martin S. Pernick and Jacquelyn C. Miller have argued that Rush's treatment of yellow fever was linked to his understanding of the new nation's politics. Pernick connects Rush's medical ideas directly to the emergence of two political factions, Republican and Federalist, in the political turbulence of the 1790s. He shows that Federalists believed that the disease raging in Philadelphia was imported from the West Indies, while Republicans, including Rush, believed it arose from the filthy condition of Philadelphia. Students will want to know the basis on which people made this

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[7]Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, September 8, 1793, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 27: 62.

[8]Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, October 17, 1793, *Papers*, 27: 254–55; Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, October 24, 1793, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: 1969), 15: 373–75.

connection. They should also be alerted to the extent and far-reaching nature of party differences, at least in the minds of some politicians in the early national period. To his original article, reprinted with revisions in *A Melancholy Scene of Desolation*, Pernick adds an afterword in which he evaluates his own paper. He points out, for example, what he could have said, but did not. Students will learn from Pernick's conclusions how incomplete and tenuous historical writing is.[9]

Jacquelyn C. Miller, too, believes that Rush's treatment was tied to politics, but in a more diffuse sense than Pernick's notion of it as a direct response to the existence of factional politics. Rush, she shows, was convinced that bodily health and political health were interconnected: passionate political involvement could disrupt the body, while bodily disease could lead to the weakening of the patient's will and to dangerous political excesses. In these ideas, she suggests, lay the origins of his harsh therapy.[10]

Apart from the medical mayhem he caused in Philadelphia, Rush held the erroneous idea that African Americans were immune to the disease. Accordingly, he and others urged them to act as nurses and gravediggers. Free black ministers, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, mobilized their community to help with the dangerous and gruesome tasks required to deal with the epidemic. We can assess the depth of the black community's altruism only when we know the difficulties free black people faced as they tried to live in Philadelphia.

Former slaves encountered a harsh world. In 1787 they had banded together to form the Free African Society to build a community for themselves and to protect and educate free black Americans in the city.[11] Members of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery argued that former slaves who had been debilitated by their experience could recover and become citizens of the American Republic. Others did not accept the social environmentalist theory behind this argument, but despised former slaves for their poverty and misery. Scorned by many in the city, free blacks were driven from their customary seats in St. George's Methodist Church in 1792 and offered room in a segregated section. They withdrew and set about raising money to build an independent African Church, for which they broke ground early the next year.

After the black community had come to the aid of yellow fever victims in 1793, a newspaper editor, Mathew Carey, wrote a pamphlet about the epidemic in which he praised black workers, but also criticized the extortion practiced by some black nurses

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[9]Martin S. Pernick, "Politics, Parties and Pestilence: Epidemic Yellow Fever in Philadelphia and the Rise of the First Party System," *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (1972): 559–86; reprinted in Estes and Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene*, 119–46, with an afterword.

[10]Jacquelyn C. Miller, "Passions and Politics: The Multiple Meanings of Benjamin Rush's Treatment for Yellow Fever," in Estes and Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene*, 79–95.

[11]Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 113, 199.

who had raised their fees for nursing the sick in the face of desperate efforts to hire them. Carey's pamphlet inspired Jones and Allen to write a rebuttal that Phillip Lapsansky calls "the first African-American polemic."[12] Students might consider whether the two black leaders over-responded to Carey's criticisms because they lived in a social situation so unfriendly to their aspirations. Alert students, reading the fourth edition of Carey's pamphlet, will note Carey's response to Jones and Allen's criticism.[13] Some students might be ready to read Philip Gould's paper analyzing the two texts in terms of the contemporary conflict between capitalism and humanitarian sensibility.[14]

A more challenging topic, because printed evidence is sparse, is the work and responses of women during the epidemic. Students might want to take up the challenge thrown down by Mark Workman, who argues that treatments used by the doctors, in spite of their theoretical basis, were no better than those used by lay healers, who of course included women.[15] As an example, he refers to Margaret Morris, a Quaker, who stayed in Philadelphia to care for her extended family during the epidemic. The daughter of a doctor, Morris was prepared on at least one occasion to apply bloodletting to a patient, though generally for yellow fever she used preventives such as spreading vinegar and burning tobacco and tar, which the College of Physicians had endorsed. She seems also to have used bark (quinine) and wine, a treatment that other doctors recommended.[16] Students might learn more about the responsibilities of female healers by comparing Morris's limited work and the large and safe midwifery practice of Martha Ballard of Maine.[17] In Philadelphia, the doctors had their theories, but they shared treatment regimens with women such as Morris. It is difficult to know who was influencing whom, though Morris's treatments were likely similar to those used by other

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[12]"'Abigail, a Negress': The Role and the Legacy of African Americans in the Yellow Fever Epidemic," in Estes and Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene*, 61–78; Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, Afro-American History Series, Collection 1: Black Thought in Early America* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, n.d.).

[13]Mathew Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia*, 4th ed. (New York: Arno Press and *The New York Times*, 1970).

[14]Philip Gould, "Race, Commerce and the Literature of Yellow Fever in Early National Philadelphia," *Early American Literature* 35 (2000): 157–86.

[15]Mark Workman, "Medical Practice in Philadelphia at the Time of the Yellow Fever Epidemic, 1793," *Pennsylvania Folk Life* 27 (1978): 33–39.

[16]Workman, "Medical Practice in Philadelphia," 36.

[17]Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard based on her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

women caregivers. If Workman is correct, students will want to discuss the fragile claims doctors had to professional knowledge in the 1700s and the overlap between their knowledge and the medicine that women and others practiced at home. In medicine at least, professional men and women healers shared a sphere in the late eighteenth century.

Students will be interested also in the burden that middle class people, including women, bore during the epidemic. Physiological and medical science at the time held that health could be maintained by emotional self-control. Therefore, men and women were urged to moderate their grief over the fate of loved ones in order to preserve their own health.[18] Students should be asked if such restrained behavior was possible, and they might consider the extent to which there is a history of emotion. They might be challenged to compare the situation in Philadelphia with the behavior of victims in twentieth-century wars or in more current catastrophes.

Historians are actively at work producing a compelling and varied literature about the epidemic. Good primary source materials on the epidemic are also available in print, microform, and on websites. Dr. Rush's letters to his wife, Julia Stockton Rush, who stayed outside the city with the couple's younger children, give a day-by-day account of his work in the city. Julia's letters are not printed, but students interested in tracing out the elements of their relationship in the context of fear and distance will find the doctor's letters stimulating.[19] *The Federal Gazette*, published throughout the epidemic, is available in the microform series *Early American Newspapers, 1704–1820*. Websites also give access to primary sources: "Destroying Angel: Benjamin Rush, Yellow Fever and the Birth of Modern Medicine," maintained by an independent scholar, Bob Arnebeck, contains transcribed documents, particularly about the treatment regimens of several doctors, and an outline of the author's proposed book about Rush.[20] The Department of American Studies at the University of Virginia offers primary sources with commentaries in the section of its website called "The Diseased City" and "Writing the Fever."[21]

I have assigned the yellow fever topic three times to students taking a course on the skills and methods of historical research. Students were able to write good papers because the topics were so specific. I have received papers on a variety of subjects: the

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[18]Jacquelyn C. Miller, "An 'Uncommon Tranquility of Mind': Emotional Self Control and the Construction of a Middle-Class Identity in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Journal of Social History* 30 (Fall 1996): 29–148.

[19]L.M. Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951).

[20]See <http://members.aol.com/Fever1793>

[21]See <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/forrest/WW/fever.html>

history of medical theories; Benjamin Rush's desperate attempts to quell the epidemic; the constitutional issue of strict or loose construction of the Constitution; women as healers; and the behavior of groups such as the committee of volunteers and the Free African Society. As to the individuals involved in Philadelphia, who can complain when students' research shows that a signer of the Declaration of Independence and members of the cabinet could be as ignorant as anyone else when it came to treating disease?

In comments on doing research projects on yellow fever, undergraduates have told me that they finally realized the importance of understanding historical contexts when they read and wrote about the past. Others welcomed the opportunity of learning how to use primary sources. Many were surprised at the variety of topics for research that the yellow fever epidemic offered them.

The topic of yellow fever in Philadelphia is also useful for investigation in American History surveys and upper-level courses looking at the history of the new nation. The story of the epidemic can teach students a great deal about the social and cultural world of America in the late eighteenth century. A great city was in crisis and its people largely responded with fear and frenzy because they could neither understand nor cure what threatened them. Doctors, former slaves, and other volunteers battled the epidemic together because governments ceased to function. Racism was briefly challenged by the service offered by the Free African Society. The yellow fever epidemic in 1793 is a local history matter certainly, but studying and researching it will teach students much about American life at the end of the eighteenth century.

COLLECTING STORIES ABOUT STRIP-MINING: USING ORAL HISTORY IN THE CLASSROOM

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The study of history has always been an interdisciplinary exercise that borrows generously from the methods and insights provided by other disciplines, but the narrative method continues to remain central to the discipline of history. Telling stories as a method of explaining how things have changed or why things are the way they are is at the heart of most historical endeavors. Despite the centrality of story-telling to the discipline of history, until relatively recently, historians have given little critical consideration to the narrative as a method of explanation, and non-historians, our students among them, even less so. Most of the students in my classroom enter with the understanding that history is merely a series of stories, and that stories are merely a collection of facts. It is important, however, to make students of history aware that the narrative is a method of explanation, that story-telling is not merely the process of ordering a series of facts. One of the most valuable lessons students of history can learn, I believe, is that narratives can be constructed in ways that will lead different story-tellers (and their audiences) to quite different conclusions. The use of oral history in the classroom can be an effective method to help students understand the power of the narrative.

Inviting students to examine how we tell stories about transformations in the natural world can be a valuable learning tool in the environmental history course as well. In "A Place for Stories: Nature, History and Narrative," William Cronon tells us that "When we choose a plot to order our environmental histories, we give them a unity that neither nature nor the past possesses so clearly."[1] Cronon's observation can be demonstrated successfully in the environmental history classroom through the use of oral history to explore local or regional stories about environmental change. What follows is a description of one peculiarly local example, unique to the time and place where I teach. Nonetheless, it might inspire others teaching environmental history, local history, or even more broadly defined American history courses to consider employing oral history to examine their own local or regional stories.

