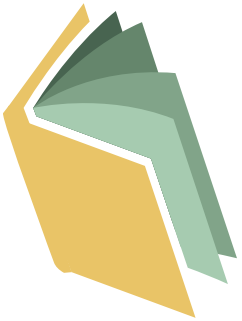

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Historical Practice and Artifact-Focused Authentic Assessment in an Introductory World History Course

Jennifer Mara DeSilva
Ball State University

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> "I felt like it was very fun! I wouldn't say I was ridiculously confident in my final product, but at the same time I feel like I want to narrate a documentary! I enjoyed bringing history to life in this way, but it was also a healthy reminder for how difficult a historian's job really is."[1]

> "I think that I enjoyed this assignment more than the paper assignments done in class. This assignment gave me the opportunity to be more hands-on with the artifacts that we were talking about."[2]

> "I feel less impending doom as I now have a better grasp of how to find research. I find them [secondary sources] to be pretty large and daunting but Compared [*sic*] to before, I feel more confident."[3]

The quotations above come from an online reflection survey that students took after submitting podcasts contextualizing museum artifacts in an introductory-level world history class at a Midwestern American university. Across the board, student-respondents appreciated the opportunity to work with artifacts from a local museum and develop a project that paralleled a professional historian's tasks. As museum educator Craig Barker has argued, "museums remain one of the most useful resources available for developing historical understanding for students of all ages and levels."[4] One student wrote approvingly: "I think that this type of assignment is much more useful than essays or exams, as it is a sample of the work a historian has to complete."[5] Other students noted that the assignment's stages helped them better understand how the historian investigates the past. One student commented: "by conducting my own research on my artifact, it made it easier for me to understand the research process and recognize which sources were relevant or useful."[6] These experiential narratives suggest that students see artifact-focused research assignments as beneficial for the learning process and for understanding their chosen profession: "[it is] a good way to get a feel of how historians do research and compile it all together. It is a good way for students to go through the process of a historian."[7]

Recent research has also shown that similar artifact-based (or object-based) learning strategies are associated with improved subject-specific knowledge, as well as the development of transferable scholarly and communications skills.[8] By creating podcasts based on their own selection, examination, and contextualization of artifacts, students engaged in the sort of active inquiry process that is associated with long-term recollection of learned knowledge. As students followed a clear process they created linkages between artifacts and then between

1 Student 1 Survey Response, Semester 6.

2 Student 4 Survey Response, Semester 6.

3 Student 6 Survey Response, Semester 6.

4 Craig Barker, "History teaching and the museum," in *Historical Thinking for History Teachers. A new approach to engaging students and developing historical consciousness*, ed. Tim Allender (London: Routledge, 2019), 260, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003115977 .

5 Student 19 Survey Response, Semester 6.

6 Student 17 Survey Response, Semester 6.

7 Student 9 Survey Response, Semester 6.

8 Leonie Hannan, Rosalind Duhs and Helen Chatterjee, "Object-Based Learning: A Powerful Pedagogy for Higher Education," in *Museums and higher education working together: challenges and opportunities*, eds. Anne Boddington, Jos Boys, and Catherine Speight (London: Routledge, 2013), 162.

ideas about artifacts and ideas about the society of origin. These activities facilitated the process of independent meaning-making that sits at the core of active and experiential learning.[9]

The challenge in an Introductory World History class is to practice historical thinking while introducing students to new regions, questions, and types of sources, and without overloading them or reverting to a coverage model.[10] As Helen Chatterjee, Leonie Hannan, Scott Paris and their collaborators have shown, artifact-focused discussions offer snapshots of the past that facilitate comparison across continents and centuries, encourage active and experiential learning, and appear more tangible and relevant to students.[11] This article introduces instructors to a series of activities that scaffold the process of creating artifact-focused podcasts, while practicing fundamental historical thinking processes.[12] When these activities are used in succession, students progress from close observation of one artifact to comparing several artifacts and then placing their observations in context using scholarly secondary sources. Not only does this process allow students to complete an assessment that mirrors a museum professional's work, but it scaffolds basic historical thinking tasks into a more complex assessment, which is hard to do in a one-semester content-heavy course.

As many educational researchers have argued, both in the classroom and future work environments, students are expected "to be able to find, organize, interpret, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and apply new information or knowledge to solve non-routine problems."[13] Over the past two decades the Humanities has billed itself as a flexible domain with analytical and communicative processes at its core. This has preserved History's place in the general education curriculum, but challenges instructors to marry knowledge of the past with historical disciplinary skills. The current educational emphasis on skill demonstration and professional preparation makes "authentic assessment" a useful component to any secondary and post-secondary-level World History classroom. Combining it with an artifact-focused approach helps students see how knowledge arises from examining evidence and better understand the work of History professionals.[14]

As Ashford-Rowe, *et al.* noted, authentic assessment requires matching skill development with the appropriate assessment mode in order to ensure that "assessment supports learning" by allowing students to demonstrate acquired skills and knowledge, as they progress towards achievement.[15] This means that authentic assessment cannot be tacked onto a course, but exists as an integral organizing component that spurs activities that develop skills, direct knowledge acquisition, and result in a culminating 'product.' As Grant Wiggins, who coined the phrase 'authentic assessment' has argued, the most useful feedback is formative and functions as a running commentary that accompanies student work as it progresses, rather than appearing after its completion. Although a running commentary requires more checkpoints, it also offers greater opportunity for students to

9 Sharan B. Merriam and Barbara Heuer, "Meaning-making, adult learning and development: A model with implications for practice," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 15, no. 4 (1996): 243-255; Hannan, Duhs and Chatterjee, "Object-Based Learning," 161.

10 Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1358-1359.

11 Helen Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan, eds., *Engaging the Senses: Object-Based Learning in Higher Education* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315579641; Scott G. Paris, ed., *Perspectives on Object-Centered Learning in Museums* (London: Routledge, 2002).

12 Students can complete these activities individually, in small groups, or as a class depending on their skill level and the instructor's need. While this study originated in an introductory class at a four-year university, the activities are flexible and easily adapted to middle school and high school needs.

13 Kom H. Koh, "Authentic Assessment," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia Education Research and Assessment Methods* (2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.22.

14 Likewise, Craig Barker has included "Students will gain direct experience of learning to think and act in the way a professional historian/archeologist/art historian does" as one of the five animating ideas of his model educational program at the University of Sydney's Nicholson Museum; Barker, "History teaching and the museum," 271.

15 Kevin Ashford-Rowe, Janice Herrington, and Christine Brown, "Establishing the critical elements that determine authentic assessment," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 39, no. 2 (2014): 205, https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2013.819566.

reflect, respond, and strengthen their work.[16] While formative assessment offers a much larger portal into student learning than summative assessment does, it also requires a deeper integration of learning goals and activities and more frequent observation and assessment.[17]

Many scholars have advocated authentic assessment as an appropriate tool for tracking the higher-order thinking that is characteristic of the competencies many History departments advocate and general education courses demand. Bain and Ellenbogan have shown how teaching historical thinking aligns with the aims and resources of many museums.[18] Yet, as Arabella Sharp *et al.* note, few studies have explored the impact of university-level artifact-based learning.[19] Fewer scholars still tackle plans for secondary and post-secondary World History classrooms.[20] This article strives to fill the gap by describing the process employed in one introductory-level World History university class. These assessment activities also allow instructors to observe how students describe and compare artifacts, evaluate information and sources, and build and support arguments, making them appropriate for any general education History course. This article's first section provides an overview of artifact-focused podcasts as a World History textbook and a model for student work. The second section describes model assignments that scaffold the historical thinking process students follow as they produce their own artifact podcast. The third section explores student progress using these assignments over several semesters, and students' own reflections on their usefulness.

Podcasts: Uses and Precursors

To access investigations of the past in an intellectually and financially accessible way, open-access Public History podcasts are a valuable source. Many of these podcasts focus on one type of artifact or a single event as a portal to a larger human or regional experience. This technique also reduces the vastness of World History, which students appreciate. Podcasts also tend to provide more meta-discourse allowing students to better understand the historian's knowledge-building process. Often textbooks are the chief historical voice that students encounter, yet traditionally textbooks obscure the selective process that produces secondary sources. This characteristic sits in contrast to the emphasis on reflection that is key to historical thinking and to active learning. Museum educator and theorist Elaine Heumann Gurian has argued that a museum is "*a place* that stores memories and presents and organizes meaning in some sensory form."[21] Textbooks contrast with the reflection and discussion that Heumann Gurian has encouraged museums to foster in their visitors. Artifact-based podcasts offer more room for independent meaning-making while foregrounding the historian's process, making them useful conduits for historical content and meta-discourse.

In preparation for encountering museum artifacts, students listened to thirteen-minute podcasts drawn

16 Grant Wiggins, "Assessment: Authenticity, Context, and Validity," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 75, no. 3 (1993): 200-208, 210-214, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ472587.

17 Karee E. Dunn and Sean W. Mulvenon, "A Critical Review of Research on Formative Assessments: The Limited Scientific Evidence of the Impact Formative Assessments in Education," *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 14 (2009): https://doi.org/10.7275/jg4h-rb87.

18 Robert Bain and Kirsten E. Ellenbogen, "Placing Objects Within Disciplinary Perspectives: Examples from History and Science," in *Perspectives on Object-Centered Learning in Museums*, ed. Scott G. Paris (New York: Routledge, 2002), 153-169, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410604132.

19 Arabella Sharp, Linda Thomson, Helen J. Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan, "The Value of Object-Based Learning within and between Higher Education Disciplines," in *Engaging the Senses: Object-Based Learning in Higher Education*, eds. Helen J. Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan (London: Routledge, 2016), 97.

20 David Sherrin, *Authentic Assessment in Social Studies: A Guide to Keeping it Real* (New York: Eye on Education, 2020); Christopher David Elisara, *Authentic assessment: An ethnography of a ninth-grade world history class* (PhD diss., Biola University, 1998).

21 Elaine Heumann Gurian, "What Is the Object of This Exercise? A Meandering Exploration of the Many Meanings of Objects in Museums," *Daedalus* 128, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 165.

from the well-known *A History of the World in 100 Objects* series (*AHOW*).[22] This podcast series spans the chronological, geographic, social, and topical spectrum. Students might learn about a chopping tool from Olduvai Gorge, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Flood Tablet, the currency used in the early Umayyad caliphate, or a brass plaque showing the *oba* (king) of the Kingdom of Benin with Portuguese traders. Students can investigate historical subfields (*e.g.*, political, religious, gender, and economic history), compare types of historical evidence (*e.g.*, coins, maps, statues, household goods), and follow greater themes across varied times and places (*e.g.*, human relations with the gods, with rulers, involvement in trade). All the artifacts profiled in these podcasts are on display at the British Museum in London, and the podcasts often remind listeners of colonial legacies, offering another useful avenue of approach.[23]

The podcasts' central attraction to a World History class is how they model the contextualization of artifacts using close observation, secondary source research, and expert commentary. The series host, Neil MacGregor, formerly the director of the British Museum (2002-2015), begins each podcast with an introduction designed to connect the artifact or the podcast's theme to twenty-first-century concerns or experience. For example, in the *Ceremonial Ballgame Belt* podcast the Mesoamerican ballgame is compared to the global enthusiasm for professional soccer through religious and social motifs.[24] After this introduction, MacGregor provides a detailed description of the artifact in order to place it in the listener's mind's eye. The remainder of the podcast is dedicated to exploring how and by whom the artifact was made and used, its original purpose and its meaning to historians. The last two discussions are the most complex part of the podcast and involve commentary by two named experts. They contribute historical and sociological perspectives on the artifact, its community of origin, and its meaning from a modern perspective.

Although the series originated as a radio program, when posted online it became an open-access secondary source, produced by one of the premiere centers of World History research.[25] Since 2010 the podcasts have been downloaded millions of times and become reliable classroom resources.[26] The series has also inspired teachers to build classes around creating histories through object collection and contextualization. At Yukon College (Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada), Amanda Graham's students in Northern Studies 200: Research in the North combined thematic investigation with research methods practice by presenting *A History of the Yukon in 100 Objects*.[27] At the University of Central Florida (Orlando, FL, USA), across several semesters Robert Cassanello's Historical Documentary and New Media class created a fifty-episode series of video-podcasts telling *A History of Central Florida* through artifacts. The series established close contacts with local museums and academics that

22 *A History of the World in 100 Objects* podcasts (British Museum and British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010), https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00nrtd2. Transcripts are also available online and in book format; Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (New York: Viking, 2011). For a review of the series, see Mary Beard, "A History of the World in 100 Objects by Neil MacGregor – review," *The Guardian* (November 12, 2010), https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/nov/13/history-world-hundred-objects-review.

23 Acknowledging and critiquing the British Museum's hegemonic approach to the past is an important part of using this series.

24 "Ceremonial Ballgame Belt," *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (British Museum and BBC, May 27, 2010), https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00sfgx4.

25 Elizabeth Lambourn, "Review Article: *A history of the world in 100 objects*," *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 3 (November 2011): 532-533, doi:10.1017/S1740022811000441.

26 Britain's Department of Education partnered with the British Museum and a hundred other museums across the United Kingdom to create clusters of free, online materials, including object images, object information, comparative objects, video clips, local places to visit, and activity suggestions that teachers could use in their classrooms. Each artifact page offers the following subpages: "About the object," "A bigger picture," "Teaching ideas," and "For the classroom." A useful example is the "Eye of Horus amulet," http://teachinghistory100.org/objects/eye_of_horus_amulet.

27 In an interview Graham explained the course activities and assessments; Andrea Eidinger, *Digital Pedagogy: A History of the Yukon in 100 Objects* (April 25, 2017), https://www.unwrittenhistories.com/digital-pedagogy-a-history-of-the-yukon-in-100-objects/. Access the resulting course blog here: https://100ytobjects.wordpress.com.

helped to contextualize histories that give voices to "overlooked and underrepresented" peoples, especially lost native communities and other minority groups.[28]

Podcasts are an example of authentic assessment that has increasingly become more common in university courses over the past three decades.[29] In the same way that a curator faces a collection of artifacts and must determine which has public interest, an accessible character, and might be easily researched, a student learns just as much from the research process as from the project's content. The eight essential elements of an authentic performance assessment include "challenge, performance or product (outcome), transfer of knowledge, metacognition, accuracy, fidelity, discussion and collaboration."[30] Unlike other indirect or conventional assessments that require students to produce information as a proxy for intellectual performance, authentic assessments require the student to construct a crafted outcome or product that would be acceptable in the targeted profession.[31] As the assessment's professional relevance is a key component, in the case of an introductory history course, a podcast that would describe and contextualize an artifact for a museum visitor would be eminently appropriate.[32] University museums often draw volunteer docents and collection interns from this sort of class, and many Public History students complete their internships in museums, libraries, or archives, making this application of skill, knowledge, and disposition a useful preparation.

Podcast-based Activities and Authentic Assessments

When incorporated as classroom activities, listening to and dissecting podcasts can assist students in learning about object description and comparison, secondary source selection, contextualization and narrative design. The discussions that follow detail a series of activities that use artifact-focused podcasts to practice historical thinking, often in small groups or as joint productive activities. As Alison Burke has shown, small group scaffolding activities that foster conversation between students stimulate creativity, improve memory, yield greater satisfaction, and support the performance of "many more competencies than [students could perform] independently."[33] The first activity accustoms students to the podcast's narrative structure, which encodes its research and analysis. The second and third activities scaffold the student's own research process. Usually these activities occur after the class has visited a local museum or a museum's online collection database to choose a focal artifact. While understanding this object is the core purpose of the second and third activities, along the way students learn how to select scholarly research sources and construct an analytical discussion. The final step, crafting a contextualized artifact-centric historical narrative (*i.e.*, the podcast), brings all these activities together. By this point students should understand how the podcast presents the historian's work and be able to justify their historical process in addition to explaining what they discovered through that process.

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28 Robert Cassanello, *A History of Central Florida*, podcast video series (November 18, 2013-June 11, 2015), http://stars.library.ucf.edu/ahistoryofcentralflorida/.

29 Sadie Bergen, "History on the Download: Podcasting the Past," *Perspectives on History* (February 29, 2016), https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2016/history-on-the-download-podcasting-the-past.

30 Kevin Ashford-Rowe, J. Herrington, and C. Brown, "Establishing the critical elements that determine authentic assessment," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 39, no. 2 (2014), 206, https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2013.819566.

31 G. Brown and M. Craig, "Assessment of authentic learning" (2004), 2, http://www.coe.missouri.edu/~vlib/glenn.michelle's.stuff/GLEN3MIC; Doug A. Archbald and Fred M. Newmann, *Beyond Standardized Testing: Assessing Authentic Academic Achievement in Secondary School* (Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988), 33.

32 John Hattie, John Biggs and Nola Purdie, "Effects of Learning Skills Interventions on Student Learning: A Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 66, no. 2 (1996): 29, https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543066002099.

33 Alison Burke, "Group Work: How to Use Groups Effectively," *The Journal of Effective Teaching* 11, no. 2 (2011): 88, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1092109; Roland G. Tharp and Ronald Gallimore, *Rousing Minds to Life: Teaching, Learning and Schooling in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 124, 132; Bain and Ellenbogen, "Placing Objects Within Disciplinary Perspectives," 163.

Preliminary Activity: Diagramming Podcasts

The first time students listen to an *AHOW* podcast they will likely listen for content and the argument and structure will be lost under the more prominent names, dates, and description. After listening to the podcast individually, students can draw a graphic organizer to systematize the information presented, perhaps using an annotated webbing model or an adapted main-idea and details model. This activity practices categorizing information, identifying argument, and revealing the podcast's phased structure.[34] As Scott has noted "graphic organizers are visual representations of mental maps using important skills such as sequencing, comparing, contrasting, and classifying." Marzano *et al.* have lamented that graphic organizers are effective, but woefully underused learning tools.[35] Using the graphic organizer as a scaffolding tool, students can identify information and assign understanding to it or record and keep it in a holding pattern to be explored by the class.

Some instructors might suggest that students listen to the podcast and then record information next to pre-selected classifiers, like "Sourcing information," "Object description," "Rare or common artifact," "Daily or extra-ordinary use," "Named commentators." While most students are routinely able to annotate three-quarters or more of the classifiers, this activity is too much like a fill-in-the-blank worksheet. By asking students to articulate their own classifiers for the information they hear, graphic organizers require a deeper cognitive engagement and reveal more about students' ability to firstly identify and categorize information, and secondly see the podcast's model structure. After students have created this graphic organizer, as a class they can discuss the types of information presented. As students contribute types of information, the instructor can ask about the podcast's phases, illustrating a progression from basic sourcing information, through description, to contextualization, and modern meaning. By charting this progression on the blackboard, the class can determine the point at which new sources are incorporated. This will allow students to consider the limit of artifacts and the role of secondary source research.[36]

Activity 1: Comparing Similar Artifacts

As Hannan *et al.* have noted, "[f]acing students with an unknown object and asking them to deduce what they can from its physical form, encourages just the sort of analysing and hypothesizing that are the life force of scholarly enquiry."[37] Once students have chosen an artifact to research, they should conduct a close examination of how an artifact looks, feels, and sounds.[38] Some of this description, like the artifact's sound, will be projected as most displayed artifacts are behind glass. This initial examination allows students to draw precise elementary conclusions (*e.g.*, worn paint equaled great use or exposure to the elements). Asking students to move from this very focused analysis to identifying broad characteristics about the artifact's society of origin, geographic location, and cultural importance, is often unsatisfying. Cultural group characteristics often evade any connection with profiled artifacts, which make it particularly challenging for students, who are then more likely to collect information that has little connection with their artifact. The following staged activities adapts an object-based pedagogy to guide students through an extended artifact analysis process in order to delineate an historical narrative before searching for secondary sources. Through the activity, students develop a deeper understanding of their artifact and thus are less likely to fill their podcasts with unrelated information about the artifact's society of origin, since they can construct more focused analytical narratives. By employing sourcing and close

34 This can be done as a whole-class activity led by the instructor, in small groups, or as an individual activity.

35 John Scott, "Authentic Assessment Tools," *Educational Resource Information Center* (2003), 39-40; Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering and Jane E. Pollack, *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001), 75-78.

36 An extension to this discussion could involve students in small groups identifying potential secondary sources to contextualize the podcast's artifact.

37 Hannan, Duhs and Chatterjee, "Object-Based Learning," 165.

38 Students could complete this task during the museum visit.

observation methods students develop linkages between artifacts, chart chronologies, and map practices that produce important conclusions.

In Activity 1 students conduct internet searches for two comparative artifacts from public museum websites. Each comparative artifact should come from a different museum, which will increase the student's experience with collection search engines, knowledge of this type of institution, and the chance of finding similar artifacts. Each artifact should have clear sourcing information (*i.e.*, date, creator, geographic origin, type of artifact) that parallels the focal artifact. As the handout in Appendix 1 shows, students record their original chosen artifact and the three comparative artifacts, along with sourcing information for each one. The sourcing information helps students envision the chronological and geographic reach of their artifact. For example, in investigating Pre-Columbian artifacts students might think that Central America is quite compact, and then learn that similar artifacts appear in modern Belize and Costa Rica across a three-hundred-year period. This discovery of similar artifacts across a larger area and timeframe spurs students to wonder how technology, materials, and artistic style spread. By collecting similar artifacts, and comparing them across time, geography, theme, materials or technology, students can narrow their narrative focus and conduct more profitable secondary source research.

After identifying useful comparative artifacts and recording each artifact's sourcing information, students must offer a short explanation, indicating how the artifacts are comparable and what that suggests about the time and place that they originated from. This requirement builds in an opportunity for analysis and reflection on historical evidence that is usefully open-ended. Explanations might run from the simple (*e.g.*, comparing size or material) to the more nuanced (*e.g.*, similar artifacts made of different materials indicate differences in available supplies or the owner's class). These explanations are unstructured, which allows students to develop their own research or narrative direction. In addition, this simple search for comparative artifacts helps students to answer questions about mundane versus rare objects, gender or class-differentiated ownership, and the contemporary meaning of materials and iconography. This reflection should also show how students are beginning to formulate their podcast's emerging historical narrative, and indicate the direction of their next activity.

Activity 2: Comparing Complementary Artifacts

In the second artifact-focused activity students conduct searches for two complementary artifacts from public museum websites.[39] Unlike the previous search, these artifacts are not meant to replicate the chosen object, but shed light on the environment from which it originated. In many cases, this is challenging as artifacts might seem straight forward in their use. However, the *AHOW Ceremonial Ballgame Belt* podcast offers a good example of how this activity might be done.[40] The podcast describes a sport that students are unlikely to have seen played, but which was central to the Mayan worldview. As the ballgame has left many related artifacts (*e.g.*, Mesoamerican ballgame courts, player figurines, reliefs depicting the game, and equipment), it offers many opportunities to consider how other artifacts can reveal social practices and beliefs related to a single artifact (*i.e.*, the ballgame belt). Sport history is also a compelling topic even for reluctant student-historians.

As the handout in Appendix 2 shows, in Activity 2 students follow a process that is almost identical to the first activity. Students choose two artifacts and record each artifact's sourcing information and website origin. For example, a student who started with a ballgame belt might chose a tumbler with a ballgame scene, a model of the game with figurines, or a court marker that also depicts a player.[41] These complementary artifacts show

39 Students should start with the museum's online collection search page, which is usually accessible from the museum's "Welcome" page via a pull-down menu.

40 Instructors could also use this podcast as a small group activity to practice artifact-based search and analysis before asking students to do this individually.

41 For example: "Cylindrical Vessel with Ballgame Scene (682-701 CE)," *Dallas Museum of Art*, https://collections.dma.org/artwork/5289667; "Ball-Court Model (200 B.C.-A.D. 500)," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/656346; "Jaina-style Figurine of a Female Ballplayer (A.D. 600-900)," *Denver Art Museum*, https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/object/1985.635; "Ballcourt Marker (circa 550-850)," *North Carolina Art Museum*,

contemporary visions of how this game was played, where it was played, and what it meant to the players and observers. While artifacts from museum websites are ideal, as they provide more reliable and object-focused detail, some students might choose spaces as contextualizing artifacts. The ballgame courts at Chichén Itzá in Mexico or at Chihuatan in El Salvador are examples of appropriate contextualizing spaces that offer valuable information about Mesoamerican ballgame artifact origins.

After choosing complementary artifacts that provide context, in another short explanation students justify their choices by identifying the artifacts' relationship to the original artifact and articulating what new understanding they bring. This requires students to determine what complementary artifacts reveal about the original artifact and the society they are studying, which demands more analysis and careful articulation. In grappling with the relationship between artifacts, students build an evidence-based discussion that fits nicely into their podcast narrative. In sum, this activity demands that students navigate at least two museum websites, pursue a low-level categorization task (identify related artifacts), and then complete a higher-order analysis task (determining how the artifacts reveal more about the ballgame and its place in society), while beginning to write their podcast narrative.

Activity 3: Contextualizing with Secondary Sources

The preceding in-class activities break down the process that a curator would follow when conducting artifact-focused research. On separate class days students can move from one comparative step to another, and eventually to finding reliable secondary sources, as the next activity describes. This is one of the most challenging aspects of the historian's work as it appears simple (*i.e.*, providing information), but actually requires content knowledge and scholarly discernment that curators and historians build over years of practice. When students seek scholarly secondary sources on their own they often turn to online sources that are incompatible with secondary or post-secondary-level research, including encyclopedias, university course websites, and the Khan Academy.[42] While these sources are attractive and accessible, they are inconsistent with the peer-reviewed sources that professional researchers would use to contextualize an artifact for the public.

Activity 3 reviews how to select scholarly secondary sources and ensures that students have useful contextualizing materials to support their artifact analysis. Some instructors may present the activity as the focal point of a class devoted to discussing what scholarly secondary sources are, how they differ from general audience sources, and what this type of source looks like in the discipline of History. Connected with this discussion is how to use and identify sources in historical writing. Many students in introductory classes do not know that they should use a clause to introduce a quotation or what that might look like when written down. Many more students worry about inadvertently committing plagiarism or how to cite their sources correctly. These fears are a good reason for instructors to provide clear parameters about what a reliable source is for a History podcast and offer an opportunity to practice choosing one.

In addition, Activity 3 asks students to conduct an online search for a scholarly secondary source that will provide useful information contextualizing the focal artifact. As the handout in Appendix 3 shows, this activity has three parts of differing complexity: finding a secondary source, writing the citation, and justifying the source's utility. Instructors may wish to have students complete the assignment individually, but conduct their work in small groups so that they can pool their knowledge and help each other. Before dividing the class into groups, the instructor should define a scholarly secondary source and provide an example for the class. For an Introductory

https://learn.ncartmuseum.org/artwork/ball-court-marker/; "Mold-Impressed Tripod Vessel Depicting a Ballgame Scene (A.D. 400-700)," *Denver Art Museum*, https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/object/1971.417.

42 As many students have encountered Khan Academy videos in middle or secondary school classrooms, they assume that they are equally appropriate for post-secondary-level research. *Ancient History Encyclopedia* is particularly attractive to students as it provides detailed information about rulers, deities, empires, locations, and artifacts, while borrowing images, maps, and timelines from other web sources; www.ancient.edu. Unfortunately, neither of these sources provide the historical meta-discourse that scholarly secondary sources should.

World History class, a reliable supply is the more than one thousand essays produced for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*.[43] These 500 to 1500 word essays span the centuries and the globe. Their focus on types of artifacts, activities, materials, artistic styles, or geographic areas, ably fulfills Bain and Ellenbogen's hope that "technology might extend and support learners' experiences with objects."[44] Museum curators wrote these essays, which use sample artifacts from the museum's collection to support the discussion, and provide a "Further Reading" list. Curators continue to write new essays and periodically old essays are updated. Asking the class as a group to justify one of these essays as scholarly would help identify the characteristics that students should look for in their own searches.

Following this whole group activity, in small groups of three or four people, students should discuss the previous two activities in which they conducted online searches for artifacts. Did they encounter artifact pages written by museum curators that provided substantial detail or contextual material? Did they encounter introductory essays to museum exhibits or articles in museum journals that present background information on the time period, specific culture or practice, or type of artifact under investigation? If not, students should discuss the results of a new online search and compare their findings with the initial class discussion of how to identify a reliable and scholarly source. Large, so-called encyclopedic museums, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Denver Art Museum, usually have more resources available for writing detailed artifact pages. Similarly, museums that have extensive archeological investigations produce short artifact-based reports, like the Penn Museum's *Expedition Magazine*.[45] Students may also find that scholars produce reliable commentary in video format, like the *Smarthistory* series.[46] Identifying the similarities between these secondary sources will also help students understand how scholars convey reliable research to the public.

In addition to finding suitable sources, the activity asks students to practice employing a citation system. The system introduced should be the same system that students are expected to use in other course assignments. Instructors should provide students with a link to the preferred style guide (*e.g.*, Chicago Manual of Style's online *Citation Quick Guide*),[47] which provides sample citations (both notes and bibliographic formats) for all types of sources. In small groups students can choose the appropriate format and produce a footnote for their chosen secondary source. This activity encourages students to practice the format that they will use in their podcast scripts when providing references supporting quotations and other borrowed information. Instructors can also discuss the difference between in-text citation and footnotes or endnotes, and a works cited list or a bibliography. While this sounds like a simple enough task, it requires students to know the type of source they have chosen (*e.g.*, journal article, website, video, monograph, *etc.*), find it listed in the online guide, and match the information in the citation model to the bibliographic information provided by their secondary source. The latter task is a challenge for most students who are not familiar with the layout of online scholarly sources and their subtle but important differences (*e.g.*, webpage title and website title, article title and journal title, volume and issue number). Introductory courses rarely involve using more than two or three sources at a time, leading students to believe that in-text citations or no citations at all is normal practice in History courses. This short exercise allows instructors to cover foundational issues, including selecting scholarly secondary sources, identifying the type of secondary source, and producing correct citations, that are important parts of a research product. Moreover, such an explicit exercise ensures that students can draw on their corrected work when they write their podcast script.

43 *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, NY), https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/.

44 Bain and Ellenbogen, "Placing Objects Within Disciplinary Perspectives," 164.

45 *Expedition Magazine* articles follow the museum's collection of artifacts, its archeologists, and their global research projects closely, to provide greater depth to its displays and to describe its history and its ongoing excavations. The articles are short (four to seven pages), open-access, specific in their focus on artifacts and contextualizing research, and provide suggestions for further scholarly reading. *Expedition Magazine*, The Penn Museum (Philadelphia, PA), https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/.

46 *Smarthistory*, The Center for Public Art History, https://www.youtube.com/user/smarthistoryvideos/featured.

47 *The Chicago Manual of Style Online*, 17th edition, https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html.

Activity 3's final requirement is that students justify their choice of secondary source. After reading or watching the source, students identify the information provided and evaluate its utility. This requirement demands that students see the secondary source as a whole instead of a mass of detail, understand the contextual information that they lack, and articulate the direction of their podcast narrative. At this point students should realize how much more research they need and in which areas, and how far along in the research process they have come.

Writing the Podcast

What remains for students to do is to bring the knowledge and products of the preceding activities together in a single narrative. Diagramming *AHOW* podcasts helps students see how description, comparison, and contextualization processes together create a full understanding of an artifact. Comparing similar artifacts identifies what is common and variable about the chosen artifact, while related artifacts reveal the larger society that produced the artifact. Secondary sources offer contextual detail allowing students to explore gender, professional, or economic groups, religious beliefs or military practices, body modification, adornment and funerary practices, and many other issues. These activities chart an explicit process that guides students from artifact choice through the research process, and emphasizes building an evidence-based narrative, as other History professionals would do.

Appendix 4 offers a sample evaluation sheet that lays out the requirements for a detailed artifact analysis that grows out of artifact comparisons and is contextualized with scholarly secondary sources. Instructors should provide this document to students who can use it as a guide to writing their narrative. The evaluation sheet begins with basic assignment requirements, which ensures that students know the podcast's expected chronological and geographic parameters, minimum running-time, and need for a script. (The script ensures student planning and facilitates quotations and citations.) The rest of the evaluation sheet acts as a path from an introduction (*i.e.*, the artifact's sourcing information and full description) through a broad comparison of artifacts situating it in its original environment, to more specific questions about the artifact's use and user, and concludes with reflections on the artifact's limitations and what big ideas it reveals about the past. These requirements are designed to present the artifact in as full a fashion as possible and according to the historian's best practice, while also capturing the work that students did across successive preparatory activities. Thus, students illustrate their understanding of the artifact's mundane or extraordinary character via their comparative work, and draw quotations from their scholarly secondary sources, mimicking the *AHOW*'s expert guests.

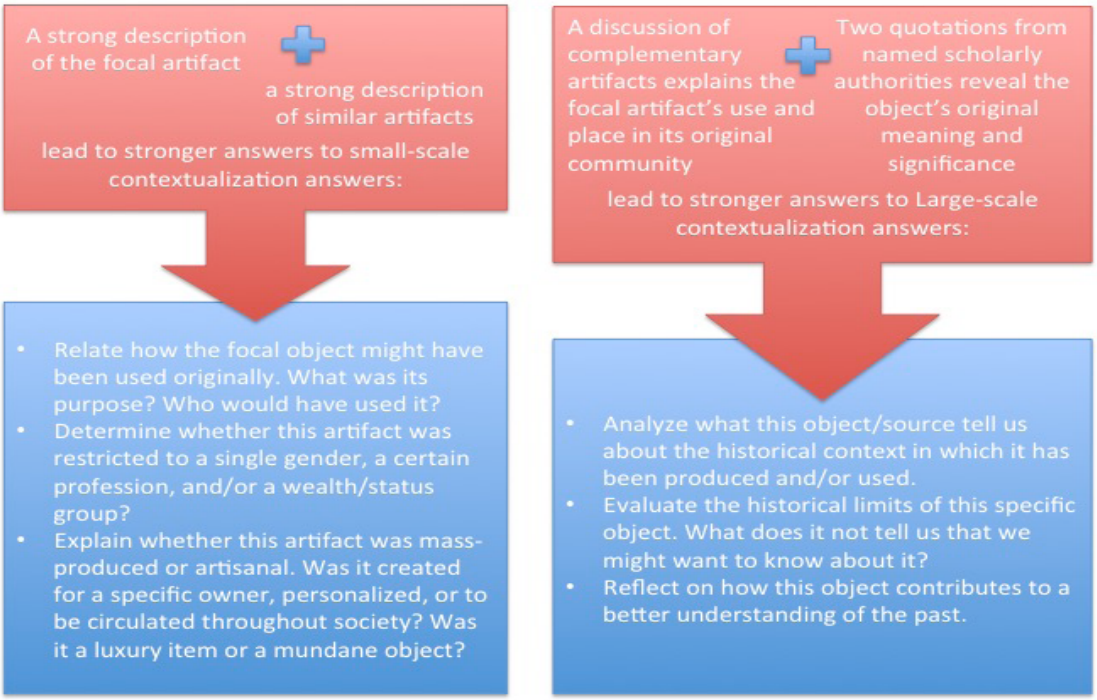

Figure 1: Progression of artifact activities to evaluation sheet questions

As already noted, prior to the introduction of these activities, students struggled with contextualization. Students found it difficult to say anything meaningful about their artifact as a representation of an artifact type. Their struggle grew from not knowing how to gain knowledge about their artifacts. Introducing scaffolding activities helped students develop a knowledge base that led incrementally to answering more complicated questions, initially about their focal artifact and later about the society that it came from. Figure 1 shows how the scaffolding activities lead to knowledge that fulfills specific requirements on the podcast evaluation sheet. Activity 1 requires students to closely examine their focal artifact and other similar artifacts. Their written response involves describing each artifact and identifying similarities and differences. This work with a sample of similar artifacts prepares students to fulfill the artifact-focused requirements listed in the evaluation sheet. This experience creates knowledge of small-scale contextualization that expands the student's understanding of the artifact as a type and as a representation of that type. Applying Bloom's revised taxonomy, these activities incorporate lower and middle-order cognitive domain learning outcomes that ask students to understand the artifact's characteristics, analyze a sample of artifacts, and apply ideas about materials, use, and production techniques, as well as gender and class norms.

Activities 2 and 3 are more complicated and take students beyond the artifact into its original society and then the historian's investigation. The discussion of complementary artifacts demands that students select a sample of new artifacts and analyze connections between them in order to produce new knowledge about their shared environment and its users. Following this, students evaluate their knowledge of the artifact and its community and seek scholarly secondary sources to fill in the gaps. Information drawn from the secondary sources, which is signaled by scholarly quotations, deepens analysis, but it also helps students think about the historian's process. The evaluation sheet asks students to reflect on what they know, and determine how much of their knowledge comes from the artifact and from scholarly research. Reflecting on and categorizing their knowledge helps students realize how the historian acquires information. For example, students may realize that they are more likely to encounter high-value grave goods that were intentionally preserved in burials rather than mundane domestic objects that wore out. This realization can establish connections between periods (*e.g.*, royal Egyptian and Mayan burials), even as it leads to a larger awareness of historians' uneven knowledge of the past. Finally, these activities

require higher-order cognitive domain learning outcomes that ask students to manipulate their knowledge to develop a new understanding that extends beyond the focal artifact. Indeed, the podcast itself fulfills the highest-order learning outcome, which requires students to create a new knowledge product that is distinct but emerges from the scaffolding activities' results.

Methods

To track the impact of this staged process, this article compares student work from six semesters of an Introductory World History class. In each semester, the class visited a local university museum, where each student chose an artifact and completed an initial close observation note-taking activity that mirrored questions about the artifact in the podcast evaluation sheet.[48] Semesters 1 and 2 provide a control sample of 169 podcasts, showing student work before the introduction of the new activities. Students moved independently from choice of artifact to research and on to the narrative-writing stage. Semester 3 provides an intermediary sample of 75 podcasts. In this semester, students diagrammed podcasts individually and worked on Activities 1, 2, and 3 in small groups and as extra-credit assignments. Semesters 4, 5, and 6 provide a transformed sample of 288 podcasts in which students completed the staged assignments individually (but usually in conversation with others) and afterward submitted a reflection survey. In these later semesters, students also diagrammed at least one *AHOW* podcast either as an in-class activity or as a homework assignment before beginning their podcast research.

In Semesters 4, 5, and 6, in the class period after visiting the museum, the instructor introduced students to museum collection search engines and discussed how comparing artifacts could provide contextual knowledge. The instructor provided suggestions of museums with large collections and easy to use collection searches.[49] Students individually began and completed Activity 1 in the classroom. In the same class session, students began Activity 3, which they completed individually as homework.[50] In the classroom, the instructor discussed how secondary sources could provide useful information about artifacts' materials, decoration, use, significance, and place in community culture. The class also discussed the usefulness of museum websites, journal articles, and academic search engines and databases. The class explored how to identify a scholarly source by identifying footnotes, scholarly publishers and journal articles. Submitted assignments were graded within two to four days to ensure a continued in-class conversation. At all stages, if students chose inappropriate or unusually challenging artifacts or secondary sources, the instructor offered alternate suggestions.

