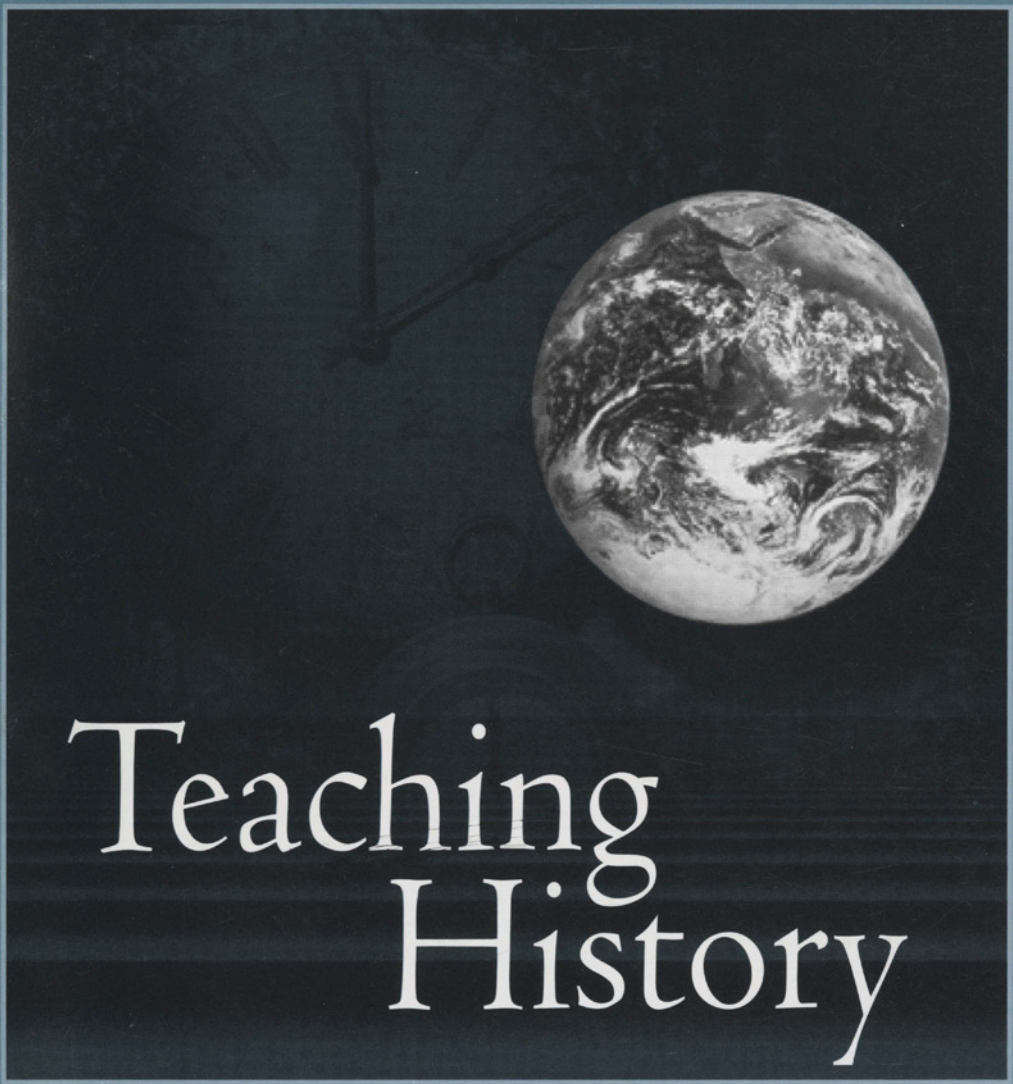

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THE "BIG PICTURE" MODEL FOR LEARNING WORLD HISTORY, OR SLIPPING BETWEEN THE ROCKS AND HARD PLACES

Mark Newman
National-Louis University

Give me a place to stand and I will move the world, Archimedes reputedly boasted. All that the Greek scientist thought he needed to hoist this 6.6 billion, billion ton planet was a firm enough foundation. Many teachers probably think that they could teach world history effectively if they had enough time and space. But just as Archimedes never located that perfect foundation, so teachers have not gained the additional minutes or days they desire. An old line works here: Teachers are stuck between a rock and a hard place that keeps them from moving in new directions or even trying new ways of teaching.

Because world history is a fast growing subject in the history curriculum at all academic levels, we need more good ideas on how to teach this incredibly broad subject effectively. What if faculty approached the subject from a different, yet familiar angle? What if skills development drove the course instead of content delivery? The premise of the "Big Picture" model is to use skills development to teach content.

Of Rocks and Hard Places

The decision to organize instruction around skills was less an inspired idea than a desperate act. In twelve years of offering undergraduate world history survey courses and graduate methods classes on teaching history, I learned a major lesson: Few students have a background in world history—or geography. An unofficial survey of undergraduate students suggested that only one third had taken a world-related course in high school, be it history, civilizations, or geography.[1] Skills were also a problem. Different levels of students presented different challenges. The reading, cognitive, and writing skills of the undergraduates varied, thus requiring some attention, and the graduate students not only had to master content but also learn how to teach world history. So we started from scratch in several ways. After absorbing some hard knocks in the classroom, I decided that instruction had to integrate skills and content, with the former being paramount.

The "Big Picture" model was developed first for undergraduate world history courses. It proved remarkably successful, even in classes containing up to fifty students, most in their first year of college. It was later adapted to the graduate methods courses for pre-service teacher education students planning to teach high school history.

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[1]This survey was part of an opening class activity in which students filled out index cards answering various questions about themselves and their educational backgrounds. I have opened my classes with the index card activity for some ten years.

Although it needs some tinkering, the method is easily applied to secondary education as well.

Many teachers have faced similar situations. Part of the problem is that world history has changed dramatically over the last ten or fifteen years. Neither Western Civ nor a political chronicle of dates, events, and places involving white men passes for world history today. The trend is away from the traditional area studies format to a global perspective. According to Heidi Roupp, three approaches to world history predominate: a comparative study of civilizations, a thematic or topical approach to study human societies, and the chronological survey.[2] Ideally, instruction encompasses all the different peoples, places, and cultures that have ever lived together and apart on the seven continents, four oceans, and many more than seven seas of this 197 million square mile crusty planet. Accommodating space thus poses a vexing dilemma regarding who is included in instruction or left out of instruction and why.

Time creates different challenges. Human existence might amount to a paltry few minutes on scientist Carl Sagan's cosmic calendar, but teachers are still overwhelmed by the time frame of instruction. Most secondary school courses run a full academic year of approximately 36 weeks, five days a week for 40 to 50 minutes per day. In higher education, the courses typically run ten or fifteen weeks in a three-quarter or two-semester sequence. In either case, teachers have limited class time to cover a subject spanning anywhere from about 6000 to several million years.

Complicating matters, many schools are radically altering the character of instruction. Teachers are using more interactive exercises that directly involve students in the learning process, often stressing document-based activities. On the plus side, students prefer when teachers share knowledge rather than dictate it. Interaction also promotes learning content while building skills, but it eats up time voraciously in the classroom. The analysis of just one primary or secondary source document can stimulate a fruitful, insightful learning experience, but might consume an entire period.

Add to this mix the growing intrusion of standards and competency-based learning, along with the mania for standardized tests, and the question arises: What is a teacher to do? The expanding scope and scale of the content combined with the ongoing transformation of goals and methods has stimulated a strong debate on the future course of education. It has also pulled teachers in various and often conflicting directions, almost to the point of being educationally drawn and quartered. Though disagreements abound on what to cover and how to teach, on one point consensus does exist. The time and space constraints of world history courses have hardened.

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[2]Heidi Roupp, editor, *Teaching World History: A Resource Book* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 3.

The "Big Picture" Model

Not a be-all and end-all solution to the numerous and disparate issues in education, the "Big Picture" model provides a cohesive, relatively simple procedure that promotes student learning of both content and skills. The name indicates its intent. Focus on overarching generalizations of global themes and topics distilled into a single explanatory sentence. Let the topic determine the scope of study rather than traditional political or other boundaries. This approach follows current thinking among some world historians. In *The New World History*, Ross Dunn suggests that "world history is the search for answers to questions about the past in which the inquiry embraces whatever geographical, social, or cultural field appropriate and in which conventionally defined entities such as nation-states are not allowed to limit the scope of investigation arbitrarily."[3]

My premise was that if students could end their study of a unit topic by writing a one-sentence hypothesis that explained the content, and if they could write an essay that defended or refuted that hypothesis, they probably had a good working knowledge and understanding of that unit's content. The intent was to place students in control of the learning process by giving them responsibility for making and justifying decisions. The ability to make reflective decisions and then support them effectively depended upon practicing essential skills grouped in three domains: thinking, working with others, and communicating. These domains encompassed a wide spectrum of literacy (and not just print, but map and visual, too), cognitive, collaborative teamwork, oral communication, and writing skills. But tutelage and practice were not abstract exercises. Both related directly to the mastering of content. In other words, students developed their skills through the study of world history. Or they learned world history by practicing skills. While the structure of daily lessons was dictated by skills, the organization of instruction was determined by historical content, a rather nice synergy.

Based upon experience, four guidelines served as the keys to success:

- Do not assume that students possess content knowledge or skills not in evidence;
- Do not skip steps;
- Keep things simple and basic; and
- Asking people to do something new requires practice, patience, and persistence as well as praise even for small accomplishments.

Following these guidelines enables students to manage the "Big Picture" model, building their knowledge and understanding of history and important skills in the process.

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[3]Ross Dunn, editor, *The New World History: A Teacher's Companion* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 6.

The goals of the "Big Picture" model are:

1. To improve student knowledge and understanding of world history;
2. To enable students to become independent, reflective thinkers;
3. To enable students to become effective communicators; and
4. To build history's habits of mind and methods among students.

In the process of meeting these goals, students proceed through six sequential steps, repeated in each unit:

1. Inquiry into primary sources to identify information and pose questions for further study.

This task involves reading for information and comprehension. Teachers can employ a variety of techniques, all of which involve supplying a framework for student reading. One option is for the teacher to place the document in context for students by posing abstract questions about the author, origins, and purpose, followed by content queries to identify topic, themes, main points, etc. Based upon the data they collect, students develop focused "who, what, when, how, where, and why" questions to guide their exploration of the unit topic. Typically, individual and/or small-group work leads to full-class discussion to report on and synthesize findings. The rule of thumb is a one-page print document per class period, though, in jigsaw fashion, groups can read and report on different documents.

2. Gathering information through examination of primary and secondary source documents.

Again, students individually or in groups construct lists, charts, or tables, culminating with class reportage and synthesis. The reading is done primarily as homework and then supplemented by additional resources in the classroom. But the discussion of the readings, including the construction of the lists, etc., is done in class so all students have the same base of information. It is also possible to insert simulation or role-play exercises in this stage to dramatize the historical process and highlight the human perspective.

3. Organizing information using lists and graphic organizers to select, categorize, and classify pertinent data.

This is a class activity, but it can be accomplished by small groups and then individual work, depending upon class and student mastery of the content and skills.

4. Synthesizing to construct the "Big Picture" statement or hypothesis as a class activity, using the Socratic Method to foster discussion.

The teacher should model this step in the first unit with minimal student interaction. Student involvement will increase naturally over the succeeding units. The

teacher can facilitate discussion by writing key points on the board. First, construct a master web or bubble chart of the major topics, themes, and points. Next, eliminate duplications and those items that can be categorized under others of more general nature until a short list of perhaps five to six major points is left. Students then can use this list as key words to craft their hypothesis in one sentence.

5. Assessing the hypothesis involves reviewing previous steps in reverse order and identifying support from general to specific facts.

Done as preparation for individual students to write the essay, the teacher might have to model this step for the class in the first unit.

6. Essay writing is an at-home task preferably done over a weekend to give students time to think, reflect, and develop their arguments.

Issues and Answers

Anytime something new and possibly different is tried, issues arise. This is particularly true in education where new ways of teaching and learning often require paving of the way to become accepted and effective. A basic rule of change is that if people do not find the change valuable and desirable, if they do not believe they can master it, they will resist it. Computer use or the lack thereof is a good example. In addition, the maxim of practice makes perfect comes into play, as does the problem of tedium. Few things can doom a new method quicker than cries of "boring!" Yet repetition is an integral part of practice.

With the "Big Picture" model, overcoming reluctance and resistance and averting the boring syndrome are tied to clear communication and careful, detailed, front-end planning. Teachers must let students know the value of the method in practical terms, assuring them that they can use the method in this and other classes to improve grades. I also tie the learning to developing essential job skills such as critical thinking, managing information, working collaboratively, and communicating effectively. If students know both what they are doing and why they are doing something, resistance lessens. For example, the construction of the master web that culminates with the development of the hypothesis is a tedious task consuming one or more class periods. However, anytime I commented on the tedium and asked students if they wanted to do this independently at home so we could move on to something more interesting, the class voted unanimously to construct the map. They realized its significance both as a learning exercise and as a pivotal step leading to the essay and ultimately their grade.

Another important point is to reassure students that instantaneous mastery is not expected, that they will not be left alone if they do not learn the content and skills quickly, and that you as teacher will work with them to achieve excellent results. Also note that grading will be on improvement, providing an incentive and not penalizing students for their performance while they are learning something new.

As is true with teaching and learning generally, long-term planning determines success. Planning here refers to constructing an efficient instructional framework compatible with the "Big Picture" model on two related levels. First, there is the organization of content into units and, second, there is the sequencing of the skills program by mastery.

Content is a sticky issue. As Dunn has noted, few think a world history course must cover everything. Instead, the issue is "how to build and then properly position a platform from which to expostulate human history in all its variety and confusion."[4] The "Big Picture" model is specifically geared to making sense of the variety and confusion of human history. Following the strategy of overview and case study as well as the process of creating and defending the hypothesis helps to clarify content and thus leads to better comprehension.

What about meeting a "global" criterion, that is seeing that the whole world gets covered in a world history course? For the most part, neither daily lessons nor units can always accommodate content of true global dimensions, causing occasional frustration. Not every people, culture, or facet of history gets covered in each and every unit. However, by applying the criterion of "global" to the course, over the length of the course, they all can get some attention.

A second consideration is context. In many units, students should learn about the global dimensions of a topic. Using maps and timelines or chronologies, students get an overview of a topic to help place case studies into perspective. For example, in exploring the rise of agriculture, I use a map and chart that depicts its emergence and spread throughout the world. In this fashion, students gain appreciation for the magnitude and scope of the transformation stimulated by agricultural food production. Then our studies focus on the transition from hunting and gathering to farming in West Asia, the purported first instance of this shift. Similarly, a map depicting the spread of the Industrial Revolution over time and place helps students understand the worldwide dimensions and different stages of this phenomenon. Then they study selected examples, including Great Britain and a small number of other national experiences worldwide. In this sense, meeting the global criterion is more an opportunity than an obstacle, since it provides a broad context to the more specific content that comes in case studies.