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[1]William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* 78 (March 1992), 1347.

This project centered on the demise of an earth-moving machine called "the Big Muskie." The Big Muskie rested atop a ridge about twenty miles south of the college where I teach. It was, until it was cut up for scrap in the summer of 1999, the largest walking dragline ever built.[2] Between 1969 and 1991, when it was finally retired, the Big Muskie operated 24 hours a day, 364 days a year (with all-too-frequent interruptions for repair), stripping the surface of seven townships in southeastern Ohio in order to expose seams of high-sulfur coal. After its retirement in 1991, it rested upon that ridge, rusting away, until American Electric Power decided to cut it up for scrap. The news of the Big Muskie's demise provoked a curious response in this community. It seems many locals had a great deal of affection for this machine, and great efforts were made to "Save the Big Muskie" and turn it into a museum. But all of these failed.

As a newcomer to the region and an environmentally minded liberal, I was a bit perplexed by this local response. So was one of my colleagues in the Biology Department, who endured the wrath of many when he publicly declared that we should celebrate the demise of "the Great Rapist." The Big Muskie was not only a source of local pride, but had been for many years a source of the highest paying jobs this region had to offer. It was a "mortgage lifter," one of its defenders proclaimed.

The demise of the Big Muskie seemed to mark the end of an era—the era of surface mining in southeastern Ohio. A few small mines remain, and have been given new hope of resurrection by the Bush administration, but in recent years they have had increasing trouble finding customers for their high-sulfur product. The dismantling of the Big Muskie was, for locals, a powerful symbol of the end of an era, and so it seemed to present an ideal opportunity for a classroom-based oral history project. In the summer of 1999 I gathered a range of willing volunteers: ex-miners, including three of the Big Muskie's operators; displaced farmers and others who had grown up on land mined by the Big Muskie; and lifelong residents of the towns nearest the mines.

I prepared the students for the project by presenting two counter narratives about the impact of strip-mining on the region. One came from public relations material produced by Ohio Power and its parent company American Electric Power. The other was Harry Caudill's anti-strip mining screed, *My Land is Dying*, which includes some photographs and discussion of the human and environmental costs of strip-mining in southeastern Ohio, as well as his native eastern Kentucky.[3] The narrative presented in

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[2]A "dragline" is a machine used in surface coal mining that employs a large bucket, "dragged" across the earth, to scoop up soil and rock above a coal seam. During the 1960s, power companies built increasingly larger draglines and shovels, in an effort to reach coal seams more efficiently. The 27 million pound Big Muskie, 32 stories high when its boom was extended, could scoop up 325 tons of earth and rock with each pass. It "walked" on four steel "shoes," each 130 feet long and 20 feet wide, at a speed of .17 miles per hour.

[3]Harry Caudill, *My Land is Dying* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1971).

these two accounts could not have been more starkly differentiated. Ohio Power compared strip mining to harvesting in one of its brochures and began its story with images of failed, impoverished hillbilly farms, a land used up by improvident farming methods over many generations. "Ninety-five percent of the land here wasn't suited to agriculture to begin with," they asserted with questionable statistical authority. The mines brought prosperity to an impoverished region; good wages and company taxes created a positive ripple effect throughout the community. Stripped areas were reclaimed and replanted—the more level landscape, the company declared, was actually an "improvement" from what had existed before, impossibly steep ridges and dark hollows. New uses were found for post-reclaimed lands, including a 15,000-acre grassland preserve for endangered species called "The Wilds."[4] Harry Caudill presented a far darker narrative. Powerless Appalachian peoples were forced off their land, poorly compensated or not compensated at all. Streams and lakes were contaminated by acid run-off. Machines like the Big Muskie were described as "monsters of death."[5]

The task of the students was to determine to what extent either of these narratives reflected the experiences of the people they interviewed. So they went out to interview people in their living rooms and at their kitchen tables. They were welcomed warmly into homes of farmers, miners, ministers, and merchants, and often left with full bellies as well as full tapes. Not surprisingly, the stories they collected were quite varied, but few conformed to either of the narratives. Miners told of endless hours of overtime and rotating shifts, working at dangerous but high-paying jobs, and, while they tended to accept the stereotypes of impoverished farmers, they also more readily acknowledged than company propaganda the serious limitations of the lands some of them helped to reclaim. Farmers were often hesitant to voice open criticism of mining companies, but bristled at the ways they had been stereotypically presented as impoverished hillbillies. They eagerly shared pictures of neatly kept farms and comfortable farmhouses and confessed that leaving the land was difficult. Some had signed option contracts and were forced to leave at the company's lowest price; others held out and believed they made a tidy sum for their farms. People living in the towns closest to the mines generally did not witness the prosperity celebrated by the power company—in fact, surface mining brought hard times, not good. When the farmers who had filled their churches, bought gas at their gas stations, and groceries in their grocery stores disappeared, so did the local economy. The miners took their good wages and bought homes thirty to forty miles away from the noise and disturbance of the mining operations. What wealth the mines brought seemed to benefit communities on the periphery, while those near ground zero witnessed steady decline.

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[4]"Harvests," Ohio Power Company brochure, undated, ca. 1980, in William Kerrigan's personal collection.

[5]Caudill, 93.

But people's perspectives on the Big Muskie and the mines were complicated further by webs of personal and family relationships. Many miners were indeed "outsiders," who moved to the region from other mining operations in other states, and these individuals were the most likely to present stories in line with company propaganda. But for long-time local residents, complex webs of relationships moderated their views. One miner grew up on a farm; he took part in strip-mining. Most farmers and townspeople had some friend or relative who took a job with the mining company. Difficult decisions—to hold out or sell out—and vastly different outcomes (farms sold for as little as $30 an acre and as much as $2000 as acre) caused rifts in families and between neighbors that have not completely healed.

What united farm families was a vigorous rejection of the stereotypes associated with the term "Appalachian." They were not rich in money, but were independent and self-sufficient, most contended, and many insisted their original quarter-section farms still might be able to sustain them today had they not been forced to move. In order to get at the truth behind these disparate portrayals of the region's farming potential, one student unearthed old copies of a Soil Conservation Study for the county completed in the early 1940s. The report did not paint an entirely bleak picture (and certainly contradicted the power company's "95%" claim), but suggested that these lands were in fact not being farmed in a sustainable manner, that some acreage would need to be turned to woodlot or pasture, and that the number of acres in crops would need to be reduced.[6]

After conducting the interviews, students were required to prepare a content index of each interview tape and to write up a personal narrative on each subject, connecting the life stories of the participants to the changes brought about by strip mining. Students shared these with the rest of the class, and the class discussed how these personal narratives supported and challenged the power company story and the liberal environmentalist story. As part of a take-home final exam, students had to construct their own narratives on strip-mining in southeastern Ohio.

Student response to the project was highly favorable. Although some were nervous about leaving the classroom and venturing out to the homes of rural residents, nearly all returned from their interviews eager to share the stories they collected. Post-interview discussions included perhaps the broadest participation I have ever encountered in the classroom, because each student brought to them a unique authority—the knowledge of the stories they had collected. Comments on evaluations gave the project a near-universal approval, with many commenting that the project was "interesting" and "fun," and that they appreciated the opportunity to encounter the perspectives of "real" people. The best measurement of its success, however, was in the

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[6]C.L. Whiteford, A.H. Paschall, and E.C. Sease, "Physical Land Conditions in Muskingum and Guernsey Counties, Ohio" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 1944), in William Kerrigan's personal collection.

quality of the final exam essays. Students approached materials written by both environmental historians and power companies with a more confidently critical eye as a result of their oral history experience.

This immersion in one local environmental story also offered ample opportunities to reflect on other issues addressed in the course: How is this contest over land use (farming vs. mining) similar to and different from other such contests in American environmental history (Native American vs. European subsistence methods, for example), and why do we privilege some land uses over others? What stereotypes (positive and negative) do we possess of the self-provisioning farmer, and of the person who earns a living as a strip-miner, and how are our impressions of them fashioned by our understanding of their relationship with the natural world? Does the popular dichotomy in which so many environmental issues are presented—jobs vs. nature—make any sense in explaining the story of strip-mining in southeastern Ohio? Finally, by asking students to reconcile three or more narratives on the story of strip-mining in southeastern Ohio—the power company's story, the liberal environmentalist story, and the personal stories of those they interviewed—students gain an intimate understanding of how we employ narratives to make sense of our personal lives and communal experiences.

Although this project drew on specific recent developments in the historiography of environmental history, projects might be developed with the same goal—to help students understand the power of the narrative as a form of explanation—in other history courses. In selecting a suitable topic, instructors should consider stories that have significant local meaning (and thus can be revealed in the personal experiences of local residents), but they should also be stories that can be tied to one or more particular meta-narratives constructed by external groups—historians, the media, or corporations, for example. A course on women's history might examine the impact of World War II on local women and measure local women's personal experiences against the historiography on women and war. Students enrolled in a course on the Cold War might interview locals about their childhood concerns about the Russians, bomb shelters, and atomic fallout. And virtually every American community—rural, urban, or suburban—has been transformed by the construction of interstate highways in the last half-century. An oral history project focusing on the specific local impacts of any part of our interstate highway system could be built into a course on modern America. The above suggestions, of course, might be used in any region of the country. I would encourage instructors to search out stories that are peculiarly local, but can be given broader meaning by tying them to broader national narratives. The rewards of such projects might be measured in the classroom, but they also can have positive impacts on the wider community.

Doing Oral History in the Environmental History Classroom: Practical Details

Pre-planning: While oral history projects can be immensely rewarding, they do require some pre-planning to be successful. Expect to spend a fair amount of time in the months before the class preparing for the project. Networking in the local community to find subjects is critical and will require some advance planning. Contacting churches, grange halls, and other local institutions will yield some results. Getting invited to a dinner for locals organizing against a planned mega-hog farm connected me with a large group of interview subjects. Earning the trust and confidence of a few key people will open many doors.

There is paperwork that should be prepared before the class begins. Contact information sheets providing critical information that students will need to know before conducting interviews (name, phone number, address, basic biographical details, relationship with other interview subjects); a letter of introduction to each participant, explaining the goals of the project; and release forms, which are essential if you expect to make the interviews available to others or to use them in your own research.