After students received the instructor's feedback, they had two to three weeks to write and record their podcast narrative. As Appendix 4 shows, the instructor evaluated podcasts using a Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory scale for objective requirements and a five-point scale of Exceptional / Proficient / Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory / Poor for subjective requirements. This five-point scale roughly corresponds to the letter-grade scale. An analysis of these evaluation sheets tracked podcast scores over the six-semester period on specific requirements, including close description of artifacts, comparative artifact discussion, and contextualization. This examination led to graphing the relationship between comparative artifact discussions and contextualization scores and secondary source usage. An analysis of podcast scripts added further information about trends in use of secondary sources, specifically the scholarly character and type of research sources, as well as how students integrated material from those sources into their scripts (*e.g.*, named quotations, paraphrasing, and use of footnotes).

Following the podcast submission students were invited to complete an online survey through the course management website. As Appendix 5 shows, the survey included qualitative and quantitative questions designed to elicit student perspectives on artifact-based learning and the podcast as an assessment tool. Students had one week in which to complete the survey and received a small number of points. Survey responses were analyzed to

48 From the course's outset, the podcast evaluation sheet was available to students as part of the course syllabus.

49 Foremost among these suggestions were The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, the Getty Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Denver Art Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

50 In-class work on each podcast was limited to one class period to visit the museum and one class period to start the scaffolding activities.

provide experiential narratives that usefully frame the student learning process.

Analysis

Creating podcasts guided students to develop knowledge on two levels. Initially students explored a specific artifact as a representative of a type of tool, and later that artifact became a portal for investigating the society that used it. To determine whether Activity 1 led to more of the first type of understanding, the instructor used the evaluation sheet's three artifact-focused question clusters as a proxy measure.[51] As Figure 2 shows, podcasts with an explicit comparative discussion of artifacts are associated with higher scores on the three artifact-focused question clusters. Analyzing a single semester reveals how impactful scaffolding activities can be. In Semester 6, 75 out of 98 podcasts (76.5%) included a comparison of artifacts, which was generally based on Activity 1. In this sample between 74.7% and 61.3% of podcasts scored Exceptional or Proficient on these question clusters.[52] In contrast, the 23 podcasts that did not include a comparison of artifacts are associated with less consistently high scores on the three artifact-focused question clusters. In this smaller sample between 78.3% and 43.5% of podcasts scored Exceptional or Proficient on these question clusters.[53]

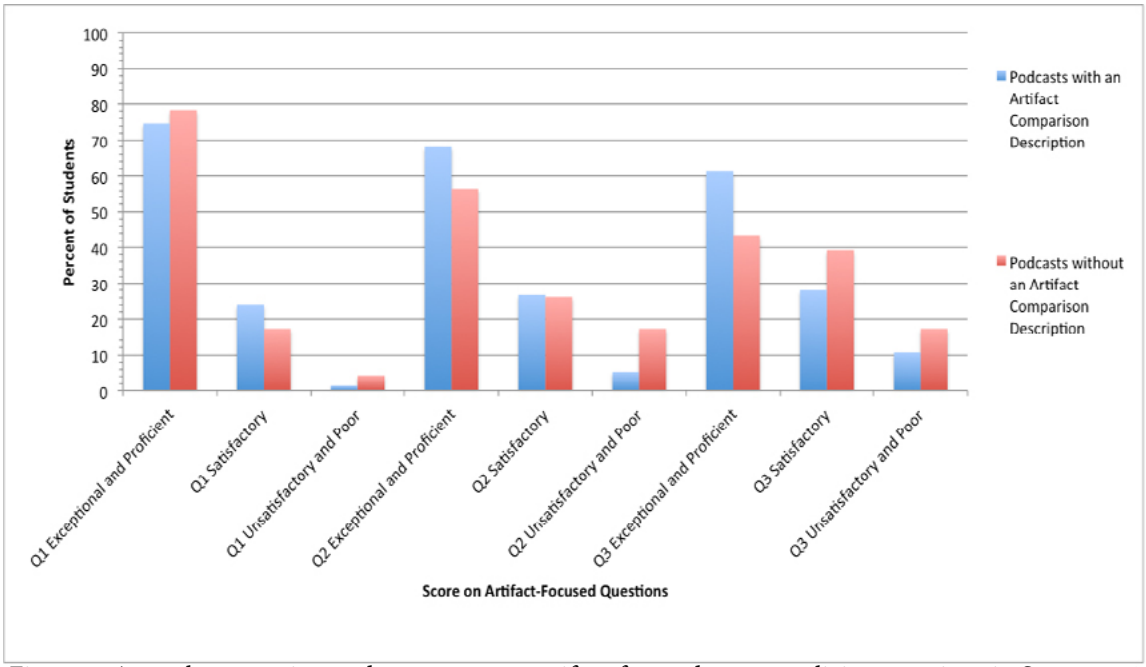

Figure 2: A graph comparing podcast scores on artifact-focused contextualizing questions in Semester 6

To determine whether completing the scaffolded activities improved students' ability to illuminate past societies through artifacts, the instructor used the evaluation sheet's three contextualization questions as a proxy measure. These three questions weighed students' ability to reflect on a society's skills and values through their artifact, as well as the limits of their knowledge, and provide a larger conclusion about artifacts' contribution to historical understanding. Undoubtedly, these are more complex questions than the artifact-focused questions. Moreover,

51 These questions were: 1) Detailed description of how the artifact might have been used originally, its purposes, and who would have used this artifact 2) Was this artifact restricted to use by a single gender, a certain profession, and/or a wealth/status group? 3) Was this artifact mass-produced or artisanal? Created for a specific owner, personalized, or to be circulated throughout society? A luxury item or a mundane object?

52 On Question 1, 74.7% of podcasts with a comparative artifact discussion scored Exceptional or Proficient, while 68% and 61.3% did so on Questions 2 and 3. On average across these three question clusters, 68% of podcasts scored Exceptional or Proficient.

53 On Question 1, 78.3% of podcasts without a comparative artifact discussion scored Exceptional or Proficient, while 56.5% and 43.5% did so on Questions 2 and 3. On average across these three question clusters, 59.4% of podcasts scored Exceptional or Proficient.

articulating the contextualized meaning of artifacts depends on students engaging in artifact comparisons and secondary source research, which Activities 1-3 required.[54] Tracking podcast scores across all six semesters shows improvement on two out of three contextualization questions. Figure 3 shows a substantial rise in podcasts scoring Exceptional and Proficient on Questions 1 and 3 in Semesters 3 through 6, but negligible change on Question 2.[55] In Semester 3 on Question 1, another 25.4% of the podcasts beyond levels seen in Semesters 1 and 2 scored either Proficient or Exceptional. In Semesters 4, 5, and 6, this change remained approximately the same, with a further 23.6% of the podcasts beyond levels seen in Semesters 1 and 2 scoring either Proficient or Exceptional. Question 2 continued to be a challenge, with podcasts scoring at about the same levels as in Semesters 1 and 2, or at a lower level.

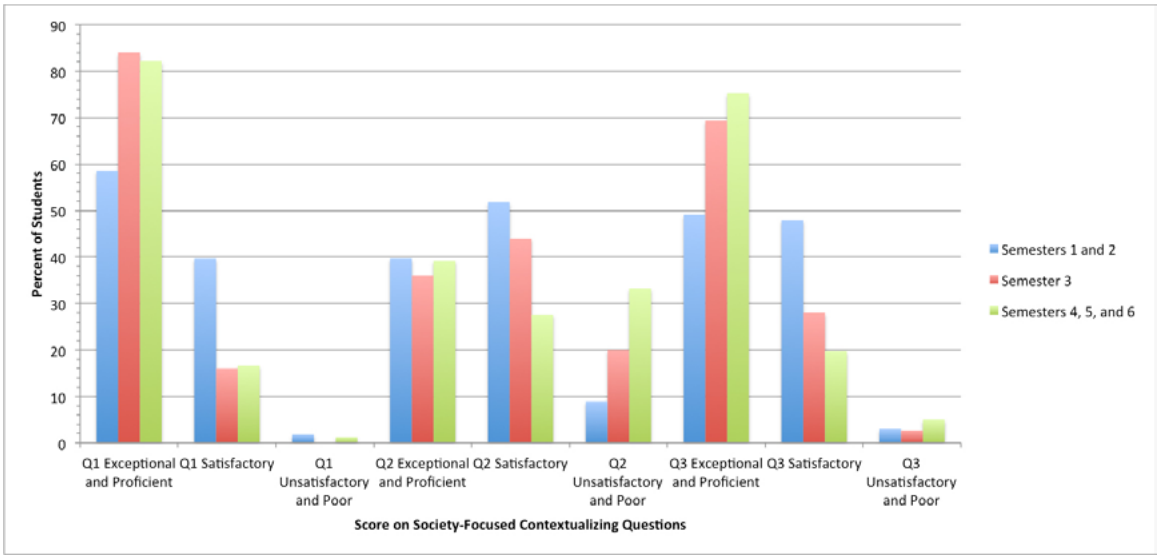

Figure 3: A graph showing podcast scores on society-focused contextualizing questions, Semesters 1 to 6

To determine whether completing Activities 1 and 2 had an impact on students' use of secondary sources, the instructor looked for an association between artifact comparisons and using scholarly secondary sources. Hypothetically a greater experience with museum websites might lead students to use more museum-sponsored secondary sources and fewer non-scholarly sources. Table 1 presents the percentage of students who described comparative artifacts alongside an examination of students' secondary source types (*i.e.*, museum websites, scholarly sources, non-scholarly sources). This table shows several developments across Semesters 1 to 6. First, there was a substantial rise in the inclusion of a comparative artifact discussion from Semesters 1 and 2 to Semesters 4, 5 and 6. In Semesters 1 and 2, only 12 and 19.4% of students included a comparative artifact discussion. This percentage rose by 12.7 percentage points in Semester 3 and continued to rise dramatically in later semesters. From Semester 4, when students began to work on the activities individually, to Semester 6, the rate of including a discussion of comparison artifacts rose by 25 percentage points and then a further 18.2 percentage points. In Semester 6 more than five times the number of podcasts included a comparative artifact discussion than in Semester 1. This change suggests that progressively students spent more time searching museum collections and developing knowledge based on comparing artifacts.

As comparative artifact discussions increased, Table 1 shows an even greater increase in the use of scholarly secondary sources. In Semesters 1 and 2 between 42.7% and 71% of podcasts drew on at least one scholarly research source. With the introduction of the scaffolding activities to all students in Semester 4, this percentage

54 These questions were: 1) What does this artifact tell us about the historical context in which it has been produced and/or used? 2) What are the historical limits of this specific artifact? What does it not tell us that we might want to know about it? 3) How does this artifact contribute to a better understanding of the past?

55 From Semesters 1 and 2 to Semester 3 scores on Question 1 rose by 25.4% and then in Semesters 4 to 6 by a further 23.6%. Over the same periods scores on Question 3 rose by 20.2% and then by 26.1%.

rose to 95.2% and remained within a two-percentage point range through Semester 6. The use of museum websites rose from 34.7% in Semester 1 to 83.5% in Semester 4 and 90.8% in Semester 6. Introducing students to museum websites with the scaffolding activities is associated with a continued rise in using secondary sources produced by museums. Podcasts privileged museum artifact webpages, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* essays, the Penn Museum's *Expedition Magazine*, and other museum newsletters, blogs, and catalogues.

Semester	Describes Comparative Artifact(s)	Uses Museum Website Sources	Uses Scholarly Source(s)	Uses Non-Scholarly Source(s)	Total Podcasts
1	9 (12%)	26 (34.7%)	32 (42.7%)	28 (37.3%)	75
2	18 (19.4%)	58 (62.4%)	66 (71%)	38 (40.9%)	93
3	24 (32%)	55 (73.3%)	65 (86.7%)	21 (28%)	75
4	59 (57.3%)	86 (83.5%)	98 (95.2%)	18 (17.5%)	103
5	48 (55.2%)	73 (83.9%)	82 (94.3%)	12 (13.8%)	87
6	74 (75.5%)	89 (90.8%)	92 (93.9%)	15 (15.3%)	98

Table 1: A comparison of podcasts presenting artifact-comparison discussions alongside secondary source usage. Number of podcasts in each cohort listed, percentage in parentheses.[56]

Figure 4 graphs the data presented in Table 1 to show that as the discussion of comparative artifacts and scholarly sources increased, simultaneously the percentage of podcasts that depended on non-scholarly secondary sources decreased. Non-scholarly sources primarily included encyclopedias and web articles or public websites with no research apparatus. In Semesters 1 and 2, 37.3% and 40.9% of podcasts cited non-scholarly secondary sources. In Semester 3 this dropped to 28% and fell further reaching 15.3% in Semester 6. Notably, in Semesters 4 to 6 podcasts that used non-scholarly sources were more likely to couple them with scholarly sources and museum websites. For example, of the 15.3% of Semester 6 podcasts that used non-scholarly sources 85.7% also used either a scholarly secondary source or a museum website or both. Even when podcasts did not present a clear comparison of artifacts, their references showed that they drew on museum sources and scholarly publications.

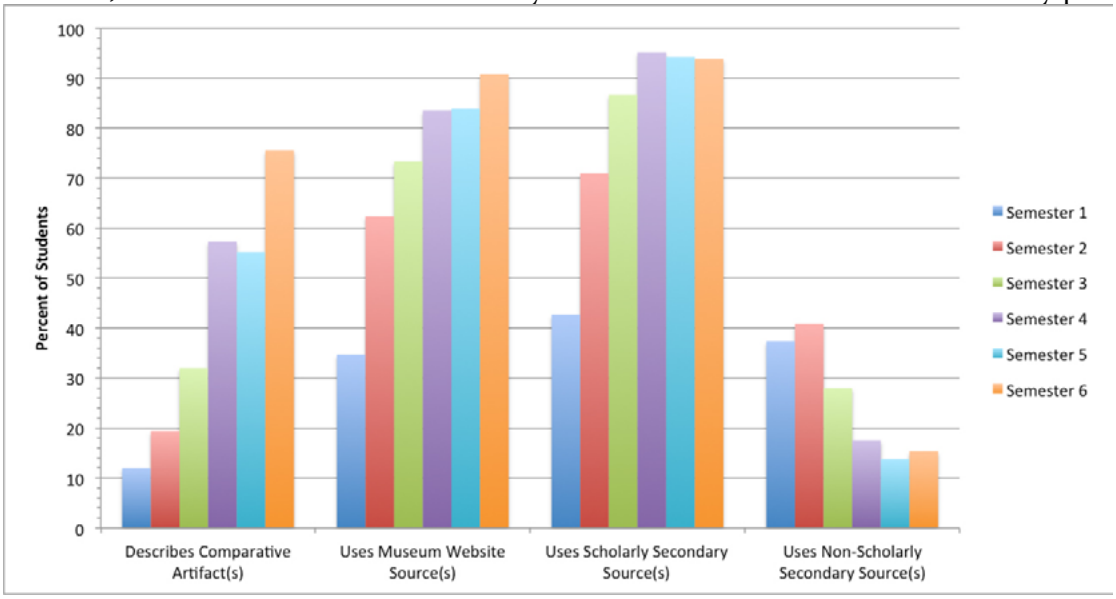

Figure 4: A graph comparing the inclusion of artifact comparison and the use of secondary sources in Semesters 1 to 6

56 All statistical work was completed by the author.

This practice suggests that students did not employ museum webpages only for comparisons, but as they grew in confidence and skill through completing the scaffolded activities, students used museum sources more intensely. The podcast evaluation sheet required students to include two quotations from a named scholarly authority to encourage meaningful engagement with secondary source ideas. Quotations from named scholars replaced the expert commentary supplied in the *AHOW* podcasts. In podcast scripts quotations identified important contextual information that tracked students' thinking. As Table 2 reveals, many students avoided this requirement until the in-class contextualization activity was introduced. In Semesters 1, 2, and even 3, fewer than two-thirds of students met the two-quotation minimum requirement. From Semester 4, Activity 3's emphasis on explaining each secondary source's usefulness and the introduction of more targeted museum sources coincided with a rise in quotation use. In Semesters 4, 5, and 6, more than two-thirds of podcasts met the minimum expectation and on average a quarter of podcasts surpassed it.[57]

Semester	Uses No Quotations	Uses 1 Quotation	Uses 2 Quotations	Uses 3 or More Quotations	Total Podcasts
1	18 (24%)	37 (49.3%)	13 (17.3%)	3 (4%)	75
2	30 (32.3%)	15 (16%)	36 (38.7%)	13 (14%)	93
3	16 (21.3%)	11 (14.7%)	37 (49.3%)	10 (13.3%)	75
4	19 (18.5%)	11 (10.7%)	44 (42.7%)	28 (27.2%)	103
5	16 (18.4%)	5 (5.8%)	40 (46%)	24 (27.6%)	87
6	19 (19.4%)	4 (4.1%)	52 (53%)	23 (23.5%)	98

Table 2: Podcast use of quotations in Semesters 1 to 6. Number of podcasts in each cohort listed, percentage in parentheses.

In Semesters 4, 5, and 6, after students submitted their podcasts, they completed an online survey inviting reflection on their experience. The short-answer survey encouraged students to share their feelings about the podcast as an authentic assignment and to evaluate the utility of the scaffolded activities. Responses varied in length and detail. Moreover, only 154 out of 288 students completed the survey, resulting in a survey response rate of 53.5%. This relatively low response rate is mitigated somewhat by the clear trends in the survey data.

Figure 4 shows that in all semesters surveyed respondents generally valued the assignment, the staged process, and using *A History of the World in A Hundred Objects* podcasts as models. Between 83% and 93% of respondents recorded positive comments about creating artifact-focused podcasts, both as an enjoyable activity and as an assessment that recreated the historian's process.[58] Many respondents noted how much they appreciated the freedom to choose their own artifact and explore one topic in-depth. An even higher percentage of respondents, between 91% and 96%, stated that the scaffolding assignments were helpful. Some respondents observed that the assignments prevented procrastination as they had already completed the foundational research in class. Other respondents appreciated the instructor's feedback on comparative artifact and secondary source choices. Many respondents stated that the scaffolding assignments made the process more clear and less stressful. In contrast to near unanimity on the other questions, responses were varied on the utility of *A History of the World in A Hundred Objects* podcasts. Between 51% and 79% found these podcasts to be valuable models for understanding artifact-focused podcasts generally. Some respondents cited the podcasts as useful templates for structure and tone, while others found their length and use of guest commentators to be too different. Notably, respondents were less keen about diagramming *AHOW* podcasts. This sub-theme in responses suggests that more time could have been spent in class helping students to see how the *AHOW* structure provided a useful model.

57 In Semesters 4, 5, and 6, 69.9%, 73.6% and 76.5% of podcasts included two or more quotations from scholarly secondary sources.

58 This mirrors the feedback that Hannan *et al.* collected regarding the perceived benefits of object-based learning; Hannan, Duhs and Chatterjee, "Object-Based Learning," 162-163.

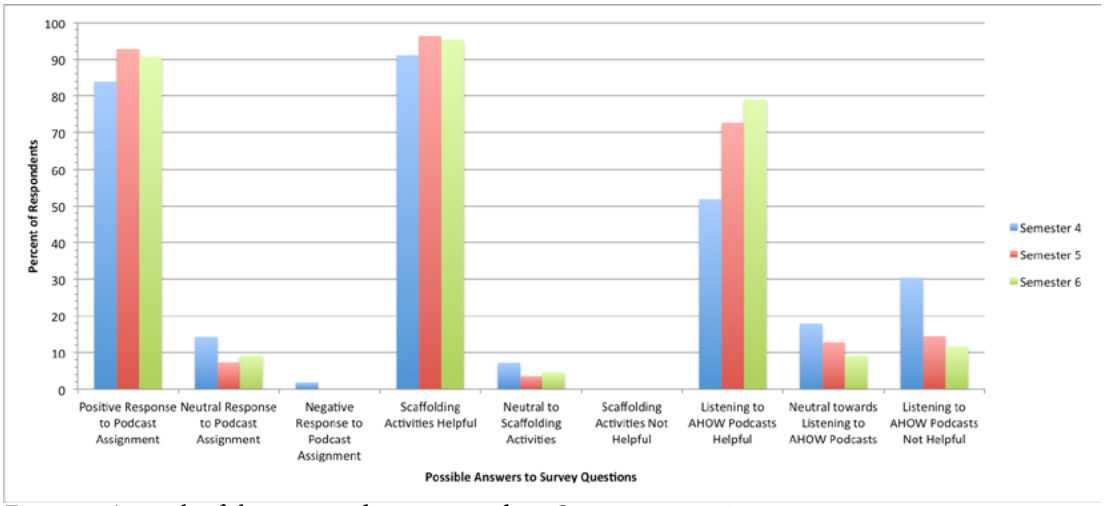

Figure 5: A graph of the post-podcast survey data, Semesters 4 to 6.

Discussion

Prior to developing this scaffolded system, the podcast assignment provoked mixed feelings. Students enjoyed visiting the university's museum, and appreciated the freedom to choose an artifact and develop their own investigation. However, students struggled to determine if their artifact was representative in a field they had little knowledge of. Students often failed to use scholarly secondary sources in their research, and provided thin context to support arguments about their artifact. Students who were already doing well in the class tended to do well on the podcast assignment, but there was no integrated mechanism to assist students who struggled with analysis, research, and contextualization.

The introduction of the staged activities profiled in this article helped the podcast assignment meet the challenges that Bain and Ellenbogen identified in educators' support of novice museum-learners. The activities prompted students to "formulate legitimate inquiry problems or driving questions that transform objects into sources [...and used] disciplinary tools to interrogate objects [... in order to] connect objects/sources to relevant archival and curatorial resources [...before finally employing] museum resources in their inquiries and investigations."[59] Moreover, these activities revealed to students the assessment's roots in scholarly research and museum artifacts. The staged production process reassured students who worried about completing big projects, and provided more opportunities for targeted formative feedback resulting in strengthened research. Tracking student podcasts across six semesters revealed that introducing a staged process of scaffolded activities increased student awareness of the historian's process and improved student skills. As the opening quotations drawn from survey responses show, students were well aware of this staged process and appreciated the intellectual and time-management benefits.

These activities reassert the importance of using sourcing information as anchors for primary sources. Students found date, place, creator, and type of artifact to be familiar categories that also organized museum collection search engines. In completing Activity 1 students reliably found artifacts that overlapped in type, time, or place with their focal artifact, and they carefully identified those links through the comparative artifacts' sourcing information, material and content (*i.e.*, what they saw). While students were generally proficient in identifying similar and comparative artifacts, they found it more challenging to provide an explanation of what the artifacts indicated about past societies. Clear instructions about incorporating artifact comparisons into podcasts as support for broad statements about an artifact's mundane or rare quality are important. Selecting complementary artifacts also helps students to increase their understanding and develops a conversation about artifact users and past practices and values. Together these activities help students contextualize artifacts and

59 Bain and Ellenbogen, "Placing Objects Within Disciplinary Perspectives," 162.

draw important conclusions from simple scaffolding activities.

To ensure that students progressed towards conclusions about past societies, it was crucial to incorporate secondary sources after artifact comparisons. Working on the artifact comparison activities led to a dramatic increase in student comfort with museum websites and their employment as secondary sources. Student use of non-scholarly sources diminished just as use of scholarly sources increased, which indicates a shift in thinking about useful research sources. Observing students working with secondary sources reminds us how challenging introductory-level students find reading a scholarly secondary source, identifying useful information, and articulating its contribution to an early-stage project. This observation highlights the importance of the scaffolded activities that introduce targeted scholarly sources, like the *AHOW* podcasts and *Smarthistory* videos, museum essays, and short artifact-focused journal articles.

Sam Wineburg's warning that simple access to artifacts is not transformative underpinned students' visit to the museum and their engagement in historical thinking.[60] Starting with close observation, then comparing artifacts, and finally contextualizing artifacts with scholarly secondary sources guides students through the historian's full process. Engaging closely with artifacts to investigate past societies is the hallmark of historical work and a podcast chronicling this process is an appropriate authentic assessment. These activities fulfill Craig Barker's encouragement to "link museum experiences with classroom history teaching in a dynamic and interesting way."[61] In-class activities in which students found, selected, and examined focal, comparative, and complementary artifacts, are activities which could be completed in small groups that appear to be less stressful to students, while offering a valuable feedback opportunity. Overall, after introducing the scaffolded activities, when students submitted full podcasts, scripts showed that they used scholarly secondary sources with greater confidence and in greater numbers than in previous semesters. This dramatic change in student performance argues for the scaffolding activities (as formative assessments) having a beneficial impact on student understanding and the podcast (as a summative assessment).

Some instructors may question why so much time and effort should be invested in introductory courses that often serve as general education requirements and so attract many students who will not become History teachers, History professionals, or historians. Other instructors worry about overloading freshman students intellectually, and prefer to ease into considerations of disciplinary methods with a few defining conversations at the introductory level that prepares the ground for a sophomore methods course. This strategy risks losing students who enjoy the investigative side of History and are more keen on doing than memorizing. In addition, this slow start wastes time. As Wiggins reminds us, "If we want competent performance later, we need to introduce novices to that performance from day one."[62] Introducing students to artifact-focused authentic assessments that place them in the position that they aspire to professionally, with a supporting structure of scaffolding and feedback, encourages greater student understanding of the historian's process, purpose, and impact.

60 Samuel S. Wineburg, "Historical Problem Solving: A Study of the Cognitive Processes Used in Evaluation," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 83, no. 1 (1991): 73-87.

61 Barker, "History teaching and the museum," 260-261.

62 Wiggins, "Assessment: Authenticity, Context, and Validity," 202, 204.

Appendix 1: Comparative Artifacts Exercise

Comparing artifacts will tell you what is generic about your artifact and what is extraordinary. When you choose comparative artifacts, think about the artifact's material, decoration, location, date, and purpose. Providing a comparison of artifacts in your podcast will expand your Artifact Analysis discussion and help you understand the artifact's likely owner and use. Find two artifacts that are somewhat similar to your chosen artifact. Each example should come from a different museum. Each artifact should have clear sourcing information that parallels the focal artifact. Choose museum webpages that provide a substantial amount of background information that contextualizes the artifact and its place in society.

Remember that your chosen artifact must be from before 600 CE and an area that we have studied.

Focal Artifact
- Name:
- Date:
- Geographic Origin:
- Materials:

Comparative Artifact 1
- Name:
- Date:
- Geographic Origin:
- Materials:
- Museum and Website URL:

Comparative Artifact 2
- Name:
- Date:
- Geographic Origin:
- Materials:
- Website URL:

Explanation: Do these artifacts show consistency over time and/or place? Do these artifacts show change over time and/or place? Provide three sentences for each artifact explaining how the comparative artifact helps to better understand your focal artifact.

Appendix 2: Complementary Artifacts Exercise

Comparing artifacts will help you think about what your artifact was used for, by who, and where. When you choose complementary artifacts, think about the artifact's date, location, material, and purpose. Providing a comparison of artifacts that were used together or by the same person in your podcast will expand your Artifact Analysis discussion and help you understand the artifact's likely owner, purpose, and meaning. Find two artifacts that are adjacent to your chosen artifact in purpose or space. Each example should come from a different museum. Each artifact should have clear sourcing information that parallels the focal artifact. Choose museum webpages that provide a substantial amount of background information that contextualizes the artifact and its place in society.

Remember that your chosen artifact must be from before 600 CE and an area that we have studied.

Focal Artifact
- Name:
- Date:
- Geographic Origin:
- Materials:

Complementary Artifact 1
- Name:
- Date:
- Geographic Origin:
- Materials:
- Museum and Website URL:

Complementary Artifact 2
- Name:
- Date:
- Geographic Origin:
- Materials:
- Museum and Website URL:

Explanation: Provide three sentences for each artifact explaining how the complementary artifact helps to better understand some aspect of your focal artifact.

Appendix 3: Contextualizing Artifacts Exercise

Secondary sources provide information about how artifacts were used and by who, how they were made and the origin of their materials, their place in daily life, and what they tell us about their society. Students should find two scholarly secondary sources that provide background information about their artifact, its materials or use, or the time and place from which it originated. Both these sources should have been written/made after 1975 CE. These sources must be listed as footnotes in your script after the appropriate quotation.

Focal Artifact
- Name:
- Date:
- Geographic Origin:
- Materials:

Secondary Source 1
- Type of Source (i.e., museum website, journal article, podcast, website):
- Author:
- Title:
- Date:
- Chicago Note Citation:
- If this is an online source, provide the Website URL:

Secondary Source 2
- Type of Source:
- Author:
- Title:
- Date:
- Chicago Note Citation:
- Website URL:

Explanation: What sort of information does each source provide? Is it specific information about the type of artifact you have chosen? Is it information about the material or the original use of this artifact? Is it more general background information about the place or time period? Provide three sentences for each, explaining how this secondary source helps you to better understand your focal artifact.

Appendix 4: Podcast Evaluation Sheet

Basic Expectations, 5 points	Satisfactory			Unsatisfactory	
Object from assigned galleries and time period					
Podcast runs 4-6 minutes long					
Student also submitted a script for podcast					
	Exceptional	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Introduction, 30 points					
Object's sourcing info provided					
Full description of the artifact provided, including: shape, texture, color, exact measurements, weight, sound					
Artifact Analysis, 40 points					
All persons, objects, symbols, gods, places, cultures named in/related to the artifact are identified, showing meaning.					
Detailed description of how the artifact might have been used originally, its purposes, and its users.					
Was this artifact restricted to use by a single gender, a certain profession, and/or a wealth/status group?					
Was this artifact mass-produced or artisanal? Created for a specific owner, personalized, or to be circulated throughout society? A luxury item or a mundane object?					
A comparison of similar artifacts reveals the variety or similarity of this type of artifact in this time and place.					
Complementary artifacts are discussed to explain the artifact's use and place in its original community.					
Two quotations (+ footnotes) included from named scholarly authorities about the object's meaning and significance					
Logical development of discussion					
Interpretive Conclusion, 25 points					
What does this artifact tell us about the historical context in which it has been produced and/or used?					
What are the historical limits of this specific artifact? What does it not tell us that we might want to know about it?					
How does this artifact contribute to a better understanding of the past?					
How does it help us reflect on an issue, theme, or type of artifact studied in this class?					
Clear sense of historical causality: dates, names, details					
Podcast demonstrates intelligent reflection.					
Total Grade: /100					

Appendix 5: Reflecting on the Podcast Questionnaire

Now that you have submitted your podcast, reflect on your feelings about the assignment's stages and usefulness.

Question 1: How do you feel about this type of assignment as a way to follow the historian's footsteps?

Question 2: What skills did you use in the podcast assignment? Circle all that apply.

- Develop a disciplined, skeptical stance and outlook on the world that demands evidence and sophisticated use of information.
- Understand the dynamics of change over time.
- Explore the complexity of the human experience, across time and space.
- Evaluate a variety of historical sources for their credibility, position, and perspective.
- Read and contextualize materials from the past.
- Distinguish between primary and secondary materials and decide when to use each.
- Recognize the value of conflicting narratives and evidence.
- Generate a historical argument that is reasoned and based on historical evidence selected, arranged, and analyzed.

Question 3: How did the preparatory activities (comparing and contextualizing artifacts) help you to prepare for drafting the podcast?

Question 4: Did listening to the *A History of the World in 100 Objects* podcasts help you to build a better podcast? Why or why not?

Question 5: How long was your podcast?

Do More History: U.S. Deficiencies and Project-Based Learning

Jonathan Grybos
Shamokin Area School District

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Social studies allows us to better understand and deal with human affairs than any other field. Social studies typically includes history, government and civics, geography, and economics. However, there are many smaller branches of this field, such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, and even anthropology. Given that all of these social studies disciplines help us in society, one would imagine that Americans would overwhelmingly prioritize and exemplify them and their related competencies. Sadly and possibly dangerously, the opposite appears to be true. Various data related to social studies in the U.S. reflect a cautionary tale needing not only attention, but a remedy that can be found in education. More precisely, a move in education towards skills and Project-Based Learning (PBL) may provide the best chance at combating an abundance of concerns.

Firstly, the competencies in social studies are troubling. For example, The Nation's Report Card, one of the leading authorities in collecting and analyzing educational information in the U.S., has shown in 2018 that only 15% of students scored proficient or advanced in U.S. history, 23% in civics, and 24% in geography.[1] Other studies find similar results, such as The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation Research study in 2018 that highlights two of three Americans failing a basic U.S. citizenship test.[2] Similarly, the Southern Poverty Law Center found in 2017 that 68% of high school seniors did not know that it took a constitutional amendment to end slavery formally, only 22% could correctly identify how provisions in the Constitution gave advantages to slaveholders, and only 8% of could identify slavery as the central cause of the Civil War.[3]

Nor does the U.S. fare well regarding media and literacy. The Pew Research Data Center found in 2018 that only 26% of those surveyed could correctly identify all factual statements, while 35% could do the same with opinion statements.[4] Comparably, The Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) tested digital and media literacy in 2019, finding that 52% of respondents believed a Russian video was evidence of voter fraud in the U.S., that two out of three could not distinguish between ads and news online, and that 96% did not ask who was behind a partisan website.[5]

Secondly, U.S. civic engagement is not only lacking in participation but is also inept. For instance, according to the U.S. Census Press Release, only 67% of eligible voters turned out for the 2020 Presidential Election.[6] Regardless of best guesses, even 70% would seem less than ideal for the wealthiest and most powerful nation. The rate is also poor when compared to other commensurable nations. Rates worsen for non-presidential elections, especially for the state, local, and school board elections. Another notable concern in civic engagement is hyperpolarization, routinely observed online, in public, and around the dinner tables at any holiday celebration. This unique and

1 The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), "Civics: Highlights from the 2018 Assessment" The Nation's Report Card, 2018: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/civics/2018; "Geography: Highlights from the 2018 assessment," 2018: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/geography/2018; "U.S. History: Achievement-level results" 2018: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ushistory/results/achievement.

2 Brittney Lewer, *Reimagining American History Education* (Princeton, NJ: The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2019).

3 Southern Poverty Law Center, "American Slavery," Teaching Hard History, 2018: https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/tt_hard_history_american_slavery.pdf.

4 Amy Mitchell, Carrie Blazina, Michael Barthel, Nami Sumid, "Can Americans Tell Facts from Opinion Statements in the News?" *Pew Research Center*, 2018, June 18. https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2018/06/18/distinguishing-between-factual-and-opinion-statements-in-the-news.

5 Stanford University, "Reading Like A Historian." *Stanford History Education Group*, 2022. Retrieved March 6, 2022, from https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lesson.

6 Jacob Fabina, "Record High Turnout in 2020 General Election," *The United States Census Bureau*, 2021, April 29: https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/record-high-turnout-in-2020-general-election.html.

frightening phenomenon is drastically furthering the divide of the U.S. population. Issues of contention include gender acceptance, voter access, the minimum wage, the future of energy, immigration, and even maple syrup.

The differing definitions, perceptions of current events, and even views of history are more serious. For example, a 2021 survey from Ipsos/Reuters found that 56% of Republicans believe the 2020 election was rigged or the result of illegal voting, devoid of factual evidence.[7] It is not exclusively a political party problem, but political bias is often powerfully shaping and reshaping Americans' perception of basic realities. This form of cognitive bias does real damage to society. Further population analysis is troublesome regarding U.S. data and statistics on consumption, waste, health, pollution, divorce, crime, death, disease, debt, education, and even inequality.

Thirdly, the number of those interested in higher education for social studies-related majors is declining.

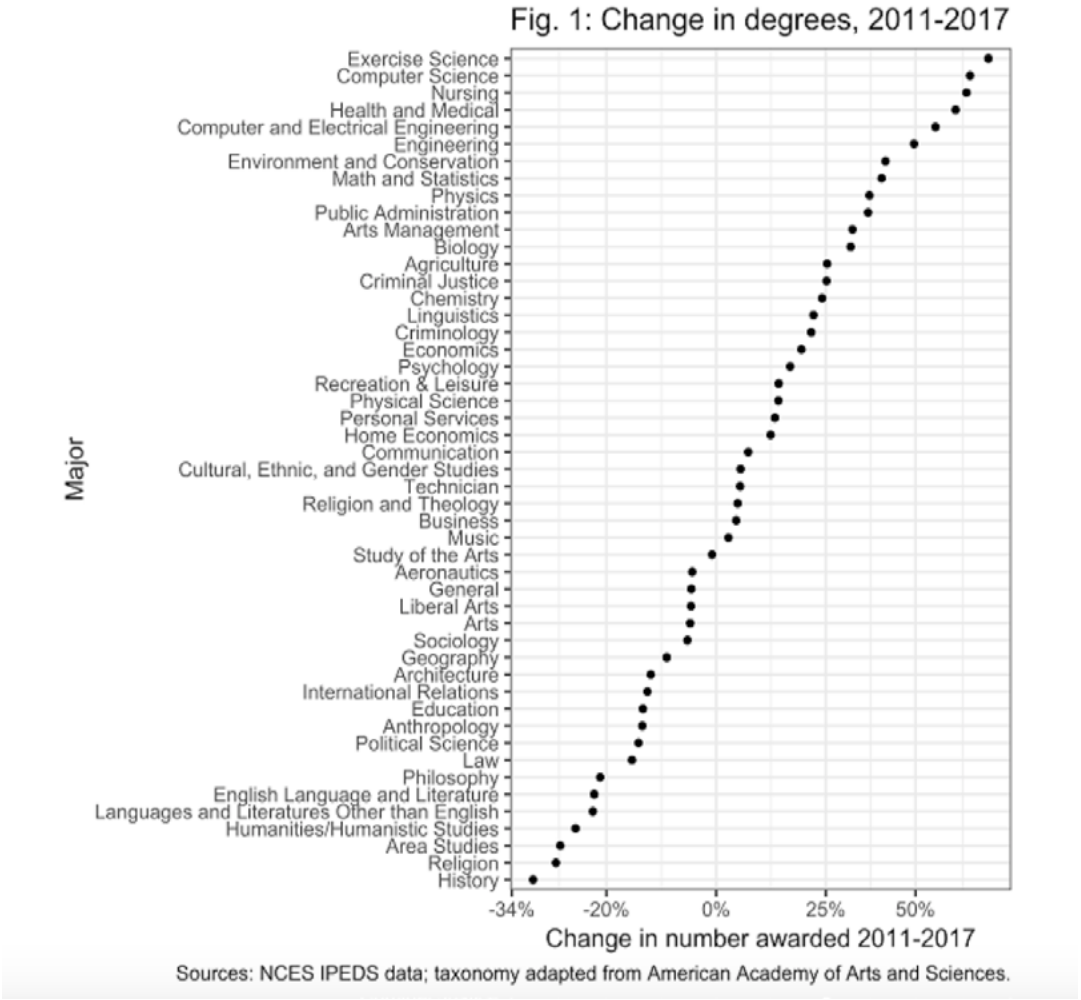

Figure 1: Change in degrees, 2011-2017

Figure 1 shows that, according to NCES IPEDS data, almost every declining major from 2011 to 2017 is related to social studies. Sociology, geography, architecture, international relations, anthropology, political science, law, philosophy, humanities studies, religion, and history are at the bottom of the list. It is hard to understand why this is happening, but perhaps it has to do with cultural beliefs that a liberal arts higher education is a scam or a waste and will leave one unemployed and poor. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, these gripes are often mythological since obtaining a college degree correlates with lower unemployment, less poverty, and higher

7 Reuters, "53% of Republicans View Trump as U.S. President," May 24, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/us/53-republicans-view-trump-true-us-president-reutersipsos-2021-05-24.

wages.[8] More specifically, the same can be said for a BA degree in history in which unemployment is as standard as any other profession, and the pay is also standard compared to most other majors outside of healthcare and engineering.[9] Overall, the decline in these majors and college, in general, may lead to future societal deficiencies.