The critical areas are the selection of topics and the length of the units. Both are influenced by the hypothesis culmination. Students must be able to explain the topic in one sentence and assess that explanation. The database of names, times, places, events, and such cannot be so massive that making sense of it overwhelms students. This consideration has less to do with the topic per se than with the number of examples and the materials introduced to explore those examples. My topics tend to be large and global, such as the initial rise of civilization, the axial age (Karl Jasper's term for the

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[4]Ibid., 4.

period between approximately 700 BCE and CE 200 when many of the major schools of western and eastern thought and belief arose), the transoceanic encounter, and the democratic and industrial revolutions, among others. The case studies then bring the "Big Picture" into clearer focus by providing specific illustrations. For example, in studying the rise of the first civilizations, I emphasize river valleys where the earliest civilizations arose: the Tigris-Euphrates in West Asia, the Nile in North Africa, the Indus in South Asia, and sometimes the Wei in East Asia.

In addition, students need enough time to work with the information so they can construct a hypothesis. Unlike surveys where content generally is covered once in the classroom, the "Big Picture" requires students to examine information approximately six times, three times in the classroom and possibly three at home. In class, I introduce a topic to them. Then they analyze it to build a database. Next they go over the database to organize it and make sense of the unit. At home, students study the database to test the hypothesis and to identify examples to support the thesis of their essay. They then outline and finally write their essays. Working with the content several times in different ways facilitates learning and improves student knowledge and understanding while building skills, but it also consumes time. A good rule of thumb is that it takes approximately three days of 50-minute classes, or the equivalent, to introduce, revisit, and organize the information, construct the hypothesis, and prepare for the essay.

The length and organization of units, then, is largely determined by what is needed to complete activities successfully and by the student learning curve. Most units run from two to four weeks depending upon the topic. For units longer than two weeks, the last day of each week might be devoted to summarizing the content covered that week by constructing graphic organizers in the form of charts, table, webs, etc. This review provides practice with managing information and also facilitates putting everything together during the last week when the hypothesis is constructed.

To begin the course and introduce the method, a one-week orientation unit helps acquaint students to the model and its various steps. My introductory unit on the shift from hunting-gathering to farming is a pivotal topic but is very narrowly defined and explored using a handful of pertinent primary and secondary source documents that pertain to North Africa and West Asia.[5]

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[5]The one-week duration of the introductory unit requires using a small number of print, map, and visual primary and secondary documents. The primary sources used to open the unit are an Egyptian wall painting from the late fifteenth century BCE that depicts a harvest from Dennis Sherman and others, *World Civilizations: Sources, Images, and Interpretations*, second edition, volume 1 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1998), 19, and a rock painting interpreted as people harvesting rain from Alfred J. Andrea and James H. Overfield (eds)., *The Human Record: Sources of Global History*, second edition, volume I: *To 1700* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 51. Students analyze these graphic images primarily to identify what the people are doing, to judge how the methods of farming have changed over time, and to

(continued...)

Another concern is flow of content. Because world history is so disparate and chaotic, its study needs structure and connections. Unit topics work best when they relate to each other. A good ploy is to develop a large course title to use as the central theme. In constructing the course theme and unit topics, use short phrases that contain neutral, abstract language. Avoid wording that might bias students towards a predefined hypothesis, a foregone conclusion that works against developing cognitive skills.

For example, World Civilizations II (the second quarter of a three-quarter sequence) studied world history from 1500 CE to World War I. The course theme was that the transoceanic encounter initiated by Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries set in motion forces that stimulated an age of revolutions that continues to transform the world. The theme does not characterize the natures of the encounter, the revolutions, or the transformation. The unit titles were the meeting of cultures, the democratic revolution, the development of the industrial revolution, and implications of the industrial age. Though cause and effect is evident in the course theme and topics are identified, the wording does not provide clues to the eventual hypothesis that will explain the content of the units. If clash, conflict, or conquest had been used in the theme or units, the connotation would have been very different and the student hypothesis would have been strongly influenced by such descriptions. For example, the unit title "meeting of cultures" offers a much different impression than does "clash of cultures."

The second consideration is skills mastery. Here, the context differs somewhat from traditional frameworks as the sequencing focuses on independence tied to performance, rather than building from lower to higher-level skills. Due to class and individual learning curves, it is impossible to prepare a timetable of mastery achievement prior to the course. After all, students ascend Bloom's cognitive taxonomy in each and every unit, a difficult task to master in one year or semester.

A good way to gain insight into student skill levels is to use the orientation topic to diagnose ability to perform the various tasks. Teachers might even survey students, having them evaluate their own skills competencies. It is important to remember that

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[5](...continued)
estimate how farming changed the lives and cultures of peoples adopting it. The two images exhibit vastly contrasting styles and content. The Egyptian image is a complex series of realistic, detailed images, while the rock painting is a much simpler, bare-bones depiction. In addition to a map showing the origins and spread of agriculture, I use the following short secondary readings in the introduction unit: Elise Boulding, "Women and the Agricultural Revolution," in Kevin Reilly (ed.), *Readings in World Civilizations, Volume I: The Great Traditions*, third edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 21–25, and Robert J. Braidwood, "The Agricultural Revolution," in Sherman, *World Civilizations*, 24–26. In some classes, students read the section on the rise of agriculture in Clive Ponting, *A Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations* (New York: Penguin Books USA, 1991), 37–55.

confidence influences competence and many students are extremely insecure about their abilities. The results from the first unit will help in planning others.

The schedule of activities facilitates learning because it provides a routine repeated enough times that students become familiar and comfortable with it. Equally important, the routine is flexible and variable, leading to results that directly affect student grades, so tedium is less of an issue. As they move through the process and gain both confidence and competence, students will let the teacher know when they believe they can go through the steps with minor aid or just with the teacher writing on the board.

Unfortunately, mastery is a two-edged sword. The class likely will show good progress and mastery due to the collective nature of performing the tasks. Individually, almost all students will quickly know what to do and understand the process. They will also recognize the value of the method. But knowing what to do is different from knowing how to do it well. Individual student mastery is a mystery that cannot be slotted. Some students will learn the method rapidly. Others will learn parts. Still others might experience difficulties throughout the entire course and require frequent help. And some students who had trouble throughout the course might return later to report that they used the method in another class with good results.

Another issue is materials. Students construct their hypothesis from a database comprised of a diverse body of information from a variety of authorities—not just a textbook. The "Big Picture" model stresses document-based learning. For our purposes "document" refers to focused primary and secondary sources in full or excerpted versions. They are the core materials.

The document basis raises questions about access and use of these resources as well as the role of the textbook. Access to sources is not the problem it was in the past. A wide range of readers is readily available. Some contain primary sources, some secondary articles, and some mix the two.[6] In addition, textbook packages usually come with an array of ancillaries that include maps, primary source documents, media in some cases, and so on. Lastly, the Internet is a virtual treasure-trove of documents. Yes, it takes some work to access materials, but the effort is not overwhelming and often proves rewarding. Another point is that access is generally a one-time task that conceivably can be put on students as research, especially as technology training in using the Internet.

The length of the unit and the class period necessitates that the sources be brief and to the point. In many cases, editing is necessary for materials used in the classroom. Reading and discussion in class can be incredibly time-consuming, yet these are the most effective means for making certain that the pertinent information about each document is identified and interpreted. Also, by having a document focus on one point, students can easily grasp the content and meaning, as well as develop reading

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[6]Sherman, *World Civilizations*, is an excellent reader.

skills. Using several focused documents allows for a number of perspectives to be identified and discussed in one class. Every student does not necessarily read the same document. In the jigsaw format, groups can read several documents and then report findings to other class members. Even though focus questions should be provided for each outside reading assignment, the in-class analysis of sources also helps students know what to look for in the readings done as homework.

For example, to begin inquiry into the development of the Industrial Revolution, I generally pass out four or five documents. Students receive guidelines or questions to help them identify the context (author, title, date, etc.) and content (topic, main points, etc.) of the document they are assigned. In small groups, each group working with a different document, students compare notes and summarize findings that are then recorded on the board. Using the notes on the board, students pose questions to pursue further their study of the Industrial Revolution.

The last point concerns a staple of history instruction—the textbook. In the "Big Picture" model, a textbook is not essential. When it is used, the text plays a secondary role as a reference work. There might be scattered reading of pertinent sections, but generally students employ the textbook as an encyclopedia to look up specific points. Thus, the textbook provides a time-and-space overview and, if they are of high quality, a good collection of maps and timelines or chronologies.

And in the end

Actually, there is no end to education. Despite all the fuss and bother about outcomes in education, teaching is more about means than ends. The best "outcome" is to have students realize that they are always in the process of becoming educated and that learning is not confined to school, but spans their entire existence. The "Big Picture" model is about means, about learning a method to achieve understanding. It also recognizes that learning is process-oriented and continues far beyond the confines of a single class. Learning is becoming.

The notion of "becoming" is especially applicable to the teaching of world history. Currently, it is in flux and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. No consensus exists on how to conceptualize it for the classroom.[7] The continuing evolution of world history reflects an undeniable fact of education and life—change is the normal state of affairs. And change creates two opportunities. We can whine about another fine educational mess or we can innovate to meet the new conditions. "The Big Picture" model seeks the innovators.

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[7]Dunn, *The New World History*, 4.

The "Big Picture" Model
Activity-Skills Set

Inquiry into Primary Sources

Examining documents as texts, planning inquiry:

Reading for knowledge, note-taking, working collaboratively, organizing data into lists, summarizing data, posing questions

Information Gathering

Examining documents as texts:

Reading for knowledge, comprehension, note-taking, working collaboratively, organizing data into lists, summarizing data, posing questions

Organizing Information

Managing information to create organized data base:

Data analysis, evaluation, categorization, prioritization, creating graphic organizers, working collaboratively

Synthesis

Developing a hypothesis:

Generalizing data, synthesizing information, working collaboratively, writing for understanding

Hypothesis Assessment

Testing the hypothesis:

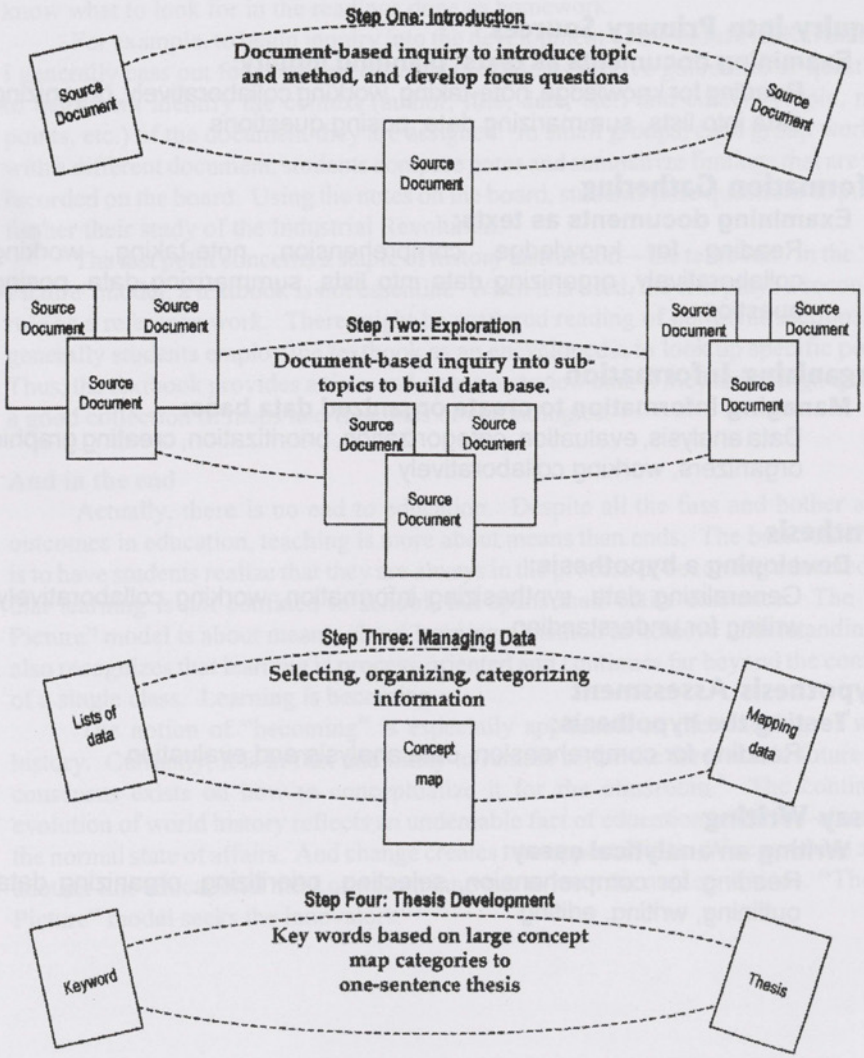
Reading for comprehension, data analysis and evaluation

Essay Writing

Writing an analytical essay:

Reading for comprehension, selecting, prioritizing, organizing data, outlining, writing, editing

The "Big Picture" Method:
document-based inquiry learning to manage and make sense of content



TEACHING MODERN AMERICAN HISTORY IN AN HONORS PROGRAM

William M. Simons
State University of New York at Oneonta

Two years ago the State University of New York at Oneonta re-established an honors program. The purpose of this venture was to attract outstanding students to our college and retain them. To create a strong base before expanding, only two honors sections were offered initially, one in philosophy and the other in history. Admittance to these two courses was by invitation only, with selection, limited to an elite group of incoming freshmen, based on high school grade average and class standing, Scholastic Aptitude Tests, and a writing sample. Asked to teach the history course, I established its primary purpose: to demonstrate the relevance of the past to the present.

The honors course I confronted was, in Oneonta parlance, United States History II, a survey beginning in 1877 and ending in the present. A typical U.S. History II section had 45-50 heterogeneous students, utilized lecture as the primary mode of instruction, assigned a major textbook, progressed chronologically, covered considerable content, and employed examinations as the major instrument of evaluation. Simply increasing the required reading load would not convert the survey into a honors course. Brainstorming about curriculum revision always came back to the student audience: It would comprise thirteen bright, motivated first-semester freshmen, with a record of past academic success and ready to face a new challenge. I resolved to conduct this course as a seminar, driven by discussion.

Convinced that the affective is as important as the cognitive to the learning experience, I decided, for this group, to flout the conventional wisdom that first-semester freshmen should avoid long night courses. To allow discussions to gain momentum and nuance, I decided that we would meet once a week, on Tuesday evenings, for approximately three hours. Long sessions, I hoped, would create the familiarity and trust that would transform a class into a community of learners.