Equipment: A classroom oral history project can be done quite cheaply if the primary purpose is a learning exercise. We had pretty respectable results with $20 portable tape recorders and $30 lapel microphones available at Radio Shack. If you are serious about creating "radio broadcast quality" tapes, or are concerned about preservation issues, more expensive professional equipment is recommended. Search the logs of H-Oralhist for extended discussions of the benefits and drawbacks of different professional quality recorders.

Training: It is important to devote a few class sessions to training students in the use of equipment and the art of interviewing. You should be able to accomplish this in two or three sessions.[7] I invited a colleague from our Communications Department who had extensive oral history experience to come into class and provide students with a "crash course" on interviewing. It is also important that the students are educated interviewers. Test students on relevant course materials before sending them out to interview, and require them to submit lists of interview questions beforehand.

After the interviews: Students were required to prepare a content index of each tape (indexed to the tape counter) and to write up a personal narrative on each subject, connecting the life stories of their subjects to the changes brought about by strip mining. Students shared these with the rest of the class, and the class discussed how these personal narratives supported and challenged the power company story and the liberal environmentalist story. As part of a take-home final exam, students had to construct their own narratives on strip-mining in southeastern Ohio.

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[7]I relied on two books, Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Simon and Schuster, 1994) and Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, 2000), in preparing sessions and handouts on "doing oral history."

After the class: This project took on a life of its own after the end of the semester. With the aid of a group of community volunteers and a grant from the Ohio Humanities Council, we created a traveling display that is currently making the rounds of libraries, banks, and town halls throughout southeastern Ohio. The exhibit, entitled "Reclaiming Our Heritage" combines images of the affected communities over time with excerpts from the oral histories, many of which were also transcribed and deposited in local libraries for public use. While the exhibit attempts to cover all aspects of this story, as the title suggests, the volunteers who worked on it were most interested in "reclaiming" the history of communities erased from the landscape by years of mining and reclamation. That project was unveiled last fall at a community event at The Wilds, a 15,000-acre refuge for endangered exotic animals established on reclaimed strip-mined lands. Students and subjects all gathered to hear indigenous music, to picnic, to view the display, and to share more stories. Octogenarians gathered around pictures of churches, schools, and general stores now long gone and pointed to spots on a transformed landscape (where rhinos and zebras now roam), to show the places once occupied by their childhood farms.

USING FIRST-PERSON SOURCES TO TEACH THE VIETNAM WAR

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As an avid proponent of student-active teaching pedagogy, one of the various methods that I employ is to build an entire course around discussion of a body of readings. First-person sources serve as one of the best media for this approach. Two of my most popular offerings, "Women's Lives in Asia and Africa" and "The Civil Rights Era," focus on a film and the discussion of one or more first-person accounts each week. My course "The Vietnam Experience" is more heavily lecture-oriented, but reading, discussing, and writing about first-person sources is a central component of this course as well.

In nearly thirty years of teaching Vietnam and more than twenty years of writing about teaching the subject, beginning with an article in *Teaching History* in 1981,[1] my approach and my pedagogy have evolved, but one important point of continuity is an emphasis upon understanding the multifarious dimensions of the conflict from the perspectives of the major groups of participants. Reduced to only the most basic differing perspectives, they are the United States' South Vietnamese allies, the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, American government and military leaders, American war participants, and the anti-war movement. Obviously, each of these groups is far from monolithic, with many perceptions and viewpoints represented. A quick visit to Amazon.com (http://www.amazon.com) reveals almost 3000 books under the category of Vietnam War personal narratives.

I attempt to expose students to as many different first-person perspectives as I can squeeze into the reading load of the course. Admittedly, I sometimes push the envelope more than I ought with too many readings. The task of selection is daunting. Because I cannot use each of these sources every time, I vary some of the readings each time that I teach the course.

I am quite conscious of the criticism of scholars such as Ronald Spector, Frederick Z. Brown, Allan Goodman, and others that the teaching of Vietnam must rise above "a ditty bag of war stories" or "anecdotal accounts of what the fighting and

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[1]Joe P. Dunn, "Teaching the Vietnam War as History," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 6 (Fall 1981): 50–59.

decision making were like (at home and abroad)."[2] Serious analysis of the causes, policy process, impact, and continuing legacy are essential. Goodman, for example, stressed the need to raise questions about when to use force and when to employ diplomacy. He also called for teachers to address the issue of the efficacy of war even for justified reasons. Is war worth the social and economic costs that continue for generations? While acknowledging the truth of these scholars' warnings against superficial analysis,[3] an important place still exists for introducing students to the perspectives of participants and the first-person account is an excellent tool. With all the caveats noted, I offer my favorite first-person sources from each of the above groups.

Probably my favorite book on any aspect of Vietnam is Duong Van Mai Elliott's *The Sacred Willow: Four Generations in the Life of a Vietnamese Family* (1999). Elliott uses the story of her family from her great-grandfather through her siblings and her own life to capture the many dimensions of the Vietnam experience. It is an amazing *tour de force* that seems to touch virtually every aspect of Vietnam's past from the colonial period through the present, and it personalizes the complex world of Vietnamese politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mai's father, her uncles, and her siblings represent different allegiances during the war, and her own story about growing up in the late 1950s through the 1960s is instructive. Mai attended Georgetown University from 1960 to 1963, where she met David Elliott, today a leading Vietnam scholar, whom she married when he arrived in Vietnam as an Army sergeant in 1964. She provides her perspectives during American escalation until she left Vietnam in 1968 to join her husband in the United States. She continues to tell both her own story and that of her family through the fall of South Vietnam in 1975 and afterward. Although this combination of history, memoir, and autobiography is lengthy and sophisticated, students praise the book. My suggestion is that it is used best in segments as students progress chronologically through the course.

Sacred Willow is the story of an educated, elite Vietnamese family. Two other of my favorite books also trace the lives of two Vietnamese men of family, stature, intellect, and privilege who took opposite directions in South Vietnamese politics. Bui Diem, a key figure in the Republic of Vietnam, held several important positions, including chief of staff (1965), secretary of state for foreign affairs (1966), ambassador

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[2]Ronald H. Spector, "What Did You Do in the War Professor? Reflections on Teaching About Vietnam," *American Heritage* 38 (December 1986): 98–101; Frederick Z. Brown, "Myths and Misperception Abound in Our Courses on the War in Vietnam," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 34 (May 25, 1988): A48; and Allan Goodman, "Scholars Must Give More Serious Thought to How They Teach and Write about the War in Vietnam," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 36 (July 25, 1990). Quotes are from Spector and Goodman.

[3]See, for example, Joe P. Dunn, "The State of the Field: How Vietnam is Being Taught," *Journal of the Vietnam Veterans Institute* 4 (November 1995): 4–15.

to the United States (1967–1972), and special envoy to the Paris peace talks (1973–1975). His memoir, *In the Jaws of History* (1987) tells the story of how and why so many of his generation supported the Republic of Vietnam. Ambassador Diem, whom I have been privileged to know for many years and to host in my home, is one of the finest gentlemen I have met. His story is powerful, poignant, and illuminating. It has become virtually cliché in many circles to depreciate the South Vietnamese. However, any fair-minded person cannot help but appreciate the nobility of men such as Bui Diem whose love for and loyalty to their country were beyond reproach. And the former ambassador continues to distinguish himself to this day with his ongoing work on behalf of the Vietnamese people. This fine book offers a valuable perspective.

Truong Nhu Tang's *A Vietnam Memoir* (1985) provides an excellent counterpoint. Tang reflects the same family background, commitment, and love of country, but he followed a different path. Tang fought the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, was a founding member of the National Liberation Front, and held the same kinds of high-level positions in the NLF that Bui Diem did for the South Vietnamese government. Tang's moving memoir explains why a patriot would pursue this life. No better source exists for students to understand and appreciate the "enemy" than this book. It is a perennial favorite of my students. Interestingly, both of these men ultimately were sold out by their allies. The United States abandoned Bui Diem and its South Vietnamese allies in 1973 and afterwards, and the North Vietnamese after victory in 1975 swept aside Tang and his comrades in the National Liberation Front.

A few other sources that I sometimes employ deserve mention. North Vietnamese colonel, liaison to the foreign press, spokesman concerning American POWs, and the first North Vietnamese officer to enter Saigon in the final collapse, Bui Tin relates his life in *Following Ho Chi Minh* (1995) and his recent retrospect, *From Enemy to Friend: A North Vietnamese Perspective on the War* (2002). Both brief volumes provide good insight into North Vietnamese thinking and why Bui Tin, like Tang, also broke with the Communists after the war. David Chanoff and Doan Van Troi's *Portrait of the Enemy* (1986), a collection of interviews with North Vietnamese and Viet Cong captives, offers a large number of individual accounts and perspectives. Two illuminating novels, each written in 1995 by the two finest contemporary Vietnamese writers, Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* and Duong Thu Huong's *Novel Without a Name*, employ a first-person perspective to capture the mind and angst of many North Vietnamese soldiers.

Although I do not use the following two books in my Vietnam course, students read them in the "Women in Asia and Africa" course. Le Ly Hayslip's *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1990) is a sweeping tale of the life of a Vietnamese woman who experienced the war from the South Vietnamese, Viet Cong, and American sides—the last as the wife of an American Vietnam veteran. A mediocre movie based on the book entitled *Heaven and Earth* is a somewhat useful auxiliary source as well. Duong Thu Huong's exceptional novel, *Paradise of the Blind* (1994), employs a first-person family history to provide retroactive insight on the war and the miasma of post-

war life in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Her more recent *Memoirs of a Pure Spring* (2001) discusses the same themes without the family history. Finally, Yung Krall's melodramatic *A Thousand Tears Falling: The True Story of a Vietnamese Family Torn Apart by War, Communism, and the CIA* (1995) at least deserves mention in this context.

The bibliography on American policy officials is lengthy and rich. I used Robert S. McNamara's books, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (1995) and later *Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* (1999), when they first came out because they were *au courant* and much in the news. However, I would not assign them again. Even though *Argument Without End* has the virtue of counterposing American and North Vietnamese first-person perspectives, I have problems with both books.[4] But my single biggest concern is that they are simply too long and tedious to assign with all the other reading in the course. William Colby's *Lost Victory: A Firsthand Account of America's Sixteen-Year Involvement in Vietnam* (1989) has much to offer, but again it falls victim, as do many other extremely useful books, to what is possible to require in a single course.