Competency in these fields is crucial, and a lack of knowledge and skills impacts the economy, democracy, and society. At the individual and collective level, this competency fosters more engaged citizenship and informed consent towards every element of society. When practicing social studies, we exemplify many different roles with real utility. We practice being storytellers, speakers, scientists, analysts, investigators, journalists, psychologists, economists, philosophers, lawyers, judges, writers, researchers, and statisticians, while simultaneously developing skills concerning critical thinking, reading, writing, research, inquiry, organization, speaking, presenting, empathy, evaluation, debate, pattern recognition, reasoning, awareness, and citizenship. That is powerful, regardless of career path, especially in the 21st century. At the very least, emphasis on social studies can allow us to be informed decision-makers who value evidence. At the very most, it can allow individuals to make fundamental changes in the world. With social studies offering such great potential or grim impacts, a greater emphasis on social studies must be taken seriously and sincerely.

A practical and trending solution is to focus on teaching history and civic skills rather than solely on content. These skills would include historical thinking, historical reading, data literacy, media literacy, and civic reasoning, or more specifically, evidence-based arguments, perspective taking, close reading, cause and effect, sourcing, contextualization, corroborating, bias awareness, logical reasoning, cost-benefit analysis, and lateral reading. Students can participate as active learners in an authentic hands-on way when building these skills. In short, students learn by doing the practice for themselves. Furthermore, this independence allows them to practice fundamental skills to foster lifelong learning and confident autonomy. When educators pair these skills with PBL, the outcomes are beneficial across the spectrum of outcomes.

PBL in education creates a student-centered environment. Students learn by doing, such as finding solutions to real-world problems. Reflecting part of educational theorist John Dewey's work, these methods allow students to experiment, much like in a science lab, and contribute to society in the form of a public product. This method improves interest, motivation, retention, and even the quality of student work while potentially improving society at some level. In addition, their work is not necessarily guided strictly by a teacher but by their own intrinsic interests, making it more personally compelling and effective. Thus, students determine their work by creating an authentic, substantive product for the public that demonstrates their skills.

An agreed-upon definition and encapsulating elements are non-existent since PBL is broad and related to projects, inquiry, community, problem-solving, skills, and even service. PBL projects include webpages, videos, presentations, essays, infographics, pamphlets, newsletters, magazines, speeches, policy, budgets, proposals, interviews, debates, and more. This project-based method often authentically focuses on the real world and on solving problems. Therefore, the topic or purpose of the project may be just as important and could include creating a budget, debating controversial issues, informing through published writing or presentation on contemporary issues, writing to public officials, creating a history series web resource, creating advertisements for public safety measures, starting a school newsletter, and so on. As a result, the possibility for civic engagement and impact becomes maximized due to the authentic and autonomous real-world contribution. In other words, to paraphrase a leading physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to his students, it is not important what we cover but what you discover.[10]

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8 Benjamin Schmidt, "The History B.A. Since the Great Recession," The American Historical Association, November 26, 2018: https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2018/the-history-ba-since-the-great-recession-the-2018-aha-majors-report; Elka Torpey, "Education Pays, 2020: Career Outlook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021. https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2021/data-on-display/education-pays.htm

9 Paul Sturtevant, "History is Not a Useless Major: Fighting Myths with Data," *The American Historical Association*, April 1, 2017:. https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2017/history-is-not-a-useless-major-fighting-myths-with-data.

10 Josh Jones, "Noam Chomsky Defines What it Means to be a Truly Educated Person," *Open Culture*, April 29, 2016:

Unfortunately, social studies classes and education generally do not often experiment enough with PBL or skills exclusively. Specific data on implementation is limited.[11] One source states that only 1% of schools use PBL, but this is from 2013.[12] An updated but inconclusive source states that 68% of schools have implemented PBL in some classrooms.[13] Often, the PBL literature reviews show the practice as something needing much more testing. The literature reviews almost always include some statements about PBL looking promising but not necessarily having adequate evidence as best practice. To improve educational outcomes that can combat the vast array of societal deficiencies and their lasting negative impacts, PBL implementation is perhaps the best solution. PBL can also develop real citizenship and lead students to skill-mastery for real-world use. Creating and replicating this lab-like environment will add to the PBL literature and hopefully push for the practice to be mainstreamed at all levels and subjects in education.

Given these points, PBL seems likely to provide a means to alleviate the various roots of social studies deficiencies. The dreaded norms of standardized testing, rote learning, and an overreliance on oversimplified boring textbooks is at most doing real harm to students, or at the very least not coming close to maximizing student potential.

PBL Origin and Progression

The origins of PBL are both complicated and unresolved. Those credited with starting PBL include the philosophers Confucius, Socrates, Aristotle, and the educational theorists John Dewey and William Kilpatrick.[14] Confucius allegedly said, "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand … Not having heard something is not as good as having heard it; having heard it is not as good as having seen it; having seen it is not as good as knowing it; knowing it is not as good as putting it into practice"[15] The credit to Socrates and Aristotle similarly comes from learning by doing and learning through critical thinking, inquiry, and questioning.[16] Later, and more commonly, Dewey and Kilpatrick are credited.

However, I should note other various points of origin as well. For example, in 1500s Italy, architectural and engineering education have been cited as early forms of PBL. In the U.S., other sources of PBL prior to Dewey include early education in agriculture, manual training, and domestic science.[17] But the most widely credited founder of PBL is the educational reformer John Dewey. In the context of the Progressive Era, as a part of the nationwide push for reform and social change, Dewey argued that the classroom is just practice for real civic life and participation in a democracy that should foster social reform. To prepare students to be engaged citizens,

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https://www.openculture.com/2016/04/noam-chomsky-defines-what-it-means-to-be-a-truly-educated-person.html.

11 For a collection of PBL research, see Buck Institute for Education, PBL Works, "Research Publications," https://www.pblworks.org/research/publications.

12 Peter Glenn, "Why Project-Based Learning Hasn't Gone Mainstream (And What We Can Do About it)," *EdSurge*, April 23, 2016: https://www.edsurge.com/news/2016-04-23-why-project-based-learning-hasn-t-gone-mainstream-and-what-we-can-do-about-it.

13 Speak Up Research Project (SURP),"Why Project-Based Learning Works For Students," *Project Tomorrow & PBL Works*, 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bhsKJKqxTF_V6-sDi5dSS3wTXx-CJu5K/view.

14 Suzie Boss, . "Project-Based Learning: A Short History," *Edutopia*, September 10, 2011: https://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning-history. ; Robert Capraro, Mary Capraro, Mary, James Morgan, James, ed., *STEM Project-Based Learning: An Integrated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Approach*, Second Edition (Rotterdamn: Sense Publishers, 2013).

15 Learniture, *Project-Based Learning*, 2018, January 23. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from https://www.learniture.co.uk/knowledge-hub/project-based-learning.

16 Boss, "Project-Based Learning," Noelle Nelson, "Student Engagement and Project-Based Learning in the Social Studies Classroom," Ph.D. diss., Hamline University, 2016.

17 Capraro, Capraro, and Morgan, *STEM Project Based Learning*, 8.

students should have opportunities to create their ideas, discuss and debate these ideas, and make a change.[18] One of his biggest gripes in demonstrating his principles of practicing citizenship involved combating propaganda from The U.S. Committee on Public Information's Edward Bernay and Walter Lipmann.[19] Dewey thought that instead of making a passive population step to the side for prominent folks to make choices for society, education must embolden, ennoble, and empower students with literacy to improve democracy, society, and the standard of living.[20] To obtain this, Dewey thought learners needed to be active, have authentic experiences and try to solve real-world problems.[21]

Dewey often said education is not preparation for life but life itself.[22] Similarly, William Kilpatrick said, "we of America have for years increasingly desired that education be considered as life itself and not as mere preparation for later living. A man who habitually so regulars his life concerning worthy social aims meets once the demands for practical efficiency and moral responsibility. Such a one presents the ideal of democratic citizenship."[23] The parallel is no coincidence since Kilpatrick studied under Dewey in college. From Dewey to Kilpatrick, education began to shift toward being project-centered. Kilpatrick published The Project Method and would serve as another critical figure of origin. While Kilpatrick admits he was not the founder of the term or practice of projects in education, he was widely credited with expanding PBL.[24] Another figure in the progression of PBL is developmental psychologist Jean Piaget. Piaget would add the constructivist theory that suggested students learn better by making meaning from their experiences, building upon previous knowledge, investigating, interacting with others, and reflecting on those experiences overall.[25]

Few educators or researchers used or studied PBL from the 1930s to 1960s.[26] Capraro et al. argue that the reasons point to the climate of society during this time, including the Great Depression and World War II. Moreover, PBL was on the back burner due to the state of society and education that prioritized perceived needs rather than educational wants.[27] Some work was being done in western Europe in the 1960s, and would also be formally developed in Canada.[28] Some evidence suggests that McMaster University in Canada introduced PBL into its curriculum around this time, which became standard practice in medical education.[29] In 1987, The Buck Institute of Education (BIE) created a framework and standards for PBL that remains the mainstream practice for

18 Sprouts, "John Dewey's 4 Principles of Education [Video]," *Youtube*, 2021, January 30. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3fm6wNzK70.

19 Michael Boyle, "Lippmann and Dewey: Debating Democracy in the Age of Metropolis," *The Electric Agora*, November 16, 2015: https://theelectricagora.com/2015/10/02/lippmann-and-dewey-debating-democracy-in-age-of-the-metropolis.

20 Noam Chomsky, "Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media," *The Noam Chomsky Website*, March 15, 1989: https://chomsky.info/19890315; Francesco Regalzi, "Democracy and Its Discontents: Walter Lippmann and the Crisis of Politics (1919-1938)," *E-rea:* Revue "Electronique d'études sur le Monde A nglophone 9, no. 2 (2012): https://doi.org/10.4000/erea.2538

21 Boss, "Project-Based Learning," ; Daniel Bullock, "Real World Engagement: A Case Study of a Teacher's Implementation of Project Based Learning in Social Studies," Ph.D. diss., North Carolina State University, 2013. [Doctoral dissertation].

22 Sprouts, "John Dewey's 4 Principles of Education."

23 Bullock, "Real World Engagement," 22.

24 Capraro, Capraro, and Morgan, *STEM Project Based Learning*, 8.

25 Boss, "Project-Based Learning

26 Bullock, "Real World Engagement," 23.

27 Capraro, Capraro, and Morgan, *STEM Project Based Learning*, 13.

28 Bullock, "Real World Engagement," 23.Kyna Doles, "What is Project-Based Learning?" PBS: Frontline July 17, 2012. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/what-is-project-based-learning.

29 Doles, "What is project-based learning?"

schools and teachers today.[30] In the 1980s and 1990s, elementary schools and then K-12 adopted PBL.[31]

PBL: Definitions and Elements

Similar to the origins of PBL, the definition or definitions of PBL can be complex and ambiguous. It may be implemented as both a teaching method as well as a learning concept.[32] The Buck Institute for Education (BIE) describes PBL as a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. Students learn by actively engaging in a real-world and personally meaningful project.[33]

PBL is hard to define and has no universally accepted set of practices, but it usually includes specific principles and elements.[34] Adding an additional complexity is that PBL overlaps and intersects with problem-based, inquiry-based, place-based, and even service-learning approaches.[35] The principles can differ depending on the resource, school, or teacher. For example, comparisons in PBL with some educators focusing more or less on elements of their framework such as open-endedness; the degree of real-world problems; the direction of student interest; peer involvement; teacher involvement; class time spent; and even the use of technology.[36] Frameworks of principles differ circumstantially.[37]

Bullock provides five themes that are needed in PBL: a real-world application to real-world problems; scaffolding and teaching strategies to help students research and better understand their content; accountability for students to be independent and responsible learners; teacher-student interactions, such as feedback, trust, respect, and responsibility; includes the benefits and challenges of technology, such as a student learning to navigate a research database.[38]

Another similar framework points to ten elements that must be included in PBL. A paraphrased list from Badr includes coaching to get students familiar; concept generation for students to generate ideas related to their project; confrontation for students to work together; comprehension for students to develop clarity in their goals and vision; creation for students to do their project; critique for students to find an error and improve their work; change for the students to adjust and fix their work culmination for students to present their work; collaborative reflection for students to assess their peers; and composition for students to write about their experience.[39]

BIE's "Gold Standard" states seven design elements for PBL: the need to address a challenging problem or question; sustained inquiry; authenticity of the real-world and students' lives; student voices and choices on their ideas and decisions throughout the process; student reflection on how they feel about their work; formative feedback from peers and from the teacher; creating a public product beyond the classroom.[40]

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30 Bullock, "Real World Engagement," 23.

31 Kyna Doles, "What is Project-Based Learning?" PBS: Frontline July 17, 2012. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/what-is-project-based-learning.

32 Buck Institute for Education, "PBL Works;" Nelson, "Student Engagement and Project-Based Learning," 10-11.

33 Sierra Turner, "Project Based Learning for the History Classroom," Ph.D. diss., California State University, 2018, 14.

34 Barbara, Condliffe, et al., "Project-Based Learning: A Literature Review," *Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation*, October 2017: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED578933.pdf. Candace Mulcahy and Jeanette Wertz, "Using Project-Based Learning to Build College and Career Readiness among Diverse Learners," *Teaching Exceptional Children* 53, no. 5 (2020):341-349.

35 Condliffe, "Project-Based Learning," 4.

36 Condliffe, "Project-Based Learning," 13.

37 Condliffe, "Project-Based Learning," 20.

38 Bullock, "Real World Engagement," 47-48.

39 Abdelfattah Abdelkafy Badr,"The Effect of a Proposed Blended Project-Based Learning Program on Developing the 4Cs Skills for Secondary Stage Students," *Journal of Education*, 92, no. 2 (2021): 49-107.

40 Buck Institute for Education, "PBL Works."

Various PBL frameworks include overlapping elements, and curation can be helpful for a fuller understanding. To start, PBL should include questions, challenges, or themes to focus on and investigate issues that are for the students real, meaningful, and ethical.[41] It should have targeted learning goals tied to standards, class concepts, and in-depth understanding needed for class.[42] Students must be provided sufficient time depending on their needs and the complexity of the project, ranging from one week to an entire semester.[43] Student choice must be prioritized and guided, not just with topic selection but also with choosing their group members, roles, tasks, topics, questions, resources, and even medium, which in turn adds to their experience in creativity, innovation, self-direction, ownership, work ethic, integrity, and collaboration.[44] After creation, the project must be presented and accessible to the public in an authentic way as a contribution to society.[45] Lastly, the student must receive feedback from peers and teachers and reflect on the overall learning experience.[46]

PBL Skills and Project Examples

Regardless of which PBL framework is implemented, various skill literacies are tied to these practices. The competencies are broken down into three domains: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The cognitive domains include competencies related to thinking skills, digital literacy, research and investigation literacy, active listening, reasoning, problem-solving, memory, content knowledge, and creativity.[47] The intrapersonal domain includes competencies related to achieving goals, such as time management, metacognition, flexibility, and determination. The interpersonal domain relates to competencies used to express, interpret, and react to information, such as communication, collaboration, and leadership.[48]

PBL also inevitably exemplifies social studies skills. While the previously stated skills in the three domains also apply cross-circularly beyond just social studies, historical reading and thinking skills are another addition to the collection. The historical thinking skills include establishing historical significance, using primary source evidence, identifying continuity and change, analyzing cause and consequence, taking historical perspectives, and understanding ethical dimensions of history.[49] Likewise, the SHEG promotes historical reading skills including close reading, contextualization, corroboration, and sourcing.[50] Students that demonstrate these skills can create higher quality historical work more independently, just as professional historians do.

PBL is different from just doing a project, but the examples can be similar or the same. PBL project examples include various categories such as written, oral, digital, crafted, experiential, and service. Written projects may

41 Badr, "The Effect of a Proposed Blended Project-Based Learning," 62 ; Condliffe, et al. "Project-Based Learning," 22 ; Mulcahy, and Wertz, "Using Project Based Learning," 345.

42 Condliffe, et al. "Project-Based Learning," 6.

43 Buck Institute for Education, "PBL Works;" Condliffe, et al., "Project-Based Learning," 7.

44 Jason Brisini, "The Impact of Project-Based Learning on Student Learning Perspectives and Achievement in a Social Studies Classroom," Ph.D. diss; University of South Carolina, 2018 Buck Institute for Education, "PBL Works.".

45 Zuzana Chmelarova, Ladislav Pasiar, and Dominika Vargova. "The Level of Student's Creativity and Their Attitude to Project-Based Learning," *Journal of Educational Sciences and Psychology* 10, no. 1 (2020): 3-15;; Dominic Morais, "Doing History in the Undergraduate Classroom: Project-Based Learning and Student Benefits," *The History Teacher* 52, no. 1 (2018): 49-76.

46 Turner, "Project Based Learning for the History Classroom," 4, 68.

47 Craig Cash, "The Impact Of Project-Based Learning On Critical Thinking in a United States History Classroom," Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2017, 48; Condliffe, et al., "Project-Based Learning," 7, 33; Nelson, "Student Engagement and Project-Based Learning," 7.

48 Condliffe, et al., "Project-Based Learning," 35.

49 Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, "The Historical Thinking Project: Promoting Critical Historical Literacy for the 21st Century;" *The Historical Thinking Project*, n.d., 2016. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from http://historicalthinking.ca/historical-thinking-concepts.

50 Stanford University, "Reading Like A Historian."

include informative and persuasive essays, public policy, brochures, reviews, or even a cookbook. Oral projects may include speeches, presentations, oral histories, debates, and discussions, among other options. Digital projects may include creating wikis and wikiquests, videos, infographics, data collection and analysis, webpages, virtual museums, or even an online database. Crafted projects would be created by hand and skill, such as making an exhibit display or even a robot. Experiential projects may include role-playing, simulations, or even an acted-out drama. Last, projects can be more geared toward the community and service such as raising funds, organizing, or volunteering.

To illustrate PBL application in the social studies classroom, consider this hypothetical example: At "Dewey High," students can take an honors social studies course called "Civic Engagement & Public History." This class has twelve students, working in three groups of four. Their current unit for the marking period focuses on polling and data literacy to identify community problems. For three weeks, the teacher has completed standards-based training on data literacy and polling that includes types of polls, interview bias, sampling techniques, common data errors, data synthesis, and more. After reviewing the processes and content in the class, students apply their background knowledge and skills to their interests in the community. Group A decides to create a survey to sample as many of the 9th-12th graders in their school using a quick response (QR) code that is linked to a Google Form with their survey questions.

Group A hypothesizes that many high schoolers are unhappy with their educational experience, but the group is unsure about the specifics. Their work will identify the student population's source of dissatisfaction. Member A creates the form to be checked by other members and the teacher. Member B printed and spread the QR code around the school. Member C launched a massive social media campaign to spread the survey's reach. After the survey deadline is up, Group A analyzes the data. Member D is able to create visuals, such as graphs and charts, based on their findings. After routine checks with their teacher, Group A decides to take their findings to the school board meeting which is also live streamed for the public. The members take turns speaking to the board, illuminating student-perceived problems indicated by their data. Although potentially uncomfortable, Group A has not only showcased student problems, but also begun a conversation that will possibly lead to positive change for the school. In fact, Group A may continue their work, offering potential solutions. This hypothetical example demonstrates many elements of PBL such as scaffolding, background knowledge, skill-building, teamwork, teacher oversight, service-learning, problem-solving, critical thinking, rigor, investigation, technology, student interest, and real-life impact.

To conclude, PBL is not monolithic. Many versions share the same or similar principles and elements. When implementing PBL, various skills can be practiced and improved to proficiency. These skills go beyond exclusive subjects and social studies PBL adds even more to the skill sets. Whether utilized in social studies or other disciplines, PBL project potential capabilities are seemingly endless.

PBL Efficacy

The BIE and other purveyors of PBL claim that the practice improves academic performance, critical thinking, cooperation, problem solving, fulfillment, engagement, motivation, creativity, communication skills, collaborative skills, reasoning skills, learner autonomy, problem-solving skills, and even other previously stated skills.[51] While PBL certainly does break convention and gets students away from the traditional routine, it must be demonstrated to prove its efficacy.

As previously stated, highlights from the PBL literature suggest that the practice is promising! While looking broadly, PBL outcomes can be generalized to improving graduation rates, test scores, college enrollment, collaboration, motivation, creativity, pride, and engagement. Interestingly, many studies also show that PBL is

51 Badr, "The Effect of a Proposed Blended Project-Based Learning. 60; Buck Institute for Education, "PBL Works," Rina Febriana, "The Effectiveness of Project-Based Learning on Students' Social Attitude and Learning Outcomes," *Jurnal Pendidikan Teknologi dan Kejuruan* 23, no. 4 (2017): 374-382; Sally Kingston, "Project Based Learning and Student Achievement: What Does the Research Tell us?" *PBL Evidence Matters* 1, no. 1 (2018):1-11.

effective regardless of background knowledge and economic status.[52]

PBL succeeds in a number of widely supported educational outcomes. First, PBL has been shown to record higher scores on standardized tests than in traditional learning settings.[53] One study even showed better outcomes on A.P. exams, regardless of income![54] Another study showed that schools using PBL had 8% higher graduation rates and higher scores and had students more likely to enroll in a four-year institution than their non-PBL counterparts.[55]

PBL can improve student attitudes. Badr shows that PBL reduces student anxiety and increases positive perspectives on learning. Morais shows similar results: students thought they increased pride, motivation, and self-efficacy beliefs and even claimed to improve their critical thinking.[56] Their perceptions may have been correct and demonstrated by improved scores on standardized tests, which beat other students in traditional learning settings.[57]

Student engagement also improves using PBL. Student engagement is the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive level of student attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, motivation, and passion while learning.[58] PBL provides an engaging and meaningful educational experience that fosters positive learning outcomes.[59] PBL seems to improve student engagement for all students. This includes students at risk of school failure, low socioeconomic status, high absenteeism, those with disabilities, students with emotional and behavioral disorders, and also students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.[60] Even student participation was improved. Interestingly, teachers also reported positive engagement experiences from PBL. However, more studies are needed to show objective conclusive evidence rather than minor qualitative data points.[61]

Narrowing the focus to efficacy per subject can present more valuable findings. First, a 2017 study of 684 students in an English class showed significantly higher growth in informational reading but not writing. Second, a 2015 study of 70 students using PBL in a math class showed significant gains in statistical literacy compared to those in the control group without PBL.[62] Interestingly, math seems to have more trouble integrating PBL into the classroom than other subjects. Third, various studies from 2002, 2004, 2008, 2011, and 2014 tested PBL in science classrooms and showed gains in their test scores, knowledge, skills, and learning goals.[63]

Regarding social studies, PBL appears easier in terms of connecting learning to real-world problems. The research on social studies PBL efficacy shows higher levels of satisfaction, enjoyment, and even teacher support than those in non-PBL classrooms.[64] In 2005, a study of 40 students showed more significant academic gains than their counterparts while also practicing higher-order thinking skills and research skills. A 2009 study of 70 students showed more significant gains in knowledge than their counterparts on pre and post-tests. A 2011 study

52 Anna Rosefsky Saavedra et al., "Project-Based Learning in AP Classrooms: Lessons From Research," *Kappan*, November 1, 2021, 34-38.

53 Morais, "Doing History in the Undergraduate Classroom," 52.

54 Saavedra, et al., "Project-based learning in AP classrooms."

55 Condliffe, et al., "Project-Based Learning,"48.

56 Morais, "Doing History in the Undergraduate Classroom," 67.

57 Nelson, "Student Engagement and Project-Based Learning," 12.

58 Nelson, "Student Engagement and Project-Based Learning,"15.

59 Turner, "Project Based Learning for the History Classroom;" Nelson, "Student Engagement and Project-Based Learning," 61.

60 Mulcahy and Wertz, "Using Project-Based Learning," 342, 348.

61 Saavedra, et al.. "Project-Based Learning AP Classroom," 38; Condliffe, et al., "Project-Based Learning,"44.

62 Kingston, "Project-Based Learning and Student Achievement," 4, 8.

63 Kingston, "Project-Based Learning and Student Achievement," 6-8.

64 Condliffe, et al., "Project-Based Learning," 42.

of 314 students showed significantly higher scores on the A.P. test vs their counterparts.[65] A 2012 study showed students outperforming their counterparts in both social studies and College/Career Readiness. A 2013 study of 289 students showed students scoring significantly higher on the A.P. test than their counterparts. Last, a 2017 study of 684 students showed significantly higher growth in social studies.[66]

Conclusion

PBL has a rich and surprisingly long history of progression, theorizing, and demonstrating positive outcomes. Part of the history is its seamless and beneficial pairing of social studies and history skills, allowing students to create original work for the public. The literature on PBL seems to indicate overwhelmingly positive outcomes with subtle challenges that can be overcome. However, much more research is needed based on the current literature's limitations for conclusive affirmations of the practice. This research is consequential and should be taken seriously. Education, especially regarding social studies, shares a burden of blame for some American failings and must be improved. All involved should recognize this and work diligently to substantiate the array of benefits from PBL. If both the previously listed U.S. deficiencies related to social studies and the PBL literature review are correct in an honest context, then imagine the possibilities of a mainstreamed PBL that has cultivated an effective, engaged, informed, and critically thinking population. Perhaps this solution is naive or idealistic. Or PBL may be a catalyst for something truly special.

65 Sally Kingston. Project based learning & student achievement.

66 Kingston, "Project-Based Learning and Student Achievement," 4.

Archival Research with High School Students and School History: An Example of Signature Pedagogy through Project- and Place-Based Learning

Samuel J. Richards
Shanghai American School

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Introduction

When people learn I teach history at an American school in China, they inevitably ask: whose history do you teach? This question often comes with the assumption students memorize a single authoritative narrative and its supporting facts. These assumptions reflect a banking model of education in which students deposit information and store it for later regurgitation.[1] History education can do better. It can equip students to think deeply about our world and how it came to be. The marketing office at my school narrates an optimistic view of school history as one might expect. We even have PowerPoint templates that feature clip art sketches of school icons like the redbrick water tower that was a favorite spot on a former campus and Frank "Unk" Cheney who helped the school survive during Japanese occupation. Shanghai American School (SAS) swag hints at a complex, rich history few students know.

History education can empower students to examine familiar contexts, including their school's branding and mascots. At its best, history education cultivates students' abilities to examine multiple perspectives, closely read and analyze sources, determine key themes, and to communicate them in clear, concise ways. Sam Wineburg has described historical thinking as an "unnatural act."[2] One way to foster historical thinking skills is place-based learning. The local community provides a familiar access point for students.[3] This approach can also curtail students' common misperception that history is complete when the final answer is recorded in textbook format, a reminder that "pedagogical practices often reflect textbook organization" as Nancy Quam-Wickham put it.[4] Primary sources have become an important pedagogical tool in secondary-level history courses in recent decades, encouraged by concept-based teaching standards and the use of document-based questions (DBQs) on external exams such as those used by Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses. To varying degrees these disrupt traditional "coverage models" of history education that Lendol Calder critiqued in his signature 2006 essay. Instead of coverage reliant on lectures and textbook readings, history education has slowly shifted in some ways to emphasize signature pedagogy in which beginning students learn "ways of being taught that require them to do, think, and value what practitioners in the field are doing, thinking, and valuing."[5] Yet, the signature pedagogy of archival research still often remains the preserve of graduate-level study. This approach can also thrive in high schools, especially when artificial restraints created by schedules and siloing of academic disciplines are removed. Nevertheless, accounts of archive-based teaching and related pedagogy at secondary and

1**Acknowledgements**
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2 Sam Wineburg, "Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts," *Phi Delta Kappan* 80, no. 7 (1999): 488-99.

3 For related discussion see, Lauren Esposito, "Where to begin? Using place-based writing to connect students with their local communities," *The English Journal* 101:4 (March 2012): 70-76.

4 Nancy Quam-Wickham, "Reimagining the Introductory U.S. History Course," *The History Teacher* 49:4 (August 2016): 522.

5 Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *Journal of American History* 92:4 (March 2006), 1361.

undergraduate levels remain scarce.[6] My recent experiences suggest it does not have to be this way.

Project-based learning (PBL) offers one avenue for exploring signature pedagogy in secondary history classrooms. The Buck Institute for Education defines PBL as "a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects."[7] We can better teach key transferrable skills by empowering high school students to do the hands-on work of historians. We can create space and time for personally meaningful and authentic archival research during which students develop historical thinking and transferable research and problem-solving skills by drawing from preserved historical sources about our schools and surrounding communities. This essay provides an overview of ways place-based learning related to school history was used in order to introduce the signature pedagogy of archival research to 13- and 14-year-old high school students. It provides an account of a 9-week unit enabled by an unusual level of creative interdisciplinary cooperation from the perspective of the history teacher with the hopes of providing inspiration for others. The article provides: (1) school context, (2) curricular planning context, (3) sourcing archival study, (4) teaching and learning, (5) exhibition, and (6) reflection. But, we will begin with the end in mind and work backwards. Let's begin with the exhibition.

Exhibition

Over 200 people were invited to our virtual school history museum in late May 2022. The day before the live exhibition, guests received a program including hyperlinks to preview "our final showcase of the Pudong Innovation Institute's inaugural year."[8] The 8-page guide represented ninth-grade students' choices for titles, descriptions, and images related to their exhibits depicting seven eras of school history. Each exhibit answered "What gets remembered?" based on what sources are available to historians and what those sources emphasize. The PBL goals for Asian History were to: (1) curate primary and secondary sources in a way that helps museum visitors understand the development of SAS in its historical context and (2) share findings in an accessible way to inform the public while analyzing strengths/limitations of available artifacts. Throughout the unit, we emphasized students' roles as curators, archivists, and museum designers. These roles helped reinforce authenticity of this PBL unit.[9] Success of this was evident in students' final presentations. Application of authentic historical thinking was complemented by interdisciplinary skills and content taught in science, English, and Design Technology. All of these skills were assessed through the interdisciplinary PBL's final product. Figure A uses Wiggins and McTighe's GRASPs method to illustrates ways interdisciplinary skills and content were synthesized through this history-focused PBL's final product.[10]

6 Elizabeth S. Manley et al. "Teaching in the Archives: Engaging Students and Inverting Historical Methods Classes at The Historic New Orleans Collection," *The History Teacher* 53, no. 1 (November 2019): 70.

7 "What is project-based learning?" Buck Institute for Education, November 2022, https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl.

8 Pudong Innovation Institute, "Shanghai American School Museum of History | What gets remembered?" (May 23-24, 2022), 2.

9 Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education identify "authentic work" as one of four core practices of PBL. The others are disciplinary content learning, student collaboration, and building an iterative culture. See Pam Grossman et al. *Core Practices for Project-Based Learning: A gude for Teachers and Leaders (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2021)*.

10 The Grade 9 I^2 curriculum includes four units of study. The PBL component of each unit tends to lean more heavily toward one or two subjects. In this way, students get a deep dive on skills related to multiple disciplines throughout the year while also experiencing authentic ways academic disciplines connect.

Goal	Create an immersive exhibit for your assigned decade that tells the story of SAS from multiple perspectives.
Role	You are a public history team of archivists, curators, designers, and guides at the Shanghai American School Museum of History.
Audience	the general public
Situation	Your grant has been accepted! Your proposal for a new exhibit about the history of SAS has been approved! Now get to work!
Product **P**erformance	immersive, mixed-media museum exhibit guided tour through exhibit
Skills & Content	Asian History: • Curate primary and secondary sources in a way that helps museum visitors understand the development of SAS in its historical context • Share findings in an accessible way to inform the public while analyzing strengths/limitations of available artifacts Design Tech. 9: • Design an interactive and immersive museum experience, with specific consideration to User Experience (UX) and User Interface (UI) English 9: • Write with a specific voice (diction, detail, imagery, syntax, tone): • Present an account of an event or experience from the perspective of a fictional person that could have existed at SAS during assigned time period using historical sources. Science 9: • Identify and apply the role of waves in technology. • Evaluate the selection of technology and how information is stored and communicated.

Figure 1: The GRASPs overview used to introduce the unit PBL to students.

Historical thinking was honed during a series of History Labs and other work sessions throughout the unit. These skills were synthesized with learning in other academic disciplines. For instance, Design Technology skills taught by my colleague Jeff Bailey were at the forefront. Students had examined user experiences (UX) and user interfaces (UI) at various online museums.[11] In this context, students were empowered to make authentic choices as docents, curators, historians, and designers of our virtual school history museum. High school freshmen curated their exhibits and selected their ideal online platform. Our design thinking process encouraged ideation and prioritizing student choice, signature elements of PBL. Students opted for a variety of platforms including Prezi, PowerPoint, Artsteps, and Cospaces (See Figure E). Museum construction also created several teachable moments. This included an unexpected lesson on racialized elements of period music like "My Old Kentucky Home" and an invaluable lesson on paraphrasing and plagiarism. Twenty-four hours after the museum guide arrived to inboxes, 25 students became museum docents.

As docents of live tours for their virtual exhibits, high school freshmen capably fielded questions. Students provided an overview tour of their exhibit then managed Q&A sessions using the chat feature of Microsoft Teams. Audience members submitted questions. Students responded orally. Some questions were broad; others were quite specific. Some audience questions were answered easily while others required higher levels of reasoning

11 I^2 design teacher Jeff Bailey created a 27-page Museum Guide to support students' guided inquiry of UX and UI at online museums. Case studies for online platforms were the National Museum of China (Beijing), National Museum of Korea (Seoul), Dali Theatre-Museum (Figueres, Spain), Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam), British Museum (London), Van Gough Museum (Amsterdam), National Museum of Computing (Bletchley Park, UK), History of Science Museum (Oxford), Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History (Washington, DC), and the Terracotta Warriors Museum (Xi'an).

and synthesis. The latter was undoubtedly a response to students' professionalism as historical researchers. A few examples of questions posed by visitors are included below.

> 1900-1909: "You mentioned many considerations for families choosing schools in 1900-1909 Shanghai. Do you think these concerns remain the same? Have any of them changed?"
>
> 1900-1909: "You seemed to consider the perspective of adults in the choices they made for their children. I am wondering if you might speak a bit more to what you learned about the experiences of students and what they may have thought of the schools they were attending."
>
> 1940-1944: "Some sources state that Unk and the board never got along. After Shanghai's condition started to normalize, the board replaced him, with no thanks for his efforts of maintaining education in Shanghai. What thoughts do you have on this situation? A SAS member had stated that Unk deserves a statue for his contributions. How do you think he should be honored?"
>
> 1945-1949: "Is there any record of SAS alumni who returned to the US, having gatherings for alumni in the US between 1950-1980?"
>
> 1970-1985: "You mention that SAS might not have been as successful as we remember as it most likely didn't have the resources necessary to meet it goals as stated. Apart from inferring this, do you have any other info that might support the idea that SAS might not have been as successful as we remember?"

Thirteen- and fourteen-year-old students capably navigated these complex questions showing that "doing history" is possible at the ninth-grade level.[12] While asking "what gets remembered?" students also had the wisdom to tell listeners that sometimes historians cannot answer our questions. Sometimes documents are not preserved. Sometimes things are not remembered.

School Context

Shanghai American School's history dates to 1912 in the dynamic context of twentieth-century Shanghai. This creates a rich opportunity for historical investigation. He Fang-yu of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences describes SAS as "an important symbol of Sino-American friendship."[13] The school's enrollment, curriculum, facilities, staff, and faculty offer many entry points to analyze continuity and change over time in China's commercial capital.

SAS's initial board of managers represented Protestant missionary boards. School founders wanted to provide an American-style education for children of American missionaries serving in what was then the Republic of China. SAS dormitories became home to children whose missionary parents undertook religiously-motivated humanitarian work in impoverished, rural regions of China.[14] The board soon expanded to include business leaders as the school welcomed children of industry. Standard Oil Company became a major supporter in 1920

12 Use of the phrase "doing history" for this unit was first inspired by Carla Vecchiola, "Digging in the Digital Archives: Engaging Students in an Online American History Survey," *The History Teacher* 53:1 (November 2019): 107-134.

13 He Fang-yu. "'Take Care of Our Children' – Missionaries and Establishment of Shanghai American School (1896-1912) [何方昱, 传教士与上海美国学校的创办(1896-1912)], *Historical Review* 6:130 (2011).

14 Intellectual historian David A. Hollinger points to ways the experiences of "missionary cosmopolitans" in China made them more critical of racism, imperialism, and parochial religious views upon their return to the United States. He contends that "missionary-connected individuals and groups were prominent in efforts to end the mistreatment of people of non-European ancestry at home and abroad, and they opened the public ear to nonwhite voices within and beyond the United States." See David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017): 2.

while expanding its industrial footprint in East Asia.[15]

SAS moved to a picturesque redbrick campus in 1923. Its main building echoed features of Independence Hall in Philadelphia surrounded by a campus that included a lake and quadrangle reminiscent of an American college. SAS continued to grow until the 1940s when students and teachers were among those interned by Japanese invaders. School leaders, especially Frank "Unk" Cheney and the Rev. Val Sundt, worked to maintain educational opportunities during the Second Sino-Japanese War (concurrent with World War II) and Chinese Civil War.[16] This included renaming the school multiple times, relocating it to International Community Church, and even later operating from a concentration camp. Nevertheless, SAS closed its doors in 1950 as foreigners fled the port city following the Communist Party's victory in China's Civil War. SAS continued to exist only on paper until its "liquidation and dissolution" in March 1967.[17]

SAS re-opened in 1980 in line with Paramount Leader Deng Xiaoping's policies of Reform and Opening Up. The school was initially housed in the grounds of the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai. The reestablished SAS was a day school. It was a small, secular operation in keeping with revolutionary changes to American public education that occurred during SAS's closure. U.S. President Ronald Reagan visited in 1984. However, he was not the first high-ranking U.S. official to visit SAS students.

SAS has hosted and educated influential people. U.S. Speaker of the House Joseph W. Byrnes of Tennessee was among "outstanding government leaders" who visited SAS in 1936.[18] In addition to political leaders, records of alumni and faculty experiences provide avenues for historical investigation. This includes the everyday routines of school life and extracurriculars as well as heartbreaking accounts from the 1940s. SAS welcomed refugee students from Kuling American School on Mt. Lu (Lushan) before SAS students and faculty were themselves sent to concentration camps, especially Chapei (Zhabei) Civil Assembly Center.[19] Not everything is bleak. SAS was a formative place for influential religious studies scholar Huston Smith and U.S. diplomats James Lilley and J. Stapleton Roy.[20] Newberry award-winning author Katherine Paterson published her first piece in *The Shanghai American*, the school's newspaper.[21] One benefit of being founded in 1912 is that SAS's rich history offers contemporary students with diverse backgrounds a common access point to analyze twentieth-century continuity and change while investigating a familiar place.