Then I decided to take a risk in my evaluation of student performances. There would be no tests. Evaluated discussion would form a major component of the course grade. Class size would preclude anonymity. The extent of an individual's engagement with the relevant history and historiography would manifest itself through the discussion. Still, discussions must not degenerate into rote recitation or mere documentation of empirical mastery. I distributed probe questions in advance for the readings and discussion, but I counseled students that these materials were not to be regarded as catechism, simply as a tool. Student remarks would not be followed regularly by instructor commentary—meaningful discussion would require students to engage each other.

Given the desirability of providing frequent feedback, encouraging student progress, and confronting a variety of topics, I decided that four interpretative papers, each from five to seven pages, better suited the objectives of an introductory survey

course than a single 20 to 25-page research paper. In addition to honing generic writing skills, these medium-sized essays would facilitate the specific skills of an interpretive historical essay—identification and defense of a thesis, disputation with alternative viewpoints, judicious selection of supporting data, analysis, and synthesis. Readings for the papers came, for the most part, from common assignments rather than individual research.

I considered eschewing a basic text and relying exclusively on a series of more specialized readings. Ultimately, however, I decided upon a textbook, acknowledging that a survey course in United States history must cast a broad net while providing connections between and context for topics. Although there are many outstanding introductory textbooks, several of which I have used in past years, for this course I chose George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, Fifth Edition, Volume II (New York: Norton, 1999). The clarity, engaging writing style, and balance appeal to students. The reading list also included Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (New York: Norton 1996); W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997); J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt & Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997); *Time: 9/11 One Year Later*, September 11, 2002; *The New York Times*, September 11, 2002; and several articles, some academic and others journalistic. Supplementary readings were dictated by course structure.

Each week's class meeting dealt with a single historical period running in chronological sequence. For an innovative curricular aspect, our weekly session also focused on a single issue indigenous to the era under consideration. Thus, the first part of a class meeting featured discussion about the distinctive and defining attributes of the period, and the second half of the session focused on a single major issue of that era. The issues were ones that had their peak significance in a particular period but also possessed an enduring significance for America that transcend a single era. This strategy allowed for course organization to be both chronological and topical.

Although issues other than those selected might appeal to others and, undoubtedly to me in the future, a description of the topics employed in the inaugural edition of my honors survey of modern American history provides prospective teachers of such a course with a construct that they can adapt to their own needs. A description of the fifteen class meetings of the honors survey follows, linking each chronological period to a significant historical issue that encourages students to discuss connections between the past and the present.

Class Meeting #1
Chronological Period: Gilded Age
Issue: The Reality and Mythology of Socio-Economic Mobility

After a brief orientation, we discussed significant phenomena of the Gilded Age. Given the era's numerous components, this discussion of the chronological period was not comprehensive, but it was analytic, established important connections, and provided

context for consideration of our first issue. Time allotment for this first class provided the prototype for those that followed. This honors course differed from normative surveys of modern American history in the attention given to a single issue each session.

Confronting the Reality and Mythology of Socio-Economic Mobility in the Gilded Age, students received data packets containing a few brief excerpts from Horatio Alger novels, concise assessments by consensus and revisionist historians about the extent of social fluidity during the era, material from city directories germane to representative Americans, and statistical information about the origins of Captains of Industry. Students concluded that socio-economic mobility during the Gilded Age, though real, was not uniform and less pronounced than some of the hyperbole surrounding it. We also discussed the relationship between the aspiration for "rags to riches" and the American Dream, whether this belief in the possibility of great fluidity, as well as the gap between aspiration and actuality, remains vital today, and the relevance of contemporary beliefs and opportunities for achieving great success to students' own lives. Applying the past to the present, students debated whether today's corporate CEOs, superstar athletes, and victors in reality television shows embody Horatio Algerism.

Class Meeting #2

Chronological Period: The Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries from a Regional Perspective

Issue: The Relationship between the Leo Frank Case and Southern Exceptionalism

Students discussed regionalism in the Northeast, Midwest, South, and Trans-Missouri West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from a comparative perspective. We considered factors that sustained regional identity and those that challenged it. The opening discussion provided an introduction to one of the South's most significant episodes of this era.

The Leo Frank Case involved the 1913 murder of Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year old white girl employed by the National Pencil Factory in Atlanta, Georgia, and the arrest of Leo Frank, the superintendent of the establishment, who was charged with her murder. Virulent prejudice against Frank, as a Jew, a Northerner, an urbanite, and an industrialist who symbolized values alien to the rural South, colored his trial, which ended in a guilty verdict. Students examined the components of Southern exceptionalism and the extent to which the Leo Frank Case mirrored those phenomena. Consideration was also given to whether regional distinctiveness still defines the contemporary South. Students compared Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, ex-Presidents but still contemporary figures, to past political leaders native to the South. Although concluding that the region today differs considerably from the earlier South, students found that a powerful trajectory bound, albeit differentiated, the two.

Class Meeting #3
Chronological Period: The Progressive Era
Issue: The Response to Racism—Accommodation versus Protest

Students discussed the Progressive Era's complex response to corruption and inefficiency, attuned to the contradictory motives of reformers and conservatives. Then, students focused on a specific issue, The Response to Racism—Accommodation versus Protest. The Progressive Era marked an important period in African-American history, encompassing the beginning of the mass movement of blacks from the rural South to the urban North. Progressivism, as a whole, was not particularly responsive to black needs as exemplified by race riots and the segregation and removal of black officeholders.

During the Progressive Era, two black leaders, Booker T. Washington, principal of the Tuskegee Institute, and W.E.B. DuBois, a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, offered very different prescriptions for black advancement in the face of racism. Washington, although possessed of an encrypted complexity, appeared to advocate black accommodation while DuBois urged vigorous protest as the path to progress. Prior to class, students read *Up From Slavery* and *The Souls of Black Folk* and completed interpretive essay #1, which asked: "What did Booker T. Washington advocate for black America? What were the strengths and weaknesses of Washington's program?"

During the class discussion, students analyzed, compared, and debated the merits of Washington's and DuBois's strategies within the context of the early years of the last century. Students then considered the efficacy of accommodation and protest as antidotes to contemporary racism, finding the relevance of these alternative approaches to understanding the disparate ideologies of contemporary African-American leaders, including Reverend Al Sharpton, noted for his fiery rhetoric, and Secretary of State Colin Powell, an institutionalist.

Class Meeting #4
Chronological Period: The Twenties—The Politics and Government of Normalcy
Issue: Cycles of History

Typically historians treat the 1920s as a distinct entity, and we adopted this approach to our examination of the politics and government of "normalcy." Application of the Cycles of History theory posited by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Sr. provided us with an issue for this session. The Schlesingers, father and son, contended that the American polity, from its origins onward, has swung back and forth like a pendulum between liberalism, reform, and public involvement on one side and conservatism, reaction, and privatism on the other. I asked students to consider whether such a shift took place between the Progressive Era and the Twenties. Was the shift as profound as the Schlesingers suggested, or were there significant continuities? How did the shift manifest itself? What significance did it possess? Finally, students debated whether consideration of the entire sweep of American history validates or discredits

the Schlesingers' Cycles of History thesis as well as the theory's possible relevance to the present and future: If the theory is correct, does the present represent a liberal or conservative phase, and when will the present zeitgeist yield to a new formulation?

Class Meeting #5
Chronological Period: The Jazz Age—Society and Culture in the 1920s
Issues: Dualisms in American Civilization

After completing a broad canvas of the main currents of Jazz Age society and culture, students confronted an important issue germane to the era. The oppositional forces of change and tradition are constants in American history, but this dynamic was particularly pronounced in the Jazz Age. After viewing selected excerpts from the film *Inherit the Wind*, students discussed the Scopes trial as a microcosm of society and culture in the 1920s. By doing so, they identified and analyzed several biformities, including the tradition-change, liberal-conservative, faith-science, rural-urban, regional-national, and tribal-pluralistic dualisms. Next, students offered diverse theories as to why the Jazz Age was so replete with permutations. We concluded by scrutinizing the present for dichotomies, finding the phenomena enduring, manifesting themselves in contemporary civil liberties-national security and domestic priorities-international responsibilities debates.

Class Meeting #6
Chronological Period: The Great Depression
Issue: Why Wasn't There a Revolution During the Great Depression?

During this session students examined the period from 1929 to 1941, the years of the Great Depression. Students identified many New Deal accomplishments, but they also recognized that the New Deal failed to bring about full recovery. It took wartime spending to finally eradicate the Great Depression. This led students to debate an important issue: Why was there no revolution during the Great Depression? Given that hard times afflicted millions for over a decade despite the New Deal, how did democracy and capitalism, albeit in a more regulated form, survive the 1930s? The discussion that ensued gave attention to definitions of revolution, distinctions between revolution and reform, the extent of class consciousness in America, and Franklin Roosevelt's leadership as both instrumental and psychological. Some students questioned the assumption underlying our discussion, claiming that a revolution did indeed occur in the 1930s. Other students doubted whether the United States possessed a genuine revolutionary tradition. The dialogue was intense and thoughtful but brought no consensus. Nonetheless, discussion did lead to recognition that the question was germane to our own era: Why, for example, did disaffected Democrats not revolt in 2000, despite the controversial voting irregularities in the disputed presidential election of that year?

Class Meeting #7
Chronological Period: The Road to Pearl Harbor—Foreign Policy, 1933-1941
Issue: Isolationism versus Internationalism

The class examined the rise of aggressive totalitarian regimes, the threat to collective security, appeasement, the America First movement, and the foreign policy of the Roosevelt Administration from March 4, 1933, to December 7, 1941. Students then focused on the great issue of the years immediately preceding Pearl Harbor: isolationism versus internationalism. Students debated the ability of American democracy to effectively formulate and conduct foreign policy, conditions that justify U.S. military intervention, the appropriateness of a presidential administration acting covertly and/or infringing upon the Constitution in the interests of national security, the role of public opinion, the patriotism of obstructionists, and the impact of a direct attack upon the United States. After considering those items within the context of the isolationist-internationalist debate that preceded Pearl Harbor, the class applied them to concerns about American foreign policy before and after September 11, 2001.

Class Meeting #8
Chronological Period: World War II
Issue: President Harry Truman's Use of Atomic Bombs

Discussion of the chronological period entailed examination of the causes, conduct, and consequences of American participation in World War II. The issue for this meeting concerned President Harry Truman's use of atomic bombs. To prepare for this class, students read J. Samuel Walker's *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan.* Due for this sessions, interpretive paper #2 posed the following: "How should President Harry Truman have used the atomic bomb(s)? Take into account the political, diplomatic, and military content as well as wartime and postwar objectives."

Students understood that doing exactly as Truman did, which resulted in the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, or rejecting any military use of these weapons were not the only options available. Students identified and analyzed diverse opinions. Evaluation of Truman's decision addressed the relative importance of bringing the war in Japan to the quickest possible end, American casualties, Japanese casualties, morality, revenge, and impact upon the Cold War and the arms race. After thoughtful debate, students voted to determine which of the options garnered the most support. Finally, the class considered under what circumstances, if any, contemporary American use of weapons of mass destruction would be justified: Are there scenarios, students were asked, in which the United States's use of nuclear weapons would be militarily effective and morally justified against present-day rogue nations and /or terrorist organizations?

Class Meeting #9
Chronological Period: Postwar America, 1945-1960
Issue: Were the 1950s a Golden Age for the American Family?

After examining the major historical currents of Postwar America, 1945-1960, students addressed the issue of the week: Were the 1950s a golden age for the American family? Prior to class, students read chapter 2 ("What We Really Miss about the 1950s") in Stephanie Coontz's *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). Consideration of this issue began with the viewing of brief video excerpts drawn from two sources: an episode of the 1950s television series *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* and the 1955 movie *Rebel Without a Cause*. Both were icons of the 1950s popular culture, but their depictions of families of that era were highly divergent.

With these contradictory visions of family life in the fifties as a catalyst, students analyzed dating, sex, marriage, spousal relations, divorce, the relationship between public perceptions and private truths, childbearing, childcare, adolescence, juvenile delinquency, child and spousal abuse, emotional health, women's work in and outside the home, motherhood, the feminine mystique, fatherhood, masculinity, gender roles, housing, material standard of living, education, and other attributes of familial structure and functions. They also gave attention to the relationship between 1950s families and the historical macrocosm, including the Cold War and postwar prosperity. Finally, the class compared 1950s family life to that of today, finding that past prototypes provided perspective for understanding contemporary models.

Class Meeting #10
Chronological Period: The Sixties—Politics and Government under JFK and LBJ
Issue: Evaluating JFK's Leadership during the Cuban Missile Crisis

Students examined politics, government, and war during the 1960s from the vantage point of the presidential administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. After surveying the period, students addressed the issue of President Kennedy's leadership during the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. A vignette from the film *Thirteen Days* (2000) engaged students on an experiential level. The discussion considered Kennedy's prior policies toward Cuba and the Soviet Union, options open to the President, time pressures, morality, political considerations, the structure of the decision-making process, risks incurred by Kennedy's conduct to that of Nikita Khrushchev, and the impact of the crisis upon the Cold War and on history. The session involved comparisons of Kennedy's leadership during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Truman's approach to ending the war with Japan, and the contemporary campaign against terrorism. Students debated the lessons that President George W. Bush might derive from the context, process, and consequence of Kennedy's decision-making.

Class Meeting #11
Chronological Period: The Sixties—Society and Culture
Issue: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Just Society—Civil Rights and Vietnam

After analyzing society and culture in the 1960s, students discussed the crusade of Martin Luther King, Jr., for a just America, focusing on his advocacy of civil rights and his opposition to the war in Vietnam. To prepare for this session, students read excerpts from writings about and by King and viewed video clips from some of his most significant speeches. The discussion entailed debate of the following questions: How did King view racism in America, and how did those perceptions shape the philosophy, tactics, and strategy of his civil rights campaign? Why did King oppose the Vietnam War, and what form did this opposition take? What linked King's critique of racism and his opposition to the Vietnam War? What were King's major triumphs and failures? Are King's character and personal life relevant to an evaluation of his philosophy and leadership? Students compared King to other black leaders of the 1960s as well as those who preceded him and those who followed. The class also considered King's overall effectiveness, his impact on history, his legacy, and the relevance of his goals and tactics in the present. Students concluded by responding to a query: How would King have responded to court rulings on affirmative action, racial profiling by police, proposals that the descendants of slaves receive indemnities, and other components of race relations in contemporary America? How would he have responded to George W. Bush's war on terrorism?