The same problem exists with anti-war critics. Selecting any one source as representative from the many first-person accounts is impossible. On this topic I have determined that a more analytical assessment of the wide range of protests is necessary, and Adam Garfinkle's detailed, balanced, and nuanced *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (1995) stands head and shoulders above all other accounts.

My solution to dealing with both the policymakers and the challengers in my course is a useful brief volume, Gil Dorland's *Legacy of Discord: Voices of the Vietnam Era* (2001), that engages a wide range of important policymakers and critics in a question-and-answer format. Some reviewers correctly criticize the relatively brief interviews for failing to develop the complexity of the issues with each respondent. However, Dorland packs an amazing number of perspectives into a useful format. My students praise the book enthusiastically, and it has been an invaluable tool in my class.

Finally, we turn to the most difficult challenge in setting up the course: electing reading to represent Americans who fought the war. The categories of participants here seem endless. I have written about groups such as American POWs and women in Vietnam, and I usually attempt to include a reading from each of these categories.[5] The

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[4]See Joe P. Dunn, "*In Retrospect* in Context: McNamara, Military Strategy, and the Literature," *Journal of the Vietnam Veterans Institute* 5 (1996): 11–18. Indeed the entire journal in this double-issue edition is dedicated to a critical analysis of the McNamara book.

[5]Joe P. Dunn, "The POW Chronicles: A Bibliographic Review," *Armed Forces and Society* 9 #3 (Spring 1983): 495–514; "The Vietnam War POW/MIAs: An Annotated Bibliography," *Bulletin of Bibliography* 45 (June 1988): 152–157; "Women and the Vietnam War: A Bibliographic Review," *Journal of American Culture* 12 (Spring 1989): 79–86; and "The Vietnam War and Women," 47–67, and "The Vietnam War and POWs/MIAs," 68–83, both in *Teaching the Vietnam War: Resources and Assessments*, edited by Joe

fact that I teach at a women's college lends particular relevance to the latter category. However, a strong case could be made that it is an important issue no matter what the nature of the educational institution.

The quest for one representative combat narrative is futile. The war was so different during each year of American involvement and the regional theaters varied so greatly that no book can be representative. The experiences of Army, Marine, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard combatants each had unique elements. So how do we respond to the perennial student query: "Is this what it was like?" The only answer is that it depends upon year, place, military service, and job. One way to address the multiplicity is to employ one of the dozens of collective oral histories, a genre that continues to proliferate. The present bibliography is too long to mention even a few.[6] Many of them are quite good, but I never know what to do with the books after students read them. My preference remains the individual narrative.[7]

Of the many hundreds into the thousands of combat narratives, a few of the old staples remain the best. No book is better in depicting the hard day to day in the field than John Del Veccio's novel *The 13th Valley* (1982). The detail and the beautifully crafted characters provide a vivid first-person "grunt" view of the war, but it is a sophisticated and lengthy read that often overwhelms novice students. With all the other readings that I assign, the book is just too much for the purpose that I wish the combat narrative to play. I have used many different first-person combat narratives at various times—Tim O'Brien, Ron Kovic, Winston Groom, James Webb, David Donovan, to name only a few—but I keep returning to the old classic, Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* (1977), the book that students react to best.

Two problems remain. If I use *A Rumor of War*, a Marine account from the first months of American combat involvement in 1965, by definition it does not represent

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P. Dunn, Center for the Study of Armament and Disarmament, 1990.

[6]For a list of most of the collective oral histories, see Joe P. Dunn, "Texts and Auxiliary Resources," in Marc Jason Gilbert, ed., *The Vietnam War: Teaching Approaches and Resources* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 201–25, especially pp. 216–17; and "Personal Narratives and Oral Histories," in James S. Olson, ed., *The Vietnam War: Handbook of the Literature and Research* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 29–47. The best new collective oral histories not noted in these two sources are James R. Wilson, *Landing Zones: Southern Veterans Remember Vietnam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); Ron Steinman, *The Soldiers Story: Vietnam in Their Own Words* (New York: TV Books, 1999); and Frank L. Grzyb, ed., *A Story for All Americans: Vietnam, Victims, and Veterans* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2000).

[7]However, I have found the film, *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam*, produced by HBO in 1988, an excellent first-person source. These excerpts from actual letters written from all kinds of Vietnam participants and read by movie stars while various forms of visuals are displayed, including movies taken by participants, capture the multifarious nature of the war in powerful visceral reality. The film, a staple of my course, is always one of the most popular sources.

the nature of the war as it developed. A different reality existed by 1970, for example, than the one that Del Veccio depicts. And to return to the question, "Is this what Vietnam was like?" the truth is that only a small percentage of Vietnam veterans saw any form of combat. The story of the "typical" Vietnam veteran would be an account of a rear-echelon participant (derisively referred to as REMFs) far from any combat role. Of course, very little published literature has come from this vast majority sector. The Vietnam memoirs of cooks, jeep drivers, clerks, mechanics, cartographers, or personnel specialists have little market. Only a handful of books exist in this genre, and most are not particularly useful.

This situation led me a few years ago to write my own memoir, *Desk Warrior: Memoirs of a Combat REMF* (1999), a book that I propose is distinctive in the vast Vietnam bibliography. In brief, I was drafted while well into my Ph.D. in diplomatic history and teaching at a university. I went to Vietnam in late 1969 as a private first class, which put me in the upper ranges of education for one at the lowest miliary rank in country. Trained originally in artillery fire direction control and later in electronic intelligence, I was assigned when I arrived in country as a clerk/typist in the brigade intelligence office. I was an REMF, although at a forward combat headquarters, not a conventional one. Over time I worked my way into the dual role of clerk/typist and the non-commissioned officer (NCO) head of the electronic intelligence unit. I alternated between combat activity and clerical functions. The book's title and subtitle are oxymorons, but they reflected my reality.

Almost every day I wrote a letter to my parents addressing everything that I was doing and thinking. Thirty years later I employed these letters, a virtual intellectual and explanatory diary, as the basis for the memoir. The book portrays my thoughts as a young participant augmented by the perspective of an academic who has devoted most of his career to studying and teaching the war.

As a REMF, my story reflects the reality of Vietnam for most of the 2.6 million participants. I functioned in the rear echelon bureaucracy in all its absurdities, and I observed daily the world of a command headquarters. In a limited and decidedly tangential way, I had access to how the war was fought at the infantry brigade level. Although by grace in only a small number of situations, I engaged in combat so I identify with the warrior role. In so many ways, I was a typical low-ranking enlisted man who experienced the normative pattern from Basic Combat Training to the stages of maturation during a year in country from innocent naïf, through the rights of passage such as R&R, to grizzled and semi-hardened veteran, and the universal coming-home adjustment syndrome. In another sense, my academic inclinations, background in war and diplomacy, efforts to chronicle activities, and my rather unusual job responsibilities made me anything but typical.

I witnessed and participated in the Vietnamization process, including the training of the 18th ARVN Division to replace American units, the drawing down of the numbers of American forces in the country, and indeed the deactivation of my own unit, the 199th Infantry Brigade. I observed the nature of the war in the field and on base camp in those

pivotal winding-down years. As an academic on "sabbatical" in military uniform, I juxtaposed the interpretations of and reactions to the war on the American campus against the realities of my daily life, particularly during the upheaval of the Cambodian incursion. As an inveterate historian, I lived Vietnam constantly contemplating how this experience would be interpreted twenty years later.

My students have a talking artifact before them and the book expands their confrontation with another first-person source. One of the reasons that I opt for Caputo's *A Rumor of War* in my class is that I can use Caputo's and my experiences to counterpose topics such as the early combat days against the Vietnamization years; a combat marine in 1965 vs. an Army REMF in 1970; the I Corps theater in the northernmost provinces of South Vietnam vs. the less-intense war in III Corps in the southern portion of the country, etc. Yet the themes of innocence to reality, the year-long evolution, the brotherhood of warriors, and the coming-home syndrome resonate the same in both works, as they do in most participant memoirs.

First-person accounts can play a valuable role in teaching the Vietnam War. The degree and emphasis upon this literature vs. other kinds of sources, whether texts, monographs, analytical treatises, or document collections, depends upon the nature of the course, the teacher's preferences, and local institutional realities. I hope that the suggestions and comments in this article are helpful for those who wish to employ or increase the use of the various genres of first-person sources.

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A TEACHING NOTE: GETTING STARTED IN A COURSE ON HISTORICAL METHOD

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All teachers teach method as well as content, whether they intend to or not.

Therefore, we should teach method explicitly. If we don't, students are likely to learn passive and sloppy methods and not know the difference between plagiarism and thinking.

Exercises are one of the best ways to draw attention to method.

For 25 years, I have been putting these propositions into effect at the College of Staten Island. They shape all my teaching, from the freshman level to the graduate level, and they dominate one course, "Introduction to Historical Method." This "teaching note" describes the exercises that I use at the start of the course, looking at "What Is a Fact?" and "Point of View."

An exercise is not a paper. Papers focus on results; exercises focus on process. In a paper, one suppresses preliminary thinking and dead ends; in an exercise, one shows them and gets credit for them. Each exercise starts with a question or a task. Students do the task, or devise a way to answer the question, using a certain body of material (or rummaging around the library and the Internet), and simultaneously they watch how they complete the task—this is where method comes in. The methodological dimension asks what we do when we think historically. So each exercise has both content goals and methodological purposes. Exercises use short, informal writing methods—lists, notes, questions, paragraphs, occasionally culminating in a short paper. Equally important, exercises provide raw material for discussions. Students complete the exercises to hand in at class time; then I devote one or two hours of class time to processing each exercise while it is still fresh in mind. Using exercises turns each course into a laboratory about the use of evidence. (This "teaching note" looks at opening exercises—I use this approach throughout the entire course.)

PROLOGUE: ASKING QUESTIONS

I rarely assign this as an exercise outside of class. More commonly, I use question-asking to start a semester or a topic. In the Method class, before I hand out the syllabus, I ask, "What could this course be about?" and go around the room; everyone has to answer. Usually students say that our role as historians is to gather information and interpret it. They talk about subjects and kinds of material; I keep bringing the discussion back to our activities. I then offer a compromise—history in a learning environment is about both activities and content. That is my real position. I agree that we cannot talk about "method" abstractly, but must embed it in material. I argue that

every course is about both method and material. In Method, the balance is weighted towards developing one's own method. In most other courses, the balance is weighted towards content—but not exclusively. We have to *do* history, and asking questions is the point of departure.