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15 A student newspaper editorial celebrating contributions describes "fifty thousand dollars gold from the Standard Oil Company being the most notable." *S.A.S. Nooze* (November 1930).

16 Frank "Unk" Cheney (1881-1958) led a full life. He could be the subject of a graduate thesis. He died at age 77 while still teaching industrial arts at Dayton High School in Kentucky. He was born in Jamestown, New York, and went on to teach for 58 years including stints in Pennsylvania, California, Tennessee, and Kentucky in the U.S. and abroad in China, India, Turkey, and the Philippines. Cheney is said to have "adopted" 13 children—only 1 legally—during his lifetime. He also published several books and poems. His death in 1958 was front page news in Cincinnati. See, Tom Brennan, "True to His Purpose: Unk Cheney Bows Out on a Long, Exemplary Career as a Teacher," *Cincinnati Enquirer* (May 23, 1958).

17 Burke & Burke to Wallace C. Merwin of the National Council of Churches (March 8, 1967). Wallace C. Merwin of the National Council of Churches, Far Eastern Office, to Charles L. Boynton, (August 23, 1963), Charles L. Boynton papers, Box 7, Hoover Institution & Archives, Stanford University.

18 *The Columbian* [yearbook], Shanghai American School (1936): 176.

19 Kuling American School's most famous alumna was Pearl S. Buck, winner of the 1938 Nobel Prize for Literature. For firsthand accounts of these years see: George Wang and Betty Barr, *Shanghai Boy, Shanghai Girl: Lives in Parallel.* (Shanghai: Old China Hand Press, 2011). Sterling H. Whitener, *In the Shadow of the Pagoda* (CreateSpace Publishing, 2013). Paul Sheretz, ed. *Lushan Stories: Memoires of Kushan American School* (1989).

20Ambassador James Lilley, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Project." Interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. May 21, 1998. https://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Lilley,%20James%20R.toc.pdf

21 Linda T. Jones, "Profile: Katherine Paterson," *Language Arts* 58:2 (February 1981): 189. Katherine Paterson, "Fighting the Long Defeat, the 2007 NSK Prize Lecture," *World Literature Today* 82:3 (May-June 2008): 20. Samuel J. Richards, "Terabithia Author Talks Writing Process and Recalls Schooldays at SAS," *The International Educator* (October 26, 2022).

Curricular Planning Context

Interdisciplinary PBL is a signature aspect of the Pudong Innovation Institute (I^2) at SAS.[22] The ninth-grade program brings together 3 required courses—Asian History, English, and integrated science—with an elective Design Technology course. This level of integration among high school faculty with higher levels of academic specialization is unusual. In I^2, each teacher brings specialist disciplinary knowledge and skills, a key aspect of "professional capital" needed for strong teacher agency.[23] With this foundation, the Grade 9 I^2 teaching team develops units collaboratively using backwards design planning popularized by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe.[24] Their GRASPs acronym helps the I^2 faculty design a common PBL culminating task for each interdisciplinary unit capable of demonstrating students' mastery and transfer of key knowledge and skills.

Interdisciplinary connections are encouraged by shared philosophy and collaborative planning time. For instance, each I^2 unit features a shared conceptual lens, an approach shaped by the work of H. Lynn Erickson and Lois Lanning.[25] Teachers are also individually responsible for ensuring disciplinary learning standards and illustrative content are effectively planned for, taught, and assessed within the I^2 context. For instance, the freshmen history course is aligned to the 2013 *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* published by the US National Council for the Social Studies.[26] Planning time is also used intentionally to maximize interdisciplinary connections. Renée Couturier, director of educational programing at SAS, advises school's embarking on similar programs to "Hire the most collaborative, the most flexible and adaptable, and the most committed teachers." Then, she encourages administrators to "trust your teachers."[27] This collaboration was also supported by the 6-12 technology coach, Annalee Higginbottom, who helped with logistics and also facilitated day-long planning meetings that occurred quarterly. This structure allowed the teaching team to focus on curricular development without anyone being distracted by facilitation tasks like monitoring time or taking minutes. The I^2 team not only plans lessons together. It also collaboratively allocates time.

I^2 operates in many ways as a dynamic school within a school by limiting artificial restraints typical in many schools. Schedule flexibility within the institute helps integrate subject-based content and skills. This may be novel for many high school programs. It is also among the most important logistical considerations for planning success. Meeting every other school day, I^2 operates in a 1:1 laptop environment and benefits from a purpose-built space with movable walls and furniture. I^2 operates on an independent schedule separate from the high school except for lunch. I^2 faculty allocate time each day based on instructional needs. This approach allows the teaching

22 The SAS Pudong Innovation Institute benefits from lessons learned by our colleagues at Puxi campus. The Puxi I^2 was founded five years earlier. Its focus is art education, while Pudong's focus is design process. Pudong I2 faculty have been influenced by the work of Buck Institute, Stanford d.school, and the Project-based learning program at the University of Pennsylvania.

23 Andrea Nolan and Tebeje Molla, "Building Teacher Professional Capabilities through Transformative Learning," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 49:4 (October 2020): 72. Molla and Nolan, "Teacher agency and professional practice," *Teachers and Teaching* 26:1 (2020): 67-87.

24 Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998).

25 For an overview of conceptual lenses and illustrative content in curricula planning see, H. Lynn Erickson and Lois A. Lanning, *Transition to Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction for the Thinking Classroom: How to Bring Content and Process Together* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2014). Lois A. Lanning, *Designing a Concept-Based Curriculum for English Language Arts: Meeting the Common Core with Intellectual Integrity, K-12* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012).

26 In addition to using C3, I^2 courses use the US Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy (2010) and US Next Generation Science Standards (2013) for its required courses. The Design Technology elective draws from both the US National Core Arts Standards for media arts (2014) and the Australian Curriculum Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2015) standards for Design and Technologies.

27 Samuel J. Richards, "'Try it!' High School Transformed: Shanghai American School, Pudong develops interdisciplinary project-based learning institute," *The International Educator* (December 8, 2021).

team to maximize interdisciplinary synergy when planning.[28] This level of freedom and responsibility would likely shock most secondary teachers and be met by resistance from administrators. "Schools are one of the biggest push systems you can imagine. Here's the curriculum; we're pushing it on you. Here's the timetable; it gets pushed on you," according to Paul Magnuson, director of educational research at Leysin American School in Switzerland.[29] He calls for greater agility in lieu of what he calls "command and control models."[30] I^2 offers one such example to help educators imagine what this flexibility might look like. These command models extend beyond scheduling.

Efforts to supposedly "teacher proof" curricula often lead to unreasonable lists of proscribed content and onerous pacing guides that discourage design thinking.[31] By prioritizing critical thinking and historical understanding as the goal, history teachers can also avoid guilt associated with not having "covered" every topic on a curricular checklist—a tick box approach to history education that I believe does little to enhance long-term critical thinking and civic mindedness of students.[32] Authentic archival research offers one way to achieve this. After all, it is already supported by learning standards focused on conceptual understanding. The *C3 Framework* is the most prominent example of these among social studies educators. A resourceful and creative secondary level history program can flourish using this curricular framework.

Context also includes careful consideration of illustrative content. Embarking on archival research with high school students includes considering sensitive topics. Writing about what they called the "social studies rabbit hole," Mark Hemlsing, Daniel G. Krutka, and Annie McMahon Whitlock remind us that our work can "uncover myths and fantasies of historical actors" and "unsettle our knowledge and our relation to the world." Our field is an area where contexts are "disagreed upon, contested, or sometimes traumatic."[33] These are values of our work. They can also be pitfalls. High school students are not adults. If a topic is too sensitive or not age appropriate for students to engage with critically, it would not be useful illustrative content for our I^2 PBL. These considerations are familiar terrain for humanities teachers, especially when teaching literature or about world religions. Teachers and teaching teams must make determinations based on their context. In authoritarian China, studying certain topics can place teachers and students in jeopardy.[34] For this reason, our investigation of school history ended with 1985. This decision meant students would not encounter sources in which SAS alumni commented on pro-democracy protests and Beijing's violent crackdown in 1989 nor have to consider ways increasingly nationalist policies are changing international schools.[35] Even so, historians' signature pedagogy equips students to research

28 Richards, *The International Educator* (December 8, 2021).

29 Tim Logan. "On Agile Education in Practice – A Conversation with Paul Magnuson," *Future Learning Design Podcast*. September 18, 2020. Podcast. Length in 31:24. https://www.peakchallenges.ch/news/tim_logan_future_learning_designs_podcast_conversation_with_paul_magnuson/

30 Logan.

31 "Teacher proof" curricula is used by Diane Moore, the founding faculty director of Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School, to describe the proliferation mass-produced scripted teaching resources that squash creativity while negating the constant challenges of integrating theory and practice in unique contexts and ever-changing student populations. See, Diane L. Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 107.

32 For critiques of "coverage" models at the university level see Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *The Journal of American History* 92:4 (March 2006): 1358-1370. Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, "The End of the History Survey Course: The Rise and Fall of the Coverage Model." *The Journal of American History* 97:4 (2011): 1050-66. Nancy Quam-Wickham, "Reimagining the Introductory U.S. History Course," *The History Teacher* 49:4 (August 2016): 519-547.

33 Mark Helmsing, Danield G. Krutka, and Annie McMahon Withlock ed. *Keywords in the Social Studies: Concepts and Conversations*. Counterpoints: Studies in Criticality (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), xxii.

34 Peter Hessler, "A Teacher in China Learns the Limits of Free Expression: How had the country experienced so much social, economic, and educational change while its politics remained stagnant?" *New Yorker* (May 9, 2022), https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/05/16/a-teacher-in-china-learns-the-limits-of-free-expression.

35 See for example, Richard Kleinman, "Memories of China in the '30s: Americans who taught or studies in Shanghai get together to

effectively and to think critically when they discover new information and untaught topics—an inevitability since none of us can "cover" all historical events.

This was the school context for launching a 9-week, history-focused unit emphasizing place-based learning in March 2022. "Memory" served as our conceptual lens complemented by the interdisciplinary essential question "What gets remembered?". Figures B and C provide an overview of illustrative content and disciplinary skills drawn from each subject during this unit. In addition, Figure B provides an overview of archival skills taught during a series of History Labs crucial to unit success. Finally, Figure A provided an overview of the interdisciplinary PBL component.

Illustrative Content				
English	Design	Science	Asian History	History Lab
Text: *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan Narrative Point of View Diverse Narrative Structures Voice via diction, syntax, details Vocabulary Literary Elements Literary Devices	End User Design (UX) -aesthetics -appeal -appearance Usability -user satisfaction Accessibility -navigation -control -links Function -Speed -error tolerance User Interface Design (UI) -User Flow chart -Wireframing Virtual gallery space: AR/VR	Wave principles Different waves and how they work as an output: sound, heat, energy, light, etc. How wave behavior changes in different materials – loops back to creation of materials for different purposes Transfer of digital information	Rise of Modern China Fall of Qing Dynasty Republic of China Kuomintang Sino-Japanese War and United Front Civil War (Kuomintang v. Chinese Communist Party) Establishment of People's Republic -Cultural Revolution -Great Leap Forward -Reform and Opening Content assessment will be viva voce (Q1: description, knowledge; Q2: analysis, reasoning)	**Lab 1**: Practicing with 2 sample SAS sources; strengths & limitations of evidence **Lab 2**: Student groups investigate sources curated for assigned era; consider perspectives, strengths & limitations **Lab 3 Guest Speaker**: alumna Betty Barr Wang on theme "What gets remembered?"[36] **Lab 4**: Continue investigating teacher curated sources; draft paragraph summary for feedback; address "what gets remembered?" & identify missing perspectives **Lab 5**: Introduce in-house digital archive; students begin to explore **Lab 6**: Research time **Lab 7**: Student teams present 4 artifacts essential to telling school's story during their assigned era

Figure 2: Outline of illustrative content for each discipline during the "Memory" unit. These were aligned to standards for the respective academic disciplines.

reminisce about old times," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 18, 1990. Chan Ho-him and Eleanor Olcot, "China's international school sector threatened by Covid and crackdown," *Financial Times*, June 5, 2022.

36 Betty Barr Wang is a 1949 graduate of SAS. She is a well-known, long-time resident of Shanghai and author or co-author of several books including *Between Two Worlds: Lessons in Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Old China Hand Press, 2004) and *Shanghai Boy, Shanghai Girl: Lives in Parallel* (Shanghai: Old China Hand Press, 2011).

Disciplinary Skills				
English	Design	Science	Asian History	History Lab
Reading Skills: -Define Words in Context -Analyze character based on voice Writing Skills: Narrative Writing	Design Thinking User research User empathy Interaction design Visual communication Collaboration	Asking questions and defining problems Mathematics and computational thinking Engaging in argument from evidence Obtaining, evaluating and communicating information	C3 Dimension 3: Gathering and Evaluating Sources C3 Dimension 3: Develop claims using evidence C3 Dimension 4: communicating and critiquing conclusions	C3 Dimension 3: Gathering and Evaluating Sources C3 Dimension 3: Develop claims using evidence C3 Dimension 4: communicating and critiquing conclusions

Figure 3: Outline of disciplinary skills for the "Memory" unit. These were aligned to standards for the respective academic disciplines.

Sourcing Study

Place-based learning using archives requires access to a rich trove of sources. Most schools and towns do not maintain accessible local archives convenient for 13- and 14-year-olds. Curators and archivists might have nightmare visions of high school freshmen rummaging through historical documents. History educators planning a similar unit must consider several key questions. These questions are:

1. Do we have access to sufficient primary and secondary sources?
2. Can this illustrative content achieve our learning goals?
3. To what extent can we cultivate students' analytical thinking related to sensitive issues?

This makes developing an archive an essential first-step to determining viability of PBL using local history.

I[2] was fortunate in having a highly flexible schedule and plenty of historical sources. Firstly, the unusually flexible I2 scheduling model allowed faculty to structure 3 days during which students did not have history class. As the history teacher, I used this time to gather primary and secondary sources. Secondly, past alumni had the foresight to preserve school memorabilia in various well-resourced institutions that willingly scanned and digitized files for our use. These were supplemented by some historical documents available locally along with two published histories, and tranches of unindexed photographs and documents in the school marketing office[37]. With support from our technology coach, I established a digital archive of more than 900 sources.

Archival research using place-based learning requires consideration of context. SAS offers a unique vantage point. Most schools and communities do! I previously worked at Boonsboro High School in rural Appalachian Maryland. There, I could envision a similar interdisciplinary unit that would rely on local—rather than school—history. It could still use memory as the conceptual lens paired with the essential question "What gets remembered?" but draw from different illustrative content. For instance, sources might focus on the National Road (US Rt. 40) or memorialization at nearby Antietam Battlefield[38]. In southwestern Pennsylvania, Trinity Area

37 This endeavor was possible with assistance from archivist Martha Smalley at Yale Divinity School; former SAS marketing guru Kevin Lynch; SAS staff Mina Hsiao and Melissa Szarowicz; Steve Harnsberger of Kuling American School Association; and the U.S. Department of State, especially Consul-General James Heller in Shanghai and Mark E. Ulfers and Beatrice Cameron in the Office of Overseas Schools. Published histories include Phoebe White Wentworth and Angie Mills, *Fair is the Name: The Story of Shanghai American School*, 1912-1950 (Los Angeles: Shanghai American School Association, 1997). Angie Mills, *A Story of the Shanghai American School, 1912-2008* (Chicago: Shanghai American School Association, 2008).

38 Two recent studies to help get started could be: Emilie Amt, *Black Antietam: African Americans and the Civil War in Sharpsburg* (History Press, 2022). Roger Pickenpaugh, *America's First Interstate: The National Road, 1806-1853* (Kent State University Press, 2020).

School District includes President Ulysses S. Grant's repeated visits to the region as part of its curriculum. On several occasions Grant stayed with relatives at a mansion that now forms a wing of the district's high school[39]. Place-based learning is an invitation for teachers to discover what's local.

No matter one's context, time will be a significant start-up consideration. Even at the university level, "the most substantial challenges facing history instructors who want to move beyond coverage [models of teaching] may be logistical" according to Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker[40]. Gathering useful primary and secondary sources will energize and inspire many history educators. This is an essential ingredient for success. It is important to note that many history teachers face impediments such as high-stakes testing, crowded classrooms, restrictive school schedules, and siloed academic departments that might hinder levels of creativity. Flexible pedagogical models like I^2 unlock the magic of what can be.

Teaching and Learning

Introducing authentic archival research empowers students to "do" history rather than receive it in textbook form. History education still dedicates significant instructional time to textbooks. During this interdisciplinary PBL unit, research skills were taught during a series of labs. These 45 to 60-minute sessions were in addition to students' study of 20th century China occurring in Asian History class, enabled by flexible interdisciplinary scheduling. (See Figure B above.) During History Lab 1, I introduced the lab concept with all students using the same four teacher-selected sources. These sources were selected to establish a common experience—like a writers' workshop anchor text—to reference as students embarked on increasingly independent archival research. This initial lab included a mixture of independent thinking, small-group discussion, and teacher "think alouds" to model thinking like a historian. This was supported by a lab sheet with guiding questions focused on strengths and limitations of sources, an approach inspired by a DBQ activity developed by Stanford History Education Group (See Appendix I).[41] The introductory lab used two visual and two text-based sources. The culminating work for lab 1 was an open-ended question in which each student submitted a response using our interdisciplinary I^2 writing format of Claim-Evidence-Reasoning. The prompt asked students to compare our school in 2022 to our school in 1912. Students submitted typed responses then received formative feedback before our next class and lab. Students' writing indicated a range of abilities. All struggled to be concise. Typical submissions included lengthy descriptions of sources leading to some analytical conclusions. Here is a sample submission from one ninth grade girl.

Sample Student Submission following History Lab 1

> The difference of Shanghai American School(SAS) now and SAS in 1912 is shown by their different perspective and views regarding religion. A comparison of a school ruled under Christian and a more opened community for learning is presented. Back in 1912, one united religion is shown. From a summary of the meeting for the establishment of SAS, Source A, recorded evidence proving that Christians were leading the foundation of Shanghai American School. According to this source, under the catalogue of "Members of the original committee that worked to establish a school in Shanghai", all the people being mentioned all owned the honorary style "the Rev.", which stands for the "the reverend". The title stands for clergy and were frequently used by Christian priests and ministers. Which means, the leading people who founded SAS were all believed in Christianity. To add on, from the architectural

39Barbara Miller, "Grant's local connection displayed on Trinity wall," Observer-Reporter (Washington, Pennsylvania), February 14, 2016. Samuel J. Richards, "A Forgotten Muhlenberg School: Trinity Hall in Washington, Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies 87:2 (Spring 2020): 259, 268.

40 Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, "From Learning History to Doing History" in *Exploring Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind*, ed. Regan A.R. Gurung, Nancy L. Chick, and Aeron Haynie (Sterling, Virginia: Stylus, 2009), 30.

41 Stanford History Education Group. "Evaluating Sources." August 26, 2021. https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources.

> style of SAS, Source B, the point mentioned can be further proven. In source B, a picture of the old SAS campus existed from 1912-1923, it has several similarities to Christian churches - they both have arched, neatly arranged windows covering the subject of the building; both have pointed triangular designs at the eaves; both have projections on the roof. And, in the middle eaves, SAS used to have two cross designs. The cross has a special religious significance to Christianity and is a representative symbol of Christianity. Thus, it is clear that Shanghai American School had a strong Christian existence. In 2022, however, Shanghai American School become more nuanced in the area of religious affiliation. Today's Shanghai American School has changed considerably from its once recognizable Christian architecture and all-Christian school leaders. Instead of a heavily Christian building, the 2022 Shanghai American School has a new, modern architecture with bold, curved roof shapes that highlight the school's innovative, generous style. And, the SAS student handbook clearly states: "Groups/individuals with the following characteristics (real or perceived) are protected from discrimination based upon these characteristics: gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, religion, ethnicity or national origin, race, disability, age, color, or marital status." Unlike the SAS of the 1910s, the SAS now promotes more freedom and openness to religious beliefs. While SAS in 1912 promotes a unity for religion, modern SAS becomes more inclusive. It emphasizes that no one should be discriminated against for having religious beliefs and everyone has the right to choose. In the 110 years since 1912, as the years have changed and the times have evolved, the Shanghai American School has undergone tremendous changes from its former pursuit of uniformity to its current open, liberal system.

This formative writing helped me calibrate work for lab 2. Together with previous DBQ assessment data from Asian History class, writing samples also provided a data point for our teaching team to finalize student PBL groups as "public history teams," a moniker used to promote learning in an authentic, real-world scenario. Students were assigned to one of seven public history teams with three to four members in each. Team rosters were announced during an I^2 community meeting, reinforcing the importance of our interdisciplinary approach.

Students first met as public history teams during History Lab 2. This was a key moment to review the 7 Norms of Collaboration.[42] Additionally, students were reintroduced to the concept of historical periodization and began investigating their assigned era of school history. All history teams received a folder of 8 to 12 sources for this (see Figure D). I curated these folders to include a combination of visual and text-based sources as well as both primary and secondary sources. The goal was to create an encouraging, exciting, and helpful environment without overwhelming students. This was mostly successful. However, I would introduce only 4 or 5 sources during this lab with future cohorts. Source A in all teams' folders was purposefully chosen to provide an overview of key themes for their assigned era. This was especially important since several students fixated on identifying misleading or biased sources during lab 1. No sources were chosen to mislead or trick students. This would have squandered precious time! Collectively, each PBL team analyzed sources and made notes using a shared lab guide document accessible on Microsoft One Drive. Groups then submitted a summary paragraph at the end of the lab (see Appendix II). Summary paragraphs provided another opportunity for formative feedback as part of guided inquiry. Feedback was a regular component after each lab. Once students developed competence and confidence, the I^2 faculty generated excitement and unveiled the 900-plus document "SAS Digital Archive" during lab 5.

Students' historical thinking became more sophisticated during the seven labs and subsequent project worktime. Students were sometimes frustrated. They also celebrated breakthroughs. I was impressed by the depth of historical thought cultivated by this approach. Two excerpts from students provide evidence of this.

- Student 1 was investigating reasons why some Americans in Shanghai did not like Ms. Jewell's School and wanted to form a new American school circa 1910. He was clarifying use of the slang term *holy roller*.
    - "I wrote Ms. Jewell as a fundamentalist Episcopalian because of some information coming from multiple perspectives that seemed to indicate that she was both a fundamentalist (Holy Roller)

42 I^2 uses the 7 Norms of Collaboration developed by Adaptive Schools. During this first meeting, students shared lists of "gifts" and "needs" with their 2 to 3 partners.

and an Episcopalian… But seeing as fundamentalist Episcopalians are apparently not prevalent, does 'Holy Roller' imply a denomination, such as the Methodists?"

- Student 2 explains how she obtained a Mandarin-language source from a Chinese university database.
  - "I searched up Shanghai American School in Chinese in a database used between Chinese universities. It required an account to access and I managed to find a professor who teaches at Shanghai Normal University to download and sent the paper to me 😊"

Students improved historical thinking was likely accelerated by I²'s interdisciplinary approach. I generally led History Labs while also teaching about 20th century China in my Asian History class. However, all I2 faculty participated in many of our History Labs. My science colleague, Amanda Young, was especially good at setting expectations and leading goal setting related to student collaboration. Students received written and spoken feedback and mentoring from not only Asian History class, but also during Michael Crachiolo's English lessons where they read memoir excerpts along with historical and contemporary fiction.[43] In Design Technology students considered relevant user experiences in museums and in science they examined the role of waves in digitizing and creating accessible archival sources. Co-teaching strategies such as "one teach, one assist" and "parallel teaching" also helped guide students during labs. These techniques reinforced interdisciplinary connections and helped inform collective scheduling decisions when allotting time to classes, History Labs, and other I² activities during this unit. These structures proved resilient when authorities shuttered schoolhouses throughout Shanghai on March 14 as part of China's dynamic 0 Covid policy. We adapted. Our PBL meant to culminate in an in-person museum adapted to a virtual environment as our school term continued online for the remainder of the academic year.

Reflection

During our final class session on June 1, students provided feedback related to our interdisciplinary unit. I² faculty consistently collect student feedback at the end of each unit in order to improve future PBL units. It is also an opportunity for teachers to model ways we use collaboration and design thinking, skills we regularly expect of students. Our unit reflections usually last a little over one hour. They begin with students thinking independently about specific prompts. They record thoughts on post-it notes which they later place on the glass walls. Teachers then look for patterns, group post-its accordingly, and prepare follow-up questions to seek clarification or more detail during an I² community meeting. In this instance, covid policies in China meant our reflection was completed via Microsoft Teams. We used the chat feature to collect students' responses then facilitated discussion. We asked students four questions related to the PBL unit. These were:

1. What helped you complete your response to the unit question "What gets remembered?"
2. What was <u>not</u> helpful or did <u>not</u> work?
3. For your teachers, what suggestions might you have for this unit?
4. For you, what learning will you remember from this unit?

Many students mentioned History Labs in their feedback.

Coaching and mentoring students to "do" history rather than study it proved essential. 15 of 25 freshmen specifically named "feedback" as helping them complete the PBL. Teachers implementing archival PBL must plan for this. Our interdisciplinary teaching team provided feedback during small-group and one-on-one conversations as well as via comments in interactive online documents. The frequency of feedback and coaching was made possible by interdisciplinary collaboration and exceeded what would normally occur during a research assignment in one of my more traditional history courses. That was another benefit of our interdisciplinary approach. However, 3 students still said there were not enough opportunities to receive teacher feedback. 7 students specifically named sources and History Labs as helpful to their success. Even so, improvements can be made.

43 Text sources included Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club: A Novel* (G.P. Putnam Sons, 1989); Ruth Hill Barr and Betty Barr, *Ruth's Record: The Diary of An American in Japanese-Occupied Shanghai, 1941-1945* (Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2016).

Students suggested changes to pacing of historical research. Three students felt initial History Labs moved too quickly. In the words of one, "we were kind of rushing them but the one about how to analyze sources was great." I agree with his assessment. I used initial labs to introduce baseline skills using common sources. My hope to provide a common reference point for all public history teams unintentionally slowed students' investigation. There were few occasions during which these anchor texts proved useful. Students' investigations required a range of research methods as they discovered vastly different sources and circumstances ranging from newspapers to personal scrapbooks, memoirs, and government documents between 1900 and the 1980s from both China and the United States. There was also a range of writing styles among documents, most of which were in English and some in Mandarin Chinese. This made independent problem-solving, mini-lessons, and teacher mentoring essential. In the future, it might be worth introducing students' PBL groups immediately rather than using anchor texts.

High school students expressed frustrations like ones we might overhear in a café during the American Historical Association's annual meeting. This is an indicator that we achieved PBL authenticity. The most common frustration was having too many or too few sources. One boy wrote that he will remember "what it's like to sift through a mass amount of information, finding and using the relevant information, while disregarding the irrelevant, or at least the not as relevant (in order to save time)." This was the first time during which students did not have someone else telling them which historical sources mattered. Students also celebrated breakthroughs like the discovery of an especially important or difficult to obtain source. This resonates with Canadian archivist Michael Eamon's criticism that, "the most significant problem with the use of pre-packaged selections of documents for the effective teaching of history, however, is that they fail to create the heuristic experience of archival research."[44] In short: they are inauthentic. Feedback from I^2 students showed that 13- and 14-year-olds had come to understand elements of historical methodology by engaging in authentic research. Another student summarized the most helpful steps as: "looking through them [sources], getting to know and further feel how it is to live within our [assigned] time period, then slowly figured out what gets remembered."

Archival research connected to place-based learning offers something more than prepackaged primary source readers and DBQs. Schools and school systems willing to embrace agility and reduce push systems can leverage place-based learning in creative ways to empower students to do history rather than merely read about it. While archive-based learning remains mostly the preserve of graduate level history education, this experience shows signature pedagogy can thrive in high school. Ninth grade students are capable of authentic historical research.

44 Michael Eamon, "A 'Genuine Relationship with the Actual': New Perspectives on Primary Sources, History, and the Internet in the Classroom," *The History Teacher* 39:3 (May 2006): 303.

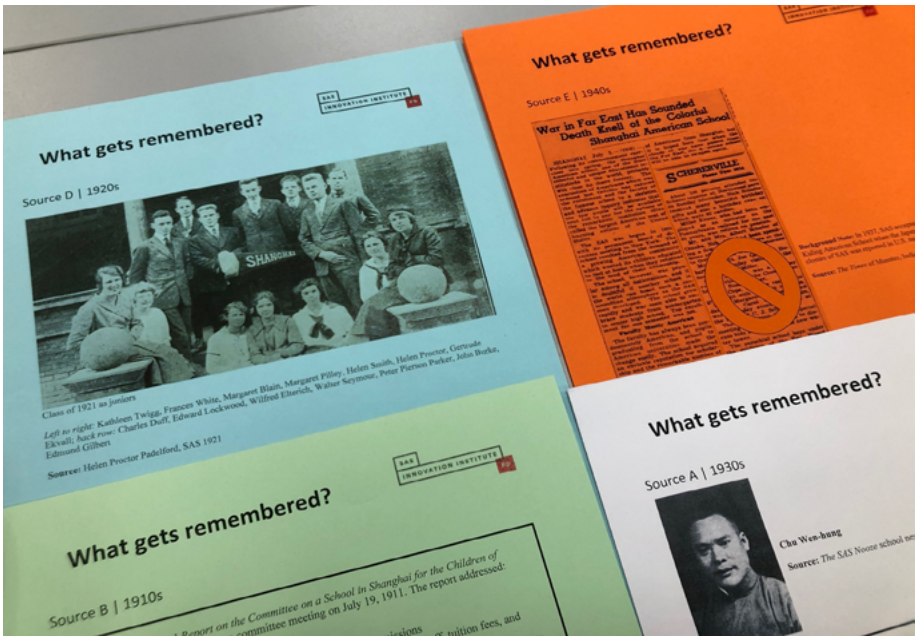

Figure 4: Examples of curated sources aligned to eras of school history. Source A in each collection was designed to give student groups an overview of their assigned era.

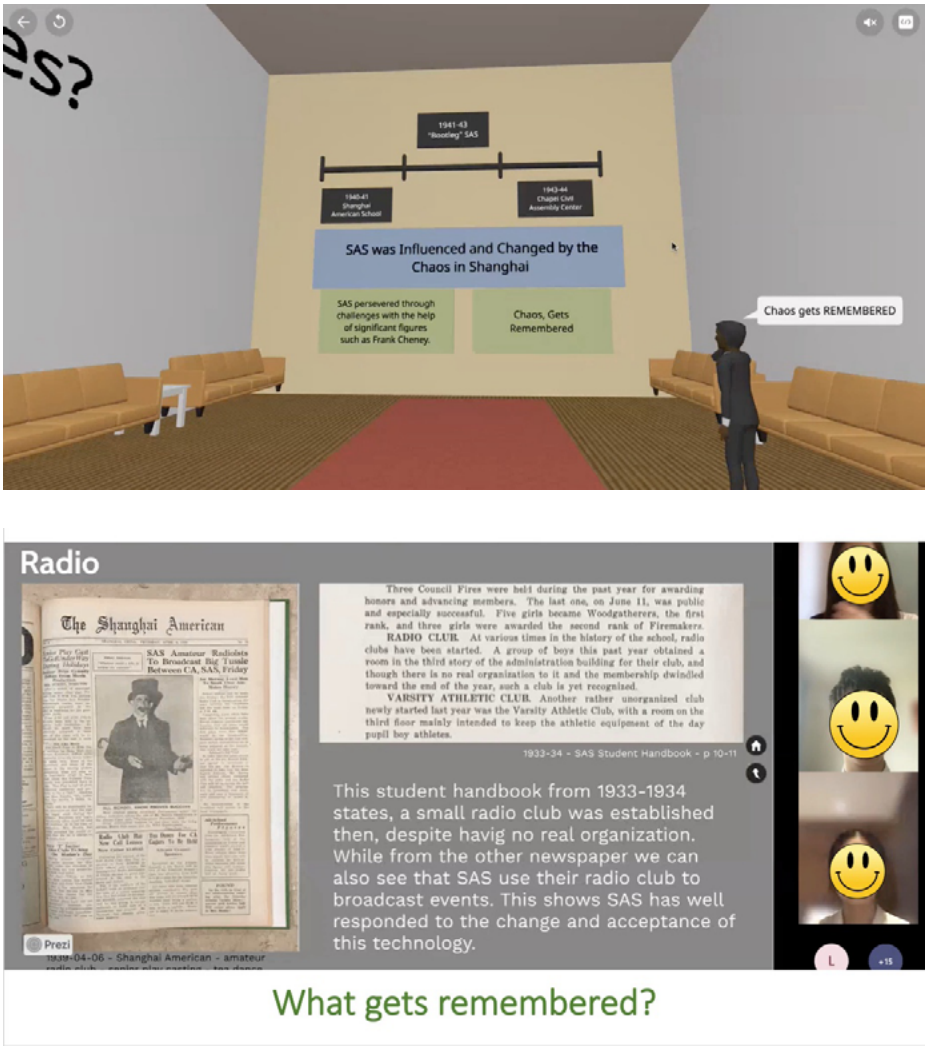

Figure 5: Screenshots from guided tours of exhibits designed by 3 public history teams representing 1930-1939, 1940-44, and 1970-1985.

Appendix I: Organizer used to facilitate History Lab 1.

Name: _____

I² History Lab: Evaluating and Interpreting Sources

Historical Question: In what ways was Shanghai American School of 1912 different from the Shanghai American School of today?

Source A: Excerpts from *Report on the Committee on a School in Shanghai for the Children of Missionaries* (July 11, 1911)

Strengths (What about the source makes it good evidence for answering this historical question?)

Limitations (What about the source might limit its usefulness as evidence for answering the historical question?)

Source B: An image of the first SAS campus.

Strengths	Limitations

Source C: Excerpt from a 1961 letter by Ed Lockwood (SAS 1921) to Charles Boynton

Strengths	Limitations

Source D: A map showing locations of SAS between 1912 and 1945

Strengths	Limitations

Claim • Evidence • Reasoning

Using these sources and your own knowledge, in what ways was Shanghai American School of 1912 different from the Shanghai American School of today?

	Above Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Approaching Expectations	Needs Improvement
CLAIM	The paragraph presents a strong **claim**/thesis that clearly responds to the prompt and provides a line of reasoning for argument(s) to follow. **4**	The paragraph presents a claim/thesis relevant to the prompt that attempts to provide a line of reasoning for argument(s) to follow. **3.5**	The paragraph attempts to present a claim/thesis that is relevant to the prompt; may be unclear, nonspecific, or mostly a restatement of the prompt. **3**	The paragraph does not present a claim/thesis that is relevant to the prompt. **2**
EVIDENCE	The thesis/claim is supported by specific and highly relevant historical **evidence**. Evidence used demonstrates strong understanding of historical content studied. **12**	The thesis/claim is supported by mostly relevant evidence, with some specificity. Evidence used demonstrates understanding of historical content studied. **10**	The thesis/claim is supported by somewhat relevant evidence but may be noticeably vague. Evidence used demonstrates some understanding of historical content studied. **8**	The thesis/claim is not supported with sufficient evidence to create an argument relevant to the prompt, or evidence is noticeably inaccurate. Evidence used demonstrates weak understanding of historical content studied. **6**
REASONING *examples* - significance - comparison and contrast - continuity and change - causation - observations about human nature, etc.	Analysis of evidence gives multiple **reasons** for how the evidence supports the thesis/claim and includes interesting critical insight going beyond a superficial narrative. **10**	Analysis of evidence gives reasons for how evidence supports the thesis/claim. Further development and/or depth is needed in places. **8.5**	Attempts to connect evidence to the thesis/claim but is noticeably descriptive rather than analytical. **7**	Paragraph is descriptive to the point where the thesis/claim is unsupported. **6**

Appendix II: Organizer used to facilitate History Lab 2.

Names: _____

I² History Lab 2: Initial Impressions of Historical Period

Initial Impressions of Your Historical Periodization

Our Assigned Historical Period is: _____

Based on Source A, what gets remembered? List key themes or ideas that seem important to narrating the history of SAS during your assigned era.

-
-
-
-

What technology was present during this era? *Text and visual clues provide key evidence.*

-
-
-
-

Corroboration: Do the sources agree? If not, why?

These documents all agree about...

These documents all disagree about...

Page Break

Wonderings: What are you left wondering?

Some things we are wondering:

A document/perspective we might need is...

Summarizing Your Current Thinking

Directions: Craft one concise paragraph for the prompt below.

Based on your current knowledge and sources, describe SAS during your assigned historical era...

Insert summary here. Be sure to begin with a clear topic sentence.

Learning While Doing: Conducting Oral Histories in Class

Wendy Soltz
Ball State University

Lars Arceneaux
Ball State University

Claire Matney
Ball State University

Halle Pressler
Ball State University

Teaching History 48(1)
DOI: 10.33043/TH.48.1.55-60

In Spring 2023, I worked with 24 Ball State University students enrolled in HIST 240: "Introduction to Public History" to practice oral history methods. Ball State is a R2 public university in Muncie, Indiana with an approximately 15,000 undergraduate student body that is 76% white. I teach the course every spring that is divided into fourteen units that focus on the various subfields and methods of Public History. I usually bring in guest speakers and take the class on short fieldtrips on campus and in town, but this year the students got the opportunity to directly work with the public.

In Fall 2022, I was approached by the Fort Wayne Historic Preservation, Neighborhood Planning and Activation, and Parks Departments to help create an oral history-based video for the Jennings Center, a mostly Black youth center in operation since 1948 (the center was actually open since the 1920s, though under a different name). The oral history recordings would help to document the life of the center and its impact on the East Central Neighborhood. Students worked with Fort Wayne City staff to develop questions and learn about the project from the "client's" point of view and to learn about the history of the center and oral history best practices. The 24 students were divided into twelve groups and each pair was assigned an individual to interview. We have an Oral History Lab on campus but decided to use Zoom in the Lab to conduct the interviews due to distance between Muncie and Fort Wayne. The students could decide amongst themselves who would be the interviewer, and who would be the support person and complete the transcription work.