Class Meeting #12
Chronological Period: The Seventies
Issue: Richard Nixon and the Search for National Character

Critical discussion of the United States in the 1970s preceded consideration of the issue of the week: Richard Nixon and the Search for National Character. Prior to class, students read excerpts from diverse theories about national character as well as abridged articles about the life and presidency of Richard Nixon. Discussion about Nixon and national character was also facilitated by the viewing of brief video excerpts from some of Nixon's emblematic public moments and from Oliver Stone's film *Nixon* (1995). Student initially raised generic questions about national character: Is there such a thing as American national character? If there is, does national character transcend cultural and political divisions, regions, lifestyles, genders, races, ethnic groups, and economic classes? Is national character static from chronological period to chronological period, or does each generation recreate it? What are the attributes of national character? Then, students applied the concept of national character to the character of Nixon, particularly as it manifested itself during his presidency.

The discussion of Nixon's relationship to national character included examination of the following: Was there a consistent Nixon character or rather a succession of New Nixons? What were the defining components of Nixon's character? Did Nixon's character reflect or deviate from the national character? Did Nixon's character reflect

or deviate from the zeitgeist of the 1970s? Did Nixon's character, more than his ideology or politics, shape the domestic and foreign policies of his presidency? What were the chief strengths and weaknesses of Nixon's character, and how did that impact on his life and presidency as well as upon history? Students considered whether policies of the incumbent president, George W. Bush, and his immediate predecessor, Bill Clinton, were driven more or less by character than were those of Richard Nixon?

Class Meeting #13
Chronological Period: The Eighties
Issue: Rating Reagan—Presidential Evaluations

After surveying the main currents of American history during the 1980s, students took up the task of rating the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Prior to class, they read a few articles representing varying viewpoints that assessed the Reagan presidency within a comparative context. To engage students on an experiential level, they heard brief excerpts from some of Reagan's speeches and press conferences. Rating Reagan began with the class's attempt to establish generic criteria to employ to evaluate any American president. Suggestions for areas to include in these evaluative criteria encompassed pre-presidential background, electoral success, communication skills, creation of a national mood, character, intelligence, ideology, vision, idealism, compassion, priorities, appointments, domestic and foreign policies, management of the economy, national defense, effectiveness during crises, and impact on history. Students also considered whether a single area might be so important as to dwarf all others in evaluating a president, and, if this was the case, whether Reagan's handling of the Cold War constituted the defining issue of his administration. Students debated how much credit Reagan merited for hastening the end of the Cold War. As a means of evaluating the Reagan presidency, students compared it to presidential administrations that preceded and followed it, identifying similarities and differences between the Reagan administration and those of other recent presidents.

Class Meeting #14
Chronological Period: 9/11/01 and Beyond
Issue: Days That Defined America

Through reading (the September 11, 2002, commemorative issues of *Time* magazine and *The New York Times*), antecedent topics, probe questions, curricular context, and an essay assignment, students were prepared to discuss the new era that commenced on September 11, 2001, and the issue of Days That Defined America. Interpretive paper #3, due for this meeting, asked, "What impact did the September 11, 2001, attack have, in the months since the tragedy, on the public and private lives of: (1) America as a nation, (2) the individual you were assigned from the *Time* magazine profile, and (3) you?"

The class commenced with SUNY-Oneonta Professor Emeritus Dennis Shea's remembrance of how the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor ended the isolation

of America as well as that of his own insular Irish-Catholic neighborhood in the Queens region of New York City. SUNY-Oneonta provost and historian F. Daniel Larkin followed by recounting the shock and disbelief that swept the nation and his personal circle in Albany, New York, upon hearing of the November 22, 1963, assassination of President Kennedy; he also hypothesized about how the tragedy altered history. Next, SUNY-Oneonta graduate John Jermyn, a twenty-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department, described his participation in rescue efforts at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001; he also commented on life in New York since the terrorist attack. Presentations by the guest speakers were introduced by visual images from documentary films. Then, students discussed and analyzed the impact of 9/11 on the nation, specific individuals, and themselves within a historical framework. The guest speakers joined students in considering similarities and differences between these three Days That Defined America, linking the nation's past and present.

Class Meeting #15
Chronological Period: The American Past, Present, and Future
Issue: The Defining Attributes of the American Civilization

For our final meeting, each of the thirteen students was paired with a different chronological period, selected from those previously covered in the course. I asked students to identify those attributes from the era for which they were responsible that had an enduring impact on American civilization. They were instructed to provide evidence and a rationale for their choices in a final essay and in an oral report. Interpretive essay #4, collected during this last meeting, called upon students to consider: "What and who were the distinctive and defining attributes, phenomena, events, trends, and people in the chronological period for which you have responsibility? What people and what characteristics of your period have had an enduring influence on American culture, civilization, and/or character?" Thus, in the last meeting, the class—drawing from the past and present—collectively sought to define "American civilization." The discussion was intelligent, energetic, and engaging. Although the topic defied definitive answer, the quest was enlightening, and by emphasizing the significance of the historical to the contemporary, it provided a fitting conclusion to the course.

Student feedback suggests that the honors course in modern American history was a success. People vote with their feet: Despite rigorous grading and a substantial work load, no one dropped the course. During the entire fifteen weeks of the semester, there was not a single unexcused absence. In an age of informality, I was moved when several students asked if they could dress up for our final session. And, in that last meeting, each of the oral reports by students was followed, quite deservedly, by applause. Without exception, students indicated an interest in taking other honors courses.

The success of the course gave an important boost to the fledgling honors program, still modest in scope, with courses initially rotating, semester by semester, among

academic disciplines. The Director of the Honors Program indicated that in the future I would have the opportunity to repeat the honors offering in modern American history. In a subsequent incarnation of the course, I would address two concerns: the request of students for further integration of audio-visual material into class proceedings and additional discussion to augment historiographical disputation. Extension of the meeting time would ameliorate these problems, suggesting the desirability of converting a three-credit course into a four-credit offering, with another hour of class per week.

In both their statistical and written evaluations, students gave the honors course in modern American history high marks. As the following representative excerpts from course evaluations illustrate, student comments were enthusiastic:

- "Class provided a valuable learning experience."
- "The course was interesting and informative. I learned a lot and enjoyed it much more than a typical survey course. Much more in-depth."
- "The class was a very rewarding experience ... I liked doing the papers rather than having tests."
- "It was by far the most interesting history class I have taken."

Echoing points made in discussion and papers, student evaluations credited the course with illuminating a process of renewal and change that connected, yet rendered distinct, the present from the past.

"GREAT THINKER'S DAY"— OR CAPTURING THE LARGEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE ON CAMPUS

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"Great Thinkers Day" is a day-long multidisciplinary event and an innovative active learning experience that involved an entire college community. This essay describes my experience with planning, organizing, and executing this event, including both the benefits and difficulties I experienced putting the day into action. I also share my thoughts on how I might do things differently the next time. The potential for an exciting, interactive, and integrative day is inexhaustible. The main criteria for success are sound planning and organizational work at the beginning executed with the help of a good support staff.

Challenges in College Teaching

Innovation in teaching comes in myriad forms: role-playing, history theatre, visual and audio cues to accompany lectures, and a variety of other interactive formats. Trying to combine any of these approaches, e.g. interdisciplinary and interactive with visual, audio, and sensatory experience in a "traditional" structure, can be challenging. One way I have found to meet this challenge is to eliminate the class structure and, therefore, the expectations that accompany it. This did not mean canceling classes, however. Working with colleagues and students, I sought to create a more total and holistic learning environment. That challenge became an opportunity to organize a one-day symposium devoted to the history of ideas at a two-year community college where I taught for four years (Tunxis Community College in Farmington, CT). As I worked through the problems of how to make learning vital and compelling—something no one would want to miss—I created a learning community for my colleagues, myself, and our students.[1]

In developing a living history symposium, I knew I wanted to do two things: 1) reinforce the integration of disciplines and 2) imitate early historical research methods, specifically information gathering. Learning traditionally has been a process of finding

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[1]The original idea for this day was formed when I attended the Barnes Seminar for Teaching Excellence in May 1999 at Madison, Connecticut. There, while exchanging ideas on teaching innovation, I met someone whose school had organized something like what would evolve into "Great Thinkers Day." Ed Grippe, another community college faculty member, and I began to brainstorm the possibilities and laid down the framework for this multi-disciplinary event at our respective schools. Since my campus is extremely small and space constraints are the biggest obstacle to hosting an event of this proportion, it was some time before I was able to overcome the limitations of room availability and host what I had envisioned and planned. In the interim my partner in organization and planning, Ed Grippe, was able to put on what he called "Plato Day" at his institution. I presented a talk there and was able to observe his first-hand experiences. My observations there combined with my experiences with "Great Thinkers Day" on my campus make up the substance of this paper.

the foremost authority on a subject and listening to his or her expositions on the topic at hand—this has been the way of learning since organized schooling began centuries ago. It has been only relatively recently, with the push to make education accessible to all, not just the elite, that learning has been formalized and categorized and put into the modern form called the public college or university.

Change and transformation of teaching are rooted in keeping the connectivity among the disciplines obvious. Our students' perceptions of the classroom experience and of the college experience as a whole remain primarily, stubbornly, in the realm of lecture, note-taking, and other familiar forms of learning. Their expectation is that each instructor will remain in a narrowly defined field of specialization. Students enter the classroom with the expectation that the instructor will do the breaking down and that what the instructor presents to students is the way it is "supposed to be." Unfortunately, and most importantly, students fail to grasp the connections among the various courses in their general education curriculum, which in part defeats its purpose. This is an extremely important part of a college education and something that is not evident to students but extremely clear to teachers.

Premises

"Great Thinkers Day" is based on the premise that if students have an opportunity to see that their course work is inherently linked and that what they learn in one class can be transferred to another, then their education might seem purposeful. A liberal arts education is how most American students are taught from kindergarten on; however, in the traditional school system so much emphasis is placed on result-oriented teaching and learning that the connection between mathematics and sciences become weak, the relationship of historical developments to literature is disassociated, and so on. I am convinced that more students would be inspired during their years in school and college if they could see links between the courses in their curriculum, for example, if they learn that understanding Plato will clarify issues of politics and law long after they are through with school and might help to make them politically active citizens.

This ability to forge and build on the ties that bind all disciplines of study is what makes a liberal arts education more valuable than any other. Thus some questions I have asked students to address include: What was the connection between marriage contracts and the role of women in a particular society? What did the practice of medicine and the image of the human body have to do with the Enlightenment political structure and philosophy? Asking students to address these questions actively, I try to help them to see the connection between culture and history, between documents and values. This new type of interdisciplinary experiment in instruction has helped my students make that leap that is so difficult to make in a traditional classroom experience. I began with several premises: 1) students love to be challenged, 2) students love to have variety in the classroom experience, 3) students can exhibit their natural curiosity, which makes the human animal strive for knowledge, 4) students can value changes in the classroom setting—they can learn in a variety of settings, and if the learning

environment (the actual physical setting) is changed, knowledge acquisition will proceed more smoothly, 5) students want to be surprised by their teachers—they appreciate innovation, and 6) students learn better if they are part of the teaching experience—if they must become the teachers. From these premises came the development of "Great Thinkers Day."

"Great Thinkers Day" in Practice

The overall theme for the first "Great Thinkers Day" was the Enlightenment, with the specific focus on France. In addition to academic presentations, we offered food, drink, music, singing, dance, and a theatre presentation, a dramatic reading in French of a French period work of literature (excerpts from *The Mad Woman of Chaillot*). The intention was to create a template for an interdisciplinary symposium that could become an annual event. "Great Thinkers Day" could become a hallmark, a unique feature of the college anticipated by the public and the students and one that would distinguish the college from others.

When guests entered the college on "Great Thinkers Day," hosts handed them several items: a copy of the program, a map of the campus that indicated the presentation rooms, and a general timeline of the seventeenth century along with a two-page biography of Rene Descartes. In this way no one in attendance had to feel unprepared or uncomfortable without the rudiments of familiarity with the "Era of Descartes." I asked student volunteers to provide on-the-spot support for anything we might need to do, from greeting the public at the main entrance and handing out programs and maps of the campus to hanging posters to rearranging tables and video projection screens. Student involvement, although an aspect of the event that was born of necessity, had the added bonus of making my students not taking Western Civilization that semester (I was teaching United States history survey courses as well) aware of and interested in an event on campus. This gave them a sense of ownership and pride in their college. My Western Civilization students were required to attend; attendance was in lieu of their classes for that day. Many of my colleagues supported the event by bringing their classes to the sessions.

Another aspect of preparing us all to "enter" into the period was to plaster Descartes's portrait all over campus a couple of weeks in advance with no clue as to his name or reason for the posting. Perhaps a counter-intuitive measure, but the "dour faced man" elicited a lot of questions, which in turn sparked interest in "Great Thinkers Day."

Critical to the success of the project was the voluntary support of other faculty members. I announced my intention to organize and present this event at a college-wide meeting and then prepared a flier to invite presenters among the faculty. All presenters were volunteers, yet incredibly the day was balanced in its offerings. Although I had no claims on their time, I found that simply by talking to everyone about the concept and asking for volunteers to present yielded a workable number of sessions (we ended up with twelve). The volunteers came not only from full-time faculty but

part-time faculty as well. This was a tremendous tribute to our adjunct faculty's eagerness to contribute even more to our campus community than they already did.

My colleagues were eager to participate and were unanimously effusive about their positive experiences of the event. It was a thrill to have faculty who had *not* participated as presenters approach me afterwards and offer their services for the next "Great Thinkers Day." One memorable comment came from someone eager to substitute chairing a committee for a presentation during "Great Thinkers Day" because that event was so much more fun and rewarding. The presentation titles included the following;

"The Science & Fiction Synthesis: Cyrano's *Voyage to the Moon*"

"Get Out! Tom Hanks Isn't the First 'Castaway'"

"Evaluation of Infantry Weapons during the Seventeenth Century"

"The Emergence of the Scientific Perspective, *De Human Corpus Fabrica*"

"Descartes's Scientism: Is Science on Sound Footing?"

I did not suggest assignments or ask for specific presentations. The only requirements I set were chronological—I asked presenters to prepare something on a subject in the Enlightenment, something they were familiar with and something that excited them. The topics and presentations offered a cornucopia of originality and inspiration.

Presenters exhibited outstanding innovation and creativity. For example, the presenter of "Castaway" handed out gummy worms to get the audience closer to comprehending the exigencies of survival in an unfamiliar place. The presenters of *De Human Corpus Fabrica* brought and passed around original period instruments of the medical profession as well as leeches in a jar. (They did not, however, ask for volunteers to come forward for a proper bleeding demonstration!) They also put together a power point presentation to instruct their audience better in the period techniques of doctors. The presentation on infantry weapons included an authentic musket along with a demonstration of how to load one. The presenters on music of the Enlightenment, a session that presented a general survey, surprised and delighted the audience because up until that moment students had known them only as "a math teacher" and "a computer science teacher." They exhibited the breadth of their own talents—both are avid instrumentalists who promised to perform as well as play recordings of the period music next time. They taught not by the quality of their presentation alone but also by showing their students the multidimensionality that is part of living the liberal arts. This is a kind of education that students cannot acquire in the traditional way.