After handing out the syllabus and skimming over it, teacher-style, I do another version of this exercise, one I learned from Rose Ortiz of CSI's English Department. I fully agree with Ortiz's emphases: Reading is an activity; the first obstacle to overcome is students' passivity and resistance; students have to learn to manufacture interest. The syllabus tells them the author and title of the first book I assign, nothing more. "What could you get out of this book? What questions could you hope to answer using it?" I make them write questions for a few minutes, and then once again go around the room. Some students try to evade, saying that their questions have already been given; others improvise, expanding on things others have said. The latter is a good response—it marks a step toward listening to each other and taking each other seriously. Instead of questions, students often give answers—things they think they know, conclusions or myths from their families or peers or textbooks. I try to get those students to turn their pictures into hypotheses to be tested. We usually end up with a good list of questions on the board, which I make them copy down to use as they read. In the next class, I return to these questions. I ask which questions we are able to answer and which do not pan out. Asking and answering questions aimed at establishing the methodology of learning—open inquiry, experimentation, an activity shared among the students and between the students and me.

EXERCISE ONE: WHAT IS A FACT?

Get the facts, the Rankeans say—facts are building blocks for historians. So we start with a simple inquiry and exercise:

> Is it a fact that Dwight Eisenhower's Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson said "What is good for General Motors is good for the country"? I don't know, because I haven't done the necessary research. Your assignment is to decide whether you can prove it to be a fact, or prove it not to be a fact.
>
> First, do the research. As you research, make a list of all the steps you take, even if they don't yield information. Record each source, what you find in it (i.e., take notes), and any problems you have with accepting the information (i.e., think while you read and hunt). Go as far as you can.
>
> Secondly, write a page or more saying how sure you are that you know the truth and can prove it. What is the relevant evidence? How good is it? Why have you reached your conclusion? Is there any doubt in your mind? What is your criterion for calling a statement a fact—common consent among your sources? Provenance, the source used by a particular author? Internal consistency (i.e., there are no contradictions within the

account of the events within which the statement was recorded)? External consistency (i.e., a particular account doesn't contradict other accounts)? Plausibility? A "smoking gun"? The "ring of truth"?

Hand in your list of steps, notes, and page. You might not find a definitive answer; I will reward diligence and an honest, searching assessment of WHETHER you can say that it is a FACT that Charles E. Wilson did say the words attributed to him above. In addition, I will reward ingenuity and following directions. I will mark down for lateness, not just this time but always.

PROCESSING ACTIVITY FOR EXERCISE ONE

One of my hallmarks is that I ask students to write on the board. This practice speeds up class and makes it less teacher-centered. Many refuse, but after coaxing some students comply. First, I ask students to write one source that they consulted. Usually they have sources that cover the gamut from encyclopedias to textbooks, monographs, and websites; often someone has consulted a parent or a friend. Someone always writes a quotation or a conclusion on the board, not the name of a source. This student wants to rush ahead to the "answer." My purpose is to discuss what works and what does not work. I want them to discover that encyclopedias do not work and that they inevitably encounter dead ends. In every class, some show real ingenuity and have tips to share that prove useful for other assignments.

The next step is to ask them to put their best evidence on the board. In this particular case, the students have different versions of the quote. Some give it as I have, including the (intentional) misquotation. A number of students go to the *New York Times* on microfilm to locate Wilson's words. He made his comment in confirmation hearings; the transcripts were released to the press eight days later. Wilson said, "I cannot conceive of (a conflict of interest) because for years I thought that what was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice versa. The difference did not exist."[1] This usually leads to a lively discussion of whether there is a difference between the two wordings.

"What convinced you?" opens the next round of questioning. I want students to develop their own terms for their criteria for calling a statement a fact, and offer the ones in the third paragraph of instructions as hints. It is plausible that Wilson would have said, "What's good for General Motors is good for the country," but here plausibility lets us down. One can take the *New York Times* account of the hearings as a "smoking gun." I usually introduce the journalistic notion of corroboration by a second independent source, and put great weight on the "source of a source." "Common consent" is hard to obtain in this case, since secondary sources often misquote Wilson. Of course, historians often infer "common consent" if a couple of authors agree; we

[1] *New York Times*, January 24, 1953, 8.

have to satisfy "reasonable doubt," not "cockamamie doubt." Students now rarely take authors as "authorities," which gratifies me. In any group of students, some learn from this exercise that they have not gone deeply enough, but I give good grades to those who realize that they do not have an answer and could say what was missing. If the students give me an opening, I talk about myths and stereotypes—statements that look like facts but are based on inadequate evidence.

Virtually any "simple fact" can be plugged into this format. I have asked, "When was George Washington really born?" The date one gives depends on the calendar one uses, since England changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1759, and of course we use a third calendar (Washington's birthday—now President's Day—is always on a Monday in February). Another very successful version of this exercise asks, "Were there any women prisoners in the Bastille on July 13, 1789?" Students can find primary documents on line, and also make inferences from various secondary accounts.

Doing this exercise over the years convinced me that my definition of "a fact" is operational: A fact is a statement that has survived a process of testing. I employ all of the tests given in the directions.

In the course of this discussion, someone usually says that it all depends on your point of view. That remark challenges the whole meaning of a fact and the goal of objectivity. I do not want to settle these issues; I want to keep them alive as main themes of the course. To advance discussion, I have students move on to Exercise 2.

EXERCISE TWO: POINT OF VIEW

I assert that everyone has a point of view from which to look at reality. (The Rankeans thought that they could get rid of their point of view, but even they admitted that such a thing existed. They called it "bias.") So I ask:

> What was Eric Schlosser's point of view as he wrote *Fast Food Nation*? What kinds of people and behavior did he like or dislike? What were his values? What yardsticks did he apply to people?
>
> Your task in this exercise is to construct Schlosser's point of view, using ONLY the introduction and the first five chapters of *Fast Food Nation*. Do NOT do extra research; I will mark down if you do! To categorize his point of view, you may compare his point of view with that of other historians whose work you know. As you write up your answer to this exercise, cite passages that support your points and comment on those passages.

PROCESSING ACTIVITY FOR EXERCISE TWO

I begin by having students put their best piece of evidence on the board. We process them, looking for value-laden words, words that express approval and disapproval. One particularly telling passage reads, "The fast food chains feed off the sprawl of Colorado Springs, accelerate it, and help set its visual tone. They build large

signs to attract motorists and look on cars the way predators view herds of prey."[2] The word "predators" jumps out at us. Is "sprawl" a neutral word, or is it also value-laden? Can we really separate the author from his words? Moving along, by combining this passage with other ones, we can refine our descriptions of Schlosser's point of view. Is he simply anti-business, or is he impressed by the innovations made by Carl Karcher (the founder of Carl's Jr.) and Ray Kroc (of McDonald's)? Does he treat franchise owners differently than corporation heads? Other revealing passages deal with labor law violations and with the experiences of a seventeen-year-old girl working at a McDonald's.

One especially thorny problem is whether we can distinguish between Schlosser's main idea and point of view. I am delighted when this problem arises, because having a main idea is a key part of other assignments that follow in the course. I argue that his personal likes and values lay behind the main idea but that they are not the main idea. Schlosser's main idea is that we are a fast food nation, not that he doesn't like fast food. He describes the whole system of food production and the ways it has changed under the pressure of fast food.

We have at our disposal the instruction that Lord Acton sent to contributors to the *Cambridge Modern History* in the early twentieth century: "nothing shall reveal the country, the religion, or the party to which the writers belong."[3] Acton's maxim gave us categories for weighing point of view: Is Schlosser's point of view notably "American"? Is it "un-American" to be anxious about the impact of fast food on children? Does he temper his criticisms because fast food is so central an institution in our culture? As usual, this exercise leads to asking how the major sociological variables —class, gender, race—enter into someone's point of view. Most groups of students do not think that Schlosser's gender or race has much effect on the book; his class has more effect.

Once we have described Schlosser's point of view, the question inevitably arises: What should we do about our point of view? Acton's maxim, cited above, embodies an instruction to amputate one's point of view. This strategy can lead to old-fashioned textbooks that assert that there is a single story, or to saying that there are different perspectives on a subject but trying to favor none of them. Professional journalists, such as Schlosser, try to do this. The benefits of this strategy are fidelity to sources and a quest for objectivity. However, many students believe that the exercise shows that it couldn't work. One cannot get rid of one's point of view. Furthermore, there is a large drawback to trying to get rid of one's point of view: Schlosser proposes reforms to our system of food production, which inevitably make him a partisan. The opposing strategy, I argue, is to admit one's point of view. That includes making one's point of

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[2]Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 65.

[3]Lord Acton, "Letter to the Contributors to *The Cambridge Modern History*," quoted in Fritz Stern, editor, *The Varieties of History* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1956), 248.

view a tool; modifying it when it doesn't allow me to see a problem or a group of people; in general, taking responsibility for it. Many historians and social scientists put their point of view into a preface or introduction. I call this the "backdoor route to objectivity." I think that we can actually be more objective this way than by following Acton's strategy. You, like my students, don't have to agree. (Self-indulgent journalism shows the pitfalls of this strategy if objectivity isn't kept as the goal.)

What should we do about our point of view in the classroom? Even though I make my point of view visible in what I write, I do not state my point of view directly in my classes. I do not want to turn off students who do not share my politics. Of course, we are all narcissists, and students are curious about us—too curious. "Good" students have learned how to say what they think the professor wants to hear; I think we should disrupt that habit. I do not want to produce clones. So I will disclose my point of view on a specific subject only when it especially determines what I have to say, and I will answer specific questions. The operational part of my point of view is my bundle of standard questions and certain moral values derived from my concepts of respect, democracy, and freedom that I share when asked.

Another thing you might not agree with is my injunction not to do research on the author's point of view. In this exercise, I want students to infer for themselves and not "find" an answer—part of my war against passivity. Once students learn to analyze texts critically for themselves, they are ready for exercises using book reviews and reviewing the literature. Those come later in the Method course.

Stephen P. Thompson, ed. *The Renaissance*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2000. Pp. 272. Paper, $14.96; ISBN 0-7377-0218-4.