The recordings will be available to the public via a compilation video on the City of Fort Wayne's YouTube channel and City TV. The recordings, in their entirety, will be available at the Allen County Public Library and the BSU Archives and Special Collections. In addition, the Parks Department will use the material in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Jennings Center and to nominate the Center to the National Register of Historic Places. Finally, getting the word out to colleagues and other students about the important work we did as a class was essential. I created a bulletin board in the Department of History which lists the student pairs, and includes images of the narrators and excerpts from their interviews (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

While overall the project was successful, we did have a few hiccups. First, I couldn't be in Fort Wayne and Muncie at the same time. It was difficult to troubleshoot tech problems from afar and it was also hard to offer support to the students without stepping in *too* much. Second, because we were interviewing older Black individuals from Fort Wayne, it was difficult for them to relate to young white students from Muncie. This surfaced mainly from the narrators' apprehensive statements such as "Well, you're too young to remember this…" or "Keep in mind, this was a Black neighborhood in the 1950s…" Third, it was difficult for the students to modify their next question based on the narrator's answer to the previous question. This type of on-the-spot analytical thinking was by far the most difficult for the students to master. Finally, students had to overcome fear and nervousness about being on camera with another individual, a live human being, whom they had never met. The following three essays by actual students in the class shed light on the learning process and the emotions that come with doing public history.

Figure 1: As the Director of the Public History Program here at Ball State, it was important to me to showcase the work my students accomplished on campus. This bulletin board is in a prominent spot in the Department of History and is seen by faculty, staff, students, and prospective students and their families.

Figure 2: Oral histories produce qualitative results. In order to provide passersby with a snapshot of the types of information the class collected, I extracted and compiled short quotes along with a brief overview of the project. Images of the narrators and the students' names as interviewers reinforce the personal and local aspects of "doing" history in this way

History in the Making: an Oral History Reflection

Lars Arceneaux, Ball State University

I was called to study history. While I originally began my academic career at Ball State as an architecture student, the program did not end up suiting me. Between conversations with my friends and family, I realized that my true passion was in the field of history. I was initially intimidated by this change; I had already spent a year and a half in another program and was afraid of being behind my peers, but through the many excellent professors and courses, I will be graduating earlier than I would have had I stuck with architecture. While I am still not completely certain of what my career path will look like, Ball State's History Department has helped me navigate my options, especially in the field of public history. Studying public history, I've learned that there is much more to history and understanding the past than academia.

Dr. Wendy Soltz's Spring 2023 "Introduction to Public History" class has shown me a wide variety of career opportunities including but not limited to museum curators, archivists, oral historians, cultural resource managers, government historians/policy advisors, film and media producers, historical interpreters, local historians, and historic preservationists. The course has provided a solid understanding of the opportunities and responsibilities that each of these careers offer. Taking notes during lectures and reading from textbooks and other class materials is essential in learning any subject, but being able to apply that knowledge to real-world scenarios is the key to success. For my Public History class, we joined the Jennings Center Oral History Project to help facilitate their needs while also enriching our understanding and skills in public history. The project had students partner up to conduct an interview with a member of the Jennings Center to record the interviewee's history and experiences with the center to show the significance of the building and the impact it has on Fort Wayne's East Central Neighborhood.

Prior to taking this course, I had little experience with conducting an interviewinterviews outside of ones with personal friends, so conducting one with a stranger was a new challenge for me as a student. During one class session, students were broken up into small groups to begin creating a list of the best practices to follow for oral history, a timeline for the history of the Jennings Center, as well as seven potential interview questions for the project. This part of the project was split evenly before we decided which roles we would take in the interview. My partner Sophia White agreed to be the main interviewer and would write the thank-you letter while I would take care of the transcript.

I also wanted to make sure that I attended the interview so that I would be able to take notes and help Sophia if she got stuck on any parts of the interview, which proved to be useful in a couple of instances during the interview, including stepping in to ask the interviewee, Michael Ayers, a few questions. The interview was a slightly nerve-wracking experience as, while I did not have to be in the interviewer's seat, I was still anxious for my partner as I know how difficult it can be talking to strangers. this was both of our first times interviewing a complete stranger. Even though I was not in the interviewer's seat, it can be awkward and uncomfortable talking with a stranger for an hour- especially with the added stress of the interview being for a grade. However, once you realize that both you and the person you're interviewing are bound to make a mistake or take a minute to pause and think, the experience becomes significantly less stressful. Sophia and I were also the first group to go, which meant the setup process for connecting to Zoom and hooking up the microphone took a bit of time. The interview itself went relatively smoothly but did not take the hour we were expected to fill.

On the other hand, the process of creating the transcript took longer than I had initially expected it to. The rough transcript provided by Zoom was around 65 pages long, with frequent disjointed sentences and missed words. However, it was still much easier than it would have been to create the entire script only using the video/audio from the interview. I began by condensing the rough transcript by cutting out the time stamps, while adding the appropriate minute markers, and created blocks of text for each speaker so that they weren't disjointed from one another. Next, I re-watched the interview and went through the transcript to fix any mistakes to add words and sentences that weren't picked up by Zoom. This part was the most time-consuming as the microphones would occasionally have a hard time picking up the sound of the interviewee. Once that was done, I tidied up any

grammatical errors while being true to the interviewer and interviewee's speech patterns; this was different from writing for an academic audience that I had been used to.

Overall, the interview gave us some new insight into the history of the Jennings Center along with putting our lessons on oral history to practical use. One of the most unique and valuable aspects of oral history is its ability to elevate voices that might not otherwise be heard. Historians choose which narratives are shared when discussing the past and which ones are not. As a result, minority groups and marginalized people are often left out of the discussion which is why oral history projects like the one for the Jennings Center is crucial to help broaden our understanding of the past and present. The project required us to use our active listening skills, which includes being attentive to the speaker, paraphrasing what the speaker has said to ensure you are both on the same page, and avoiding judgement, along with and on-the-spot thinking to best curate questions for the narrator. The project also helped my partner and I learn how public history is meant to engage with what the public wants to see in their communities. Knowing that our work will now be a part of a larger project is satisfying to say the least and demonstrates the effectiveness of applying what we learn in the classroom to the real world.

Novice Oral History at Work
Claire Matney, Ball State University

For Dr. Wendy Soltz's "Introduction to Public History" class we had several interactive learning experiences. The first of many was to work with the City of Fort Wayne and members of the Fort Wayne public in conducting twelve oral history interviews about the East Central Neighborhood, a predominately Black neighborhood in Fort Wayne with its own community and rich history. Our focus was the Jennings Center and the integral part it played in the community.

Originally built as a YMCA, over the years the center has been a home to many children who played basketball and other organized sports there and the adults that came to watch over them and work there. In 1929 the YMCA was built as a community center for the area, then in 1945 a new director took over by the name of Al Jennings was, but in 1948 the McCulloch Center was built to replace the "Y." Jennings was regarded as one of the best directors who presided over the center, he was a man of the community, he befriended everyone who came to the center, and he was also a very generous man, one interviewee had an account of Mr. Jennings paying for her to go to Atlanta for a job opportunity. Robert Starke, Jennings' successor, 1977 renamed the center in dedication to Jennings and all the work he had done for their community.

As a class, we were all assigned an individual member of the public and worked in pairs of two, interviewer and "behind the scene," transcriber. We had to come up with interview questions, that were later finalized by Dr. Soltz and our client, into a list of standard questions everyone was to ask their narrator/interviewee. The idea of doing a project of this scale was really exciting to me, as I had done nothing like this before in any other history class I had taken. What made me the most excited about this project was the real opportunity to work with the public, and to help tell the stories of the people who were a part of the Jennings Center. In addition, this experience has added to my resume. The process of this project was lengthy as coordinating with the Jennings Center and having them facilitate interviews on their side and finding dates that worked for everyone's schedules.

First, we met with the client and talked about the overall idea for the project, what the plan was for the interviews, and help to promote East Central and share the stories of its inhabitants. On February 17 we conducted the interview on the second floor of Burkhardt in the Oral History Lab where students conducted the interviews. The narrator we interviewed was Jacqueline Turner, an 84-year-old woman who has resided in the neighborhood for 63 years along with her husband and now grown daughter, Kellie Turner. Kellie was present for the interview with her mother to assist with helping her answer the questions, some of which she partly answered as well. Together the Turners moved from New London, Connecticut to Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1959 and made a life for themselves there. They were not as involved in the Jennings Center as some of the other citizens interviewed, but the Turners did regularly go to basketball games at the center, chaperoned for dances, and attended the Christmas Wassail, a Jennings Center tradition popular in the community.

By being behind the scenes in this project and taking on the role of the transcriber I learned a lot of valuable skills that I might not have gained if I was in the role of the interviewer. From previous experiences, I was familiar with the work of transcribing various interviews, but that wasn't part of what I gained from the interview. I learned how to watch and listen and this is a transferable skill I could use in any field. By observing the interview and watching what's going on you get a better understanding of the entire story as its unweaving before you which was great because then I was able to piece parts of what people said back together when there was an audio mishap or Ms. Turner mumbled something or switched topics mid-question. Ms. Turner was a little rather hard of hearing so sometimes she would ask repeatedly for the question to be restated and then her daughter would step in and answer it with her or help her with an answer.

Looking back on what this experience in oral history brought me, I didn't realize how impactful it was to me in the beginning but the more and more I reflect on this experience I am very grateful for how it has helped me grow as a historian. With this project, I was able to develop my active listening skills as well as develop my observation skills. One day, I hope to hone these skills in oral history so that I may be a well-rounded public historian.

Benefits of Oral Histories in Challenging Interviews

Halle Pressler, Ball State University

Throughout my life, learning about history came straight from textbooks or academic papers. Understanding what happened in the past came from secondary sources that described events as simplistic chronologies. College taught me about historical narratives that changed my way of thinking, and even the way I learn, about history. I wanted to dig into primary sources such as old newspapers and journal entries, but these too have their limitations. In my Public History course with Dr. Wendy Soltz, I learned about oral history. Of course, I knew what interviews were, but understanding their importance was a new concept to me. Not only were we just going to learn about oral history, but we were going to practice it.

Dr. Soltz collaborated with the City of Fort Wayne for a historic preservation project. In the East Central neighborhood of Fort Wayne there is a building called the Jennings Center, built in 1948, that has been lacking interest and attendance. This building was a recreation center that children in the neighborhood frequented every day to play, learn, and interact with other children. Students in her Public History course were going to be paired up and assigned one community member that had attended the Jennings Center. We then had to read about the history of the building and the community centered around it. Before the project could actually begin, we had to understand what oral history was.

Dr. Soltz gave a presentation explaining oral history and then assigned readings, such as *The Oral History Manual* by Barbara Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan, that explained techniques and best practices of oral interviews. She stated that oral history is a field of study that involves interpreting the voices of the past. Oral histories would give a personal perspective of an event, place, or person. Recording these histories and presenting them to the public through interviews allows stories to be told and individual voices to be heard. Most oral histories focus on the average, everyday voice that does not typically get featured in history textbooks. Individual perspectives show how each person experienced and understood an event intellectually and emotionally, which are often left out of academic literature. Most writings and papers on historic topics leave out how people felt in the moment and how they interpret personal experiences. Oral histories bring those emotions to light, especially during oral interviews. Though hearing the emotions is an amazing way to understand the impact of an event or place, they can be tricky to handle during interviews.

My partner, Emily Loney, and I did anticipate that our narrator would probably express intense emotions. To prepare, we practiced the assigned questions and prepared follow-up questions but did not go over how to respond to emotional reactions. Instead, we simply focused on the facts and background information of the Jennings Center and the division of labor. Deciding who was going to question the narrator was a difficult decision as both my partner and I prefer behind-the-scenes work. Many of my fellow students, along with myself, find it hard to just have a conversation with a new person, let alone have it be a formal interview that is graded. After much

back and forth, we decided on my taking on the role of interviewer. The preparation for the interview was nerve-racking. I practiced the questions over and over so that I would not be following the list directly. The experience during the interview and what the narrator was going to say or how he would react was unknown. There is no way to fully prepare for that.

On February 16 I entered the Oral History Lab in the Burkhardt Building on Ball State's campus and was immediately placed before the computer and cued up the microphone for the Zoom call. Dr. Soltz went through the whole setup including the list of questions and the chat she put on the screen so she could pose questions for me to ask. The beginning was nerve-racking and stressful, as this was a new experience for me as well as many of my classmates. I faced many challenges just to get started including the microphone not working, audio going out, and the narrator, Mr. Dixie, not being fully ready to begin as his consent form photo had not been taken yet. When everything was finally ready, I spoke at the speed of light because of my nerves, even though Dr. Soltz repeatedly told all of us students to just slow down. Her reminder in the chat made my voice slow at mid-sentence, and I slowly calmed down and relaxed.

After the rocky introductions, the interview went well. I was apprehensive about my ability to form follow-up questions, but as the interview went on, I developed open-ended questions that elicited more information from the narrator that would expand more on what he was saying. The questions asked focused on the importance of the Jennings Center to Mr. Dixie and the community he lived in. I learned how truly important the building was to him and the impact it had on his life. Toward the end of the interview, he got teary-eyed discussing the man whom the building was named after, Albert Jennings, who had an important role in his life. I internally panicked as he wiped his tears, as I only had a split second to decide the best way to proceed with the interview. I was able to calm myself and ask if he needed a break before we continued. Thinking on my feet allowed us to continue the interview until we ran out of time.

Emotions like Mr. Dixie's showed me what makes oral history interviews so important. I saw how people, places, and events impact people's lives through the raw emotions that showed the depth of their impact. Even though there were challenges throughout the interview, such as sound issues and feeling unprepared for emotional reactions, hearing the emotion behind everything Mr. Dixie said showed me the importance of oral history. Having Mr. Dixie write down his story instead would have lacked the emotions and raw answers of an oral interview. The interview is now in two archives and is being used by the City of Fort Wayne in an attempt to revive the Jennings Center. Hearing how important the Jennings Center has been from a person directly affected by it will hopefully spark a revival in the use and attendance of the Jennings Center.

Editor's Introduction to the Fall 2023 Special Section "History Fun and Games"

History is serious. Interpreting past events, deciding why things happened the way they did, is a serious scholarly endeavor with serious, real-life consequences for individuals, families, communities, nations, and the world. Teaching history is also an extremely serious endeavor, perhaps never more so than today. The stakes are sky high. When we live in an era of "alternative" facts, AI-generated texts and images, and bots spewing misinformation about life and death issues on social media seen by millions, our job—teaching students how to access reliable primary sources and make an evidence-based argument about the past—could not be more serious. So is this really a good time to dedicate a special section of *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* to "history fun and games?"

It's precisely because the stakes are so high for history education right now that we need to take a close look at how history educators can utilize games, gamification, and play to help our students learn. Obviously, games are not the only way to learn how to do history. But the science of learning offers compelling evidence of how effective games can be for learning. Playing games checks a whole lot of boxes on the list of things that greatly increase anyone's ability to engage in authentic learning: evoking curiosity, encouraging autonomy, creating new connections, and strengthening sociality. Students in our social studies and history classes need to build critical thinking, information literacy, and primary source interpretation skills not just for academic success but also so they will be better equipped to navigate a world saturated with misrepresentations and deceptive discourse. Games, play, and fun can be an important part of the toolkit we bring into the classroom to take on this truly weighty responsibility as educators.

Gamification is by no means a new idea in education in general or even the field of history specifically. However, I believe it has new import in 2023, when educators and learners face some truly grim challenges. We are all still grappling with the fallout of the pandemic pivot semesters, including trauma and loss. Education at every level has become one of the most vicious battlegrounds in an excoriating culture war, even as profound, systemic inequities impinge on teaching and learning. Multiple polysynchronous modalities for teaching and learning are reshaping was it even means to be in a classroom. Students, teachers, and college instructors are struggling in record numbers with anxiety, disconnection, disengagement, uncertainty, loneliness, and burnout. In short, all of us—teachers, faculty, and students of every age—need more opportunities to have fun and to engage in the social connectivity so necessary for effective teaching and learning. The authors of the articles and the subjects of the interviews in this special section of *THAJM* suggest a variety of ways to do exactly this.

In the first article, "A Fun and Different Course: How Gamification Transformed an Online U.S. History Survey," Chris Babits demonstrates how a "choose your own adventure" structure for an asynchronous history survey class fostered student competence, autonomy, and motivation—vital components of self-determination. Offering students options for accessing material and demonstrating their learning, accumulating points along the way, proved to be an effective course design and, perhaps most strikingly, students perceived it as an enjoyable, even liberatory way to learn. The ability to facilitate student engagement was an important factor for Christopher Barber as well when utilizing a role playing game in the classroom, as explored in "Reflecting on Reacting: Incorporating *Reacting to the Past* Games in the High School Classroom." Here Barber is discussing what is probably the most widely known game framework for history educators, *Reacting to the Past*.[1] After utilizing the RTTP game "Constitutional Convention," Barber concludes that "The game provides a deep dive into the historical context, events, and personalities of the Constitutional Convention, which is significantly more engaging than a

1 The American Historical Association website summarizes Reacting to the Past (RTTP) as "complex games, set in the past, in which students are assigned roles informed by classic texts in the history of ideas. Class sessions are run entirely by students; instructors advise and guide students and grade their oral and written work." Examples of games include "The Trail of Anne Hutchinson: Liberty, Law, and Intolerance in Puritan New England," and "The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 BC" (https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/teaching-resources-for-historians/reacting-to-the-past). The RTTP main website explains that it "is an active learning pedagogy of role-playing games designed for higher education. In Reacting to the Past games, students are assigned character roles with specific goals and must communicate, collaborate, and compete effectively to advance their objectives. Reacting promotes engagement with big ideas, and improves intellectual and academic skills" (https://reacting.barnard.edu).

traditional lecture-based approach," and that students can study and interact with "primary sources, historical characters, and issues … in a way that is both personal and meaningful." (page 83)

Maximizing students' personal interest to make studying the past more meaningful is the teaching takeaway in "Phantasmagoria 101: Haunted History for Fun and Profit" by Garret D. Langlois and Nicola R. Astles. Langlois and Astles describe the founding and successful growth of a Texas Tech University student group on campus called "Raider Power of Paranormal" and their annual fundraising Haunted Tour of the campus. Contrary to the stereotypes about student interest in the paranormal (i.e. anti-intellectual, conspiracy theory-driven, etc.), these authors have discovered that creating a campus "ghost" tour motivated students to engage in rigorous research of the past and authentic learning about historical processes. Assessing authentic learning, and the impact of a games approach, is the subject of the next article, Patrick Ludolph's "Measuring Critical Thinking in Reacting to the Past." Ludolph poses questions about how to best measure the elusive skills we term "critical thinking," and how RTTP (the role-playing game with which many history educators are most familiar) may help students build these skills. He concludes that RTTP "can be a potent intervention for developing creative thinking and effective communication" (page 91).

The last two articles are case studies of original gamification approaches created and implemented by the authors, again with the goal of engaging students in fun and meaningful ways that help them develop historical thinking skills. In "Murder Most Foul: A Centuries-Spanning True Story of Teaching, Vengeance, and Several Ducks, to Which is Appended an Original Role-Playing Game of the Highest Historical Accuracy," Justine Meberg describes a very successful lesson she designed for her West Point freshman in an introductory history class, "Army of the Republic: Leading Citizen Soldiers." Students studied and role played scenarios deriving from letters written in 1841 by "five cadets nursing offenses to their honor wrote to Secretary of War John Spencer to protest the Superintendent's alleged abuse of his authority in investigating the disappearance of several ducks" (page 106). As Merberg argues, "This very silly case produced big questions. We talked about what honor meant to the letter writers. We considered how their conception of it compared to ours. We asked how our responses to the documents revealed our views of officership today" (page 108).

In the last article, "Making History (with Timelines): Playing Games and Constructing Historical Narratives in History Survey Courses," Caitlin Monroe outlines an effective class activity, in game form, that both reinforced students' overall understanding of the chronology of events being covered in the class while also encouraging students to think critically about what "counts" as history: "students had to practice historical thinking skills and think about those questions about constructing historical narratives" (page 125). Importantly, the timeline game described by Monroe strengthened classroom community and sociality.

Similarly, the student reflections in the subsection of "History and Fun and Games" titled "Student Voices" suggest that a gamification approach to historical content increased their understanding of past events while helping them build new connections and to feel highly engaged in the classroom environment. Peculiar Joseph's "Is Including Games in College Class Beneficial?" answers in the affirmative, explaining that in playing the French Revolution RTTP game for her political science class, "we had to utilize our critical thinking and problem-solving skills to play the game" (page 134). Joseph also offers a word of caution when it comes to RTTP: working as a team is not easy to do, and students' different levels of willingness to actively engage and contribute can be a significant challenge. The second student reflection, "All African People's Conference Game Reflection" by Ava Moore and Kamryn Reed, emphasizes the variety of academic and professional skills that RTTP can help students develop, especially public speaking skills. Moore and Reed persuasively conclude that "it's vital that history teachers around the world incorporate games into their classrooms to help students fully engage with the concepts and events that they are learning" (page 138).

That's an argument enthusiastically endorsed by Mark Carnes, creator of *Reacting to the Past* and the subject of one of the two interviews I conducted for this special edition. In our conversation, Carnes explains the logistics of running a *RTTP* game and enumerates some of the ways that this roleplaying enlivens, deepens, and can ultimately transform history learning and teaching. He notes that *RTTP* also empowers students studying history

in a meaningful way: "Students often regard history as boring because our books and lectures often suggest that individual human agency doesn't much matter. But *Reacting* shows otherwise. Students see it in their own games. Students see that they can and do make a difference, that individual actions can change the course of history. That's a very powerful lesson" (page 146).

My second interview is with Tori Mondelli, historian and coauthor with Joe Bisz of The Educator's Guide to Designing Games and Creative Active-Learning Exercises: The Allure of Play. Mondelli delves into the different types of gamification that educators can implement and offers some specific advice to readers of Teaching History: "For those wanting to teach students or help students learn about historical events, my favorite mechanic is the roleplay and simulation. Because it helps the students kind of immerse themselves, and there are different ways you can structure it. It will typically motivate students to do reading ahead of time, so that they can be very good at their role" (page 140). In her interview, Mondelli summarizes a key learning from the scholarship and research on teaching and learning, and a point at the heart of this special section of Teaching History: students crave experiences that aren't so prescriptive, linear, and purely logical all the time" and with a gamification approach "you can open up imaginative spaces that students don't often get to traverse in traditional academic settings" (page 141).

I hope readers will find the ideas explored here inspirational and thought-provoking. I hope this special section of the Fall 2023 edition of *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* will encourage you to consider new ways to offer your students a chance to experience history fun and games.

A Fun and Different Course: How Gamification Transformed an Online U.S. History Survey

Chris Babits
Utah State University

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In March 2020, the world changed forever when Covid-19 struck in full force. Without much notice, college instructors had to turn in-person classes into online learning opportunities. The words "asynchronous" and "synchronous" joined the educational lexicon of people who had only taught in-person courses. Technostress (or mental stress and psychosomatic illness caused by working with computer technology) affected instructors and students alike. Technology provided one immediate solution for continuing the work of education during a pandemic. But there were real concerns about educational technology. How could educators make meaningful learning experiences for students when they did not have the training to use learning management systems, multimedia production software, and video meeting programs?

I was offered a teaching position at a large, land-grant university in the American West the same month Covid hit. The department chair told me that part of my upcoming teaching rotation would include creating an asynchronous section of *HIST 1700: American History*, a sweeping survey of history from "contact" to the present day. Since *HIST 1700* is designated for non-majors, I was not particularly worried about content coverage. I had ample experience developing strong essential questions (EQs) that could frame content in ways advocated by curriculum theorists Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe.[1] Instead, my primary concern centered around motivating students to do well in an asynchronous online course. These concerns were not unwarranted. "Having lack of motivation," Kübra Ertan and Selay Arkün Kocadete point out, "is one of the challenges that students face in online learning environments."[2] From the beginning, I understood that *HIST 1700* had to look and feel different from anything I had enrolled in or taught in the past.

My solution was to employ gamification in the asynchronous online survey. Defined as using game components in non-game contexts, gamification has been incorporated to various degrees in e-learning environments.[3] In this article, I explain how I use gamification in *HIST 1700* through a "choose your own grading adventure." In the grading adventure, students focus on earning points as they pick-and-choose which assignments they complete. Currently, *HIST 1700* has 350 assignments that student can complete to demonstrate their knowledge of American history. For each of the semester's fourteen weeks, students can take low-stakes quizzes attached to course lectures, primary sources, and TED Talks. Most weeks have options for students to read and analyze academic articles published by prominent historians. In addition, students can submit written assignments, like a primary source analysis or a history meme, at various junctures in the semester. Like in a video game, easier tasks, such as watching a lecture and completing the accompanying quiz, are worth few points. Harder (and more time-consuming) assignments are worth more. Although students have immense choice as they navigate the grading adventure, they are ultimately faced with a specific quest—to earn at least 282 points by the end of the semester to earn an A.

The "choose your own grading adventure" demonstrates how gamification increases student motivation to succeed in an asynchronous learning environment. Two pieces of further explanation are necessary to prove this claim. In the first, I explain what gamification is. In the second, I provide a detailed overview of the grading adventure. This section includes an overview of the assignment choices students have in the course. After setting this necessary context, this article employs qualitative data from evaluations of teaching to spotlight how students interpret their successes in the grading adventure. These qualitative data illustrate the importance of self-

1 Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005).

2 Kübra Ertan and Selay Arkün Kocadere, "Gamification Design to Increase Motivation in Online Learning Environments: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Learning and Teaching in the Digital Age* 7, no. 2 (2022): 151.

3 Sebastian Deterding, et al., "From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining 'Gamification,'" *Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference: Envisioning Future Media Environments* (September 2011): 9-15.

determination theory for comprehending motivation in gamified asynchronous online surveys like *HIST 1700*.

Gamification: What Is It?

Scholarship on gamification in e-learning environments has proliferated over the past decade. The growth of online learning, particularly within higher education, has posed numerous challenges for educators. Importantly, concerns about student motivation have ranked high on lists of concerns about students enrolling in online coursework. Generally, students in asynchronous courses, which allow students to examine instructional material at any time they choose, must be motivated learners with strong self-regulating abilities. Not every student, though, will feel motivated in their courses. This is especially true in a general education course, such as *HIST 1700*, for non-majors. Gamification presents one way to motivate students to complete and excel in their schoolwork.

Educational researchers have proposed several definitions of gamification. Most scholars use the definition provided above—gamification is using game components in non-game contexts.[4] In the context of learning, gamification is a design process where game elements change existing learning processes.[5] Numerous literature reviews point out some common features of gamification, especially within the context of asynchronous online learning. These features include emphases on the accumulation of points and earning badges. Leaderboards and progress bars are also features found in gamified courses. Christo Dichev and Darina Dicheva contend that points, badges, leaderboards, and progress bars are common parts of gamification because of their relative ease to implement in educational settings.[6]

Gamification differs from other forms of gaming, including game-based learning, in several ways. According to Errol Scott Rivera and Claire Louise Palmer Garden, gamification "employs some elements of games" without turning the learning process into a full-fledged game. These researchers stress that the aim of gamification is to "modify the learner's state in order to improve pre-existing instruction." Game-based learning, on the other hand, is much more like a flight simulator. In a flight simulator, the student has a specific goal. They learn how to take off, navigate through inclement weather, or land the plane. Game-based learning, in other words, teaches specific skills, often in a structured and heavily scaffolded manner, whereas gamification is focused much more on incorporating elements of gaming into educational settings, assessments, and activities.[7]

Researchers have identified other important components of gamification. In "Designing Effective Gamified Learning Experiences," for instance, Yunjo An stresses how gamification "is more effective when users can choose whether or not to participate" in specific learning activities. Choice, then, is a key aspect to consider when designing a gamified course. Furthermore, scholars prioritize the importance of failure for gamification. Once again, An's work is crucial on this matter. "What makes failure fun in games," she writes, "is that it comes with no serious consequences, while failure is a negative and often embarrassing experience that remains on your permanent record in traditional education settings." According to An, failure should serve as an opportunity for learning and growth in a game environment.[8]

HIST 1700's grading adventure employs some of the core features of gamification. This assessment strategy uses a point-based grading system to motivate students to complete assignments. In addition, students have many assignment choices. On top of this, students are not "punished" if they do not perform well on an assignment. Instead, *HIST 1700*'s point-based system emphasizes growth and learning. If a student earns a subpar grade on an

4 Deterding, Dixon, Khalde, and Nacke, "From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness," 9-15.

5 Michael Sailer and Lisa Homner, "The Gamification of Learning: A Meta-Analysis," *Educational Psychology Review* 32 (2020): 78.

6 Christo Dichev and Darina Dicheva, "Gamifying Education: What Is Known, What Is Believed and What Remains Uncertain: A Critical Review," *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 14, no. 9 (2017).

7 Errol Scott Rivera and Claire Louise Palmer Garden, "Gamification for Student Engagement: A Framework," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 45, no. 7 (2021): 1000-1001.

8 Yunjo An, "Designing Effective Gamified Learning Experiences," *International Journal of Technology in Education* 3, no. 2 (2020): 64, 66.

assignment, they still receive points toward their final grade. I encourage them, however, to complete another one of these assignments, taking my feedback into account so they can improve their work. The learning might not be as fun as the type that happens in a video game. But this approach lessens the all-or-nothing approach used in traditional grading schemes.

The "Choose Your Own Grading Adventure"

Thus far, I have provided some insight into the features that comprise *HIST 1700*'s "choose your own grading adventure." This includes the points-based system. In this system, students earn points for every assignment they complete. Part of this points-based system involves not "punishing" students for doing poorly on individual assignments. They can apply whatever points they earn on an assignment toward their final grade. If a student accumulates 282 points by the end of the semester, they earn an A in the course. It can be that simple. But what does this look like for students? This section includes more detail on the design process behind and the structure of *HIST 1700*.

First, I developed a set of essential questions (EQs) that would serve as anchors for the course content. *HIST 1700* focuses on five EQs: America's role in the world; civil rights; economics and labor; government and power; and women and gender. (See Figure 1 for the wording of the course's EQs.) These EQs are crucial for a couple reasons. Most importantly, they provide students a chance to answer thought-provoking and open-ended inquiries as they engage with content. Every resource in *HIST 1700*, from my lectures to primary sources and academic articles, must answer part of an essential question. Moreover, the EQs helped me think about the range of topics students might want to explore in a "choose your own grading adventure." By focusing on big themes like America's role in the world and civil rights, I could shape the course's curriculum around myriad student interests. Doing so assisted in the processes of tailoring the gamification process, as suggested by prominent educational technology scholars, and thinking conceptually about how I could structure the course's grading adventure.[9]

Second, I came up with a list of lecture topics that would help answer these essential questions. Since *HIST 1700* is such an expansive survey, I had to be selective. But for two weeks devoted to economics and labor, I ended up recording six lectures ranging between nineteen and thirty-one minutes. I matched these lectures with textbooks readings from *The American Yawp* and primary sources from *The American Yawp Reader*. My thought process was that the lectures and the textbook readings would provide students the necessary background knowledge to engage with primary sources.

Third, I searched for video resources that could appeal to students who enjoy and respond well to visually engaging materials. I wanted to find a website that had short videos that would help students better understand the course's essential questions. Ultimately, I settled on TED-Ed's animated videos on American history. Videos like "Ugly History: Japanese American Incarceration Camps" build on issues of civil rights I discuss in lectures. Other TED Talks, such as "What Causes an Economic Recession?", complement the content I address in lectures on the Gilded Age and the causes and consequences of the Great Depression. Since TED-Ed's videos are animated, I thought that this format spoke to the playful element of a gamified course. But while these video's animations are visually pleasing, they also articulate complex, often serious topics to students, albeit in an approachable manner.

Fourth, I searched for academic articles suitable for an introductory college course. I thought that academic articles, which propose novel historical arguments, would provide an extra challenge for students who want to read or write at a higher level. The gamified nature of *HIST 1700* would give students the opportunity, I reasoned, to engage with more difficult assignments without the reticence that not doing well would hurt their cumulative grade. I incorporated some of the articles I remembered enjoying as an undergraduate student, including T.H. Breen's "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century" and Erika Lee's "Enforcing the Borders: Chinese Exclusion along the U.S. Borders with Canada and Mexico, 1882-1924."[10] Since

9 Wilk Oliveira, et al., "Tailored Gamification in Education: A Literature Review and Future Agenda," *Education and Information Technologies* 28 (2023): 397.

10 T.H. Breen, "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 119 (May

I began teaching HIST 1700, the number of academic article options for students has grown to twenty-seven. I asked colleagues to share pathbreaking—and accessible—articles within their subspecialities of U.S. history when I decided to grow the number of article analysis options for students in HIST 1700.

Fifth, I started to assemble my curricular materials. This process included building Canvas pages for the lectures, primary sources, and TED Talks. As I built these pages, I used Atomic Assessments, a third-party plugin for learning management systems, to create quizzes for each of these resources.[11] Eventually, I assigned a higher number of points to quizzes that take longer to complete. A quiz on a 30-minute lecture, for instance, is worth three points, whereas quizzes associated with the 6-minute TED Talks are only worth one point. Currently, the article analyses are worth fifteen points, and in that assignment, students must locate a scholar's argument, identify which primary sources they draw from, and offer praise and constructive criticism of the article. Completing these article analyses takes more time than taking a quiz, which explains why they are worth a greater number of points.

Sixth, I designed the course's highest point assignments—the primary source reading grid (PSRG) and the history meme assessment.[12] Students can turn in PSRGs and/or history memes in Week #6 and Week #12 and during finals. They can earn up to thirty points for each of these assignments. The PSRG is a bread-and-butter assignment for an introductory survey. It asks students to consider a source's author, perspective, and historical context. The last part of the assignment also challenges students to answer a relevant EQ. The history meme, on the other hand, offers students the opportunity to create a meme based on the historical content they learned. This assignment asks students to explain their meme in a way that would make it understandable for someone who has no background in American history. In the next part of the assignment, students must connect their meme to one of the course's EQs.

Once I had everything built for a specific week, I created a page where students would be able to find everything they needed to navigate the grading adventure. Each of these pages follows the same format. There is a short introduction to the week, a link to the most relevant EQs covered in the content, and an option to complete a study skills assignment, which I call "habits of mind."[13] Then comes the historical content, with links to lectures, textbook readings, TED Talks, and primary sources. Each of these links contains not only the historical content but also an accompanying quiz for students to earn points toward their final grade. In each weekly page, I then remind students that they can turn in a PSRG and/or a history meme on any of the topics they find interesting. Every page ends with one, two, or sometimes more academic articles students might read and analyze. See Image 1 for how one week's list of primary sources shows up on Canvas.

Figure 2 shows the assignment options that students have in Week #8. This week has an intense focus on twentieth-century civil rights issues, and as such, many students interested in recent histories of race, racial ideology, and racism complete work during Week #8. If students complete every assignment offered in Week #8, they could earn up to 94 points, which is one-third of the number of points needed for an A. No student has ever

1988): 73-104 and Erika Lee, "Enforcing the Borders: Chinese Exclusion along the U.S. Borders with Canada and Mexico, 1882-1924," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (June 2002): 54-86.

11 Atomic Jolt, "Atomic Assessments: Interactive Courseware and High Stakes Testing for Canvas," 2023. https://www.atomicjolt.com/atomic-assessments.

12 There are scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) studies available on the use of memes in college-level courses. Dominic D. Wells, for instance, highlights how memes are an important part of modern politics, and as such, memes can be used to promote critical thinking in political science classrooms. Paul Mihailidis, on the other hand, completed research into youth engagement with memes and hashtags, arguing that young people have become accustomed to employing these tools in the digital world for civics-related purposes. See Wells, "You All Made Dank Memes: Using Internet Memes to Promote Critical Thinking," *Journal of Political Science Education* 14, no. 2 (2018): 240-248 and Mihailidis, "The Civic Potential of Memes and Hashtags in the Lives of Young People," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 45, no. 5 (2020): 762-781.

13 See Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick, editors, *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind: 16 Essential Characteristics for Success* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008), for an overview of the habits of mind framework.

gained that many points from a single week, though the option to do so highlights how they can pick-and-choose assignments in the grading adventure. See Figure 3 to review the number of points available for students to earn in each week.

Gamification: Self-Determination Theory at Work in *HIST 1700*

Several psychological theories explain the success I have seen in *HIST 1700*. Self-determination theory (SDT), however, offers the most insight into the course's grading adventure. In this section, I explore the most relevant components of SDT and relate these elements of SDT to what students report in course evaluations for *HIST 1700*.

SDT proposes that there are two types of motivation—intrinsic and extrinsic. Educators hope for their students to feel intrinsically motivated to complete their assignments. In educational settings, intrinsic motivation involves students making volitional choices about their learning. Students also display a genuine interest in the subject when they are intrinsically motivated. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, involves students turning in work to meet an external goal. Unsurprisingly, many students, particularly in general education courses like *HIST 1700*, have a grade they would like to earn in the class. Often, the hope to earn that specific grade serves as a form of extrinsic motivation.[14]

SDT research emphasizes three basic psychological needs to facilitate intrinsic motivation. The first is competence. According to SDT, competence is the perceived adequateness someone feels in a subject. In history classes, confident students might declare themselves to be "history buffs," whereas students lacking confidence might say things like "I have never been good at history." The second psychological need outlined in SDT is autonomy. This refers to a person acting voluntarily with a sense of choice. Courses that provide assessment options for students can offer students choice in personalizing their learning opportunities. And last, SDT stresses the importance of relatedness for fostering intrinsic motivation. Relatedness is the state of feeling connected to a person, a group, or a culture during the educational process.[15]

HIST 1700's grading adventure best satisfies the student need for competency and autonomy. Regarding competence, the course's low-stakes assignments, such as lecture or primary source quizzes, provide students with a relatively simple task. They must either watch or read something and answer some basic comprehension questions. As students gain confidence by earning points on these quizzes, they feel like they can take on harder challenges, like a primary source reading grid. This satisfies Ertan and Kocadere's understanding of competence in gamification, which they describe as providing students with challenges that gradually get harder.[16]

Course evaluations highlight how students interpret their competence as they proceed through *HIST 1700*'s grading adventure. In a Fall 2021 evaluation, one student wrote the following: "I felt like this course was easy to learn because there were multiple ways of gaining knowledge that was incorporated in the lectures."[17] This student, though specifically referencing lectures in their evaluation, recognized that they could display their knowledge of American history in several ways. Other students commented similarly. In course evaluations, comments like "Gives a wide array of different ways to learn" were frequent.[18] Student evaluations also reveal which assignments students like. "I really enjoyed the lectures and TED Talks," one student wrote. "These were informative assignments, and I learned a lot of different material."[19] These kinds of comments reveal aspects of student competence as they learn American history.

Even more explicitly, student evaluations underline how the grading adventure fosters autonomy. Students

14 Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (January 2000): 68-78.

15 An, "Designing Effective Gamified Learning Experiences," 64-65.

16 Ertan and Kocadere, "Gamification Design to Increase Motivation in Online Learning Environments," 154.

17 Anonymous student, "IDEA Survey Response for HIST 1700: American History," Fall 2021.

18 Anonymous student, "IDEA Survey Response for HIST 1700: American History," Spring 2022.

19 Anonymous student, "IDEA Survey Response for *HIST 1700*: American History," Spring 2022.

face a plethora of choices on a weekly basis as they try to earn an A in *HIST 1700*. They are thus able to take control of choosing which activities to take part in, which Xihuan Li and Samuel Kai Wah Chu identify as essential for students to feel autonomous.[20] Students not only choose which kinds of assignments they complete. They can also invest their time and energy into topics of innate interest. This mixture of assessment and content choice provides nearly endless avenues for students to earn the number of points needed for a good grade in the course.