I also asked my Western Civilization students to participate; their participation would be linked to presentations they were required to make for our Western Civilization II class. Students who chose this option would present to our class for credit and then voluntarily for "Great Thinkers Day." The topic could be anything on the Enlightenment and the mode of presentation was entirely up to the discretion of the student. I wanted to give them the freedom to present in whatever medium best suited

their temperament and personality. One student wrote and acted in a play, another prepared a multi-media presentation.

I was offered the ideal segue into the day by a Western Civilization student who wrote and acted in a one-act, one-man play with four characters. The setting was the dining room of a typical well-to-do home and the characters were a mother, father, brother, and sister. His props were a table, four chairs, one wig (the mom), a formal "top hat" (the dad), a baseball cap (the son), and a kerchief (the daughter). The "characters" sat at the evening meal discussing the fateful new ideas and new vistas on civilization offered by the increased contact and the more rapid spread of information in the seventeenth century. This student had the following to say in an evaluation of the day:

> My nervousness passed as soon as I stepped away from the podium and put my first headpiece on! I didn't have to be professional anymore in the way giving a speech had to be presented. The audience let down a certain wall as they laughed at an occasional joke I had slipped in .... The skit format, as opposed to giving a speech, made it feel a lot more relaxing and made me feel as though I could be myself. My skit portrayed the Enlightenment as it was, a time devoted to questions and also the timidness to ask those probing questions .... A good example of this is the book, *Voyage to the Moon*, presented by Steve Ersinghaus in the 1:00 session.

This student not only learned from his own presentation but also was able to recognize the connection between a history class assignment and a presentation on literature!

Utilitarian Aspects

"Great Thinkers Day" served both practical and pedagogical purposes. The practical aspects of the project were quite ordinary: We needed administrative support, e.g. funding for honoraria and food etc., room reservations, maintenance support (to set up extra chairs and tables), advertising, and technical support for media requests as well as technicians to videotape the session. The event appealed to the administration because we created a special link with the community. We fulfilled our service commitment to the community by inviting members of the local population to the presentations as both presenters and as audience for the day's proceedings. "Great Thinkers Day" was educational in the traditional sense, but the community also provided a cultural component.

The name of the program can easily be altered to use either periods or famous figures of history without losing the draw of the touchstone phrase "great thinkers day." Thus we could plan to have "Great Thinkers Day: The Era of Plato" or "The Era of Marcus Aurelius," and so on. With each year I would move toward increased involvement from the community—ideally they might suggest possible directions as well as provide cultural elements. For example, I would hope the Greek community might

help to define "The Era of Plato" from their point of view; the Italian community similarly might define "The Era of Marcus Aurelius."

Benefits

The practical aspects of tying in the college's desire to attract more students led to the decision to invite "feeder" high schools in our area. The benefit for the college would be increased enrollments and the benefit for the high school students would be a pain-free opportunity to get a taste of college-level work and a glimpse at our campus. Letters of invitation—and later programs—were sent to teachers of French, history, and social studies, science, guidance counselors, and principals in twenty high schools. We offered students and teachers the opportunity to become participants in "Great Thinkers Day." This part of my organization was the weakest link in the plan of events. The turnout was less than satisfactory. The timing of the event might have presented difficulties for the teachers and their spring semester lesson plans.

Certainly the value of this method—a living history symposium—is not limited to a two-year institution where we started the program, but could also be utilized by four-year colleges and universities. It fulfills many of the functions associated with the multiplicity of roles schools in general and scholars in particular are called on to play. Increasingly, professors and administrators find themselves working in non-traditional ways to increase enrollments and to keep and increase ties to their local communities. "Great Thinkers Day" is an excellent vehicle for this kind of goal. It is an endeavor that leaves both teachers and students satisfied—not to mention administrators! Since the community college's educational mission is tied to service to the community, this symposium was fully in the realm of that mission. "Great Thinkers Day" educated, entertained, and welcomed individuals who might be reluctant to visit a college campus under normal circumstances.

For the campus-wide community this living history symposium permitted us to display our prowess as an extremely talented faculty. It opened venues for faculty collaboration and increased normal levels of collegiality. My colleagues were excited preparing for and anticipating the event. "Great Thinkers Day" became a topic of hallway conversations, which can be extremely fruitful in forging bonds among faculty—measurably more fruitful than formal means of community. This assumption is based on my personal experience and the anecdotal evidence of my colleagues.

"Great Thinkers Day" provided our students with a model of education that involved them in their own education. They saw the interdisciplinary connections for themselves, but by participating as presenters they became role models for other students and gained a new understanding of how to learn in the process. "Great Thinkers Day" served many purposes at once. Students would stretch their critical and analytical thinking skills. They would have an opportunity to learn "stress free." In other words, their professors would not have to hear the dreaded query—"Will this be on the test?"—and students would find that learning could be intriguing and stimulating and effortless.

Problems

Because it was the equivalent of organizing a small conference, this symposium required enormous demands on my time as well as the time and effort of various support staff at the college. It is not a project to get into without considerable time off—I highly recommend getting a course release! This was not a consideration for me on this occasion, but it will be a priority before the planning for another "Great Thinkers Day" gets under way. Getting funding and approval from the president of the college were relatively simple compared to the intensive organizational and preparatory work necessary.

Practically speaking, there will be a gap between the ideal symposium scenario in one's mind and that which is possible to construct. For example, although I could envision it, I was not able to persuade faculty colleagues to do a dramatic reading in French or convince the Alliance Francaise to do a presentation of French dance or music. Getting outside groups involved required an enormous time commitment and necessitated beginning the communication process months in advance. When the Alliance Francaise could not participate, we hired a guitarist for the day to perform in the same room where we served refreshments.

The Results

Although the college sent out press releases, made up a poster, and included information on the symposium on our web page, the best advertising we received was free of charge and far reaching. An older student of mine, with connections in the radio industry, arranged to have me interviewed about the symposium on a popular morning talk show. We had a captive audience of at least 100,000 listeners. One listener from as far away as Binghamton, New York, called and asked for the program to be faxed to her. The media attention was augmented by an article and photograph in Connecticut's largest newspaper, *The Hartford Courant*. In other words, the school got lots of free publicity. Next year it will be an even bigger success in terms of community participation and attendance and getting greater name recognition for the college.

Even though I could expound on the educational value and benefits to the audience, I believe that there were a variety of intangible benefits as well, which are difficult to categorize yet are key to this kind of experience for students. Numerous student comments are illustrative of those intangible, beneficial aspects of "Great Thinkers Day." These appeared in audience and student reactions. One student saw the symposium as a way to spruce up the last few days of the semester. The new ideas and the presenters' ability to capture and keep his attention genuinely stimulated him. His description of "Great Thinkers Day" as "a shot of mental adrenaline" is one, which, on reflection, made all my efforts worthwhile:

> In the last few weeks of the second semester, a student may find the college experience to be as dull as dishwater. Classroom lectures may seem like a sleep fest. One may desperately seek ways to stay alive mentally in order to pass the

> final exams. Ironically, Descartes Day was like a shot of mental adrenaline. The ideas presented in the lectures hit me like a ton of bricks. From start to finish, the lecturers had my attention hooked as they did a great job presenting the material. ... Gambino and Cenet's presentation was not too shabby and I learned to make out Baroque from Classical music .... So the next time I'm vegging out and those long songs start playing on National Public Radio, I'll know the scoop on the background of the music. ... I'd have to conclude that the discussion in room 326 [He sat through "The Emergence of the Scientific Perspective," "Descartes's Scientism: Is Science on Sound Footing?" and "The Science and Fiction Synthesis: Cyrano's *Voyage to the Moon*."] were beyond the value of a standing ovation from even the greatest of Tunxis's intellectual elite ... I'd say that Descartes Day was a positive event; the experience was profound.

Another student's very honest response to the day suggested that this had been a new experience for her—to witness the transformation of her own ordinary teachers into dynamic presenters with a fervent message and something they are really excited about:

> Great Thinkers Day at Tunxis Community College was a unique experience. I expected some boring lecture, but it was actually very informative. All the speakers seemed very proud of their work and I enjoyed being part of such activity because it was something important to them.

Two other students were also surprised that learning could be enjoyable or something to anticipate with pleasure. They were resigned (my judgment) to yet another indifferent educational experience but in the end found it was worthwhile and engaging. One noted: "This was definitely a fun day. I wish I could have stayed longer .... You should do this again next year and your classes will definitely like it." The other added, "The presentations were extremely interesting ... the event was educational with its aspects of fun."

While the students expressed enthusiasm, I wanted to survey the faculty for more practical and useful feedback. The faculty participants, without exception, were eager to contribute their expertise for next year, and a few sent me written comments. For example, one wrote: "I would characterize 'Great Thinkers Day' as a success. A diverse group of enthusiastic presenters offered an eclectic set of topics on seventeenth-century European society and culture .... Many faculty, staff, and students to whom I spoke said they enjoyed various of the presentations .... Many people enjoyed the period music presentations: would it be possible to serenade the campus, or at least some part of it, with such music during the next 'Great Thinkers Day'?" Another faculty presenter commented: "It was quite hectic to get the presentation ready, BUT it was one of the most satisfying things I have done for my teaching in a long time. I had been looking for an excuse to try out a power point demonstration, and you gave me a really

meaningful reason to try one .... I am looking forward to being able to do something similar next year."

The Next Time Around

What would I do differently? Next time I would ask for lots of help. I would ask for volunteers to help organize. I would get more of the faculty involved, not only by asking for their participation as presenters but also by asking them to incorporate the symposium somehow into their class requirements. For example: Could the communication program students, those who want to go on to become television and movie producers, be assigned the task of videotaping our day as part of their semester assignment? Could the graphic arts or theatre department prepare "sets" or backdrops for oral or aural presentations to set the mood and make it part of their course assignments? Or perhaps could they make it an assignment to photograph still shots of the sessions? A culinary arts program could show off their skills in conjunction with the period we focus on. The possibilities for integrating "Great Thinkers Day" into the curricular life of a college are endless. "Great Thinkers Day" offers the finest kind of opportunity to show off the beauty of a liberal arts education.

"Great Thinker's Day" Schedule

TIME	NAME	EVENT
9:00 AM	Dr. Mari Firkatian President Addy	Welcome & Introduction Opening Remarks
9:45 AM	Roger Johnson Writer/Director/Actor	"The Family Meal: An Opportunity to Discuss the State of the New World" (one act play)
10:00 AM	Prof. Laura Gambino & Prof. Jean-Marc Cenet	Bach, Handel and Vivaldi: A Look at Baroque Music
	Prof. Susan Bacon	Get out! Tom Hanks isn't the first "Castaway?"
	Prof. Fran Coan	The Evaluation of Infantry Weapons during the 17th Century
11:00 AM	Dr. Betty Michalowski	Down to Earth in 17th Century European Painting
	Dr. Mari Firkatian	Women in 17th Century Society
	Prof. Rom Byczkiewicz	The Emergence of the Scientific Perspective
12:00 PM	Mr. Harris Becker	Baroque guitarist
	Café au lait & sweets	
	Dr. Ed Gripe	Descartes' Scientism: Is Science on Sound Footing
1:00 PM	Prof. Steve Ersinghaus	The Science & Fiction Synthesis: Cyrano's *Voyage to the Moon*
	Prof. Kim Karath	Newton, Leibnitz & Pascal: The Calculating Genius of Math, Science & Religion
2:00 PM	Prof. Lynn Laskowski & Prof. Linda Navitsky	De Human Corpus Fabrica (On the Fabric of the Human Body)

REVIEWS

D. Antonio & Wilson J. Warren. *Teaching History in the Digital Classroom.* Armonk, NY & London, UK: M.E. Sharpe, 2003. Pp. xiii, 361. Cloth, $68.95; ISBN 0-7656-0992-4. Paper, $26.95; ISBN 0-7656-0993-2.

Finding good books to use with pre-service teachers in history or social studies is not easy. In a class for future teachers, one of the reviewers was derided for contradicting the textbook one term—a sure sign a new one was needed. It is equally if not more difficult to find books for in-service history or social studies teachers. That is why Cantu and Warren's volume is a welcome addition. Many texts in this field reflect a traditional approach to history education. In the last decade, they might have added a chapter on teaching with technology, or taken a stab at updating the sections on assessment and standards, but the basic shape of the texts has not changed.

Cantu and Warren have tried to integrate these topics from the beginning. Rather than ask how technology will change the traditional chalk and talk lesson plan, they challenge students to rethink how technology can create new forms of history and social studies learning. They also allow extended space for discussions of standards in history and social studies, the various approaches of the standards, and different means of assessing historical knowledge.

They also draw readers into research in the field in a more sophisticated and thoughtful way than other comparable texts. Their discussions of research have the missing component—voice—that is lacking in most literature summaries. They do not try to summarize the whole field, but they do try to tell the reader what is important in each research field, and how it applies to improving teaching. This provides an invitation to the reader to engage the research community, not simply to blindly accept findings as "research says …."

The aim of the book is to change the way people teach history and social studies and to focus teaching on historical thinking and authentic learning. This approach has a strong basis in research that has shown that students need to do history in order to learn it, and to focus on learning a smaller number of historical topics in depth, rather than covering every topic in the textbook.

This book would be a strong choice for a history/social studies methods class. It provides a solid framework for students to understand lesson and curriculum design, serves up good information on topics such as collaborative learning and several detailed chapters on assessment. Charts and tables are used for quick summaries of key points, such as how to write a good essay test.

However, the book would be an even better choice for in-service teachers. Much of the research, information, and history provided would be lost on most pre-service teachers. Students without much experience in schools might get lost in some sections of the book (such as the chapter on teacher beliefs), while those same sections would provoke deep discussion among veteran teachers. People who have been in the classroom for some time would find this book a valuable resource in improving what

they do, changing their class to incorporate technology, getting a better handle on assessment, and extending their teaching to include the AP level.

In future editions, the book should expand its range of vision a bit. A section on the issues raised by students with learning disabilities would be helpful for both novice and experienced teachers, and more examples of best practices from classrooms would round things out. There are also points where the authors could apply some historical and political analysis, such as the politics of history and social studies standards. However, these suggestions of changes are not pointed out as criticisms, but in the spirit of the book, which suggests that history and social studies education will be in a constant state of change and flux for our professional lifetimes.

Wayne Westland County Schools, Wayne County, MI — Diane Cook
Eastern Michigan University — Russell Olwell

Mary Spongberg. *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Pp. 308. Cloth, $65.00; ISBN: 0-333-72667-7. Paper, $21.95; ISBN: 0-333-72668-5.