In *The Renaissance*, Stephen P. Thompson has compiled 21 articles divided into five chapters: The Origins of the Renaissance, Political and Social Contexts of the Renaissance, Renaissance Discoveries and Transformations, Achievements and Developments of the Later Renaissance, and The Significance of the Renaissance. This organization provides the reader with an essential overview of the full historical period that is the European Renaissance. Not only does Thompson provide the breadth of Italian, Northern European, and Western European Renaissance civilization, but he also touches upon the critical elements of Renaissance art, philosophy, the Reformation, and the Counter-Reformation periods.

However, the real value of Thompson's work lays in the historical topics not covered regularly in a survey readings text on the Renaissance. The text includes essays on witchcraft in Renaissance Europe, the darker side of the Renaissance, which discusses the power struggles of the Papal States, and the emergence of Cesar Borgia as an early leader of Italian unity. Topics of violence and lawlessness are presented to prevent the illusion that the Renaissance was a golden age without struggle and a certain degree of chaos. Other topical essays include influential women of the Renaissance, the "prince and the courtier," everyday life in Renaissance Europe, the economics of the Renaissance, and the European conquest of the Americas. The editor has provided a remarkable compilation of outstanding essays that explore and analyze the diversity of issues that compose the very complex nature of Renaissance European history.

The Renaissance concludes with three supplemental sections not usually found in a survey of readings text: Appendix of Documents, Chronology, and For Further Research. The supplements provide additional enrichment to the student of Renaissance history. Documents such as "Bruni's Promotion of Classical Studies," "Ficino Explains Platonic Love," and "To the Memory of ... William Shakespeare," are but three of the nineteen documents in the appendix. The Chronology (appendix) is a four-page historical overview of the major historical events and accomplishments of the Renaissance.

This is a well-written resource that promises to provide needed breadth and depth to the study of this unique historical period. Without a broader historical text on European history, it would have limited application in the teaching of post-medieval European civilization. Its greatest benefit is as a useful supplement to the teaching of modern European history.

I would recommend Thompson's *The Renaissance* for use in a college survey on modern European history or an undergraduate-level humanities course that focuses on Renaissance studies. The text is written with a reading level appropriate for most university freshman and sophomore students, who could be completing a history, social

science, or humanities requirement for general education. *The Renaissance* is written to apply easily to a variety of teaching situations and could be adopted as a supplement for advanced placement world history courses at the high school level.

Illinois State University S. Rex Morrow

Clarice Swisher, ed. *Victorian England*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2000. Pp. 263. Cloth, $24.96; ISBN 0-7377-0221-4. Paper, $15.96; ISBN 0-7377-0220-6.

In the last 500 years, England has been headed by 23 monarchs, six of whom were women. Two of these women, Elizabeth I and Victoria, not only reigned longer than anyone else, but both lent their names to characterize an age, thus adding to the significance of what they represented. The book under review, part of a "Turning Points in World History" series, consists of excerpts from previously published works "chosen for their accessibility" and introduced by an editor who provides "a general overview of the principal events and figures involved, placing the topic in its historical context." Each selection is introduced with a concise summary of its theme and an identification of the author. A modest collection of 22 document fragments brings up the rear—one-third, curiously, from the newspaper *Observer*. But this is the least of my concerns.

Victorian England as a turning point in world history is problematic at best, lacking analytical bite. Imperialism as a theme is not the subject of any of the essays, while those addressing the Industrial Revolution and some of the key ideas of the period (e.g., those espoused by Darwin) are focused parochially on Britain alone.

The selections are short and often enjoyable to read, but because so much of what they say has been superseded and expanded upon by recent scholarship, much of the book would have been out of date decades ago. Many of the authors are, or, more often, were prominent (e.g., G.M. Trevelyan and Charles Petrie), and some are known for their contributions to literature (e.g., Margaret Drabble and J.B. Priestly), but collectively the essays do not effectively represent contemporary Victorian studies. More than half were published before 1973, and several were extracted from textbooks, other general surveys, and non-scholarly writings. Even when a selection from someone of the caliber of Asia Briggs is included, it is from a book published in 1959.

The editor's nineteen-page introduction to Victorian England consists of familiar generalizations, simple statistics, unexciting facts, and a few useful primary source quotations, but the endnotes indicate that it is based heavily on secondary works published between 1949 and 1974, and it does nothing to draw attention to the selections themselves or to the appendix documents. There are also some errors (e.g., the six demands of the Chartists became "government passed acts" before 1848 that the

government "simply ignored"). Nor does the editor use the introduction to argue that Victorian England was a turning point in world history.

The appended bibliography, described in the Foreword as "extensive," actually consists of 27 titles, the most recent of which was published in 1993, the oldest in 1900, with most between 1921 and 1979—at that, most are surveys and textbooks that are far from current.

We are told nothing about the editor beyond her name, and even that appears only on the title page and among the Library of Congress information, but not on the cover or binding. She is, however, a professional editor of a wide variety of reading collections, mostly of literature, and the author of two biographies for juvenile audiences; she is not a historian, and it shows. Long before I put this book down, I questioned the wisdom of its publication; nothing afterwards changed my mind.

California State University, San Bernardino Robert Blackey

Moira Donald & Tim Rees, eds., *Reinterpreting Revolution in Twentieth-Century Europe*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001. Pp. vi, 242. Cloth $69.95; ISBN 0-312-23622-0. Paper, $21.95; ISBN 0-312-23623-9.

Understanding the recent past is often much harder for historians than seeing the far past clearly. One of the many strengths of this collection of essays is the new perspectives it opens on 1989 as well as 1789. The editors, both British academics, sought contributors who could furnish sociological as well as historical perspective on the history of revolution as a concept, and apply those views both to specific events and to the concept of revolution in general. They have succeeded admirably in putting together a book that will enrich teachers at all levels and provide a fascinating challenge to skillful post-secondary students assigned to read in it.

Eight of the nine contributors teach in British universities, and all have at least two published books on the topics they address. An opening essay by the editors sets the stage with some key definitions and questions, and a closing bravura piece appraises the legacy of revolution as idea and event.

The heart of the book is the essays discussing Russia and Germany. Essays on Russia examine the historical significance of the 1905 revolution, compare 1917 and 1991, and explore the revolutionary nature of Stalin's "Great Turn." All three mingle concept and concrete event with supple skill. In the first, Moira Donald expands our perspective by focusing on revolutionary periods as well as single revolutionary events. In the second, Edward Acton imaginatively compares the two eras, examining Kornilov's putsch, for instance, in light of the August 1991 attempt to kidnap Gorbachev. Catherine Merridale's essay on Stalin asks and answers where so-called revolutions from above fit into the revolutionary spectrum.

A look at Nazi Germany by Jeremy Noakes opens the focus on Germany, subtly dissecting the Nazis' rise to power on the basis of a crisis and—shades of Orwell's *1984*—maintaining power by maintaining a state of permanent crisis.

The two articles examining the most recent events in Europe, focusing primarily on Germany, explore a variety of similar elements, but reach different conclusions. Jonathan Osmond argues that 1989–90 was a revolutionary situation because popular discontent felled governments and fueled the following changes. Richard Sakwa looks at events with a more skeptical eye, suggesting that what we were seeing was, in fact, an anti-revolutionary uprising.

A quick summary of the main points of these essays, though, does not do justice to the careful, fair examination of issues that too often are seen through rigid ideological prisms. Each piece is rewarding on its own for how it enlarges the way readers view the specific events and revolution in general. Conclusions matter less than the reasoning behind them, and the insightful way authors sift through evidence and frame concepts can serve as a model for budding historians.

The concluding essay, by Krishan Kumar, pulls the main themes of the book together brilliantly. He examines the continuities and discontinuities between revolutions past and present and the divergences and convergences of revolution in the developed versus the developing world. Kumar concludes that while the revolutionary tradition we know from the Great French Revolution through the various revolutionary doctrines and uprisings of the twentieth century has certainly changed dramatically, the one thing we can count on about political dissent in the future is surprise.

Thayer Academy Daniel Levinson

Link Hullar & Scott Nelson. *The United States: A Brief Narrative History*. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2001. Pp. xii, 211. Paper, $14.95; ISBN 0-88295-959-X.

The United States: A Brief Narrative History is accurately titled. In fifteen compact chapters and 177 pages, professors Hullar and Nelson have covered the essentials of American history from Leif Ericson through the presidential campaign (but not the result) of 2000. Unlike most texts written by scholars, Hullar and Nelson are not household names among professional historians. They are teachers first and scholars second. Their text is based upon "fifty years of combined teaching experience from middle school through graduate seminars in history."

As a community college teacher for 32 years, this reviewer agrees with the authors that traditional texts overwhelm the student by their sheer size. Even so-called "brief" texts often run over 1,000 pages. Therefore, a real short American history text is badly needed.

In addition, the authors claim that their text stresses "big ideas, major themes, important events and basic facts ... arranged in a chronological narrative that tells a lively story without 'talking down' to the reader." Such an approach is important for several reasons. Today a number of states no longer require that high school students complete a full year of American history, much less European history. Therefore, the students who take college history courses do not have the background to understand a sophisticated college text. Also, many college students take the second half of American history without having taken part one. This text fills such a void by providing a quick review of America's history before the Civil War.

While Hullar and Nelson have given us "the big picture" of United States history, some major holes exist. The framework is anachronistic. With the exception of the last 50 pages, the book could have been written in 1965. Its structure is built around a traditional accounting of political and military events. After 1789 the presidential synthesis determines the flow of the story. This reviewer reexamined the 1961 editions of the Barnes & Noble College Outline Series on the *United States Before 1865* and the *United States After 1865* written by John A. Krout and found a similar framework covering many of the same events.

What's missing from this text is any incorporation of recent historiography on issues of race, class, and sex. The authors claim to eschew historiographical controversies. Even so, students should be aware of such events as Indian-white relations in colonial America; differences between seventeenth-century Chesapeake and New England families; the class conflicts of the American Revolutionary era; political party systems; ethno-cultural politics; the development of a slave culture; the market revolution; the (old-fashioned) transportation revolution; the business organizational revolution in the late nineteenth century; and the cultural and economic contributions of American immigrants throughout our history, to name just a few. This reviewer also wants to quibble over some omissions and interpretations of the traditional story. In Chapter 9 on the West, why is so much attention given to the "Plains War" and not enough to the mining and agricultural frontiers? Also, the Second New Deal started in 1935, not in 1937. Why do the military battles of World War II overshadow the military and diplomatic strategies of the era? Why no mention of "unconditional surrender"?