Students did not use "autonomy" in their evaluations of teaching. But they often use an even more powerful word—freedom. "The freedom offered within this class was very different," wrote one student, "and I liked the structure of the course."[21] Other students agreed. "The freedom to do the things that I found interesting was something great about this class," attested another student.[22] "I really enjoyed the freedom throughout the course to choose our own grading adventure," reported someone else. "It made learning easier and more fun."[23] This preliminary evidence stresses how important choice and autonomy is for student motivation. My hope was that the gamified elements of the course would motivate students. But I never expected to read the words "freedom" and "fun" in so many student evaluations!

Some of the most insightful student evaluations, though, address motivation head-on. When reviewing course evaluations for three semesters, I noticed variations of the following comment: "Very helpful for completing the course early before all my other classes got extremely difficult."[24] Another student declared that "[t]he layout of this class is awesome! I loved the freedom and ability it gave me to finish early and do the assignments I wanted to."[25] This second comment not only reifies the importance of choice that students experience in *HIST 1700*. It also reveals how the point-based system can serve as a motivating factor for students to excel in an asynchronous online course. The ability to finish work early compels some students to work ahead, earn as many points as possible, and make more time available for other coursework at the end of the semester.

These evaluations call attention to some of the benefits students noted from *HIST 1700*'s grading adventure. Many students emphasize how the structure of the course enables them to feel motivated to complete assessments. In addition, an overwhelming number of students use words like "free" and "freedom" to describe their engagement with the course's assessment approach. This anecdotal information demonstrates how *HIST 1700*'s grading adventure harnesses some of the best features of gamification to increase student motivation.

Further Research

The findings published in this article underscore a promising approach for gamifying a U.S. history survey. In short, *HIST 1700*'s "choose your own grading adventure" offers one path for improving student motivation in an online asynchronous introductory course. Students report increased levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in their evaluations of teaching. Moreover, students use words like "free" and "freedom" in their evaluations. These self-reports provide anecdotal evidence that a grading adventure works for many students.

Student evaluations of teaching have limitations as reliable data. Although my evaluations have been overwhelmingly positive, I am in the process of collecting quantitative data about how students navigate *HIST 1700*'s grading adventure. These data will show which assignments students complete, when they turn in these assignments, and how well students perform on different kinds of assessments. The collection of quantitative data, which will be analyzed in relation to available qualitative evidence, will shed additional light on how students navigate a grading

20 Xiuhan Li and Samuel Kai Wah Chu, "Exploring the Effects of Gamification Pedagogy on Children's Reading: A Mixed-Method Study on Academic Performance, Reading-Related Mentality and Behaviors, and Sustainability," British Journal of Educational Technology 52, no. 1 (January 2021): 160-178.

21 Anonymous student, "IDEA Survey Response for *HIST 1700: American History*," Fall 2021.

22 Anonymous student, "IDEA Survey Response for *HIST 1700: American History*," Fall 2021.

23 Anonymous student, "IDEA Survey Response for *HIST 1700: American History*," Spring 2022.

24 Anonymous student, "IDEA Survey Response for *HIST 1700: American History*," Spring 2022.

25 Anonymous student, "IDEA Survey Response for *HIST 1700: American History*," Fall 2021.

adventure. Despite the lack of quantitative data, though, I feel comfortable declaring that gamification has fostered my students' motivation to succeed in *HIST 1700*'s asynchronous learning environment. Perhaps most importantly, between seventy and eighty percent of students in any given semester earn an A in *HIST 1700*. Under ten percent receive a D or F. This alone shows that there is something about the course's grading adventure that motivates students.

Essential Questions from *HIST 1700: American History*	
Essential Question	
America's Role in the World	Determine how the United States' foreign policy changed from the 1790s through September 11. Assess U.S. diplomatic and military power over time. How did the U.S. confront the challenges it faced around the globe? Are there core tenets (or beliefs) that have guided American foreign policy? If so, what are they? If not, how do foreign policy conflicts differ from each other?
Civil Rights	The continued fight for equality has defined the American experience. Compare and contrast the struggle for civil rights that the following segments of the population experienced: 1) African Americans; 2) Native Americans; 3) women; 4) Mexican Americans; 5) Asian Americans; and/or 6) LGBTQ+ individuals. Are there commonalities in the political rhetoric and tactics of these groups? How would you describe the unique challenges these segments of the population faced? What are the arguments, agendas, challenges, etc. that have made coalitions difficult to form, both within and between different rights movements?
Economics and Labor	Evaluate how the American economy has changed since the nation's founding. How did the market revolution and then "big business" alter the landscape of U.S. industry? Why did Progressive Era and New Deal reformers pass the legislation they did? Have Americans found a way to balance economic growth and workers' rights in the post-World War II period?
Women and Gender	Analyze the political, social, and economic fight for women's equality. To what extent has the role and status of women changed over the past 250 years? What have been landmark victories for women's rights? What roadblocks have women faced? Why have various political factions opposed women's and feminist groups? What's the status of women's rights today? What work is left to be done?
Government and Power	Assess how various figures, from presidents to average citizens, have interpreted the nature of governmental power. At what level (local, state, federal) have different historical figures believed that most governmental decisions should (or should not) occur? How have American politicians and everyday citizens navigated the separation of powers between the different branches of the federal government? What are some of the reasons why the powers of the federal government grew over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries?

Figure 1: Essential Questions in *HIST 1700: American History*

Week #8: Race and Social Memory	
Lectures	• The Chinese Exclusion Act (12 minutes 57 seconds) • Japanese Internment in World War II (24 minutes 57 seconds) • The Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance (19 minutes 42 seconds) • African American Civil Rights before 1945 (29 minutes 37 seconds) • The "Classical" Civil Rights Movement (32 minutes 49 seconds) • From Black Power to #BLM (39 minutes 17 seconds)
Primary Sources[26]	• Chinese Merchant Complains of Racist Abuse (1860) • Chinese Immigrants Confront Anti-Chinese Prejudice (1885 and 1903) • James D. Phelan, "Why the Chinese Should Be Excluded" (1901) • Marcus Garvey, Explanation of the Objects of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (1921) • Alain Locke on the "New Negro" (1925) • Hiram Evans on "The Klan's Fight for Americanism" (1926) • A. Philip Randolph on a March on Washington (1941) • Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga on Japanese Internment (1942/1944) • *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) • *Hernandez v. Texas* (1954) • Rosa Parks on Life in Montgomery, Alabama (1956-1958) • Fannie Lou Hamer, Testimony at the Democratic National Convention (1964) • Lyndon Johnson on Voting Rights and the American Promise (1965) • Lyndon Johnson, Howard University Commencement Address (1965) • Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968) • Native Americans Occupy Alcatraz (1969) • Jesse Jackson on the Rainbow Coalition (1984)
TED Talks[27]	• The Dark History of the Chinese Exclusion Act (5 minutes 57 seconds) • The Dark History of IQ Tests (6 minutes 9 seconds) • The Complicated History of Surfing (5 minutes 39 seconds) • The Movement That Inspired the Holocaust (4 minutes 56 seconds) • The Hidden Life of Rosa Parks (4 minutes 59 seconds) • An Unsung Hero of the Civil Rights Movement (4 minutes 29 seconds) • Notes of a Native Son: The World According to James Baldwin (4 minutes 13 seconds) • Ugly History: The U.S. Syphilis Experiment (5 minutes 18 seconds) • The Chaotic Brilliance of Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (4 minutes 32 seconds)

26 Primary sources are from Joseph Locke and Ben Wright, editors, *The American Yawp Reader* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022). https://www.americanyawp.com/reader.html.

27 Robert Chang, "The Dark History of the Chinese Exclusion Act," July 2021, *TED-Ed*, 5:57, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2K88pWCimZg; Stefan C. Dombrowski, "The Dark History of IQ Tests," April 2020, *TED-Ed*, 6:09, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2bKaw2AJxs; Scott Laderman, "The Complicated History of Surfing," November 2017, *TED-Ed*, 5:39, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyn_orqdyHQ; Alexandra Minna Stern and Natalie Lira, "The Movement That Inspired the Holocaust," March 2022, *TED-Ed*, 4:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zCpRVP1DgQ; Riché D. Richardson, "The Hidden Life of Rosa Parks," April 2020, *TED-Ed*, 4:59, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLfbmepDd4c; Christina Greer, "An Unsung Hero of the Civil Rights Movement," February 2019, *TED-Ed*, 4:29, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJcUnXTaCgU; Christina Greer, "Notes of a Native Son: The World According to James Baldwin," February 2019, *TED-Ed*, 4:13, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKku0AfTs0c&t=48s; Susan M. Reverby, "Ugly History: The U.S. Syphilis Experiment," June 2021, TED-Ed, 5:18, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZV7RzS8QRXE; and Jordana Moore Saggese, "The Chaotic Brilliance of Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat," February 2019, *TED-Ed*, 4:32, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX02QQXfb_o.

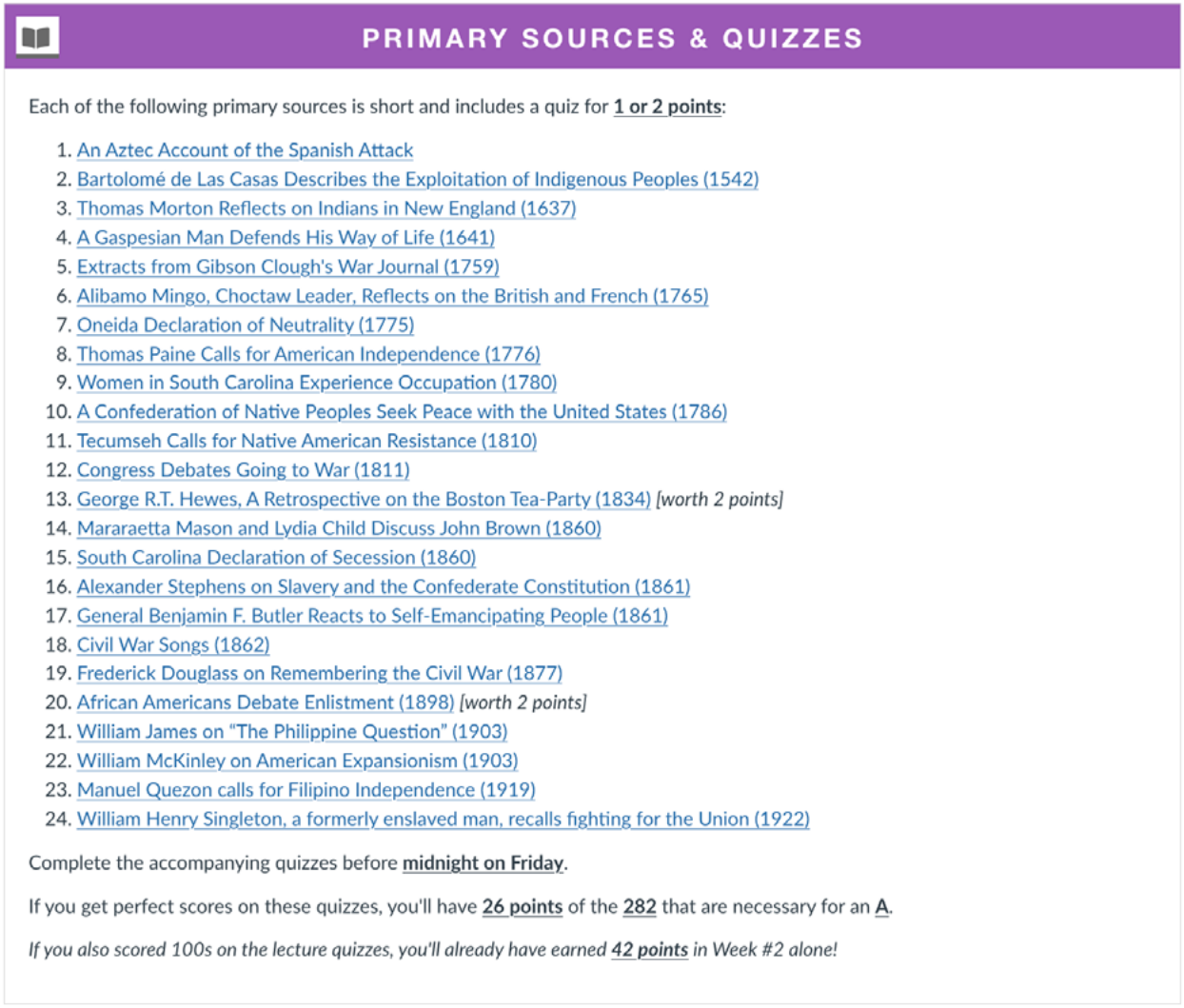
Academic Articles	• Jacquelyn Down Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263. • Troy Johnson, "The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Roots of American Indian Activism," *Wicazo Sa Review* 10, no. 2 (Autumn 1994): 63-79. • Edward J. Escobar, "The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 4 (March 1993): 1483-1514.
Habits of Mind	• Revise and Resubmit Your Primary Source Reading Grid and/or History Meme Submitted from Week #6

Figure 2: One Week's Options in *HIST 1700*

Week # and Topic	**Points Available by Assignment Type**
Week #1: U.S. Governance	• Lecture Quizzes: 8 • TED Talk Quizzes: 6 • Primary Source Quizzes: 12 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 10 • Article Analyses: 0 Total Available Points: 36
Week #2: American War and Conflict	• Lecture Quizzes: 13 • TED Talk Quizzes: 7 • Primary Source Quizzes: 26 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 10 • Article Analyses: 45 Total Available Points: 101
Week #3: American War and Conflict	• Lecture Quizzes: 11 • TED Talk Quizzes: 5 • Primary Source Quizzes: 9 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 5 • Article Analyses: 30 Total Available Points: 60
Week #4: U.S. Economics & Finance	• Lecture Quizzes: 7 • TED Talk Quizzes: 5 • Primary Source Quizzes: 16 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 5 • Article Analyses: 15 Total Available Points: 48
Week #5: U.S. Economics & Finance	• Lecture Quizzes: 11 • TED Talk Quizzes: 7 • Primary Source Quizzes: 9 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 10 • Article Analyses: 30 Total Available Points: 67
Week #6: The Search for Power	• Lecture Quizzes: 10 • TED Talk Quizzes: 6 • Primary Source Quizzes: 9 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 0 • Article Analyses: 30 • Primary Source Reading Grid: 30 • History Meme: 30 Total Available Points: 115
Week #7: Race & Social Memory	• Lecture Quizzes: 8 • TED Talk Quizzes: 7 • Primary Source Quizzes: 22 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 5 • Article Analyses: 45 Total Available Points: 87
Week #8: Race & Social Memory	• See above for a detailed list of the assignments that comprise Week #8's 94 available points.

Week #9: Gender & Certainty	• Lecture Quizzes: 8 • TED Talk Quizzes: 4 • Primary Source Quizzes: 22 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 5 • Article Analyses: 15 Total Available Points: 54
Week #10: Gender & Certainty	• Lecture Quizzes: 6 • TED Talk Quizzes: 10 • Primary Source Quizzes: 7 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 5 • Article Analyses: 30 Total Available Points: 58
Week #11: Religion & Modern Conservatism	• Lecture Quizzes: 10 • TED Talk Quizzes: 2 • Primary Source Quizzes: 15 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 5 • Article Analyses: 30 Total Available Points: 62
Week #12: Rethinking the Global Order	• Lecture Quizzes: 15 • TED Talk Quizzes: 15 • Primary Source Quizzes: 4 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 0 • Article Analyses: 15 • Primary Source Reading Grid: 30 • History Meme: 30 Total Available Points: 109
Week #13: 9/11	• Lecture Quizzes: 3 • TED Talk Quizzes: 8 • Primary Source Quizzes: 2 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 5 • Article Analyses: 45 Total Available Points: 63
Week #14: In Your Lifetime	• Lecture Quizzes: 19 • TED Talk Quizzes: 12 • Primary Source Quizzes: 4 • Habits of Mind Assignments: 0 • Article Analyses: 30 Total Available Points: 65
Finals	• Primary Source Reading Grid: 30 • History Meme: 30 Total Available Points: 60

Figure 3: A List of Weekly Topics in *HIST 1700* and the Points Available Through Assignments



PRIMARY SOURCES & QUIZZES

Each of the following primary sources is short and includes a quiz for **1 or 2 points**:

1. An Aztec Account of the Spanish Attack
2. Bartolomé de Las Casas Describes the Exploitation of Indigenous Peoples (1542)
3. Thomas Morton Reflects on Indians in New England (1637)
4. A Gaspesian Man Defends His Way of Life (1641)
5. Extracts from Gibson Clough's War Journal (1759)
6. Alibamo Mingo, Choctaw Leader, Reflects on the British and French (1765)
7. Oneida Declaration of Neutrality (1775)
8. Thomas Paine Calls for American Independence (1776)
9. Women in South Carolina Experience Occupation (1780)
10. A Confederation of Native Peoples Seek Peace with the United States (1786)
11. Tecumseh Calls for Native American Resistance (1810)
12. Congress Debates Going to War (1811)
13. George R.T. Hewes, A Retrospective on the Boston Tea-Party (1834) *[worth 2 points]*
14. Mararaetta Mason and Lydia Child Discuss John Brown (1860)
15. South Carolina Declaration of Secession (1860)
16. Alexander Stephens on Slavery and the Confederate Constitution (1861)
17. General Benjamin F. Butler Reacts to Self-Emancipating People (1861)
18. Civil War Songs (1862)
19. Frederick Douglass on Remembering the Civil War (1877)
20. African Americans Debate Enlistment (1898) *[worth 2 points]*
21. William James on "The Philippine Question" (1903)
22. William McKinley on American Expansionism (1903)
23. Manuel Quezon calls for Filipino Independence (1919)
24. William Henry Singleton, a formerly enslaved man, recalls fighting for the Union (1922)

Complete the accompanying quizzes before **midnight on Friday**.

If you get perfect scores on these quizzes, you'll have **26 points** of the **282** that are necessary for an **A**.

*If you also scored 100s on the lecture quizzes, you'll already have earned **42 points** in Week #2 alone!*

Image 1: Primary Source List from Week #2: American War and Conflict

Reflecting on *Reacting*: Incorporating *Reacting to the Past* Games in the High School Classroom

Christopher Barber
Nansha College Preparatory Academy, Guangzhou, China

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Introduction

Philadelphia, 1787. Alexander Hamilton, delegate of New York, and Elbridge Gerry, delegate of Massachusetts, check their pistols one last time. Gerry had insulted Hamilton's honor during debates at the Constitutional Convention, arguing that the New Yorker's support for a strong executive was no more than an argument for installing a new king, betraying his true anti-republican sympathies. In the face of this public insult, Hamilton's only recourse was to challenge Gerry to a duel. The two men stare at each other for a moment. They raise their pistols, take aim at one another, and fire. The crowd cheers.

Of course, it is not 1787, it is not Philadelphia, and Hamilton and Gerry never faced off in a duel. Instead, it is 2022 at a public charter high school in Indiana and the dueling delegates are, in fact, students studying the Constitutional Convention in their government class. The students, spread out across two different classes, are participating in a Reacting to the Past simulation game, where they each take on the role of a real life delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

The Reacting to the Past (RTTP) games are a unique and innovative approach to teaching history that has been implemented in higher education institutions for over two decades. One in the RTTP series is the *Constitutional Convention* game, which immerses students in the historical scenario of the drafting of the United States Constitution. Here I reflect on my experiences utilizing the game with high schoolers and consider the potential for adapting the games to the secondary level. By examining the challenges and opportunities of implementing this game in a high school classroom, I will assess the feasibility and efficacy of using RTTP games to teach history and civics to high school students and how it might be adapted to align with high school standards, engage students, and promote history's habits of mind, civic literacy, and deep learning.[1]

About Reacting

First introduced in the late 1990s by Barnard College History Professor Mark C. Carnes, Reacting to the Past (RTTP) is a series of role-playing simulation games designed to promote critical thinking, active learning, and in-depth historical knowledge among students. In RTTP games, students take on historical characters, read primary sources, and engage in persuasive and impromptu debate in order to accomplish objectives and win the game, all while learning along the way.[2] RTTP games cover a wide range of historical periods, from ancient Greece to 20th-century America, and offer students the opportunity to study and apply critical thinking skills, ethical reasoning, and historical context. It is a student centered pedagogical approach, as described by the Reacting Consortium:

> Class sessions are run by students. Instructors advise students, and grade their oral and written work. Reacting roles and games do not have a fixed script or outcome. This is not re-enacting. In Reacting games, students are assigned character roles with specific goals and must communicate, collaborate, and compete effectively to advance their objectives.'[3]

RTTP games are designed to encourage student engagement and interaction with the material and with peers. Students take on historical roles and engage in debate, negotiation, and decision-making that challenges their

1 "History's Habits of Mind," National Council for History Education, accessed January 26, 2023, https://ncheteach.org/Historys-Habits-of-Mind. I will briefly discuss the concept of deep learning in the next section, but for an in-depth look at the concept as I use it here, see Jal Mehta and Sarah M. Fine, *In Search of Deeper Learning: The Quest to Remake the American High School* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2019).

2 "About Reacting," Reacting to the Past - Barnard College, accessed January 30, 2023, https://reacting.barnard.edu/about-reacting.

3 "How Does Reacting Work?," The Reacting Consortium - What is Reacting?, accessed January 30, 2023, https://reactingconsortium.org/WIR-basics.

understanding of the historical period and their own beliefs. The use of historical sources and the opportunity for students to engage with primary documents provides a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the period being studied.

Through these methods, RTTP games promise to foster deeper learning. Deeper learning is certainly not a new concept in education; Mehta and Fine connect the current idea through Paulo Freire, Alfred North Whitehead, and Joseph Mayer Rice, arguing that "they share an emphasis on 'deep' versus 'shallow' education, that is, on education that asks students to think versus education that asks them to follow directions, and education that has purpose and meaning for students versus education that does not."[4]

Taking this idea further, they submit that deeper learning occurs at the intersection of three distinct elements: mastery, identity, and creativity. Mastery involves the traditional focus of education: the content knowledge and disciplinary skills. Identity relates to intrinsic motivations and relevance. Creativity means being able to use one's mastery to make something new, to apply the content knowledge and skills in new ways.[5] But how effective is the Reacting pedagogy for achieving deeper learning?

Evidence suggests that there are demonstrable benefits to using RTTP in the classroom. In a two year study, researchers found that "Reacting participants exhibited positive social effects (making friends, working in groups, joining class discussions) and made gains in academic self-efficacy, which has been related to academic performance and adjustment, including student commitment to remain in school."[6] In their study of 272 undergraduate students, Bledsoe and Richardson found student "self-efficacy improved over the course of the game; they reported an improvement in learning outcomes; and they were more engaged than students in the comparison group" and that "the differences between the Reacting participants as a whole and the comparison group were significant," concluding: "Above all, Reacting is an experience that students value, especially in terms of perceived learning, enjoyment, and engagement."[7]

Students play RTTP games over several class sessions, so each session builds upon the previous one. At the beginning of the game, students are given a brief overview of their role, the historical period, and their objectives. Throughout the game, students engage in a variety of activities, including reading primary sources, writing position papers, and participating in debates and negotiations. In each session they must settle one or more important issues. Students determine the outcome of the game; they are free to change history during Reacting games, sometimes dramatically so.[8]

One of the strengths of RTTP games is the flexibility they offer instructors. The games can be adapted to different levels of difficulty, different class sizes, and different time frames. Instructors can choose to focus on specific themes or historical periods, or they can integrate RTTP games into a larger course curriculum. Additionally, RTTP games offer a unique opportunity for interdisciplinary learning, as they can be used to teach not only history, but also political science and philosophy.[9] This compatibility with multiple disciplines is one of

4 Mehta and Fine, *In Search of Deeper Learning*, 11.

5 Mehta and Fine, *In Search of Deeper Learning*, 15–16.

6 Carolyn A. Schult et al., "Strengthening Students' Self-Efficacy Through Reacting to the Past," in *Playing to Learn with Reacting to the Past*, ed. C. Edward Watson and Thomas Chase Hagood (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), quoted in Robert S Bledsoe and Deborah S Richardson, "Impact of Reacting to the Past and Effect of Role on Student Attributes and Academic Outcomes," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 33, no. 3 (2022): 361.

7 Bledsoe and Richardson, "Impact of Reacting to the Past and Effect of Role on Student Attributes and Academic Outcomes," 369, 371.

8 For an example of students turning the Cuban Missile Crisis into open acts of war, see Christian Garner, "Reacting to the Past Pedagogy in the Classroom" (West Point, NY, United States Military Academy, 2018), 1.

9 The interdisciplinary use of Reacting games likely extends much further. One could easily imagine incorporating it into a speech or debate class. The subjects of some games may allow for opportunities in the science classroom as well. See, for example, Amy Curry, "1349: The Plague," The Reacting Consortium, accessed January 30, 2023, https://reactingconsortium.org/games/1349Plague; For a look at incorporating Reacting games into the philosophy classroom, see Kathryn E. Joyce et al., "Teaching Philosophy through a Role-Immersion Game: Reacting to the Past,"

the most crucial aspects for the purposes of this paper as I applied the system to the secondary level.

About The Course

The course in question was United States Government. There were two sections of the class, with each meeting on a block schedule of one 45-minute and two 90-minute periods per week. This one semester class is generally taken by students during their senior year of high school and is a graduation requirement, meaning all students, regardless of academic background or skills, must complete the course. Often some students will take the class during their junior year instead.[10] Because the school is a public charter, the class sizes are smaller than in the standard public high school. Student absences were at times frequent and, particularly in the smaller class period, it was not uncommon for the number of students present to be fewer than a dozen.

The curriculum for the class was designed to synthesize several elements: the Indiana State Academic Standards for US Government[11], the NCSS College, Career, and Civic life (C3) Framework[12], The Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy[13], and the concept of deeper learning[14]. This synthesis resulted in three learning objectives that students must meet in order to pass the course. These objectives were Civic Concepts and Skills[15], Civic Creativity, and Civic Inquiry. The first tasks students with mastering content, concepts, and skills, the second with using that mastery to create new ideas, products, or understandings, and the third fosters natural student inquiry in driving their own learning.

To meet these ends, the course was divided into four primary units, each built around a central compelling question: 1. Nature of Politics and Government (*What is the point of having government?*) 2. Foundations of American Government (*Why does our government work the way it does?*) 3. Principles and Institutions of American Government (*Who has the power?*) and 4. International Affairs (*What is our role on the world stage?*) In addition, the course culminates in a project that tasks students with identifying a social or political topic of interest to them, identifying a problem, researching the issue, and proposing a solution in the form of policy proposals to be made to elected officials, school leaders, and peers. Students determine the topic, as well as the final product.

The second unit focuses on the Founding Era of the United States, connecting the political philosophies studied in the first unit to the study of the branches and functions of government in unit three. [16] To answer the unit's compelling question (*Why does our government work the way it does?*) students needed to understand the connections between the Articles of Confederation, the debate around how to correct them that culminated in the Constitution, and the continued debate around ratification that led to the Bill of Rights. Because of this, study of the actual Constitutional Convention was bookended by two lessons. The first lesson, occurring just before the game, focused on the Articles of Confederation and their shortcomings. The second, which immediately followed

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Teaching Philosophy 41, no. 2 (2018): 175–98, https://doi.org/10.5840/teachphil201851487.

10 This is particularly true of students who intend to graduate early and as such some students may not have completed the same courses previously, proving a further challenge for the teacher trying to differentiate instruction; indeed, during one of the classes discussed here, the youngest student was actually a sophomore.

11 "Indiana Academic Standards: United States Government" (Indiana Department of Education, January 16, 2020), https://www.in.gov/doe/files/United-States-Government-Standards-2020.pdf.

12 *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History*, NCSS Bulletin 113 (Silver Spring, Maryland: National Council for the Social Studies, 2013).

13 "Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy" (Educating for American Democracy, March 2021).

14 Mehta and Fine, *In Search of Deeper Learning*.

15 The first of my course learning objectives may seem broad but is based upon Dimension 2 of the C3 Framework, specifically the concepts of civic and political institutions, participation and deliberation, and processes, rules, and laws. See *The C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, 31–34.

16 For a selection of well-developed curricular materials and lesson plans on this topic, see "Foundations of Government | ICivics," iCivics, accessed January 27, 2023, https://www.icivics.org/curriculum/foundations-government.

the game, was focused on the ratification of the Constitution and the debates surrounding it.

Briefly, the first lesson began with a short introductory lecture on the Articles followed by student analysis of Alexander Hamilton's *Federalist* No. 22.[17] I modified the paper and adapted it for this lesson, selecting six different excerpts, each focusing on a single problem, simplified to include vocabulary, and presented in large font with analysis questions.[18] Students were responsible for analyzing only one excerpt before sharing their analysis in a class discussion over the weaknesses of the Articles. The lesson concluded with Shays' Rebellion, a case study that allowed students to see that contemporary thoughts about the Articles of Confederation were divided and complex.[19]

The second lesson picked up following students studying the Constitutional Convention. Centered around the ratification of the Constitution, students took an active role in the debates by playing the iCivics game *Race to Ratify*.[20] They selected one side of the debate, either Federalist or Anti-Federalist, and attempted to influence the ratification by learning various arguments and composing pamphlets with the arguments that supported their chosen side. The lesson concluded with a debriefing in which students learned how the debate ended in reality. In the following class, students synthesized their learning from the unit to answer the compelling question.

In the initial plan for the course, the class quickly covered the Constitutional Convention with a brief lecture or video. Under this original scheme, the focus of the students' learning was on both the events leading up to the Constitutional Convention, such as Shays' Rebellion, but also the debates over ratification that followed. The limitations of this approach became obvious fairly quickly. Studying the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation certainly helps students understand why some Americans wanted a stronger central government and studying the ratification debates helps them understand the arguments for and against the Constitution, but neither actually explains how the Constitution as we know it came to be. To help the students better answer the unit compelling question, I decided to shift the primary focus of the unit to the Convention itself.

I considered several approaches to achieve this. One possibility was to provide students with a selection of primary sources and an analysis guide, following a similar outline to the Stanford Reading Like a Historian lessons.[21] A second consideration was to make use of the iCivics lesson on the topic.[22] A third option was to turn the Convention into a simulation game. There are many versions of this activity. Many of the ones I found took the approach of changing the setting of the game from the Convention itself to the school; in this design, rather than debating the makeup of the United States Constitution, students are instead debating reforms to the school's student council.[23] While this is intended to make the subject more relevant to the students and their lives, my concern was that it would make the subject of study too far removed from the compelling question (Why does

17 Although written after the Constitutional Convention, it was selected because it highlights many of the criticisms of the Articles from the faction later known as the Federalists. For the full text, see Alexander Hamilton, "The Federalist Papers : No. 22," The Avalon Project : The Federalist Papers, accessed January 28, 2023, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed22.asp.

18 For a discussion on modifying primary sources for secondary students, see Sam Wineburg and Daisy Martin, "Tampering With History," *Social Education* 73, no. 5 (2009): 212–16.

19 This portion of the lesson was adapted from one of the many excellent lesson plans found in the Reading Like a Historian curriculum. See "Shays' Rebellion," Stanford History Education Group, accessed January 28, 2023, https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/shays-rebellion.

20 "Race to Ratify - Constitution Ratification Game," accessed January 28, 2023, https://www.icivics.org/games/race-to-ratify.

21 For a detailed explanation of this curriculum, see "History Lessons," Stanford History Education Group, accessed January 30, 2023, https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons.

22 "Major Clash? Compromise! | Constitutional Convention Lesson Plan," iCivics, accessed January 30, 2023, https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/major-clash-compromise.

23 For a detailed lesson plan designed for college preparatory government students, see Jessee Hankins, "We the People: A Simulation for Young Voters" (Bowling Green State University, May 15, 2015), https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/honorsprojects/174; This lesson was adapted for the middle school classroom; see Kevin Roughton, "Digital Constitutional Convention," Teach with Magic, September 15, 2020, https://www.mrroughton.com/blog/digital-constitutional-convention.

our government work the way it does?). Ultimately, in the interest of supporting the course learning objectives and promoting deeper learning, I decided the best course of action was to adapt and modify John Patrick Coby's The Constitutional Convention of 1787 Reacting game to the secondary level.

Modifying The Game

Adapting and modifying *The Constitutional Convention of 1787* game for the high school classroom presents several challenges. The game is designed for a college-level audience and requires a certain level of prior historical knowledge, critical thinking, and reading and writing skills to play the game as originally written. Indeed, within the game book (intended to be purchased by the students, in contrast to the online instructor materials) Coby includes a detailed section on the historical background of the Constitutional Convention and a selection of core texts for students to read, analyze, and use to support their arguments in class.[24]

The challenge, of course, comes from the fact that these sections of the game book are highly detailed and written for a more advanced audience than high schoolers. The historical background section of the book consists of twenty-six pages. Within these pages, we find detailed information, not only on America under the Articles of Confederation (including topics such as the Continental Congress, Northwest Ordinance, State Constitutions, and the Annapolis Convention) but also an explanation of republican theory at the time of the founding (detailing country and court republicanism and the agent and trustee theories of representation).[25] The "Core Texts" section runs over eighty pages and includes excerpts from works such as Aristotle's *Politics*, John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, John Adams' *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, and Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America.[26] The level of detail and complexity in these texts is far more advanced than that typically studied in the secondary classroom. To fit the needs of my classes, I removed these readings, instead reviewing with students our previous study of the philosophical foundations of American government and the limits of the Articles of Confederation.

The matter of assignments and assessment presented a challenge as well. As laid out in the game, students are expected to write papers and give speeches. The papers assigned vary depending on which delegate the student is playing and which issues are up for debate that day. The game also includes quizzes for the core text readings. The intent here is to allow the instructor to grade quizzes and papers as they would in a traditional class.

This was incompatible with my class for two key reasons: first, the entire purpose of a deep-dive into the Convention was to prepare students to better engage with the unit compelling question, which served as the assessment. Second, I do not grade in my classroom; individual assignments are not given individual scores.[27] Instead, assessment is based on whether or not students meet the course learning objectives. Fortunately, this challenge was easy to remedy. As the game does not require grades or essays to function properly as a learning experience, I was able to simply remove these aspects entirely.

An additional challenge relates to class size. The game is intended for up to thirty-two players, with the minimum class size in the book being twelve. This will not be a problem for many classrooms, but for one of my classes, I only had a dozen students. If even a single one was absent for one class then we would not have enough players for the game.

To alleviate this concern, I took on a role as well in both classes. In the standard game, one player takes the role of George Washington as President of the Convention and is responsible for facilitating the debates between delegates and determines the order of player speeches. Because I was not assigning speeches to the students, the

24 John Patrick Coby, *The Constitutional Convention of 1787: Constructing the American Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), pts. 2, 5.

25 Coby, *The Constitutional Convention of 1787*, 15–43.

26 Coby, *The Constitutional Convention of 1787*, 67–150.

27 For more information on this concept, often called "ungrading", see Susan Debra Blum, ed., *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2020).

role of George Washington became largely a formality; I was able to play the role while still assisting students as a teacher during our game sessions. As an added bonus, I purchased a powdered wig to wear, signifying the start of gameplay.[28]

Finally, the game is complex. It is difficult for students to learn all of the rules quickly. Each student is assigned a delegate to play and a faction to be part of (these factions are the Nationalists, Moderate Nationalists, Moderate Confederalists, and Confederalists, which roughly correspond to the later Federalist and Anti-Federalist factions). Broadly speaking, the student's faction determines their position on the issues. RTTP games are complex, however, and the delegates are not always loyal to their faction. The game includes scenarios for duels, rivalries between specific delegates, and faction defections on top of the already complex matter of debating the Constitution. In terms of determining the winner of the game, players receive points based on how well their faction achieves their goals as well as on their own individual delegate objectives, which are different for each player.

Playing the *Constitutional Convention* game was a relatively late addition to the course curriculum so the class had limited time to prepare to play. To simplify the game for our purposes, I modified the delegate role sheets into smaller reference cards. [29] On these cards I included only the most pertinent game information: special rules such as rivalries or faction defections and individual delegate objectives. With these changes in place, the students and I were ready to embark on our first session of the Constitutional Convention.

Our Constitutional Conventions

To introduce the students to the gameplay, we conducted a "session zero" in which students met with their factions and held a vote that elected me, in my role as George Washington, as President of the Convention. With that complete, the first order of business was to elect the Convention Secretary (in the context of the game, this person helped me keep vote tallies). Any student could run for the post. In my first class, the Secretary was Gouverneur Morris (delegate of Pennsylvania) while the second class elected Charles Pinckney (not to be confused with C.C. Pinckney, both delegates from South Carolina). This was, of course, patently ahistorical; the real life secretary was William Jackson.

The main issues of the first session centered around the House of Representatives. First we debated the character of representation in the lower house: agent (or "delegate") vs. trustee (or "elite") representation. This first issue did not result in a vote. Instead, it was to set the stage for later debates to come. Student debate was enthusiastic.

The second issue of the session is where the debate picked up because it was the first with a vote: what will be the size of the House? The issue was twofold: students had to decide on how many representatives there would be for the first Congress and decide what the rough proportion of representatives to inhabitants should be. After much debate, the first class finally compromised with a starting size of 105 representatives and a later ratio of 1 per 30,000 people. The second class also landed at 1 per 30,000 but the "Nationalist" faction managed to keep the starting size at 65 representatives. At this point, the first class had already differed from the historical Convention.

The second session focused on the Senate. The two issues up for debate were the method of election and the manner of representation for the upper house. Historically, this was election by the state legislatures[30] and equal representation for each state. The first class was the closest to the historical Constitution as the various factions compromised. In their Constitution the state legislatures still had the power to elect the Senate, but to also limit state power, the state governors would in turn be elected by Congress! The second class limited state power differently. They agreed to have the lower house elect the upper house, with the compromise being that the states selected the nominees for election. Both classes agreed on equal representation in the Senate to offset the

28 George Washington did not actually wear a powdered wig. By this time the wig had gone out of style and gentlemen would instead powder their hair.

29 These role sheets, available for instructors on the Reacting Consortium website, are sometimes several pages long, including detailed biographies, individual delegate objectives, and special rules such as faction defections.

30 This was changed to direct popular election of the Senate with the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment in 1913.

proportional representation in the House.

Our third session focused on the presidency, with three key issues: length of term, eligibility for re-election, and method of election. The real convention settled on 4 years, unlimited re-eligibility, and the electoral college. [31] The first class saw the nationalist factions sweep the session, because several key members of the opposition (the "confederalists") were absent that day. They approved a six year term, unlimited re-eligibility, and direct election by the people. The second class again differed, as the confederalists put up a stronger fight. They settled for a five year term and re-eligibility for reelection, but put in a two-term limit from the start. Their president is elected by the Congress; still no electoral colleges!