Over the past several decades the marked increase in attention given to the field of women's and/or gender studies has opened up many new avenues of study, such as women's narrative and queer theory. Mary Spongberg, Senior Lecturer in Modern History at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, sets out to complete an ambitious task by chronicling the writing of women's history from "proto-feminism" in the Renaissance to the present. Few studies of this scope have been tackled in the past; Spongberg points to a 1985 *American Historical Review* piece by Bonnie Smith as one of the few to look specifically at women as historical writers. She concedes in the introduction that much of her focus will be on the connection between writing women's history and the development of modern feminism, but she must take the reader through the development of recording women's history in order to make sense of the modern period. To that effect, her first two chapters are devoted to detailing the prevailing view of women and their role in history through the Romantic period. Starting with the Greeks (Aristotle in particular), the author presents standard views of women. This brief overview at times seems a bit perfunctory. She takes some time to explain the concept of books of women worthies through the ages, but completely omits early modern examples of women writing their own stories, such as Laura Cereta, Veronica Franco, and Moderate Fonte. The handful of women with a humanist education who wrote would seem to clearly add to her argument, if only she had made full use of them.

The text becomes stronger as we approach the modern period. Spongberg sees the French Revolution as an important period for women and their view of history, citing Madame de Stael and Mary Wollstonecraft as examples of women putting their own spin on the political activity of the day. She spends the majority of the text examining the

late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, emphasizing in particular the concept of women in the academy and the birth and growth of feminism. The focus on women writing history gets somewhat lost in her discussion of women breaking down academic barriers, and her discussion of feminism is much more in line with a feminist theory text than a work about women as writers of history. Many of the writers she references, such as Betty Freidan, Shulamith Firestone, and Robin Morgan, did not set out to write women's history as such, but Spongberg does cover much ground in a concise text, and includes prominent historians such as Gerda Lerner, Joan Kelly-Gadol, and Joan Wallach Scott.

Despite the fact that her ambitious study could probably have spanned several volumes, Spongberg presents a good, solid introductory text to women's studies and the idea of women in history, perfect for undergraduates or any student new to the topic. It would be ideal for an intro to a women's studies class, or even a course on women's narrative. How to use it in a traditional history survey is slightly problematic, since it covers so many time periods and nations. A better use would be in a women's history course; however, since there is so much material on the modern period, it could be easily adapted to fit the second half of United States history.

Floyd College Laura Musselwhite

William Stafford. *John Stuart Mill.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. Pp. viii, 155. Cloth, $45.00; ISBN 0-312-21632-7.

John Stuart Mill, his philosophy, and his politics have always been of interest to intellectual historians, political historians, and even gender historians. Long-term projects of collecting and publishing his papers have been among the most impressive academic achievements of recent decades. Yet Mill suffers from neglect in many college history courses. While his ideas might appear in lectures, and certainly his early and consistent championing of women's rights ensures that he will be mentioned in modern European and Western Civilization contexts, it is rare to find his thought analyzed deeply except in the most specialized courses.

It is with refreshing frankness that William Stafford addresses the question of Mill's place in the curriculum in the very beginning of his introduction. Volumes upon volumes have been written on Mill, so why the need for another one? Further, where does someone like Mill fit into a greatly broadened and diversified history curriculum, with less and less emphasis on "traditional subjects" such as intellectual history and British history? In short, is this a book to assign in your history courses?

Not surprisingly, Stafford argues that a detailed study of Mill has enduring value, given that he wrestled with some of the most important questions of modern society then and now. The author stakes his claim to originality, however, by arguing that Mill has "all too often been assessed anachronistically, ripped out of the context of his time." Stafford places Mill in his nineteenth-century context, with all its attending

preoccupations and presumptions; examining Mill *in situ* provides Stafford with the ammunition for the claim that Mill's relevance should be sustained.

The book is mainly taken up with chapters that look at Mill's philosophy (and his other writings) in chunks, beginning with his *Autobiography*, then progressing to analyses of *The Logic*, *The Principles of Political Economy*, *Utilitarianism*, and *On Liberty*. He then finishes with a chapter on Mill's more overtly political works and on his time as a member of Parliament. Every chapter is extremely well informed about Mill's work and the commentaries on it and presents a clear and compelling analysis of Mill's thinking. In a word, this is an excellent short study of Mill and his work.

The difficulty for history teachers is how to fit this volume (and Mill in general) into their reading lists. It would fit well in an upper-division course on the history of ideas, one where it can be assumed that students know some of the basic philosophical terms used here without definition. It could also find a home in a course on modern British history, but even here it might be too focused to prove very useful in class or popular with students. Below the level of these courses, however, there would be little chance of finding much value in this book. Writing for a mainly British audience, Stafford is able to assume that readers will understand his references to events in nineteenth-century British history. This probably would not be the case for North American students taking survey courses. There are simply too many important allusions to parliamentary reform, political economy, Benthamism, Saint-Simonism, and others that will leave first- and second-year undergraduates confused. Trying to introduce these concepts to students before the book is read (or while they are reading it) would almost certainly take so much time that two weeks of a Western Civilization class would have to be devoted to Mill. Therefore, this study, while excellent, should mainly be confined to advanced courses in specific subjects and should probably not be risked in introductory or survey courses.

Penn State New Kensington Joseph Coohill

Jeremy Black, ed. *European Warfare: 1815-2000*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Pp. vii, 247. Paper, $22.95; ISBN 0-333-78668-8.

Expect this work to change the thinking of anyone who regards military intelligence as an oxymoron. The purpose of this book is to expand military history from a survey-level cocoon of strategy and tactics to a broader range of more sophisticated political and technological considerations. It is about "the ideas and practices of the military and of military force over modern times, understood as the past two centuries."

Politically, military warfare transpired from nation fighting nation at the beginning of the past two centuries to a new globalization in the postmodern age when it is more reasonable to advance national welfare by increasing productivity than by expanding the extent of territory controlled. Productivity is multilateral, multinational, and interconnected. National wars are not. Nations now, therefore, fight small wars rather than disrupt the global economy.

Although five of the eight contributors teach in the United States, two at Virginia Military Institute (VMI), the editing by Jeremy Black reflects the fact that Palgrave is the new global academic imprint of London-based St. Martin's Press. Some of the writing exhibits a convoluted British style, awkward for United States readers.

The various authors successfully relate military history to political, economic, and social events. To illustrate, Warren Chin in "The Transformation of War in Europe: 1945-2000" has an outstanding section on the media in which he describes "the CNN effect." The media, he argues, lets the world know what is happening, although why the world then cares remains unexplored.

Five of the chapters are chronological: "1815-1864" by Dennis Showalter of Colorado College, "1864-1913" by Black of Exeter University, "1917-1939" by Francisco J. Romero Salvadó of London Guildhall University, "1939-1945" by S.P. Mackenzie of the University of South Carolina, and "1945-2000" by Chin at the British Joint Services Command and Staff College. Three are topical: "The First World War" by Spencer Tucker of VMI, "Colonial Wars" by Bruce Vandervort, also of VMI, and "Naval Power and Warfare" by Lawrence Sondhaus of the University of Indianapolis. In "The First World War" Tucker concludes, "The First World War was quite simply the most important single event of the twentieth century." Insofar as England is concerned, that might be true. This might not be true, however, for the rest of the globe. If World War I is a singular, transforming "event," so are the advent of radio and television, the automobile and the airplane, health-care, privacy, and computers. These too, it must be argued, are in contention for "the most important single event of the twentieth century."

The nine articles, including the introduction, contain many relevant but little known facts in support of various arguments about the unifying theme of expanding technical aspects of military history into the mainstream of other professional historical considerations. Documentation is reasonable. A four-page index is thin but helpful. This text is recommended for integrating the tactics and strategies of European warfare into general surveys by elevating the technical minutia of military history from a too-long isolated specialty into the mainstream of historical discourse.

Thomas Nelson Community College Raymond J. Jirran, Retired

John Springhall. *Decolonization Since 1945: The Collapse of European Overseas Empires*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Pp. xxiii, 240. Cloth, $65.00; ISBN 0-333-74599-X.

John Springhall is Reader in History, University of Ulster at Coleraine, Northern Ireland. In this introductory survey, Springhall offers both a theoretical framework and concise description useful to understand the processes and dynamics of postwar decolonization. Though brief, the book satisfactorily recounts and analyzes the

devolution and dissolution of the European and United States empires while encouraging further study. Good chronology and contextual sensitivity plus appropriate, useful detail strengthen this survey.

I will use *Decolonization* to supplement lectures and discussions for classes in United States and global history as it notes themes linked primarily to the leading European empires, namely the British, French, and Dutch. For example, Britain coupled great financial investments with decolonization, with generally good results as compared with other imperial nations, while the Dutch and French, in their attempts at postwar recolonization, failed at great cost. Springhall's realistic assessment of the United States as a comparable global arbiter of its own interests will constitute a revelation for many American students. Early on he notes, within an "international explanation," the key roles of President Franklin Roosevelt and the U.S., the United Nations, and the superpowers that eclipsed the European states and empires. Also, "colonial issues remain current, despite the disappearance of empires." Witness the continuing Palestinian issue, Vietnam and South East Asia since 1945, the Kashmir problem and the formation of Muslim Pakistan during the drive to Indian independence, Britain's release of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the recurrent debate over Gibraltar, and the continuing roles of Britain and the U.S. in the Middle East and Southwest Asia. The rapidity of African decolonization provoked fragmentation, with enduring consequences, especially for France, which kept military and financial power, exacerbating long-term postwar destabilization in many African states. Nonetheless, France, like the other nations, eventually chose to abandon colonial rule.

This book can be a primer for decolonization for undergraduates and graduates and a prompt to further research. It incites further questions relevant to postcolonial globalization processes: for example, as counterexamples apart from Springhall's themes and treatment, China and the Soviet Union—the one holding a regional empire in its western provinces, and the other having suffered dissolution since 1990—whose self-interested actions in Asia and Africa increased Cold War concerns and complicated matters in the new national states. Another example more relevant to Springhall's themes: the debates over global economic imperialism in the post-Cold War era.

Springhall's conclusions reassess his beginning theoretical explanations, evaluating the "role of collaborative elites" and non-elites in decolonization, plus nationalist and internationalist explanations of colonial devolution and dissolution.

Students will find a good bibliography and thorough index. Though it includes chronologies and outline maps, the book might best be read with detailed historical atlas or wall map at hand. The paperback price allows reasonable use for college classes. As assigned reading, its subject matter and level would best suit upper-level undergraduates and graduates.

East Texas Baptist University Jerry L. Summers

Inazo Nitobe. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2002. Pp. 154. Cloth, $19.00; ISBN 4-7700-2731-1.

Japanese modernization, 1868-1919, sparked changes in all aspects of national life, from language to governmental structure to aesthetic techniques. Internally, a shift from a feudal past to a modern future prompted Japanese intellectuals to rethink the significance of Japan's past and interrogate the role of that past in the present and future. Externally, the rise of Japanese nationalism, especially during and after the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), destabilized the Pacific Rim. Western pressures on the Japanese to accept Western modes of culture led such philosophers as Kitaro Nishida to ask what the Western form of scientific and technological thinking is and how might it function in Japan without eroding spiritual and moral values traditional to East Asia. Inazo Nitobe's controversial study of samurai ethics, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, mirrors these tensions.

Kodansha's new edition of Nitobe's *Bushido* provides us with the opportunity to interpret the work's historical significance for both nineteenth-century Japan and its imperial adventures in 1894-1945. Indicative of ideas surfacing during the nineteenth century, Nitobe claims "*Bushido* was and still is the animating spirit, the motor force of our country." The "animating spirit," *Yamato Damashi*, is a "guiding principle" Nitobe equates with *bushido*. There seems to be little doubt that Nitobe's work influenced twentieth-century Japanese self-conceptions of the ideal type: "The Soul of Japan became not only an international bestseller, but served as the cornerstone for the construction of an edifice of ultra-nationalism that led Japan down the path to a war she could not win."

Since *Bushido* appeared in America in 1900, it has prompted charges that Nitobe romanticized *bushido* and ascribed a unity, both in doctrine and adherence, that many claim it never attained. As many contemporary philosophers of Japanese thought have pointed out, *bushido* was neither the "living code of ideals and manners" nor "the code of morals which the knights were required or instructed to observe" that Nitobe argued it was. Negotiations between Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism remained the social ethics operative in Japan since the sixth century. At best, some have argued, *bushido* seems to have been, prior to the seventeenth century, a loosely held set of presuppositions that any *bushi* or warrior, not just *samurai*, were likely to hold, and, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an *ideal* fostered by such *samurai* as Yamaga Soko and Yamamoto Tsunetomo. But this criticism misses an important and neglected aspect of Nitobe's work, his building a bridge of understanding between Japan and the West. While some Europeans had been engaged in the task of comparative philosophy since the seventeenth century (e.g. Leibniz's writings on Chinese philosophy), Nitobe and others engaged in their own comparative analyses linking East and West from a Japanese perspective. Nitobe's study has crucial limitations, but it is worth considering in the light of recent interest and development in East-West studies.

Bushido would prove a useful supplement in both upper-division Japanese and East Asian history courses, especially those emphasizing the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The book would also be helpful in a specialized course on samurai history and the history of *bushido* as an example of revisionist history, illustrating challenges any culture faces recovering its own past as a guide to the present and/or future. Theoretical resemblances to Epicetus's *Enchiridion*, Hsun Tzu's *Art of War*, Mushai's *Book of Five Rings*, and Tsunetomo's *Hagakure* also make *Bushido* an appropriate text for a course in military ethics.

Kennesaw State University Tom Pynn

Winthrop D. Jordan & Leon F. Litwack. *The United States: Conquering a Continent.* Redding, CA: Northwest Publishing, 2003. Volume I—to 1877. Pp. xiv, 397. Paper, $19.99; ISBN 1-931910-15-4.

The choice of a textbook in an American history survey course is an important decision. Both instructors and students would benefit from this text. The book's clearly written narrative and interesting sidebars work well in a class that depends on dynamic lecturing supplemented with minimal textbook reading assignments and periodic discussion of primary sources.

Many professors have stopped assigning textbooks in American history surveys after hearing students report that they fail to keep up with assignments and find the books boring and too costly. Before following this course of action, professors might take a look at the benefits offered by this work.

Students will enjoy this easy-to-read history written by two noted figures in the profession. The authors do a fine job presenting the major characters as well as the lesser known personalities in American history. The maps and illustrations will enable students to situate history geographically and to visualize American life and culture. Each chapter contains shaded sections that provide pertinent primary sources and interesting descriptions of word and name origins. Finally, undergraduates burdened by the rising cost of textbooks will appreciate the affordable price of the volume–$19.99.