In spite of the traditional framework, *The United States: A Brief Narrative History* is a good starting point for today's college students. The price is also right at $14.95. That is, unless you want to go to your nearest Barnes & Noble and pick up a copy of the updated version of the Nevins & Commager *Pocket History of the United States* for $9.95.

Howard Community College Larry Madaras

William F. Deverell & Anne F. Hyde, eds. *The West in the History of the Nation: A Reader*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000. Vol. I: To 1877. Pp. xvi, 332. Paper, $37.65; ISBN 0-312-19171-5. Vol. II: Since 1865. Pp. xvii, 301. Paper, $37.65; ISBN 0-312-19211-8.

The West in the History of the Nation is an excellent new primary source document collection that uses "western" examples to illuminate national themes—"western" with quotation marks, because much of the action in volume one takes place east of the one-hundredth meridian, where most western regionalists insist the "real West" begins. The two-volume set, which makes the standard break at Reconstruction, is intended primarily for accompaniment with the United States history survey course, but would also work quite well for courses on the American West.

Historians of the American West have tended to be either regionalists or scholars of the frontier. Regionalists have seen the West as a specific geographical region with distinctive characteristics, while frontier historians have seen the West as an ever-changing frontier zone of cultural interaction, beginning with Jamestown and proceeding westerly as the nation expanded. The editors have done an excellent job of balancing regional and frontier approaches, although, in general, volume one focuses on that ever-westward-moving frontier, whether it be in Pennsylvania or Illinois, while volume two understandably focuses on the regional West.

Although anchored in a frontier or regional context, the documents do a remarkable job of illuminating the broader currents of American history. Indeed, it is incredible to note how much of our national history is bound up with the "West." Most of the documents in these volumes could be included in a general reader of American history with little argument: The Land Ordinance of 1785; Alexander Hamilton's letter to the governor of Pennsylvania during the Whiskey Rebellion; Jefferson's "Secret Message to Congress" and his "Letter of Instruction to Lewis and Clark;" Andrew Jackson's "Annual Message to Congress" for 1830 and 1835; the Missouri Compromise; the Kansas–Nebraska Act; the Lincoln–Douglas Debates; William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech; the Zimmerman Telegram; FDR's Executive Order 9066; Mario Savio's "Address to the Free Speech Movement;" Martin Luther King's "Telegram to Cesar Chavez;" Richard Nixon's "Speech at the Air Force Academy" in support of Vietnam; California's Proposition 187, not to mention numerous first-hand accounts of European colonization, the American Revolution, Indian relocation, slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, industrialization, Progressivism, WWI, the Great Depression, WWII, and the Cold War. Perhaps Frederick Jackson Turner was right—the western frontier has been the defining feature of American life. While the editors would not want to be called Turnerians, this collection of documents makes a strong case for the "significance of the frontier in American history."

While the sources I have mentioned are mostly political, the collection is evenly balanced between political and social documents. The West, like the rest of the nation,

has been a meeting ground for diverse cultures, and these volumes convey the great diversity of American life. Native Americans, women, Latinos, African Americans, and immigrants speak as eloquently as political elites in these documents. Add to these virtues clearly written chapter introductions, good questions for students to ponder, interesting maps and pictures, and these volumes have much to recommend them. But, as is always the case in such a collection, not everyone will be satisfied with every chapter or every document. For instance, the chapter on the 1920s focuses entirely upon Prohibition in the West. While the documents are insightful, the narrow focus slights more momentous transformations that played a larger role in western American and American history in general during the 1920s: the rise of religious fundamentalism and evangelicalism; the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the West; and, perhaps most importantly, the rise of the automobile, which transformed the western landscape more than any other region. However, the strengths of these volumes far outweigh their drawbacks. This is an outstanding document collection that should find some loyal users, especially among instructors like myself who reside in the West and are constantly seeking ways to make American history more relevant to my western students.

Columbia Basin College David Arnold

Anne Enslow & Ridley Enslow. *Music of the American Colonies*. Music CD, 61-page Booklet & Teacher's Guide. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 2000. 61 minutes. Ages: 10-up. $24.95; ISBN 0-7660-1614-5. Order from Enslow Publishers, Inc., Box 398, 40 Industrial Rd., Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922.

Middle and secondary school teachers who are looking for authentic music from the American colonial and revolutionary era will welcome *Music of the American Colonies*. Anne Enslow and Ridley Enslow have provided a diverse selection of musical numbers performed on instruments of the period and/or sung. Although some of the songs originated in England or on the continent, all were actually sung in the colonies. The Enslows plumbed eighteenth-century newspapers, books, and manuscripts in their search for authentic tunes to include among the 22 selections on this CD. The source for each selection is carefully noted in the accompanying teacher's guide.

In recognition of the diversity of the colonial experience, the Enslows have included selections from Spanish, French, and Dutch colonists as well as the English and Scottish. Native American and African American readings and songs are also included. The inclusion of dances, a psalm, a courting song, tavern songs, an anti-smoking song, songs of the revolution, and a variety of other pieces illustrates the importance of music in the everyday life of the colonies.

Students will enjoy the sprightly nature of many of the tunes and will be delighted to find a few familiar tunes. In general, the performance is well done. Accompanied by

a variety of instruments (including such unfamiliar instruments as the theorbo, glass armonica, and balaphone), the vocalists generally sing and articulate nicely. In their rendition of Psalm 116, however, the vocalists lack their usual mastery of the material.

Equally important to the excellent quality of the CD is the helpful printed material that accompanies it. Careful work went into the teacher's guide. A two-page introduction by John D. Barrows, Manager of Music and Dance at Colonial Williamsburg, includes helpful information on the importance of music in colonial America. The guide includes a one or two-page introduction to each song, followed by the entire text of the song as it appears on the CD. Unusual information in the introductions is carefully footnoted and unfamiliar terms are explained. Appropriate pictures, cartoons, and woodcuts illustrate the guide throughout. Photographs and descriptions of the unusual musical instruments used in performance are included. The guide also has a helpful list of additional sources on music in the colonies (including the addresses of excellent websites). The guide is well indexed. Other materials include suggestions for teaching strategies and a list of the instruments used to accompany each of the musical selections.

This moderately priced educational CD will be an excellent purchase for resource centers in middle and secondary schools or by social studies and music teachers for their personal collection of teaching materials.

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Mary E. Quinlivan (Emeritus)

Thomas P. Slaughter, ed. Common Sense *and Related Writings, by Thomas Paine.* Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. Pp. xv, 152. Cloth, $45.00; ISBN 0-312-23704-9. Paper, $13.50; ISBN 0-312-20148-6.

Thomas Paine occupies an odd, somewhat uncomfortable, place in the history of the American Revolution. In some ways he is the man who came to dinner and stayed, and after leaving, he returned, and then stayed even longer—never moving on intellectually or politically as many other Revolutionaries did. Paine is part of events that matter a great deal during the American (and French) Revolution, but not fully part of them. Not quite a founding father by most accountings, he is much more than an observer of events—he made a tremendously important contribution to the success of the Revolutionary cause with *Common Sense* and his other writings at a critical moment in America's struggle for independence, which everyone acknowledges. He made a difference in the outcome of a major event in world history, after all, even if his exact role is hard to define because he never held a position of authority before, during, or after the Revolutionary struggle. He is almost the classic *deux ex machina* in the drama, dropped out of the blue into a play at a key moment to resolve a particular problem and then gone as soon as his part is played and the story moves forward. Fitting Paine into

the Revolution, especially the teaching of the American Revolution, if he is to be more than a name and a pamphlet title, can be a challenge.

Thomas P. Slaughter has done a masterful job of providing a vehicle for fitting Paine into the teaching of the Revolution. The paperback edition will be an ideal volume for any course on the American Revolution, the evolution of political thinking in the United States, or comparative revolutions. It continues the tradition of providing excellent teaching resources that the Bedford Series has established.

Slaughter has produced a slim, but dense volume that brings Paine alive as a person in a way that will be fully accessible for college students, including those in the American history survey course. He presents the forces, both societal and personal, that shaped Paine's views about the nature of government and society very effectively in a brief introduction that is a model of intellectual biography—not only providing the outline of Paine's life but linking his experiences to his later ideas on the nature of government and his personality. Slaughter also discusses Paine's career after the Revolution, making him a complete person, not just a name and a pamphlet. The full text of *Common Sense* (the Towne edition) is included so students can encounter Paine's ideas for themselves. Slaughter has also included five of Paine's earlier essays, including *African Slavery in America* and *Reflections on Unhappy Marriages* as well as two of his responses to the reaction to *Common Sense, The Forester, Number 1* and *The American Crisis*. This edition will allow students to see Paine as a real person who played an important role in the American Revolution and it will allow them to assess and understand that contribution fully.

Murray State University William H. Mulligan, Jr.

Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., ed. *Jefferson vs. Hamilton: Confrontations That Shaped a Nation*. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000. Pp. xiii, 186. Cloth, $35.00; ISBN 0-312-22821-X. Paper, $14.20; ISBN 0-312-08585-0.

Ask undergraduates about Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton and they will probably tell you that Jefferson was a president who had children with a slave mistress and that Hamilton was killed in a duel. One virtue of Noble E. Cunningham's compilation of documents is that its emphasis is very different from these current ones. *Jefferson vs. Hamilton* focuses on how in the 1790s the two Revolutionary War patriots became bitter opponents and leaders of the first American political parties, a rivalry that continued until Hamilton's untimely death during Jefferson's first term.

Cunningham, the author of many books on the period, has skillfully assembled selections from the letters of Jefferson and Hamilton, their government reports and papers, and their speeches, pamphlets, and memoranda. His commentary is integrated with the documents rather than in a stand-alone section, which helps to sustain a narrative flow. Since the historical context provided is rather minimal, it will have to be

further developed through lecture or an additional text should the book be used in a course. Although he is the author of a sympathetic biography of Jefferson, Cunningham maintains a scrupulous neutrality, leaving it to the reader to make judgments on each man's positions and character.