The last session of the game was the most difficult because it focused on slavery. This can be a hard topic, particularly in a simulation game, as Coby acknowledges in the Instructor Manual of the game: "The Constitutional Convention provides what possibly is the most anodyne, matter-of-fact encounter with slavery allowed by American history. But that encounter could still be distressing to some, especially in mixed-race classes."[32] Indeed, this served as a concern in my class; about one-half of the students were Black. To mitigate these concerns, I spoke frankly with the students about the nature of the debate and emphasized the guidance Coby provides:

> Slavery was defended at the historical convention on grounds of economic necessity only. The "positive good" school of thought had not yet made an appearance in the South, at least not in any significant way. Thus southerners in the game convention can—and should—stick to economic arguments, for by doing so they remain faithful to the record, while avoiding racial remarks that might make themselves and others uncomfortable.[33]

I made a point of emphasizing this with students at the start of simulation and again at the start of the fourth session. Students were given the opportunity to step out of the classroom or speak to me privately if they became uncomfortable with the session, though none did so. I remained attentive of the debates throughout the classroom, though students did not require redirection or correction on this particular issue. All-in-all, the students conducted the debates of this final session with a professional demeanor.

The two big issues were importation and how enslaved peoples count for representation and direct taxation. Historically importation was protected for twenty years and representation saw the Three-fifths Compromise. The first class was nearly derailed by the issue of importation. They compromised with protection for seven years and total ban after fifteen. Representation and direct taxation were fixed at one-half, an overall win for the northern states. The second class instead was stuck on the other issue. They agreed to immediately ban importation, highlighting one weakness of the RTTP approach: some students opted not to follow their delegate roles. Southern states had an advantage with representation, though, winning full representation but only a rate of two-thirds for taxes.

The final vote of the game was to determine whether or not to adopt the Constitution they had two weeks debating. Both classes ultimately did so, with the first class having a stronger central government and the second having stronger states.

As an additional note, each class also saw delegates duel. In both cases, Alexander Hamilton and Elbridge Gerry clashed over the presidency debates, with Gerry insulting Hamilton's honor and accusing him of being a not-so-secret monarchist. They faced off in the hallway with Nerf guns following (approximated) dueling rules. In the first class, Hamilton won the duel and Gerry won in the next. Neither delegate was killed; in terms of game mechanics, the loser lost their vote on the next issue and could not debate for the rest of the session.

31 Presidential re-eligibility was limited to two terms with the Twenty-second Amendment in 1951.

32 John Patrick Coby, *The Constitutional Convention of 1787: Instructor's Guide* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 21.

33 Coby, *Instructor's Guide*, 24.

Reflections

Using the RTTP game to teach the Constitutional Convention reveals both the benefits and challenges of using this approach in the secondary classroom. The game is a demanding and immersive experience that requires a significant investment of time and resources. As Ian Bennington mentions upon reflection of his own use of the games: "Do not think that RTTP classes teach themselves or that they are somehow less work than a traditional class."[34] However, the learning outcomes of the game at the college-level suggest that this investment is worth it.

The RTTP pedagogy is deliberately designed to incorporate many factors that have been shown through research to positively influence student achievement. Professor John Hattie provides a breakdown of these influences in his "Visible Learning MetaX" database, which contains and synthesizes information from hundreds of meta-analyses and list the effect size of each influence. RTTP involves collaborative learning (effect size of 0.39), competitive elements (effect size of 0.24), enjoyment (effect size of 0.56), motivation (effect size of 0.38), and self-efficacy (effect size of 0.65).[35] These benefits seemed to occur in my classroom as well, particularly in terms of student enjoyment and motivation. What needs to be studied further is the direct impact of this pedagogy on secondary students.

The game provides a deep dive into the historical context, events, and personalities of the Constitutional Convention, which is significantly more engaging than a traditional lecture-based approach. Though limited in my test case due to time constraints, with slight modification to the curriculum students would be able to engage with some of the same primary sources, historical characters, and issues as in the standard game in a way that is both personal and meaningful. The primary sources used in the RTTP games, however, must be modified or adapted for high school students to ensure that they are accessible and engaging. This may involve simplifying the language of the primary sources, highlighting key concepts, or providing additional background information.[36]

Finally, and perhaps most promising, the use of RTTP games offers significant interdisciplinary possibilities. The games can be used to explore historical, political, and social issues, as well as to develop skills across a variety of disciplines. The potential for exploration at the intersections between history and other disciplines, such as literature, science, and economics, is worthy of further study. One could easily imagine an interdisciplinary course that incorporates English, Speech, Biology, and History, particularly with other games such as Amy Curry's *1349: The Plague*.[37] In this hypothetical course, students would study the history of medieval Norwich, England, write persuasive arguments with their English teacher, deliver those arguments as speeches, and follow the game with a biological study of plagues and germs.

My experience with Coby's *Constitutional Convention* game was very promising. This unique student-centered pedagogy is worthy of further investigation, particularly within secondary classrooms. In a stroke of fortunate timing, faculty at Grand Valley State University recently were awarded a grant for the purposes of bringing RTTP to more secondary classrooms.[38] The Reacting Consortium website also has a page dedicated to hosting tips and resources for high school teachers interested in incorporating Reacting games into the curriculum.[39] These resources are generally still in the development stage but this growth of interest is a promising step towards strong inquiry-driven, student-centered classrooms.

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34 Ian Binnington, "Teaching With Reacting To The Past—Bringing Role-Immersion Play Into The College Classroom," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 14, no. 4 (October 2015): 589, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781415000523.

35 John Hattie, "Visible Learning Metax," Visible Learning Metax, August 2021, https://www.visiblelearningmetax.com/.

36 Wineburg and Martin, "Tampering With History."

37 Curry, "1349: The Plague."

38 "RTTP In High Schools: New Grant Will Help High School Instructors Incorporate Reacting," The Reacting Consortium, January 30, 2023, https://reactingconsortium.org/News/13078421?fbclid=IwAR1CxWdVzRL5iQ0c2xs3w9Q4GxG0DHSkAG0d3p9EQpaGDl_YT9gUtcs3kWc.

39 "Reacting in High Schools," The Reacting Consortium, accessed January 30, 2023, https://reactingconsortium.org/HighSchools.

Phantasmagoria 101: Teaching and Learning Haunted History Beyond the Classroom

Garret D. Langlois
Texas Tech University

Nicola R. Astles
Brooklyn Museum

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It is a misty and moon-dappled October evening on the Texas High Plains. A tour group is beckoned by a lantern-bearer, who guides them as they wind their way past campus buildings with ornate, Spanish Renaissance façades. On their journey, they encounter a cast of student storytellers who dramatically narrate the darkest events to have scarred the university's past. Like children around a campfire, they listen with palpable enthusiasm to a dozen grim tales. Many of these stories are familiar to the audience, especially alumni. Attendees have heard tell of the "Boy with the Ball", the "Cowboy Chemist", and the "Man in the Red Sweater"… yet they return anew, eager to hear them again because this is their own local history.

This event is the *Haunted Tour of TTU Campus*, conceived, researched, written, and performed by Raider Power of Paranormal (RPOP), a student group at Texas Tech University (Figures 1, 2, and 3). To realize this production, they learned how to identify, examine, and evaluate primary source materials in order to compile cohesive narratives out of facts recovered from both oral histories and archival records. This tour, generously sponsored by Texas Tech's Military & Veterans Programs, was held in 2021 and 2022. Both years summed, this cast of 52 hosted a fundraiser attended by at least 750 people and raised nearly $3,500. We present RPOP as an unconventional, but highly successful, example of students engaging with history through the study of ghost stories.

As students returned to Texas Tech University for the autumn semester of 2019, three undergraduates had the idea to form a new student-led club centered on their mutual interest in the paranormal. To gain university approval, they needed the support of a staff or faculty advisor, a requirement for extracurricular organizations. After a dozen e-mails went unanswered, the three friends feared their search for an intra-university advocate was in vain.[1] Finally, a doctoral candidate replied and agreed to help. Although graduate students exist in a nebulous student-staff duality, bureaucratic requirements were satisfied, and the new club was formed.

By the end of that semester, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, and only a few new members had joined the nascent club. Social distancing would prohibit campus activities for eight months, which stymied recruitment efforts. RPOP student leaders grew to believe the very survival of their fledgling organization hinged upon hosting an event with mass appeal. Inspiration came to them one spring evening as they speculated on the everchanging rumors about the storied campus buildings. RPOP could host a haunted tour of their campus! The plan — to explore the histories behind supposed hauntings in an open-minded, yet critical manner — would require an audacious amount of effort, but would offer a public spectacle never before seen on campus.[2] Not unlike the "ghost walks" held in some cities, this too would be a place-based experience[3], intended to amuse, inform, and delight attendees with strange tales of a locale's past.

Their new advisor was not without his concerns. Although Garret is a wildlife ecologist actively conducting

1 We acknowledge there can be marked reluctance on the part of academics to engage with the paranormal, as very real sociocultural taboos on the subject persist. However, scholars who critically examine the topic prove it can be a rich subject of investigation, *e.g.*, Martha Lincoln and Bruce Lincoln, "Toward a critical hauntology: bare afterlife and the ghosts of Ba Chúc," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no. 1 (January 6, 2015): 191-220, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417514000644.

2 For a similar project, see Yanique Chuntall Leonard, "They Won't Stay Dead: University of West Georgia Ghostlore" (M.A. Thesis, Carrollton, Georgia, U.S.A., University of West Georgia, 2018), https://www.proquest.com/docview/2050059965/abstract/FC90E2BE822D490FPQ/1.

3 Tamara Chase Coleman, "Place-Based Education: An Impetus for Teacher Efficacy" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Kalamazoo, Michigan, U.S.A., Western Michigan University, 2014), https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/370.

research on the paleobiology of the area[4], he is no historian. Serendipitously, the enduring collegiate appeal of the paranormal itself would offer succor. Garret contacted Nicola at the Brooklyn Museum, whom he had first met through a paranormal-themed club at their *alma mater*. Nicola holds a master's degree in History and Museum Studies, and offered to serve as a history and material culture consultant for RPOP.

In their own words, RPOP describe their club as: "Actively exploring the boundaries of human knowledge through alleged paranormal phenomena. Our discussions and investigations invoke curiosity, while our analytical and systematic approach sharpens reasoning."[5] Being an interest-based organization, their membership is diverse in both discourse and representation.[6] Amongst extracurricular organizations, interest-based groups seem unique because they create and nurture environments that foster a diversity of thought.[7] A reflection of that ethos, today RPOP's membership exceeds 300 students, representing over 100 different majors. Students regularly state that RPOP is the best place on campus to meet their peers from different fields of study. Members even vary widely in their view of the paranormal; some are true believers, others empirical skeptics. However, all of them unite behind the idea that there is value in asking questions about the paranormal.

Ghost stories are a way of remembering histories fraught with difficult facts.[8] They tell of past events we may wish to forget but cannot, because their legacies remain present in the very landscapes we inhabit. The prevalence of ghost stories acknowledges that history is all around us. In America, belief in ghosts has been steadily increasing for decades: 25% in 1990, 32% in 2005, and 46% in 2019.[9] A survey in 2018 revealed that 58% of Americans believe places can be haunted by spirits.[10] Recently, a study found that 72% of Americans believe in some form of paranormal phenomena, despite the fact that such beliefs are stigmatized.[11] Yet the popularity of the paranormal, and the rise in thanatourism (journeys to sites associated with death)[12], attest to an undeniable desire to engage with the darker facets of history.[13] This very human interest is one educators can ill afford to ignore, given that studies have shown critical thinking about such topics develops most markedly only when paranormal

4 Garret D. Langlois *et al.*, "The North American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is Recolonizing the Llano Estacado," *Western North American Naturalist* 82, no. 1 (March 4, 2022): 190–195, https://doi.org/10.3398/064.082.0120.

5 Raider Power of Paranormal, "Raider Power of Paranormal," TechConnect, October 2019, https://techconnect.dsa.ttu.edu/organization/raiderpowerofparanormal.

6 We parse student organizations accordingly, with some partial overlap: activity-based (*e.g.*, games, sports, teams, *etc.*), identity-based (*e.g.*, gender, nationality, religion, *etc.*), interest-based (*e.g.*, hobbies and passions), service-based (*e.g.*, community betterment), and sponsor-based (*e.g.*, extension of a department, college, or national supporter). Identity-based groups tend to be the most homogeneous by definition, while interest-based groups tend to be the least.

7 Additionally, interest-based organizations are generally student-initiated and unique to their campus of origin. Often they must self-advocate and lack the institutional backing enjoyed by some other types of student groups, such as sponsor-based organizations. Thus, interest-based organizations greatly benefit from mentorship and support.

8 Colin Dickey, *Ghostland: An American History in Haunted Places* (New York, New York, U.S.A.: Viking Press, 2016).

9 Anna P. Kambhampaty, "Many Americans Say They Believe in Ghosts. Do You?," *The New York Times*, October 28, 2021, sec. Style, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/28/style/do-you-believe-in-ghosts.html.

10 Wilkinson College, "Paranormal America 2018 - Chapman University Survey of American Fears," *The Voice of Wilkinson* (blog), October 16, 2018, https://blogs.chapman.edu/wilkinson/2018/10/16/paranormal-america-2018/.

11 Tony Silva and Ashley Woody, "Supernatural Sociology: Americans' Beliefs by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Education," *Socius 8* (March 10, 2022): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231221084775.

12 Julie Rugg, "Funerary Heritage Tourism: Definitions and Principles," *Revista Murciana de Antropología* 28, no. 2021 (December 19, 2021): 31–58, https://doi.org/10.6018/rmu.435441.

13 An interest in thanatourism does not require a belief in the paranormal, but they can be related and complementary, *e.g.*, María Genoveva Dancausa Millán, María Genoveva Millán Vázquez de la Torre, and Ricardo Hernández Rojas, "Dark Tourism in Southern Spain (Córdoba): An Analysis of the Demand," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 5 (March 8, 2021): 2740, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052740. Lincoln and Lincoln's work on Ba Chúc is also relevant to studies of thanatourism and the paranormal.

phenomena are considered explicitly.[14] The importance of teaching critical thinking is fundamental, but we have found an unlikely ally in that pursuit. We posit the power of the paranormal to inspire, captivate, and educate.

Most undergraduates struggle when initially attempting to conduct research, being unsure in approach, indiscriminate in sources, and superficial in examination.[15] Educators likewise struggle with how to motivate those students who consider history to be inherently uninteresting.[16] One way to counteract this resistance is connecting history to student interests from outside the classroom; here the allure of the paranormal was an exciting motivator.

Ghost stories can be a significant part of the shared historical memory of a community.[17] Intuitively aware of this, RPOP first inquired about campus lore from an oft overlooked repository of institutional knowledge: custodial and maintenance staff. While most every undergraduate is passably familiar with the ghosts said to haunt their campus, the stories often lack saliency. Because of their decades spent in the community and on campus, university staff recalled specifics that had been lost across subsequent generations of students. The intergenerational nature of ghost lore transmission[18] creates an ideal environment for experiential learning.[19] It was those memories, candidly shared in hallways and stairwells, that taught RPOP the value of oral histories firsthand.

One such tale begins on a Wednesday evening in 1971, when the Business Administration building echoed with blood-curdling screams and raucous laughter. Graduate students were so disquieted, several calls were made reporting the disturbance to the police, but officers could find no source for the ghastly sounds. Reports continued into the following day. On Thursday afternoon, the body of Bobby, a local high school student was discovered at the bottom of an elevator shaft. No one knows why he was in the building that night. According to the date and time on his watch, broken upon impact, he died Tuesday night — twenty-four hours before witnesses reported hearing his screams. To this day, students working in the building late at night claim to hear his cries and laughter, and occasionally even glimpse a young man disappearing into a classroom or down a corridor.

The tale of Bobby's death, and how his ghost resides in what is today the Media & Communication building, is now campus lore. To uncover the history behind this tale and others like it, RPOP next met with a university librarian, who introduced them to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. Seeking the undergraduate perspective on campus news of the macabre, RPOP combed through issues of Texas Tech's official student newspaper. They discreetly paged through Tech's short-lived and controversial underground newspapers.

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14 Richard Wesp and Kathleen Montgomery, "Developing Critical Thinking Through the Study of Paranormal Phenomena," *Teaching of Psychology 25*, no. 4 (October 1998): 275–278, https://doi.org/10.1080/00986289809709714; Lou Manza *et al.,* "Exposure to Science Is Not Enough: The Influence of Classroom Experiences on Belief in Paranormal Phenomena," *Teaching of Psychology* 37, no. 3 (June 29, 2010): 165–171, https://doi.org/10.1080/00986283.2010.488554.

15 Alison J. Head and Michael B. Eisenberg, *Truth Be Told: How College Students Evaluate and Use Information in the Digital Age* (Information School, University of Washington: Project Information Literacy Research Institute, November 1, 2010), 72, https://projectinfolit.org/publications/evaluating-information-study/; Library Journal, *First Year Experience Survey: Information Literacy in Higher Education* (New York, New York, U.S.A.: Credo Reference, 2017), 47; School Library Journal, *Information Literacy/ College Readiness Survey: A Survey of U.S. High School and Middle School Librarians* (New York, New York, U.S.A.: Credo Reference, June 2019), 79.

16 Solomon K. Smith, "Stepping Out of the Classroom Into Virtuality: Using MMORPGs to Teach History," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 42, no. 2 (November 4, 2017): 73–82, https://doi.org/10.33043/TH.42.2.73-82.

17 Targeted study of ghost lore through oral histories has proven fruitful for historians, *e.g.,* Karolina Ćwiek-Rogalska, "'It's scary here.' Haunted landscape as a research tool to look into post-expulsion landscapes," *Polish Journal of Landscape Studies* 3, no. 6 (October 9, 2020): 27-47, https://doi.org/10.14746/pls.2020.6.2; David Waldron, "How Folklore Informs History," *Agora* 58, no. 2 (June, 2023): 18–21, https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.051751040401463.

18 Michael Clinton, "'I'll Remember That': Oral History, Service Learning, and Historical Understanding," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 40, no. 2 (November 1, 2015): 107-116, https://doi.org/10.33043/TH.40.2.107-116.

19 George White, Jr., "Crafting History: On Oral History Projects, Experiential Learning, and a Meditation on Teaching and Learning," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 38, no. 1 (May 1, 2013): 23–38, https://doi.org/10.33043/TH.38.1.23-38.

The students even examined blueprints in an effort to verify the existence of underground tunnels, said to be a haunted warren beneath campus. RPOP marveled at these documents as if they had discovered some eldritch tome, where all the half-remembered dormitory stories were laid bare before them. In some cases, they were even able to put names to faces through historical photographs.

Within these archives, RPOP learned the true story of Bobby's death. Robert Kent Ramsey was visiting campus with his friend, David. The fifteen-year-old boys told David's father, Dr. Richard Cole, they needed to visit the brand-new Business Administration building to work on an assignment. In reality, the pair had discovered it was possible to enter the elevator shaft of that ten-story building. They had been there before, climbing the elevator cables until their hands shined with graphite. On the night of Wednesday, February 10th 1971, David was re-entering the elevator car when he heard Bobby fall, crying out in agony upon landing. Too afraid to look down the elevator shaft himself, he telephoned the nearest hospital, which referred him to the police. David's call was the first anonymous report of a scream in the building, but not the last, yet no one found Bobby that night. David recounted how he anxiously awaited a news report of Bobby's discovery throughout the following Thursday. When none appeared, he called the police again, nearly twenty-four hours later. When officers thoroughly searched the building on Friday night, Bobby's broken body was found at the bottom of the elevator shaft.[20] The investigation determined that Bobby and David gained access by opening the elevator shaft doors while the car was on another floor. Maintenance workers initially dismissed the suggestion as the doors were meant to be locked, however three had been overlooked and left unsecured.[21] A series of unfortunate circumstances had thus occurred. Actions that may otherwise have been characterized as benign neglect instead resulted in the heartbreaking end of a young life, whose death continues to haunt the campus over fifty years later.

Like most ghosts, Bobby refuses to be forgotten. But now he is a real person with whom students can empathize, not some disembodied spirit floating through campus. News accounts described Robert Ramsey as a typically rebellious teenager, who had run away and been reported missing before. There was even discussion of his broken watch, a small detail that had taken on outsized importance in the legends. According to detectives, the sheer force of the impact had rolled the dial backward from Wednesday to Tuesday; a jarring fact that echoes the truly frightening circumstances. RPOP commiserates with the tragic tale of this troubled youth, and commemorates his memory by relating the historical facts behind his demise.

While researching other well-known ghost stories, RPOP found some that could not be verified, which news reporters came to regard as local legends. Recognizing that there were two distinct types of campus ghost stories, the students composed a tour script that clearly distinguishes between fictional legends rumored to have occurred, and factual accounts surrounding the deaths of real people. True stories are conveyed with respect and sensitivity toward both the deceased and those who mourn them, "to honor those who have been touched by violence" in a tone both "somber and serious".[22] Furthermore, RPOP maintains a strict self-imposed moratorium against the inclusion of any real tragedy that happened less than fifty years ago, half of Texas Tech's hundred year history.

20 United Press International, "Lubbock Boy Tells of Fatal Plunge," *Dallas Morning News*, February 13, 1971, sec. D, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40WHNPX-0FD52C03BB40F8DF%402440996-0FD52C04324990B9%4032-0FD52C07DFC58BA6%40Lubbock%2BBoy%2BTells%2Bof%2BFatal%2BPlunge.

21 James Boyett, "Dead Youth Discovered in Tech Elevator Shaft," *University Daily*, February 12, 1971, http://collections2.swco.ttu.edu/handle/20.500.12255/127556.

22 Tali Russell, a junior majoring in Theatre Arts, e-correspondence with Garret D. Langlois, February 6, 2023.

Despite these precautions, members of RPOP are still asked if their tour could be misconstrued as disrespectful and exploitative. In an age where books are banned[23], language is sanitized[24], and facts are censored[25], they offer a refreshingly bold response: "History doesn't exist to make you comfortable."[26] RPOP feels strongly that presenting grievous yet factual events is important. They see it as an opportunity to "give a voice to those who never got the chance to tell their story, or those whose stories might otherwise go untold."[27] It also allows them to raise awareness. "Sharing [true] stories with students and the public can spark a healthy discussion about public safety and resources available in the event of a crisis."[28] Only legends are sensationalized for spooky effect. Having unearthed exactly where facts ended and rumors began, RPOP created an event that educates and entertains the audience simultaneously.

The *Haunted Tour of TTU Campus* is RPOP's moment to share their passion for paranormal-themed experiences and teach what they have learned. Their efforts have been richly rewarded, and the public's response was overwhelmingly positive. For the cast, the experience reinforced the importance of studying history. "It is important to know the history of where you are educated and living… It provides backstory about the morals, values, and safety of the school."[29] This sentiment was echoed in most of our interactions with the cast. "These stories let people learn about the history at this school. History is told to educate people on what not to do in the future."[30] Overall, students consider the haunted tour a valuable part of their university education; "it covers campus history that is not often discussed"[31] in a fun, friendly, and welcoming environment.

In order for "teaching to be transformative for students, instructors must teach beyond the content of their courses", which "might mean challenging the scholarly and popular consensus about the value or importance of certain people, groups, or events."[32] Ghosts have haunted societies' peripheries since time immemorial.[33] Is this history not worthy of study? Dr. George White, Jr. also reminds us, "the best teachers set a tone that helps students to develop both an inquisitiveness and healthy skepticism that allows [them] to draw connections and make comparisons."[34] RPOP warmly welcomed the insights of custodians, the guidance of a librarian, and the mentorship of a scientist, all of whom encouraged their emerging scholarship. With that support, RPOP drew those connections, made those comparisons, and sifted fact from fiction. Why not invite students to gather 'round

23 Alexandra Alter, "Book Bans Rising Rapidly in the U.S., Free Speech Groups Find," *The New York Times*, April 20, 2023, sec. Books, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/20/books/book-bans-united-states-free-speech.html.

24 Angel Eduardo, "Why 'Sensitivity Readers' Are Bad for Free Speech, Art, and Culture," *FIRE Newsdesk* (blog), The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, March 31, 2023, https://www.thefire.org/news/why-sensitivity-readers-are-bad-free-speech-art-and-culture.

25 Tyler Brunner, "Censorship in History Textbooks: How Knowledge of the Past Is Being Constructed in Schools," *Ursidae: The Undergraduate Research Journal at the University of Northern Colorado*, McNair Scholars Edition, 3, no. 2, article 9 (January 2016): 40–56, https://digscholarship.unco.edu/urj/vol3/iss2/9/.

26 Nick Adams, class of '23 who graduated with a degree in History, e-correspondence with Garret D. Langlois, February 6, 2023.

27 *Ibid*.

28 Amy Shaw, class of '22 who graduated with a degree in Accounting, e-correspondence with Garret D. Langlois, February 5, 2023.

29 Kyndal Houff, a freshman majoring in Animal Science, e-correspondence with Garret D. Langlois, February 5, 2023.

30 Bailey Bradshaw, a freshman majoring in Psychology, e-correspondence with Garret D. Langlois, February 6, 2023.

31 Daniel Ozlowski, a sophomore majoring in Natural Resources Management, e-correspondence with Garret D. Langlois, February 7, 2023.

32 George White, Jr., "Crafting History: On Oral History Projects, Experiential Learning, and a Meditation on Teaching and Learning," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 38, no. 1 (May 1, 2013): 23–38, https://doi.org/10.33043/TH.38.1.23-38.

33 Irving L. Finkel, *The First Ghosts: Most Ancient of Legacies* (London, U.K.: Hodder & Stoughton, 2021).

34 George White, Jr., "Crafting History: On Oral History Projects, Experiential Learning, and a Meditation on Teaching and Learning," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 38, no. 1 (May 1, 2013): 23–38, https://doi.org/10.33043/TH.38.1.23-38.

the proverbial campfire, to share the kinds of stories we usually tell in the dark… tales of the improbable, the uncanny, the frightening? Within the atmosphere of suspense and hushed excitement, they may just find the frisson of fear, the element of truth, and the historical food for thought that make such tales endure.

RPOP was founded by three undergraduates with $100 and an ecologist as their advisor. Their existence has not been a painless one; a student protested against them, and a professor repeatedly challenged their access to basic campus resources. But RPOP's remarkably successful transformation of research findings into public performance earned them legitimacy and recognition. The *Haunted Tour of TTU Campus* empowered RPOP to engage their local community, raise their budget thirty-fold, increase membership a hundred-fold, and save their club. RPOP's success demonstrates how having fun while learning haunted history can be a powerful educational experience, if not banished as irrelevant. Even if no such clubs exist at your own institution, haunted history could still be explored within a traditional classroom model. As demonstrated, even a modest start can yield impressive results. Imagine what the expertise of a historian could achieve through evoking their own local spirit.

Figure 1. Attendees in 2022, outside Drane Hall, listening to "Med. School Cadavers" and learning about how the willed body program was housed there back in 1973.[35] Photograph courtesy of Hunter Pitman.

35 Suzanna Cisneros, "Caring for Families and Students," *Daily Dose* (blog), January 28, 2016, https://dailydose.ttuhsc.edu/2016/january/caring-for-families-and-students.aspx.

Figure 2. The 2021 cast; word of the event spread, and the cast size increased by nearly 80% the following year. Photograph courtesy of Sierra Mello-Miles.

Figure 3. A dramatic storyteller in 2022, outside Knapp Hall dormitory, regaling attendees with the tale of the "Boy with the Ball". Photograph courtesy of Disha Ganjegunte.

Measuring Critical Thinking in *Reacting to the Past*

Patrick Ludolph
Georgia Gwinnett College

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The literature on *Reacting to the Past* has generally been laudatory.[1] For those unfamiliar with *Reacting*, it is a pedagogy originally developed by Mark Carnes at Barnard College in the 1990s, eventually spreading to college faculties across the US and beyond. It requires students to take on the role of historical figures. Students are expected to do extensive reading, preparation, writing, and speaking during these games, taking on the perspective of their characters during key historical events.

One of the central contentions scholars have made is that *Reacting* can help improve students' critical thinking. Unfortunately, there is little consensus on what critical thinking is or how to measure it. Most works on *Reacting* rely on student self-report (from class discussion, surveys, or focus groups) or faculty observations.[2] However, without both faculty and students having a clear idea of what critical thinking is, it is doubtful that either group can be trusted to report its development. In addition, even if we could trust the largely anecdotal evidence, how could we compare it? For instance, how could we know if *Reacting* is as effective in promoting critical thinking as writing a research paper? To begin to address these problems, I conducted a preliminary study in Spring 2023 measuring the effects of *Reacting* on critical thinking using a standardized assessment, the CAT. I assessed nine students in an upper division history course at Georgia Gwinnett College, a small, public, open enrollment college. Students took a critical thinking assessment before and after playing two role-playing games. Students also took two surveys gathering more data on their experiences in the course and skill development. This study finds that *Reacting to the Past* led to improved critical thinking, but not evenly across subskills. The data suggests that *Reacting* can be a potent intervention for developing creative thinking and effective communication. The study also finds that, while student self-report can be useful, it was not reliable in predicting critical thinking scores. These findings demonstrate the value of using a standardized assessment to measure critical thinking, but future studies will require greater participation.

Assessing Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is supposed to be a core element of a college education. Unfortunately, as often as critical thinking appears in college pamphlets, there is still little consensus about how best to define, teach, or assess it. Research suggests that, while college does improve students' critical thinking, much remains to be done.

In *Our Underachieving Colleges* (2006), Derek Bok makes the case that American schools have lost their premier position among global academies; American schools should be doing more to improve writing, critical thinking, foreign language acquisition, quantitative reasoning, and citizenship.[3] Bok argues that students, faculty, and the changing world all bear some responsibility. Students are more distracted by technology and entertainment than ever—and studying less than ever as a result. Faculty are relying too much on lecture and both short answer and multiple-choice exams. In this, both faculty and students collude, because these methods are easier for both parties. Students will use their memory to cover over not understanding underlying concepts and faculty have less

1 For example, Jacqueline A. Gilbert, "Reacting to the Past Drives Business Students' Engagement," *Journal of Excellence in College Teaching* 32, 3 (2021): 161-91; Carl A. Anderson and T. Keith Dix, "'Reacting to the Past' and the Classics Curriculum: Rome in 44 BCE," *The Classical Journal* 103, 4 (2008): 449-55; Thomas C. Buchanan, Nicole Rarulevicz, and Edward Palmer, "Reacting to the Past in Australasia: From Early Adoption to COVID-19," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 39, 1 (December 2020): 208-24; Kevin Burke, "Roleplaying Music History: Honing General Education Skills via 'Reacting to the Past,'" *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 5, 1 (2014): 1-21. In addition, virtually every other article or book cited on *Reacting* in this article finds it to be a valuable pedagogy.

2 For example, see Christine L. Albright, "Harnessing Students' Competitive Spirit: Using *Reacting to the Past* to Structure the Introductory Greek Culture Class" *The Classical Journal* 112, 3 (2017): 364-79. For further examples, see footnote 11. Of course, student self-report and faculty observations are valuable, but an objective assessment offers different insights.

3 Derek Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1-10.

to grade. Developing critical thinking requires active learning, in which faculty pose problems, challenge student answers, encourage students to apply learned concepts in new situations, expose misconceptions, and regularly evaluate and provide feedback to students.[4]

Richard Arum and Josip Roksa's *Academically Adrift* makes a similar case to Bok. The researchers found that student critical thinking is only minimally improving over the course of two years of college education. However, they also considered many variables to try to explain and even predict improvement. They found that certain variables, to some extent controllable by faculty, could predict scores both within and between institutions. Namely, they found that students who reported taking classes that required more than 40 pages of reading per week and 20 or more pages of writing per semester were strongly correlated with greater improvement. They also found a strong positive correlation with the number of hours spent studying—alone. There was in fact a negative correlation with more hours students spent studying with peers.[5] The reading and writing findings bode well, but this last factor can call into question the extent to which *Reacting* can spur growth in critical thinking. It is important to note that these were correlations, not causations, so there may be other factors that encourage more studying alone or course selection for more rigorous reading and writing courses. Arum and Roksa relied on a standardized measure, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA, now CLA+), that could be administered in the same way across college campuses twice for more than 2000 students. Their study demonstrates the value of objective assessments in bringing to light ways to target critical thinking development.

The study in this paper used the Critical thinking Assessment Test (CAT) developed by the Center for the Assessment and Improvement of Learning (CAIL) at Tennessee Technological University. The CAT has 15 questions, each exploring one or more skills, broken down into four major categories: evaluating information, creative thinking, learning and problem solving, and communication.[6] Each of these categories is further refined:

Evaluating and Interpreting Information	Separate factual information from inferences. Interpret numerical relationships in graphs. Understand the limitations of correlational data. Evaluate evidence and identify inappropriate conclusions.
Creative Thinking	Identify alternative interpretations for data or observations. Identify new information that might support or contradict a hypothesis. Explain how new information can change a problem.
Learning and Problem Solving	Separate relevant from irrelevant information. Integrate information to solve problems. Learn and apply new information, Use mathematical skills to solve real-world problems.
Communication	Communicate ideas effectively.

Figure 1: The CAT's definition of critical thinking

There is no single consensus definition of critical thinking. For instance, the above definition conflicts with

4 Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges*, 110-27.

5 Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 93-95, 100-101.

6 It has been validated using multiple methods: Ada Haynes, Elizabeth Lisic, Kevin Harris, Katie Leming, Kyle Shanks, and Barry Stein, "Using the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT) as a Model for Designing Within-Course Assessments: Changing How Faculty Assess Student Learning," *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* 30, 3 (2015): 38-40.

the Delphi Report, one of the more commonly accepted definitions. According to the Delphi Report, "not every valuable thinking skill is CT skill. CT is one among a family of closely related forms of higher-order thinking, along with, for example, problem-solving, decision making, and creative thinking."[7] This would appear to contradict two of the four categories assessed by the CAT. However, closer examination of CAIL's definition of creative thinking shows that it overlaps significantly with Delphi's definition of inferences—querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives, and drawing conclusions.[8] Similarly, one could make a case that much of the CAT's problem solving could be pieced together from skills identified in the Delphi Report. The Delphi Report also identifies areas not included in the CAT's definition at all, such as a more elaborate apparatus for evaluating communication or a dispositional element: self-regulation. However, even without a complete consensus, the CAT is a valuable tool for assessing critical thinking.

Beyond being a validated assessment, the CAT was used in this study for three reasons. First, my home institution, Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC), uses the CAT in assessment, making it possible to draw broader comparisons between experimental groups and the larger student population. Second, CAIL has developed a pedagogy for improving critical thinking based on the CAT: CAT Applications or CAT-apps. Third, as a result of the first two reasons, I was part of a research group that tested the effectiveness of CAT-apps. We carried out a semester-length longitudinal study of 208 GGC students in General Education courses and one upper division business course. A control group (98 students) was given no extra critical thinking training while an experimental group (110 students) completed and scored two CAT-apps. Both groups were assessed with the CAT at the start and end of the semester.[9]

The study found that the experimental group benefitted significantly from the exercises. The control group improved their average score by .98 points. We considered this to be the practice effect, a consequence of taking the exam twice in the same semester. The experimental group that completed two of the CAT-apps improved their scores by an average of 2.38 points, or 1.4 points beyond the control group, a 10.6% increase. The gap between freshmen and seniors at GGC from 2015-2019 was only 1.97 points. Thus in one semester, the effect of two CAT-Apps was equivalent to more than two-thirds of the critical thinking gains of a college career.[10]

The above study was a roadmap for the one reported in this paper with some important caveats. First, as the current one is a small, preliminary study, I will not be able to do more than discuss what the evidence suggests and provide direction for a much larger study in the future. Second, the CAT and *Reacting* are foundationally untethered. Whereas the CAT-apps were developed with the express purpose of focusing on skills addressed by the CAT, *Reacting* requires a wide range of skills, many of which may not be captured by the CAT and may not even be properly considered critical thinking. It is difficult to see, for instance, where the ability to cope with distress would fit into a definition of critical thinking. Alternatively, while perspective-taking is an important skill in historical thinking and valuable to critical thinking, learning how to think like a sans-culottes mob would not seem to fit into CAIL's definition of critical thinking. *Reacting* games are not made with the CAT in mind, and the CAT will only measure a piece of what *Reacting* offers. It is a test of particular (rather than the total) premises of both using the others' measure: that the CAT can assess critical thinking across disciplines and that *Reacting* helps students develop their critical thinking.

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7 Peter Facione, *Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction, Executive Summary*: "The Delphi Report" (Millbrae, CA: California Academic Press, 1990), 5. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED315423.

8 Haynes, et al., "Using the Critical Thinking Assessment Test," 39; Facione, "The Delphi Report," 9.

9 Unfortunately, my own courses were not able to be included because of the arrival of the pandemic.

10 Tom Lilly, Pratima Darr, Matthew Schmolesky, Todd Lindley, Patrick Ludolph, Marieke Schilpzand, Young Shim, Rebecca Higgins, Aurelie Weinstein, Lior M. Burko, and Daniel von Deutsch, "Intending to Teach Critical Thinking: A Study of the Learning Impacts over One Semester of Embedded Critical Thinking Learning Objects," *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 22, 3 (September 2022): 34-54. https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/josotl/article/view/31801.

Reacting and Critical Thinking

Much of the literature on *Reacting* indicates that it is helpful for critical thinking. However, few studies give a clear, working definition of critical thinking. It may be an entry on a rubric, or students may be asked to rate how much they had to use critical thinking, but students do not appear to have been given a definition to consider.[11] Students' understanding of critical thinking tends to be very vague; a recent survey of students at Georgia Gwinnett College about critical thinking suggests that students have a very limited idea of what it is.[12] It seems doubtful that students would be able to reliably identify which of their thinking was "critical" without further prompting.

Generally, *Reacting* researchers have tended to discuss critical thinking as being associated with three areas: primary source analysis, writing or otherwise forming arguments, and perspective-taking.[13] Paula Lazrus and Gretchen McKay, in discussing *Reacting*, argue that "students learn to make reasoned arguments and support their ideas with textual and factual information, and that is the heart of critical thinking."[14] Richard Powers, John Burney, and Mark Carnes have argued that *Reacting* "educates students in critical thinking by requiring them to advance claims and reasons, and to conduct research to develop supporting evidence while also accounting for alternative points of view." Students must do so in a "dramatic context" while trying to solve "messy" problems.[15] One of the more interesting definitions has come from Mark Carnes. He argued that the core of critical thinking was leaving the self, at least temporarily. For Carnes, the Socratic method was a mainstay of education because it could be used to break down the self through relentless critical examination. This process is very unpleasant. Instead, Carnes argues that *Reacting* students can develop their critical thinking by "adding" new selves; not destroying their old self, but temporarily taking on an alternate self.[16] Frequently, though, studies do not provide a clear definition of critical thinking, and virtually none have used a definition founded in critical thinking pedagogical research.