Professors also will profit from this textbook in a number of different ways. After reading assigned chapters, students will come to class familiar with essential factual material. Energetic lecturers will be able to delve into greater detail during class because undergraduates will have a firm grasp of background information. Instructors who seek material for lectures from this book will find suggested readings at the end of every chapter. These bibliographies tend to note the essential historical monographs written before the 1980s; nonetheless, the instructor will find reference to the classics in American history. This latest edition promises to deliver more detailed analyses of women's history and the history of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities. While it

partially delivers on this pledge, instructors might want to direct students interested in these topics to more detailed historical studies. Teachers also can use the included primary sources as discussion documents. Finally, professors can take advantage of test banks, instructor manuals, transparencies, and study guides offered by the publisher; teachers who integrate the latest technology into their classes also might consider using the online student tutorials.

Purdue University Karol K. Weaver

Richard Middleton. *Colonial America: A History, 1565-1776.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. Third edition. Pp. x, 558. Cloth, $42.95; ISBN 0-631-22141-7.

This third edition of *Colonial America* contains a new chapter on Spanish and French colonization of continental North America, although the focus remains on the English colonies. Middleton has also retained the divided organizational structure employed in earlier editions. *Colonial America* treats the colonies chronologically up through the end of the seventeenth century and then turns to a thematic treatment of "provincial America" during the eighteenth century before concluding his book with two chapters on the revolutionary crisis leading to independence. The revised and updated bibliography serves as a competent guide to recent work as well as a few old classics.

Middleton begins with a brief treatment of Columbus, Spanish and Portuguese exploration, and Elizabethan efforts at colonization. Most of the first half of the book relies on a fairly conventional account of the development of the thirteen colonies, structured around the colonial dimensions of England's seventeenth-century political and religious upheavals. Themes covered in the second portion of the book include the economy, intellectual and religious life, women, slavery and African-American life, and Native American society and culture. A political and military historian, Middleton gives primacy to political events and institutions, but without neglecting social, cultural, and intellectual history. The prose, while uninspired, moves the reader steadily and clearly through complicated events.

Colonial America possesses some distinctive and useful features. Middleton occasionally discusses differing historical interpretations of a given event or phenomenon. For instance, he briefly summarizes the debate over whether or not the struggle over the Stamp Act "unleashed a struggle between rich and poor, giving ordinary people an opportunity to demand political rights." Many of the footnotes, besides suggesting additional reading, also provide clear and insightful commentary on the political and cultural contexts shaping historians' debates. Instructors might find such discussions useful in raising students' awareness of the ways in which historians interpret information and disagree over conclusions. Middleton includes 35 excerpted

documents, which are often much lengthier than the snippets provided in many survey texts. Instructors who use a separate sourcebook of documents might even find that Middleton has given them enough here to make such a sourcebook unnecessary, something to keep in mind as students increasingly protest over book prices.

Colonial America, in its length and subject matter, invites comparison with another recent one-volume history of colonization in North America, Alan Taylor's brilliant *American Colonies* (2001). While the two works are superficially similar, Middleton's book offers comprehensive coverage of a more narrowly defined area, and so his work, while less conceptually innovative than Taylor's, might be a better choice for classroom use. Some students might find the length and level of detail in *Colonial America* daunting, but it is a solid option worth considering for upper-division courses.

Lawrence University Monica Rico

William Dudley, ed. *American Slavery*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2000. Pp. 255. Cloth, $32.45; ISBN 0-7377-0213-3. Paper, $21.20; ISBN 0-7377-0212-5.

William Dudley brings together a superb collection of articles examining American slavery from the Atlantic slave trade to its demise with the Civil War and Reconstruction. This collection represents some of the best scholarship on slavery, race, and abolitionism. Because of its high quality and clear writing, it can be used effectively in AP, undergraduate, and graduate courses. Moreover, the book contains primary documents, such as the early Virginia slave laws, constitutional debates, abolitionist literature, slave owners' opinions, and portions of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, that complement the articles.

The opening chapter explores the Atlantic slave trade and colonial slavery. Daniel C. Littlefield puts this trade into an international perspective by examining the economic systems of Brazil, Central America, the West Indies, and southern North America. John Boles looks at the transition from indentured servitude to slavery in Virginia and how it differed from the slave system that took hold immediately in South Carolina. Donald B. Wright's essay focuses on slavery in the northern colonies, a fact that often surprises students who identify slavery as a purely southern institution.

Peter Kolchin and Gary Nash consider slavery during the Revolutionary period. Kolchin explains how slavery contradicted the republican ideas of the American Revolution and led to emancipation in the North. Nash believes that the constitutional debates over slavery could have played out differently if antislavery advocates had pressed the issue.

The next section of the book examines the period from 1820 to 1860, as opinions hardened on the issue of slavery and western expansion. William Freehling describes the abolitionist movement and its paranoid effect on southern perceptions of the North. James Oakes illustrates how fugitive slaves inflamed tensions between the states and

the federal government. John Hope Franklin and Albert Moss make the compelling case that slavery finally divided the nation and brought civil war.

Other well-known scholars consider the Civil War and Reconstruction. Merton L. Dillon argues that slaves running to Union lines forced the North to confront the issue of slavery. James McPherson meditates on the revolutionary meaning and impact of the Emancipation Proclamation. Leon Litwack follows with an exploration of how former slaves adapted to freedom. As the most speculative section, the final portion of the book proves weakest. Jeffery Rogers Hummel asserts that the war caused a waste of lives, and that the North should have allowed the South to secede. He argues that slavery would have ended eventually. Robert Fogel, in a much more thoughtful essay, makes the case that allowing the South to secede would have strengthened slavery internationally and hurt the abolitionist cause.

This important source of articles and documents should find wide use in college classrooms. But like all collections, it has weaknesses. It would have benefitted from some of the newer scholarship on slavery. Although it contains essays on slave runaways, not much appears here about slaves' daily lives, resistance, work, religion, music, or family. Articles dealing with these matters would have given students another side of American slavery. Nevertheless, this edited work provides a perfect starting point for understanding slavery, especially from an economic and political perspective, and it puts some of our most esteemed scholars within easy reach of students.

St. Louis Community College at Meramec Steven G. Collins

H. W. Brands. *The Reckless Decade: America in the 1890s.* Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 2002. Pp. 375. Paper, $17.00; ISBN 0-226–07116-1.

According to H. W. Brands, Americans in the 1890s, like their descendants a hundred years later, experienced a *fin-de-siècle* debate. On one side were people who expected the new century to bring a gloomy decline; on the other were those who foresaw a bright new future. Brands suggests their debates brought about a fusion of old and new ideas that set the stage for the twentieth century. Divided into eight chapters, Brands's sweeping and rather old-fashioned synthesis of the 1890s zeroes in on national and overseas expansion, economic and racial conflict, and politics.

Brands begins and ends with expansion. His first chapter contrasts one land seeker's opportunistic experience in the Oklahoma Land Rush with Turner's frontier thesis and, more tellingly, Henry and Brooks Adams's bleak forecast of the end of western civilization. Brands returns to the expansion theme in his last chapter, a conventional retelling of the debate over imperialism.

In between, inventors and industrialists battle each other over the shape of American capitalism, only to be trumped by corporate financiers like J. P. Morgan.

Reformers champion the cause of poor immigrants, workers shoot it out with Pinkertons, and farmers rally to the People's Party. Race enters the picture, and in an excellent chapter, Brands details both sides of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. He points out that the case arose in 1892, but Plessy's lawyers put it off, hoping to build public support against segregation. Their strategy collapsed when, in 1895, Booker T. Washington put his imprimatur on Jim Crow. Brands traces the origins of Washington's faith in self-improvement, and introduces his most noted critic, W. E. B. DuBois.

Many of Brands's debates swirl around politics. Local bosses, for example, vie over Chicago streetcars, while at the national level, politicians debate currency. After contrasting the work of William Harvey and William Allen White, Brand delves into the capstone 1896 election. He follows Democratic squabbles, the tepid Republican contest, and Populist indecision. In the fall campaign, Bryan barnstormed the country while McKinley stayed home, relying on Mark Hanna's fundraising to flood the country with political propaganda. When it was over, McKinley won the big prize, Bryan claimed a moral victory, and together they laid the political foundations for the next century.

McKinley and Bryan jostle with more obscure characters, almost all of them men: Fred Sutton, "Bathhouse John," and the "Great Unknown." Brands tells their stories well, effectively using them to contrast the opposing sides in the debates of the 1890s. The stories, filled with absorbing characters, discerning details, and vivid quotations, are the book's main strength. None of the sources are cited, although an extensive bibliography does include works from the 1890s to the 1990s. In a prefatory note, we are told that initially the book had pictures; unfortunately, they have been deleted in this edition.

Brands's suggestion that the 1890s resemble the 1990s carried little weight with me. Neither does his title, for Brands makes the decade's debates seem more resolute than reckless. Nevertheless, his book remains a reliable survey of a fascinating era. As far as its use as a teaching tool, the book seems too dense for lower-level undergrads, and its lack of citations would make me hesitate to use it with upper-level or graduate students.

Century College Mark Davis

Theresa M. Collins & Lisa Gitelman. *Thomas Edison and Modern America: A Brief History with Documents*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Pp. xiv, 205. Cloth, $39.95; ISBN 0-312-29476-X. Paper, $14.95; ISBN 0-312-24734-6.

Arguably, no individual personifies the emergence of modern America better than Thomas Edison. He received over 1000 patents between 1869 and 1931, a period marked by tremendous growth in immigration, urbanization, domestic and foreign expansion, and of course industrialization.

Theresa M. Collins, a current co-editor of the Thomas Edison Papers, and Lisa Gitelman, a former co-editor, have provided over 100 documents in the latest volume of the Bedford Series in History and Culture. Their achievement is particularly noteworthy since Edison left behind more than five million documents. The selected materials are arranged into four chapters, preceded by a rich and useful introduction to Edison's life.

The first chapter offers a personal glimpse of Edison the man, followed by a chapter on his invention of a "speaking machine," the phonograph. Chapter three reveals his work on electricity, while the final chapter looks at his later projects, including storage batteries and motion pictures. The book also includes nearly twenty illustrations, a brief chronology of Edison's life, and a dozen "Questions for Consideration," which should be an excellent tool for in-class discussion or out-of-class writing assignments. An excellent and up-to-date select bibliography is also included.

Thomas Edison and Modern America contains remarks from his personal diary, letters and essays written by Edison, articles written about him, hand drawings, and advertisements of his inventions. For example, German scientist Wilhelm Roentgen announced his discovery of the X-ray in November 1895. Edison immediately set out to apply the discovery to practical use by displaying the image on a fluorescent screen. Several letters to Edison are reprinted, including an urgent plea to use Edison's technology to assist doctors as well as a 1904 newspaper article on one of his chief associates, Clarence Dally, who died from cancer, one of the learned side effects from long exposure to X-rays.

This short volume, less than 200 pages, should be strongly considered for any college-level course dealing with the Progressive Era. It could also be used for advanced high school courses of the same period. It is "teacher-friendly" in that the authors have provided a brief but useful introduction to each chapter, complete with some thought-provoking questions prior to the documents themselves.

The Progressive Era is synonymous with a nascent American nation, and Edison proved to be the right man with the right ideas at the right time. From the stock ticker to cement to an electric pen to the phonograph, Edison was both a scientific genius and someone who could be confused as one of his employees, since he often dressed in work clothes. Yet there was nothing common about Thomas Edison, nor the times in which he lived. The American landscape was changing rapidly, led by technological innovations, many of which Edison developed or improved. In short, to understand Edison is to understand the emergence of the United States as a global power. In sum, there is much to appreciate and use in this book, much like Edison himself.

College of the Ozarks C. David Dalton

Jeffrey P. Moran. *The Scopes Trial: A Brief History with Documents.* New York: Palgrave, 2002. Pp. x, 230. Cloth, $45.00; ISBN 0-312-29426-3. Paper, $14.95, ISBN 0-312-24919-5.

Many teachers are aware of the Bedford Series in History and Culture, in which scholars present introductory essays about a particular historical issue, followed by a series of primary documents related to that issue. In this case, Jeffrey Moran of the University of Kansas brings his expertise to bear on the infamous Scopes Trial of 1925—the trial that riveted the nation, revealed the tectonic gaps between modernists and traditionalists in American society, and remains an essential topic in any course on U.S. history.

The Scopes Trial is divided into three parts. Part One (72 pages) consists of Moran's brilliantly organized introductory essay, in which he succinctly but masterfully provides the scientific, religious, and cultural background of "the monkey case," in which the state of Tennessee placed high school teacher John Scopes on trial for teaching evolution. Moran then provides a day-to-day narrative of the trial, in which he presents a nuanced portrait of William Jennings Bryan that reveals that the Great Commoner's defense of fundamentalism was not at all inconsistent with his earlier career championing democratic reforms. Moran's comprehensive essay is witty and packed with details that students will find fascinating. Incredibly, even though we all know the outcome of the case, Moran's lively prose makes the story a page-turner.

Part One goes on to analyze how the trial reflected and impacted such issues as sectionalism, urbanization, and academic freedom. *The Scopes Trial* also makes a consistent effort to demonstrate the relevance of the case to contemporary developments in race and gender relations. This is one of the more original—and welcomed—aspects of the book, and renders it applicable in a wide range of courses focusing on social and cultural history.

Part Two (97 pages) is comprised of judiciously edited transcripts of the crucial exchanges from each day of the eight-day trial. The testimony shows that the issues involved in the case were complex (and timely to this very day), and that both sides made sophisticated and persuasive arguments during the proceedings, despite the enduring legend that the Scopes trial was a straightforward melodrama in which Clarence Darrow and the forces of modernism surgically destroyed an inept Bryan and the fundamentalist horde under the pitiless Tennessee sun.

Part Three (54 pages) consists of primary sources illustrating the public's reaction to the trial as revealed by political cartoons, newspaper and magazine articles, sermons, poems, and letters. The book also includes three appendices: a Selected Bibliography, thoughtful "Questions for Consideration" (that can easily be modified to suit the purposes of individual instructors), and a chronology of events related to the trial (from the 1859 publication of *Origin of the Species* through the 1999 decision by the Kansas State Board of Education to remove evolution from the state's tests for high school students).

The Scopes Trial is extensive enough that instructors can mine it for lecture materials, but also short and inexpensive so that teachers of either undergraduate or AP courses can assign it as a marvelous one-week unit on the birth of modern America. In sum, Jeffrey Moran has produced a thoughtfully organized, well written, and highly useful exploration of the Scopes trial. It is a book that teachers and students will find very beneficial.

Castleton College Jonathan P. Spiro

Christopher M. Finan. *Alfred E. Smith: The Happy Warrior.* New York: Hill & Wang, 2002. Pp. x, 396. Cloth, $26.00; ISBN 0-8090-3033-0.