In addition to often-cited documents such as Jefferson proclaiming "We are all republicans: we are all federalists," and Hamilton remarking that Jefferson is "too much in earnest in his democracy," there are less well-known selections. In an 1802 letter, Jefferson analyzes the consequences for the United States of France's acquisition of Louisiana in a vein of *Realpolitik* that is not always associated with him. As for Hamilton, historians, other than specialists in the period, might not know that he wanted to break up the large states, the better to centralize power in the federal government. Absent from the compilation are documents from contemporaries, with the single exception of a letter by George Washington. Such sources could have provided insightful perspectives. What John Adams had to say about each man is especially worth reading.

The conflict between Jefferson and Hamilton as traced in this book has Shakespearean overtones. Both men were acutely aware of being present at the creation where policies and structures defining the nation for generations to come were taking form. Beginning as cordial associates in Washington's cabinet, they soon fell out on matters of principle in regard to the size and scope of the federal government. Before long, they were questioning each other's motives as well as positions. Their letters teem with eighteenth-century words for manipulation and deceit: "cabal," "faction," "intrigues." Yet in 1800, with the presidential election deadlocked between Jefferson and Aaron Burr, Hamilton used his considerable influence to swing the Federalist vote to Jefferson, whom he considered the lesser of two evils. Four years later, Burr would have his revenge by slaying Hamilton.

Despite the drama of the inner story, many of these documents will be rough going for undergraduates, particularly if used in a survey course. Issues such as the funding and assumption of the Revolutionary War debt and the debate about the constitutionality of a national bank are not among the clearest or most compelling parts of American history. Accordingly, *Jefferson vs. Hamilton* would be used to best advantage in a major-level course on the Early National Period or in a course on American political theory.

Mercy College Peter Gregg Slater

Michael P. Johnson, ed. *Abraham Lincoln, Slavery, and the Civil War: Selected Writings and Speeches*. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. Pp. xx, 358. Cloth, $39.95; ISBN 0-312-22763-9. Paper, $14.20; ISBN 0-312-20854-5.

With the ready availability of so many thoughtful and finely crafted studies on Abraham Lincoln, does the need exist for another work? The answer is an affirmative one, provided that the new publication has been created for classroom use and has been structured specifically for student needs. The Bedford Series in History and Culture, which has already released more than 65 titles, has achieved an enviable record precisely because it has targeted college classroom audiences. This new volume represents one of the best efforts in the broad-based series and it should easily find its market.

Drawing upon Lincoln letters and speeches written primarily between 1854 and 1865, editor Michael Johnson presents the thoughts of a man who was truly a product of his turbulent times. His racial views echoed the standard white supremacy position of the mid-nineteenth century, and yet they softened as the Civil War progressed. At times, he seemed overly solicitous of commanders such as George McClellan, Joseph Hooker, and Don Buell, and yet he held the divided military structure together until victory was achieved. Likewise, he kept the slave-owning border states within the Union while moving gradually toward the Emancipation Proclamation. All the strengths and frailties of Abraham Lincoln emerge honestly from the pages of this book, and readers are free to draw their own conclusions about this very human individual and his complex nature.

Almost 200 Lincoln letters and speeches comprise this book, ranging from the full text of the January 1, 1863, Emancipation Proclamation to a curt one-sentence command of February 1, 1865, to Ulysses S. Grant to destroy Robert E. Lee's army if it failed to surrender. Johnson has done a masterful job in choosing the items for inclusion. He presents "standard documents" from the Lincoln–Douglas Debates, the first Inaugural Address, various letters on the emancipation of slaves, suspension of the Writ of Habeas Corpus, and the Gettysburg Address, but most of his choices are from more obscure writings. Having published three books about the Civil War, Johnson knows the literature and knows the Lincoln presidency. Hence, the documents are drawn from a multitude of diverse sources and assembled within a solid interpretive framework.

Intent on making this book "user friendly," the editor provides a full range of pedagogical aids. A general introduction explains Lincoln's youth and how he came to develop a love for books and expressive language, despite his own lack of formal education. More important are the editorial comments that lead into each section of related documents and help place them within a larger context. These range from one to three paragraphs each and are essential reading for students. Furthermore, numerous footnotes identify people, places, and events that are mentioned, but not fully explained, in the original versions of the documents. Rounding out the ancillary features are four military campaign maps, eleven photographs, a select bibliography, a chronology of Lincoln's life, a detailed index, and a list of twenty questions that are suitable for framing classroom discussions or posing essay questions.

Available in paperback at a reasonable price, *Abraham Lincoln, Slavery, and the Civil War* offers good adoption possibilities for upper-level courses on the Civil War,

the presidency, and biography, as well as for general surveys of American history. Any instructor who is searching for a source that promotes critical thinking skills among advanced students will be richly rewarded by the use of this work.

University of Nebraska at Omaha Michael L. Tate

Sam Roberts. *The Brother: The Untold Story of Atomic Spy David Greenglass and How He Sent His Sister, Ethel Rosenberg, to the Electric Chair.* New York: Random House, 2001. Pp. 543. Cloth, $35.00; IBN 0-375-50013-8.

David Greenglass will be remembered forever as the atomic spy who betrayed his sister, Ethel Rosenberg, assured a guilty verdict in her (and her husband's) treason trial of 1951, and sealed the couple's fate: death in the electric chair on June 19, 1953. Rather than receive the death penalty for his role as a spy at Los Alamos during World War II, Greenglass was sentenced to fifteen years in prison. He served ten years and was released in November 1960.

Although one of the most controversial figures of his generation, David Greenglass all but disappeared from public view until Sam Roberts, a *New York Times* reporter, discovered his whereabouts in 1983. It took another thirteen years for Roberts to convince Greenglass to participate in what eventually totaled more than fifty hours of interviews. Greenglass told Roberts that he finally agreed to talk because, at his advanced age (79), "I need the money."

And so historians of the McCarthy era have an opportunity to rehear the Rosenberg spy story from a long silent source. *The Brother* reveals Greenglass's perspective on everything from his amateur spying methods in the Manhattan Project to his persistent lack of regret for all he did in World War II and since. Readers are never tempted to like David Greenglass, but we are at least able to understand his political motives and often perverse reasoning. The result is that we now know that all sides in the great Rosenberg debate were right: Greenglass lied to save his (and his wife's) skin, but the Rosenbergs were guilty as charged. Greenglass has simply confirmed what recently disclosed Soviet espionage records have seemingly proven.

But just as we are ready to close the book on the Rosenberg case, there is lingering doubt about Greenglass's revelations to Sam Roberts. Is Greenglass still lying? After all, Roberts admits that "there were several elements of his account ... that were contradicted by other sources." And Roberts quotes Greenglass as saying, "When you think you can get out of something without getting anybody in trouble, then it's okay to lie." Greenglass had no qualms about lying at the Rosenbergs' trial (despite the terrible trouble it caused them) and at anti-communist Congressional hearings of the 1950s. ("I'm not adverse to lying to a committee. Screw them!") Greenglass's credibility is just as questionable today as it was in 1950, although the stakes back then were admittedly far greater.

Who should read *The Brother* and how can it be used in teaching history? Weighing in at more than five hundred pages on a very specific topic, the book is clearly not made for high school or undergraduate U.S. survey classes. On the other hand, graduate seminars on the Cold War and the McCarthy era might well benefit by including this book on their updated readings lists.

But *The Brother* is best used by teachers and professors who strive to remain current on recently released historical sources so they can share new views and information with their students. We might agree with Sam Roberts's candid appraisal that David Greenglass was little more than a rat, but even rats can provide new evidence in important debates among historians and, hence, among U.S. history students at all levels. We just must not forget that, with rare exceptions, rats must never be given the last word in our classrooms and, by extension, in life.

University of New Mexico-Valencia Campus Richard Melzer

Vincent J. Cannato. *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York*. New York: Basic Books, 2001. Pp. 720. Cloth, $35.00; ISBN: 0-465-00843-7.

Despite its unchallenged position as America's preeminent city, the scholarly literature devoted to New York City's history is relatively sparse. The one book that prominently stands out with general readers and historians is Robert Caro's biography of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker*. Vincent Cannato's recently published *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* deserves to be placed alongside *The Power Broker* as one of the few great books written about New York City. It is also a work that provides brilliant insight into American society during the 1960s. In this sense, *The Ungovernable City* is not only a book about New York, but also a fine history of urban and social life in 1960s America.

The Ungovernable City centers around the troubled mayoralty of John V. Lindsay, although it is not really a biography of Lindsay. Rather, the book covers in intricate detail the eight years that Lindsay occupied City Hall and catalogues with brilliant clarity and dramatic prose the many fiscal, racial, and social crises that buffeted New York during that time. The Lindsay that emerges here is not a likeable character; he is a patrician, Yale-educated blueblood, longing to do right by the city's underprivileged, but totally uneducated about how to conduct New York City politics and oblivious to the concerns of the city's middle and working classes. The book moves in a rough chronology, but is more thematic in its organization, with each chapter addressing a particular crisis or troubling episode (such as the Columbia student riots of 1968) and detailing how Mayor Lindsay responded to it. Taken together, the chapters lead the reader to the conclusion that Lindsay presided over the deterioration of New

York from a vibrant, working class city to one riven by racial division and beset with seemingly incurable problems such as slums, poverty, crime, and a spiraling deficit.

The author provides the reader with a decidedly conservative point of view, and readers who remember the 1960s with fondness and longing will most likely resent the conclusions made by Cannato. It is hard to escape the feeling that the author has little use for that era and the ideology that dominated it. Nonetheless, agree or disagree with the author, one cannot dispute the quality and depth of his research, the brilliance of his writing, and the dramatic way in which his narrative unfolds. It is a fine book that challenges the reader to think about its conclusions.

The Ungovernable City (like *The Power Broker*) is a hefty tome and as a whole could probably not be used in many history classes. However, each chapter is able to stand on its own and could be used by history teachers to illustrate various themes associated with the history of the 1960s, such as racial riots and urban decay. Further, the book is easy to read and could be used to provide students with a contrasting view of the 1960s not normally present in the largely laudatory histories of the era. Thus, the book would be extremely helpful in demonstrating to students that history is full of contrasting viewpoints and different interpretations. On the whole, *The Ungovernable City* makes a significant contribution to American history, and it would be of use in any class studying the 1960s.

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