Recent years have seen a flurry of interest in Alfred E. Smith. First there was Robert A. Slayton's fine book, *Empire Statesman*, and now we have Christopher M. Finan's publication. Why this interest in Smith? To be sure, we have long needed a comprehensive scholarly biography, but the continuing interest in Smith stems in large part from his own qualities. In an era of plastic candidates, weak-kneed officeholders, and homogenous and pusillanimous politicians, Al Smith looks better and better. He had character. He was honest and frank. He was courageous. He was unpretentious—and *real*.

But there is more that intrigues us, for Al Smith is an enduring puzzle. How did a man raised in a machine environment become such a statesman-like governor, a leader in his state's progressive era? How did someone with Smith's baggage manage to be nominated in 1928 when his own party was deeply divided about the wisdom of such a step? Why did Smith come to oppose his former ally, Franklin D. Roosevelt? What was Smith anyway, a liberal or a conservative? It is the very elusiveness of Al Smith that brings us back to him. Challenged by his lack of reflection (and a scarcity of primary materials), we struggle to understand Smith and how he fit into his times.

For the most part, Finan rises to the challenge: His is a readable, accurate portrayal of Smith. It tells his life story well and convincingly places Smith into his world. Even if it does not break new ground or solve the mysteries of Smith's thinking and actions across the span of his career, Finan's book does provide good insights. Any student desiring a solid synthesis of Smith's life would do well to read this book, and any instructor could use it with confidence. It would be most appropriate as assigned or supplementary reading for upper-level and graduate courses in twentieth-century America, but an instructor teaching the American history survey or a course in biography could also include it as recommended reading.

I was most impressed with the sections on Smith's life before his election as governor in 1918 and during the 1930s. Finan turns the scraps of what we know about Smith's early years into a plausible story, and there is fresh information about Smith's activities during his last decade. Although Finan had a good grasp of New York

politics, his discussions of the 1924 Democratic National Convention, the 1928 presidential campaign, and the 1932 nomination contest are less satisfying. Nor is his writing about those "middle" sections of Smith's life as spirited as that for the early and later years.

Throughout, Finan's prose is clear, well-organized, and graceful. He weaves in well-chosen details and integrates Smith's personal life and political career in an adroit way. Finan is rarely critical of his subject, but there is little overt editorializing and only once did I observe him putting a favorable spin on the words of Smith that he had just quoted. There are few outright mistakes, typographical or otherwise. Finan also uses quotations skillfully; regrettably, with three exceptions the endnotes cite only the sources of those quotations—not the other sources he consulted. The bibliography is unimpressive: Finan includes some less valuable sources with questionable relevance while omitting several indispensable volumes (by Oscar Handlin, Paula Eldot, and Allan J. Lichtman, for instance) that he cites in endnotes.

There are other shortcomings. Finan's discussion of the New York Democrats' 1918 nominating process is unclear. He underplays the Triangle Fire and overplays Smith's attack on William Randolph Hearst as formative experiences in Smith's career. Finan does not say enough about Belle Moskowitz, Jouett Shouse, and others who were important influences on Smith. Despite the fact that the Democratic Party's two-thirds rule lay at the heart of the candidates' strategic considerations during 1924 and 1932, Finan mentions the rule only obliquely. Finan's description of the 1928 presidential campaign focuses almost entirely on the religious issue, with no detailed analysis of the voting returns. He sets forth the reasons why Smith and Roosevelt were moving apart after 1928 but then concludes that the split did not exist. In general, Finan often left me wondering where he himself stood on the controversial aspects of Smith's career.

Like everyone else who has tried, Finan is only partially successful in showing how Smith's political principles and actions developed over the years. Early on, he consistently paints Smith as a liberal who also believed in structural reforms that would strengthen the democratic process. Later, Finan concludes that Smith moved to the right ("without fully realizing it," he says), but his explanation for this movement is not convincing. The puzzle that is Al Smith remains, and in the end this fascinating leader continues to elude us—which is why he is in no danger of becoming a forgotten man.

Maurertown, Virginia Donn C. Neal

Robert Cohen, ed. *Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters from Children of the Great Depression*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. Pp. xi, 266. Cloth, $29.95; ISBN 0-8078-2747-9. Paper, $16.95; ISBN 0-8078-5413-1.

Robert Cohen, in *Dear Mrs. Roosevelt*, presents an edited collection of letters from youth (children and teenagers alike) written to Eleanor Roosevelt during the Great

Depression. The volume opens with a discussion of why these youth wrote to Roosevelt, and it notes how hard the Great Depression impacted children. Cohen includes a discussion in his introduction of what the New Deal did for children, why so many letters were written (he notes that up to 300,000 letters were written to Mrs. Roosevelt annually), and why these letters were written to Eleanor rather than to FDR. The bulk of the book, however, is not a discussion of children during the Great Depression, but a presentation of approximately 200 of their letters, allowing them to write their own history. Cohen divides the letters into four areas, focusing on child poverty in America, the effect of the Depression on education, the effect on social life, and how minorities experienced the Great Depression.

Cohen's work is a revealing look into how the youngest in America were shaped by the Depression, and how they sought assistance from the First Lady. The vast majority, if not all, of these letters request help in one way or another. Cohen's work opens with an introduction that provides a good, but brief, background to the Great Depression, and his epilogue addresses what response Eleanor Roosevelt took to these letters. Each chapter also contains an introduction that discusses the subject of that chapter before the letters are presented. This method provides enough context for the letters to be understood.

This book does have some difficulties, though. It is unclear what percentage of the total letters to Eleanor Roosevelt were from children and thus are represented here. Also, since these letters are only from children, one wanting a sense of the entire Great Depression would do best to look elsewhere, and a good set of letters would be Robert McElvaine's *Down and Out in the Great Depression.* However, this book would serve as a good companion to McElvaine's work for those interested in using two volumes on the subject in their classes. In addition, this reader was left wondering throughout the book what Eleanor Roosevelt did with these letters; this query was answered fully, but only in the epilogue. Those using this book in classes might do well to read the ending first. These letters are quite depressing, which reflects the overall tenor of the Great Depression, and that fact is best known going in.

These are mere quibbles though, and Cohen has presented a fine work, generally well organized, presented, and edited. This work could be well used as a source for lectures, and as primary source material for students to consult, along with other sources from the Great Depression, or in conjunction with other works on the period. This is a worthwhile look at the voices of the "younger generation."

University of Kentucky Scott A. Merriman

Pete Daniel. *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Pp. xii, 378. Cloth, $45.00; ISBN 0-8078-2537-9. Paper, $19.95; ISBN 0-8078-4848-4.

Lost Revolutions characterizes the two decades following World War II as a period of missed opportunity in terms of racial relations in the postwar South. Daniel grapples with mercurial and sometimes contradictory evidence in trying to make a case that racial relations in the South could have been very different. While providing much discussion and anecdote that is worthwhile to the teacher of U.S. history, he fails to convince the reader of the validity of his main assertion.

Daniel's strongest section in this work is, not surprisingly in view of some of his other publications, his discussion of the revolutionary shift in southern agriculture in the postwar period. The policies of the federal government and the agendas of the elites in the South resulted in the rapid dislocation of the last generation of sharecroppers. In terms of countering the view that the fifties were a time of bland conformity, this section is of most value to teachers of survey courses.

Almost equal in value is Daniel's treatment of the blurring of the color line through popular music. Certainly the merging of blues, rhythm and blues, and rock-n-roll in the younger generation of that time had the effect of eroding the color line, at least insofar as entertainment was concerned. And while his discussion of the creation of NASCAR and the biographical sketches he offers are interesting, he does not make a convincing link to any lost revolutionary effect that NASCAR might have had in this time.

Daniel's main assertion is that in the two decades following World War II the South was ripe with possibilities for change in racial relations that would, he implies, have resulted in a much more peaceful and even amicable arrangement of social relations than what actually occurred. He is critical of Southern white political leadership in this era, and rightly so, but his lament that things could have been very different constitutes wishful thinking more than historical analysis. At the same time that Southerners witnessed social changes induced by the relocation of sharecroppers and their "lowdown" culture to urban areas and the beginnings of racially hybrid rhythm-and-blues and rock-n-roll, they also were subjected to the extremely reactionary leadership of Strom Thurmond, Orval Faubus, George Wallace, Ross Barnett, and many more. Although this reviewer also wishes it had been otherwise, it is difficult to believe that any moderate white politician in the South at that time could have gotten elected in a political climate that saw the issuance of the Southern Manifesto in Congress, the prominence of White Citizens Councils, and public school closings by governors to avoid court-mandated desegregation, not to mention the more violent expressions of resistance. Politicians posturing themselves in opposition to the federal "intrusions" that advanced black civil rights tended to get elected. That black civil rights were opposed by white Southern politicians of the time is generally true; what this reviewer believes is also true is that political opposition to desegregation was supported by the

voters of the region who mandated with their ballots that they didn't want leadership of the kind Daniel wishes had existed.

Instructors can mine *Lost Revolutions* for wonderful anecdotal lecture material. I would not recommend it for a survey course, but it could be useful for generating discussion in an upper division or graduate U.S. southern history course. Above all, Daniel's work is a pleasure to read.

Seminole Community College Daniel O. Gilmartin

Steven M. Gillon. *The American Paradox: A History of the United States Since 1945.* Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2003. Pp. xiii, 493. Paper, $45.96; ISBN 0-618-15014-5.

Comprehensive and balanced textbooks for courses on recent U.S. history can be difficult to come by, whether at the secondary or university level. Steven Gillon's *The American Paradox* resolves that concern for teachers and professors. Combining an effective writing style with generous use of primary sources and a number of helpful illustrations, Gillon has prepared a volume that can easily serve as the required text for a college-level course or as a classroom supplement for a high school history survey.

As the title indicates, Gillon has organized the book to highlight the paradoxes of American social, political, and cultural history during the last half of the twentieth century. He moves smoothly from the diplomatic crises of the Cold War, to the political and social turmoil of the 1960s, to the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The primary source excerpts help to illustrate the conflicts present in each situation. For example, the section dealing with Joseph McCarthy features a substantial passage from his 1950 "list of names" speech in West Virginia contrasted with Senator Margaret Chase Smith's speech criticizing McCarthy's practices. This sort of selection will be useful in the classroom, allowing teachers to emphasize to students the complicated nature of the topics being studied and presenting opposing viewpoints. Too often, texts present one side of the issue. Gillon strives to show a variety of positions.

At the end of each chapter, a selected reading section gives suggestions for further study. While the reading lists are varied, they are not extensive. Still, they will provide students with a good direction from which to begin projects and additional research. In excess of thirty maps, charts, and graphs illustrate the text, along with a large number of photographs and other illustrations. Extensive captions link the visual aids to the text, making them a useful learning tool for the reader. Finally, a complete and thorough index makes finding specific topics a quick and easy task.

Writing a recent U.S. history text can be a difficult task. Authors of such texts do not have the benefit of years of scholarship to read and consider when formulating their arguments. Instead, they must develop their own interpretations based solely on the

historical events. Steven Gillon has effectively used primary source material to create a thorough and up-to-date survey of the latter half of the twentieth century that will be an excellent text for instructors to add to their reading lists. *The American Paradox* is a book that will inform, provoke, and instruct. Students will have the opportunity to explore conflicting views on the difficult issues of the period and to develop their own historical judgments. I recommend this text to instructors of courses on recent U.S. history at the college level, as well as to teachers of U.S. history in the secondary schools. *The American Paradox* is an excellent addition to the available texts for the period.

Indiana Area School District, Indiana, PA William E. Doody

Richard Sobel. *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam.* New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. xii, 276. Paper, $24.95; ISBN 0-19-510528-1.

What influence does public opinion have on policymakers in the area of foreign policy? In *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam*, Richard Sobel studies this question. Sobel is a highly respected author of many articles and books on such diverse issues as civil liberties, immigration policy, public opinion, and foreign policy. He has contributed to numerous publications, including *Public Opinion Quarterly*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and the *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology*.

This recent book is a study of the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy. While the twentieth century produced presidents inclined to take an active role in world affairs, the American people have displayed less willingness to involve American forces or money in these foreign events. Four modern foreign crises are considered—Vietnam during the Johnson and Nixon administrations, the Nicaraguan Contra funding controversy during the Reagan years, the first Gulf War, and the Bosnian crisis during both the Bush and Clinton presidencies. The primary thesis of the text is that policymakers might be constrained by public opinion when contemplating foreign interventions. For each of the four crises, the author identifies relevant events, policies, and public attitudes. Public opinion changes over the life of the controversy are also noted. Then, to discern the influence of this public opinion on governmental action, Sobel traces various policymakers' statements on the public's attitude towards the government's response. When relevant, changes in public sentiment over time are noted along with changes in the positions taken by public officials.

For each crisis, attention is given to the top three foreign policymakers: the president, the secretary of state, and the secretary of defense. To determine the effect public opinion had on these government officers, the author has compiled the decision-

makers' own comments from public statements, meeting records, and memoirs, as well as interviews with the officials. In addition, the impact of the public's attitude on members of Congress and resulting congressional action on foreign policy are also noted. Using the government officials' own words, the book attempts to determine for each crisis the decision-maker's awareness of public opinion and whether the decision-maker was influenced by the public's attitude and to what extent the official felt constrained in his actions by this opinion. Sobel concludes that the policymakers in his study showed constant awareness of public opinion and felt constrained by that opinion. Of the top three decision-makers, presidents showed the most awareness of public opinion and the need to take the public's attitude into account when making policy. While statements made by secretaries of state and defense showed some knowledge of public opinion, these policymakers displayed less awareness and concern regarding changing levels of public support. Some decision-makers actively worked to influence public opinion, for example President George Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker. In certain cases, control of and influence over public opinion moved back and forth between the president and Congress, for example during the Nicaraguan Contra funding crisis. Increasingly, since the protests against the war in Vietnam, presidents have shown a desire to take into account the position of the American people when making foreign policy.

This book would be appropriate reading for senior- or graduate-level courses on foreign policy, American history, public opinion, or perhaps an upper-level class on the presidency. It would also be appropriate reading in a course on presidential power or presidential warmaking. Although Sobel briefly describes relevant events, the reader needs prior additional knowledge of these events in order to place the policymakers' statements in the appropriate context. The student also might find the format a little difficult and confusing. The author has used numerous quotes that, while interesting and imperative to the author's methodology, at times make the text's message difficult to understand and follow. This book might be well-utilized as a companion text, with the instructor assigning specific sections as the class studies each foreign policy event. Instructors might also use the text simply as a resource for lecture material, spicing up class discussions on American intervention abroad with the very words and thoughts of the policymakers.

Sobel concludes his work with words of caution for future foreign policymakers as they encounter volatile situations in world affairs and contemplate America's response to these crises. Warning future leaders who would act (or fail to act) solely on public opinion, he reminds them of the serious consequences that have resulted from delayed action by America because of public opposition, particularly U.S. reluctance to enter both world wars: "There are times when leaders should heed opinion, times when they should lead opinion, and times when they should proceed despite opinion."

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