There have been few studies that have used standardized measures to quantify the effects of *Reacting* on students in areas outside of critical thinking, but they show the value of using standardized measures. Steven

11 Marie Gasper-Hulvat, David M. Dees, and Anthony V. Shreffler, "Eliciting Meaningful Engagement in an Art History Survey Course: Reacting to the Past and Active Learning," in *Playing to Learn with Reacting to the Past: Research on High Impact, Active Learning Practices*, ed. C. Edward Watson and Thomas Chase Hagood (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 119-20; Thomas Chase Hagood, Naomi J. Norman, Hyeri Park, and Brittany M. Williams, "Playing and Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: How Does *Reacting to the Past* Empower Students and Faculty?" in ibid., 170; Tracy Lightcap, "Creating Political Order: Maintaining Student Engagement through *Reacting to the Past,*" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42, 1 (Jan. 2019): 175-79.

12 Marieke Schilpzand, Matthew Schmolesky, and Patrick Ludolph, "Student and faculty perspectives on critical thinking: a qualitative and quantitative analysis" (Georgia Gwinnett College, Lawrenceville, GA: *Teaching, Learning, and Research Symposium*, 2022). Another study found that students and academics in Education have largely similar concepts of critical thinking, though students tend to emphasize the product and academics tend to emphasize the process and disposition: Margaret Lloyd, "Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking in Higher Education," in *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 4, 2 (2010). https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1136134.

13 Among historians, this has frequently taken the form of "historical thinking" rather than critical thinking more broadly: Russell Olwell and Azibo Stevens, "'I had to double check my thoughts': How the Reacting to the Past Methodology Impacts First-Year College Student Engagement, Retention, and Historical Thinking," *The History Teacher* 48, 3 (2015): 561-72, http://www.societyforhistoryeducation.org/pdfs/M15_Olwell_and_Stevens.pdf; Gretchen Galbraith, "'I Had Almost Forgotten I Was in a Classroom Setting': Reacting to the Past and Engagement with Historical Thinking," in T*he Role of Agency and Memory in Historical Understanding: Revolution, Reform, and Rebellion*, ed. Gordon Andrews and Yosay Wagdi (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 394.

14 Paula Kay Lazrus and Gretchen Kreahling McKay, "The Reacting to the Past Pedagogy and Engaging the First-Year Student," *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development* 32 (2013): 358. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/p/pod/dod-idx/21-the-reacting-to-the-past-pedagogy-and-engaging.pdf?c=tia;idno=17063888.0032.025;format=pdf.

15 Richard Gid Powers, John M. Burney, and Mark C. Carnes, "Reacting to the Past: A New Approach to Student Engagement and to Enhancing General Education," A White Paper Report for the Teagle Foundation (2010), 28. https://reacting.barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/reacting_white_paper_teaglefoundation_0.pdf.

16 Mark Carnes, *Minds on Fire: How Role-Immersion Games Transform College* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 87-123.

Stroessner carried out an assessment on *Reacting* at Barnard College and later expanded it with Laurie Susser Beckerman and Alexis Whittaker. As they noted, "the vast majority of assessments [of *Reacting*] to date have relied on descriptive or anecdotal accounts, and empirical evaluations have generally lacked credible measures and appropriate controls, undermining causal claims about the effects of role playing."[17] Such measures and controls are important because "people tend to be quite inaccurate in judging both the nature and the extent of an impact of the experience."[18] In other words, self-report is unreliable because students and faculty may be unable to accurately gauge the effects of the pedagogy. Unfortunately, their study did not measure critical thinking. They used standardized assessments to measure psychosocial effects: empathy, locus of control, mastery, self-esteem, implicit person theory, confidence as speakers, Machiavellianism, social avoidance and distress, and optimism. They found that *Reacting* generally leads to increases in self-esteem, emotional empathy, and the belief in human malleability. However, they also found, conversely, that *Reacting* appears to make students feel less in control of their lives, but without the negative consequences that tend to follow that externalized locus of control: drops in self-esteem and the belief in human malleability. Their explanation was that, considering how frequently sudden and seemingly random events take place in *Reacting* games, it is not surprising that students feel less in control.[19] In Phase 3 of their study, Stroessner, Beckerman, and Whitaker teased out how individual differences could affect enjoyment of *Reacting*. They found that "students who have a high degree of self-confidence . . . tend to like the pedagogy. In contrast, students who do not like receiving attention as a result of disagreement and students who are highly emotionally empathetic tend to enjoy the pedagogy to a lesser degree."[20]

A study by Robert Bledsoe and Deborah Richardson uncovered a curious effect of role selection on students. The authors used standardized measures for self-efficacy and perspective-taking, along with surveys, to measure the effects of *Reacting* on students, noting that anecdotal evidence has not yet been backed up by empirical data.[21] Their most provocative finding was that students who were given indeterminate roles did not see an increase in their self-efficacy, whereas students in factionalist roles did.[22] This finding largely agrees with Matthew Weldenfeld and Kenneth Fernandez, who also lamented the lack of systematic studies of *Reacting* and used surveys and focus groups to gather data on student engagement.[23] They found that students in "moderate" or "crowd" roles did not feel the same need to prepare for class. Moderates believed it was the job of the factionalists to persuade them, and the crowd students felt they had no power over the outcome of the game. They also found that supposedly negative emotions, such as nervousness and anger, led to increased preparation and participation.[24]

All of this is to suggest that there is a great deal left to learn about the effects of *Reacting* on student learning, and that empirical studies using standardized assessments can yield fruitful data. This study is an attempt to do something similar for *Reacting* and critical thinking.

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17 Steven J. Stroessner, Laurie Susser Beckerman, and Alexis Whitaker, "All the World's a Stage? Consequences of a Role-Playing Pedagogy on Psychological Factors and Writing and Rhetorical Skill in College," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 101, 3 (2009): 605.

18 Stroessner, Beckerman, and Whitaker, "All the World's a Stage?," 608.

19 Stroessner, Beckerman, and Whitaker, "All the World's a Stage?," 612, 614. April Lidinsky argues that *Reacting* builds on feminist pedagogy that encouraged, among other things, collaboration and empathy: April Lidinsky, "'Reacting to the Past' to Be Proactive in the Present: Feminist Roots of High-Impact Practices," *Feminist Teacher* 24, 3 (2014): 208-12.

20 Stroessner, Beckerman, and Whitaker, "All the World's a Stage?," 617.

21 Robert S. Bledsoe and Deborah S. Richardson, "Impact of Reacting to the Past and Effect of Role on Student Attributes and Academic Outcomes," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 33, 3 (2022): 362-64. 365, 370-71. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1366192.

22 Bledsoe and Richardson, "Impact of Reacting," 365, 370-71.

23 Matthew C. Weldenfeld and Kenneth E. Fernandez, "Does *Reacting to the Past* Increase Student Engagement? An Empirical Evaluation of the Use of Historical Simulations in Teaching Political Theory," *Journal of Political Science Education* 13, 1 (2017): 47.

24 Weldenfeld and Fernandez, "Does *Reacting to the Past* Increase Student Engagement," 57-58.

Measuring the Effects of *Reacting* on Critical Thinking

In Spring 2023, I had the opportunity to teach an upper division course using three role-playing games: the Valladolid Debate; *Japan, 1941*; and *The Needs of Others*.[25] The Valladolid Debate game is under development; in keeping with *Reacting* standards, there were individualized roles for each student and multiple game mechanics for playing and winning the game.[26] In part because of the course's offering as an upper division Special Topics course, the students in the spring were all juniors or seniors, and mostly history majors. The course had been advertised as a role-playing game course, so students who signed up already had some idea of what it would be like. About half had played similar games in prior courses. Ten students enrolled, with nine completing the course. Unsurprisingly, these students were more committed to actively participating in the games than in a non-*Reacting* class. I graded student papers using a critical thinking writing rubric, but it was based on a non-CAT definition of critical thinking. It was intended to encourage students to inhabit their roles more fully and had categories for identifying the problem/question, perspectives, assumptions, and context. I did not provide any critical thinking training beyond explaining the terms in the rubric and related comments on their papers.

With assistance from the Office of Academic Assessment at GGC, I carried out a preliminary study using the CAT to measure changes in students' critical thinking as a result of playing *Reacting* games.[27] Students were given the CAT in the second week of the semester before playing any of the games and then again in the tenth week after finishing the second game (Valladolid Debate, *Japan, 1941*). Students were also given a two-part survey in the course meeting following the second CAT assessment. The first had open-ended questions about their experiences of the games and the second asked them to provide five-point Likert scale ratings about those experiences. Students were asked to fill out the second survey without returning to the first to avoid shaping their open-ended answers.[28] With only nine students having completed both CAT assessments and the surveys, it is not possible to draw broad conclusions about the effectiveness of *Reacting* on student's critical thinking. However, the data does give reason to be sanguine.

The CAT-app study at GGC established that there is practice effect. Administering the CAT to students twice in a semester with no critical thinking intervention led to a gain of .98 points, an increase of 7.42%.[29] For *Reacting* to show promise as a means of fostering critical thinking development, the study's subjects needed to improve by more than that.

	Average CAT Score	Evaluate and Interpret Information	Problem Solving	Creative Thinking	Effective Communication
GGC Freshmen (2016-23)	10.93	7.92	7.02	2.43	5.27
GGC Seniors (2016-23)	12.94	9.03	7.90	3.13	6.41
Point change	2.01	1.11	.88	.7	1.14
Percent change	18.39	14.02	12.54	28.81	21.63

Figure 2: Freshmen and Senior Performance on the CAT at GGC

25 John Moser, *Japan, 1941: Between Pan-Asianism and the West* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2022); Kelly McFall, *The Needs of Others* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2022).

26 I am working with Dr. Rebecca Carte at Cuyahoga Community College to turn it into a *Reacting* game.

27 My thanks to the director, Dr. Thomas Lilly.

28 Students were offered extra credit for completing both CATs and the surveys.

29 Lilly et al., "Intending to Teach Critical Thinking", 41.

	Average CAT Score	Evaluate and Interpret Information	Problem Solving	Creative Thinking	Effective Communication
National Seniors	17.64	10.73	10.82	6.11	10.5
Pretest	13.8	9.56	8.00	3.56	7.00
Posttest	15.56	10.56	8.89	4.22	8.56
Point change	1.76	1	.89	.67	1.56
Percent change	12.75	10.47	11.11	18.75	22.22

Figure 3: National Senior and *Reacting* Student Performance on the CAT

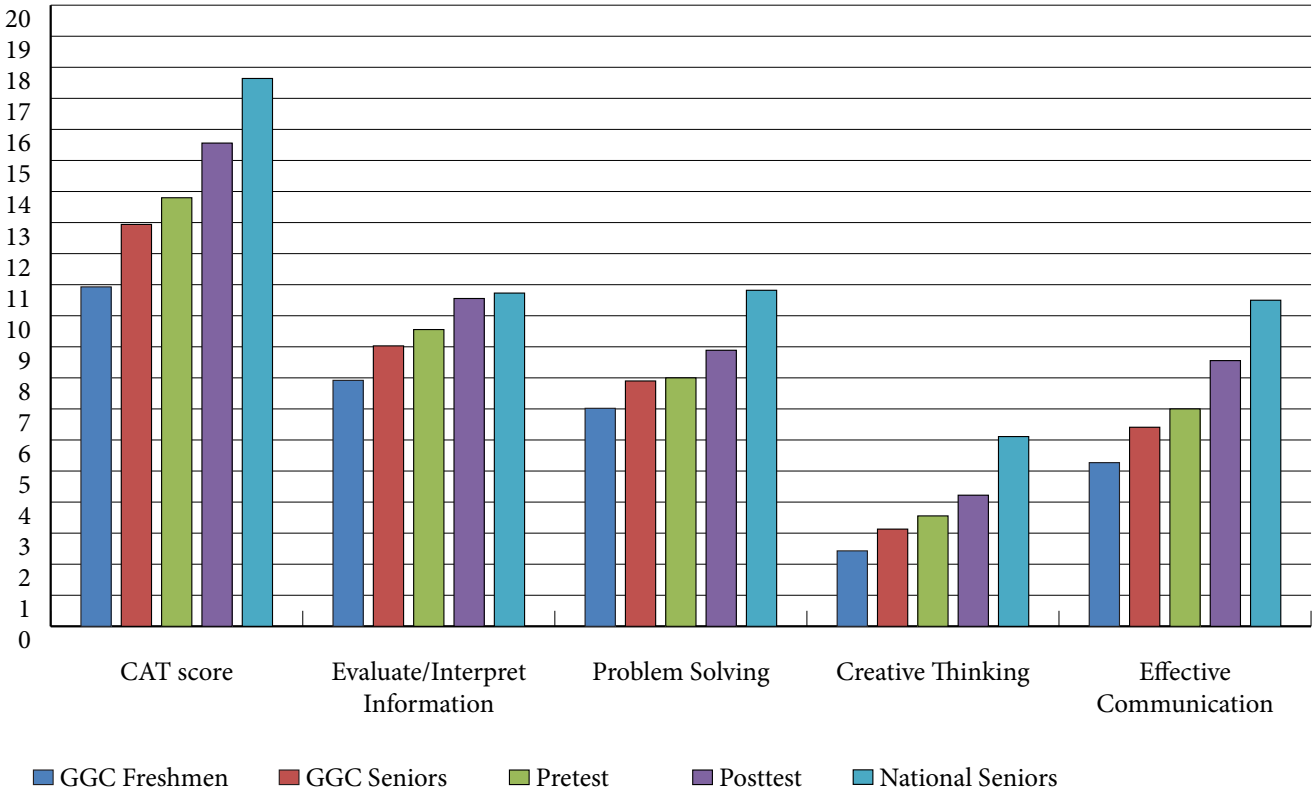

Figure 4: Mean total CAT and skill set scores

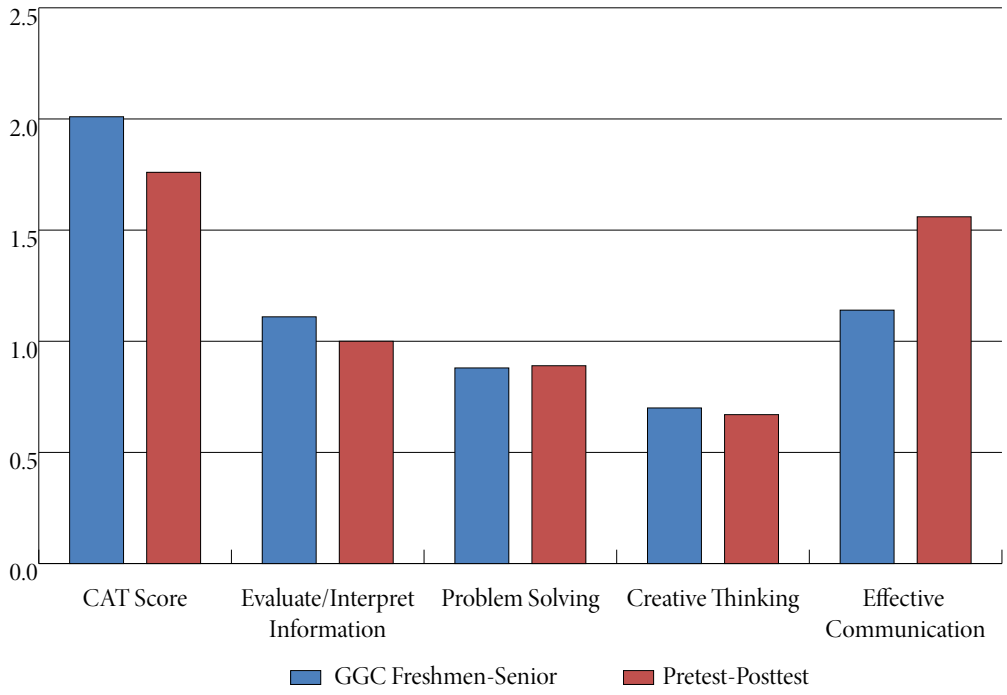

Figure 5: Change in total CAT and skill set scores by total points

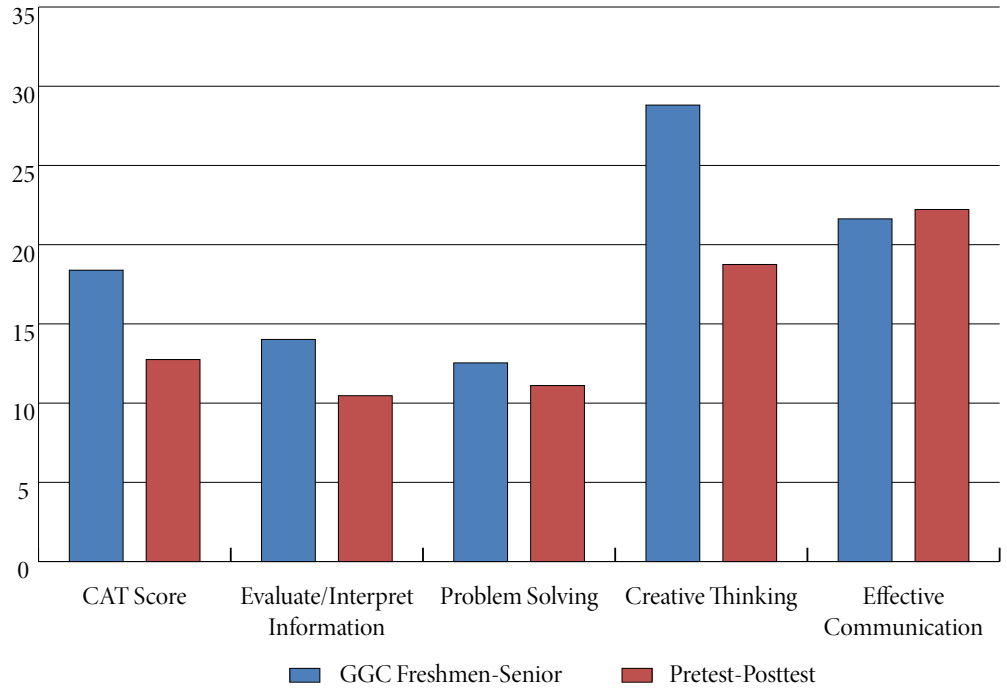

Figure 6: Change in total CAT and skill set scores by percentage

As the above figures show, before beginning to play any of the games, *Reacting* students (13.8) were a little above GGC seniors' average (12.94), but not exceptionally so. After playing two games, their total scores rose by 1.76 points (12.75% increase), close to the 2.01 total difference between GGC freshmen and seniors, and a .78 point increase —5.65%—beyond the .98 point practice effect. In the four skill categories, *Reacting* students gained almost as many points as the difference between freshmen and seniors in evaluating and interpreting information

and creative thinking, slightly more in problem solving, and substantially more in effective communication. Because *Reacting* students started with higher scores, this was a smaller percentage gain, but even there, *Reacting* students' effective communication increase (22.22%) was greater than the difference between GGC freshmen and seniors (21.63%). *Reacting* students' chief gains, in terms of percentage increase, came in creative thinking and effective communication. Given GGC students' persistently low performance in these categories relative to national averages, the possibility of a pedagogy that targets those areas for improvement is particularly heartening.

Survey data

In the class session following the posttest CAT, students were asked to take two surveys. One had open-ended questions and the other asked them to rank the course relative to other courses on a five-point Likert scale. Students were asked to answer the open-ended questions first and not return to them after taking the second survey to avoid contaminating their answers with wording and ideas from the second survey. The surveys indicate that the role-playing games made a substantial emotional impact on the students, that they primarily focused on the social and speaking aspects of the games, and that, when compared with their CAT scores, they did not have a strong sense of which skills they were developing. These results reinforce the need for using objective assessments in addition to self-report and anecdotal evidence.

1. In this course, we have played multiple historical role-playing games. Have you ever played similar role-playing games in other courses? Yes/no. If yes, please describe the course and the game.
2. What skills do you believe that you have developed over the course of playing these games? Please list and explain.
3. What was your emotional experience of this course like? Please explain.
4. If you have any other comments you wish to make at this time, please do so here.

Figure 7: Survey 1 Questions

To the first question, four of the nine students responded that they had played similar games, some of them in my courses. Two of them, in fact, had previously played an older and less sophisticated version of the Valladolid Debate game.

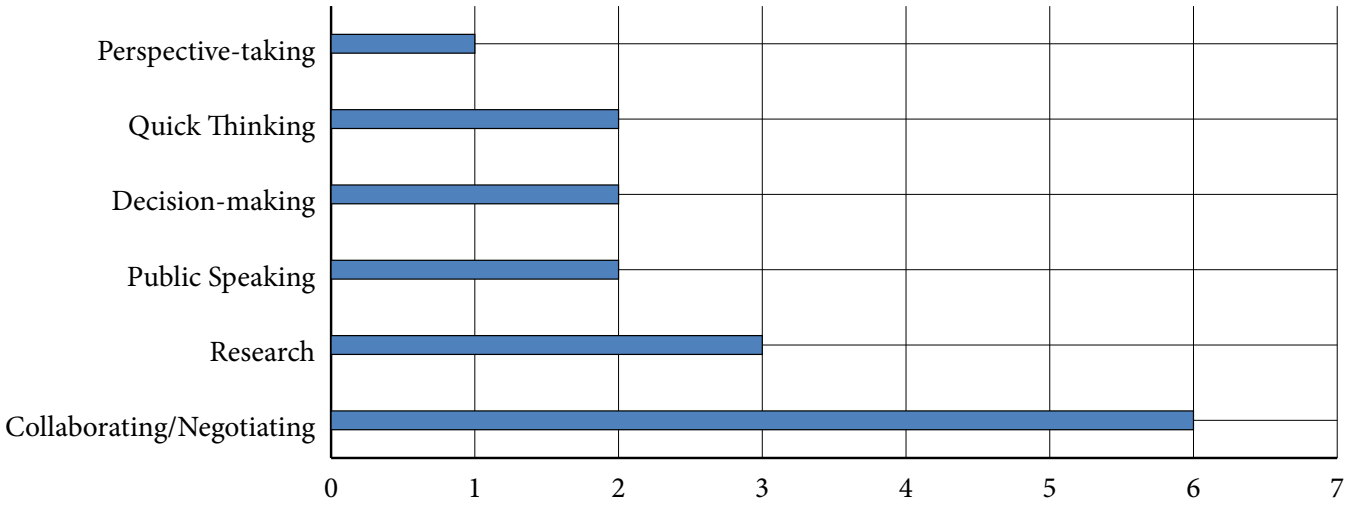

Figure 8: Survey 1 Skills (Q2)

To the second question, student answers here were generally focused on the in-person aspects of the game. They focused on communication, particularly the more social or speaking aspects. Six noted something to do with

collaborating and/or negotiating with their peers. Only three mentioned research skills, though all students had been doing some research for their roles. Two discussed having to think quickly in the moment. Two discussed working on their decision-making. Strangely enough, only two explicitly addressed working on their public speaking. Finally, only one discussed learning how to take on someone else's perspective.

For the third question, I had anticipated for many students to say that they found the games stressful, but the answers were generally positive. Students seem to have found the experiences energizing. Five students indicated having at least some negative emotions, but were still enjoying themselves. Two indicated some distress at the "heavy" topics of the games or taking on roles of unsavory historical figures, but both of those students indicated their enjoyment of the course in the following question. The other three noted some anxiety or frustration in speaking in front of or dealing with their fellow students in the games, but all indicated that they were enjoying the course. One student noted that it "can get to you a little bit when other people are roll [sic] playing more aggressively, but its [sic] just part of the game." Another noted that the "emotional experience was good but made me nervous becaus [sic] I'm not used to speaking in front of others." The third student also noted that the games were enjoyable, but that "I would get frustrated with other players both during and outside of game sessions, but I feel that those were still productive emotions, and were beneficial to critical thinking and acting under pressure." This was reminiscent of Weldenfeld and Fernandez's finding that negative emotions could support student learning.[30]

The four students who only noted positive emotional experiences pointed to their emotional investment in the course. One noted how "consuming" the games were, "like it's always in the back of your mind," particularly when other students were also taking the game seriously. Another student noted how "exciting" the games were and called them "the most impactful form of Active learning I have experience." The third student noted how "productive" the games were for developing "real-life skills" like "ways to cooperate and collaborate in preparation of real-world problems." The fourth expressed his/her enjoyment and that "I felt more emotionally connected to the content and more invested."

Seven students responded to the fourth question. All expressed their appreciation for the games and generally wanted more. They wished to see them in other classes, to try new ones, to have more participants, or to have me run the course again, for the sake of future students.

Overall, these surveys expressed what *Reacting* instructors have generally reported. Students emotionally engage with the games and develop their social and communication skills. To a lesser extent, they also reported developing their research, decision-making, and perspective-taking. There are two important caveats to the above data. First, at the end of the semester, multiple students said that they found the last game, *The Needs of Others*, to be far more stressful than the other two because of the subject matter and their frustration at being unable to intervene in Rwanda—or because they were one of the characters who actively prevented intervention. This could indicate that the material and gameplay of individual games should be taken into account when considering the emotional impact of role-playing games. Second, these students self-selected into a role-playing course. The emotional experience would likely be different for students who had not.

The second survey used a 1-5 point scale, with one 1 being "much less," 2 "somewhat less," 3 "about the same," 4 "somewhat more," and 5 "a lot more." Students were asked to rate their experience in the *Reacting* course relative to non-role-playing courses. The first six questions, listed below, were intended to test student engagement in the course: stress, skill development, learning, and workload.

30 Weldenfeld and Fernandez, "Does *Reacting to the Past* Increase Student Engagement," 57-58.

1.	How stressful was this course, relative to other courses?
2.	How much of the material have you learned in this course, relative to other courses?
3.	To what extent have your writing skills improved as a results of this course, relative to other courses?
4.	To what extent have your speaking skills improved as a result of this course, relative to other courses?
5.	To what extent have your reading skills improved as a result of this course, relative to other courses?
6.	How much work have you done for this course, relative to other courses?

Figure 9: First six questions of Survey 2

Questions 7-21 of the survey asked them to rate their skill development using the same 1-5 rating scale. However, students were given CAIL's descriptions of the skills tested by each of the 15 questions on the CAT. The survey instructions noted that these skill "descriptions were not designed for this course, so they may or may not apply. Just consider how much you have developed that skill in this course and compare it to how much you have developed that skill in other courses." Discussion with students after the survey indicated that they did not recognize them as the basis of the CAT.

7.	Summarize the pattern of results in a graph without making inappropriate inferences.
8.	Evaluate how strongly correlational-type data supports a hypothesis.
9.	Provide alternative explanations for a pattern of results that has many possible causes.
10.	Identify additional information needed to evaluate a hypothesis.
11.	Evaluate whether spurious information strongly supports a hypothesis.
12.	Provide alternative explanations for spurious associations.
13.	Identify additional information needed to evaluate a hypothesis.
14.	Determine whether an invited inference is supported by specific information.
15.	Provide relevant alternative interpretations for a specific set of results.
16.	Separate relevant from irrelevant information when solving a real-world problem.
17.	Use and apply relevant information to evaluate a problem.
18.	Use basic mathematical skills to help solve a real-world problem.
19.	Identify suitable solutions for a real-world problem using relevant information.
20.	Identify and explain the best solution for a real-world problem using relevant information.
21.	Explain how changes in a real-world problem situation might affect the solution.

Figure 10: Last 15 questions of Survey 2

Student responses to the first six questions generally reflected their responses in the first survey. Based on the first survey, students should report the most development of their communication skills, particularly oral communication. Their emotional investment in the course would suggest that they are doing more work, but their positive and negative emotional experiences would suggest that their stress level should be average, or perhaps slightly elevated. These predictions bear out in the second survey, with speaking skills claiming the top ranking and writing skills, and workload tying for second. Student stress was the lowest score, but still slightly elevated from a non-role-playing course.

Question	Mean Response
1. Stress	3.11
2. Learning	3.44
3. Writing Skills	3.89
4. Speaking Skills	4.11
5. Reading Skills	3.33
6. Workload	3.89

Figure 11: Mean responses to first six questions of Survey 2

Responses to the second half of the survey, on the other hand, indicate that students do not know which critical thinking scores they have been developing. Student CAT scores and their ratings of how much they have developed those skills do not show correlation. To make comparison easier, I have rendered both CAT scores and the student ratings for their skill development by percentage change. For the CAT, this meant comparing the average pretest and posttest scores and finding the percent increase and decrease for each question. For the 1-5 rating skill, I marked 1 as -100%, 2 as -50%, 3 as 0%, 4 as 50%, and 5 as 100%. X-axis values represent the number of the survey question and the relevant CAT "Q" question. To see predictability in student report and real outcomes in the below charts, we would need to see a similar shape, though perhaps not values.[31]

Figure 12: Mean percentage changes in CAT scores and student-reported skill development

The above figure does not suggest that students can self-report their own skill development. In fact, the highest and lowest data points, questions 13 and 15 from the CAT, demonstrate the problems with relying on faculty observations and student self-report. In question 13, students have to "identify suitable solutions for a real-world problem using relevant information." It makes sense that they should develop this skill while playing *Reacting*, and the CAT scores reflect that, but students do not perceive that this was their most developed skill. One would

31 Data on Q1 was included, but students all scored the maximum in both the pre- and posttest. Therefore it was impossible to see improvement on it. Similarly, all students also scored zero points on Q7 in both the pre- and posttest, and so it was impossible to measure a decline.

also expect them to improve for question 15, in which students are expected to "explain how changes in a real-world problem situation might affect the solution." In fact, students marked it as their most developed skill, but their CAT scores dropped by 50%. What faculty and students experience or expect to see does not necessarily align with objective assessment.

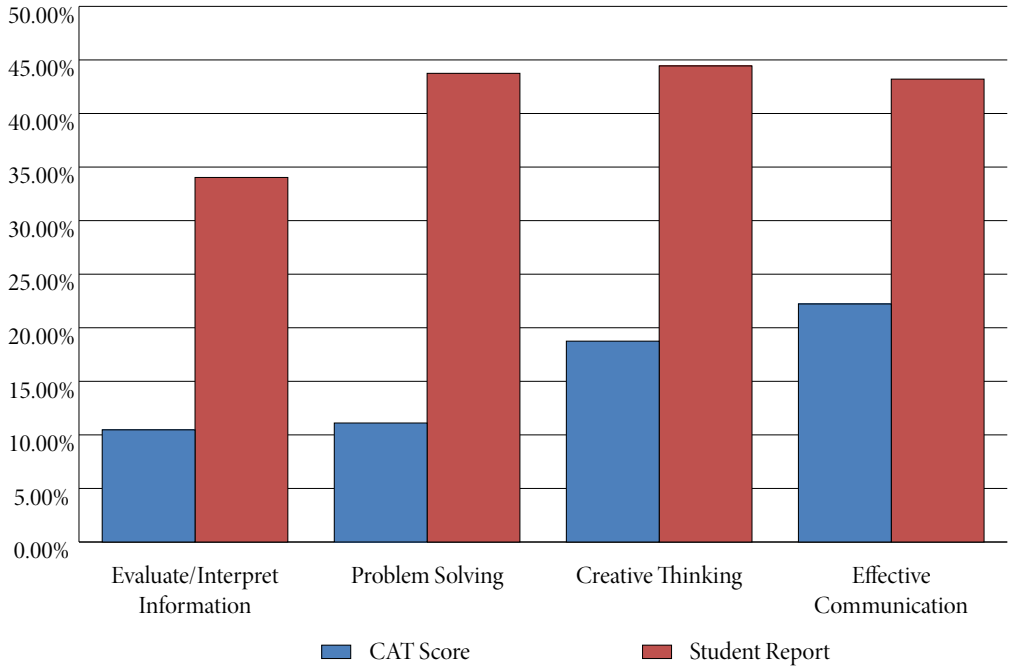

Figure 13: Mean percentage changes in CAT scores and student-reported skill development by skill set

Student expectations are slightly better when considered by skill set, but still do not align with CAT scores. Students believed that they improved most on problem solving, creative thinking, and effective communication. Student ratings for these three categories were extremely close, but we know that the changes in creative thinking and effective communication were substantially higher than for problem solving.

Limitations

The limitations on this study indicate paths forward. First, the most significant limitation on the study was its size. While the student pretest averages did not indicate that these students were extraordinary as a group, even small changes in CAT scores could provide misleading results. A larger, sustained study, using multiple faculty and courses and with its own control group would be able to provide more reliable data.

Second, student selection could also lead to unusual outcomes. Students in this study were told what they would be doing and signed up for the course. Around half had already played similar games. Some of the studies discussed previously, particularly the one by Stroessner, Beckerman, and Whitaker, have found that individual students may react differently based on their personality traits. It is possible that a larger pool of students would react more negatively or experience greater levels of stress than this self-selected group of students. A broader study of *Reacting* across multiple courses that are not specifically designated as *Reacting* courses could overcome this limitation.

Finally, there are limitations on the instrument used to assess critical thinking. While the CAT is a validated instrument, it may not be best suited to evaluate the effects of *Reacting*. Student self-report emphasized the work they had done to improve their ability to speak, collaborate, and negotiate. Much of the structure of the games, both the sessions and the writing assignments, focus on quality of oral and written communication and the construction of arguments. The CAT does not assess communication very deeply and it may also not be sensitive

to other kinds of thinking done in history courses, such as perspective-taking. If indeed critical thinking has a dispositional element, such as Delphi's self-regulation, then that would be missed entirely. On the other hand, some skills assessed by the CAT may not be relevant to many *Reacting* games. For instance, students may not need to know how to read a graph or even how to use basic mathematical skills to solve an in-game problem. Certainly, there are games where these skills would be useful, but they are not central to role-playing games as a whole. With all of that said, the CAT has still shown that it can detect changes in critical thinking as a result of students playing two role-playing games.

Conclusions

History needs objective, validated assessment to stay competitive. Lendol Calder and Tracy Steffes called for a standard history assessment tool, making the case that it would benefit history as a discipline. In part, it would be defensive: "if historians do not come to the table for conversations about assessment, decisions will be made without us." However, it would also be one means whereby "historians could help us gather important evidence about student learning according to the criteria that we as historians deem most important."[32] Calder and Steffes were suggesting an assessment based on core elements of historical thinking that would explain and justify history's place in education to students, administration, and future employers, but this study suggests that assessing critical thinking could be just as valuable. If critical thinking is commonly desired by students, faculty, and employers, and history classes can show that it provides effective training, assessment would prove how valuable history courses are. While this study was limited in scale, it gives cause to feel optimistic about the effects of *Reacting* on students' critical thinking development and justifies *Reacting*'s use in the history classroom and beyond. Students' scores, which started above GGC average, but not exceptionally so, improved by more than the practice effect. This study confirms something that was assumed: *Reacting* and *Reacting*-style games lead to a measurable improvement in critical thinking.

This study also found the limitations of previous studies on *Reacting*. While student critical thinking improved, it did not do so evenly. Creative thinking and effective communication scores increased at a faster rate than evaluating/interpreting information and problem solving. This was not necessarily surprising, but it also could not have been stated with any certainty based on previous studies. Surveys found that while students were positive about their experience and skill building, they were not very accurate in predicting which of their skills had developed. This casts doubt on self-report as a means of analyzing the effects of *Reacting*. Lastly, student responses to the open-ended survey focused mostly on in-game communication more than the writing and perspective-taking elements often discussed in the *Reacting* literature. This may be a sign of faculty and students understanding the experience of the games differently, casting doubt on the validity of faculty observations. All of this underscores the need for more studies of *Reacting* using validated, standardized measures.

The gains in creative thinking and effective communication were heartening for a few reasons. Whereas GGC students tend to score close to the national average in evaluating and interpreting information, they lag far behind the national average in the former two areas, averaging only 51.2% and 61% of the national norm, respectively. Interventions that target those areas specifically could be extremely beneficial, as they would be at any school in a similar situation. In addition, some areas of critical thinking may be more beneficial than others for student success. As discussed previously, CAIL's creative thinking skill set bears resemblance to the Delphi Report's definition of inference. Liam O'Hare and Carol McGuiness found that "the critical thinking skill of inference has particularly strong validity in terms of higher education outcomes."[33] They examined students' marks and found that the inference component of the California Critical Thinking Skills Test, which is based on Delphi, had clear,

32 Lendol Calder and Tracy Steffes, "Measuring College Learning in History," in *Improving Quality in American Higher Education: Learning Outcomes and Assessments for the 21st Century*, ed. Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, and Amanda Cook (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 40, 41.

33 Liam O'Hare and Carol McGuinness, "The validity of critical thinking tests for predicting degree performance: A longitudinal study," *International Journal of Educational Research* 72 (2015): 170.

if modest, predictive power. Thus, it is possible that targeting this area of critical thinking could improve student outcomes overall. Schools in a similar situation, not just GGC, should take note.

Finally, *Reacting* pushes students to build a wide variety of skills, many of which may not be properly termed critical thinking. For instance, students may learn how to cope with distress created by openly disagreeing with their classmates. Even if critical thinking gains were smaller than those already measured, that would not necessarily discount *Reacting*'s value as a pedagogy because of the variety of skills it hones. The value of *Reacting* is that it can improve student skills in many areas, including critical thinking.

This preliminary study was intended to test the viability of assessing the development of critical thinking as a result of *Reacting* pedagogy. While the small size of the study makes it difficult to draw any definite conclusions, the evidence suggests that *Reacting* is an effective pedagogy for improving student critical thinking.

Murder Most Fowl: a centuries-spanning true story of teaching, vengeance, and several ducks, to which is appended an original role-playing game of the highest historical accuracy

Justine Meberg
United States Military Academy AP

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I might have fallen in love with teaching for many reasons—the mentoring, the fellowship, the special moments where learning happens—but in the end, it was the ducks. I was in the archives at the United States Military Academy, fitting in dissertation research between classes and meetings with cadets, when I found the letters. In the fall of 1841, five cadets nursing offenses to their honor wrote to Secretary of War John Spencer to protest the Superintendent's alleged abuse of his authority in investigating the disappearance of several ducks. When Major Richard Delafield learned that cadets had stolen the birds from his property, he resolved to find the criminals. But when he began to ask questions, several cadets refused to answer them, citing the potential for self-incrimination.

Cadet Selden explained, "It is generally understood by the members of the Corps, that on, or about the night of the 14th instant two ducks were taken from the vicinity of the Superintendent's quarters."[1] Merely because "the head and feathers of one were found near the barracks the crime was laid to the charge of the Corps." One can only marvel at the confidence of someone who argues to his country's top military official that finding the carcass of a missing duck outside the barracks was not evidence that the cadets had cooked it for dinner.

The US military today has a phrase for exactly this kind of soldier: the barracks lawyer. The term describes someone who claims (and/or possesses) a thorough knowledge of rules and regulations and attempts to leverage those skills to wriggle themselves or their buddies out of trouble. The young men decided they had a responsibility to speak up. As Cadet Stewart put it,

> *It has so seldom happened in the recent history of this academy, that difficulties of sufficient importance to be referred to the decision of the War Department have arisen between the Superintendent and the Cadets; that I hesitated some time, before availing myself of the privilege granted to me in the 139th Art. Academic Regulations, but the course pursued by Major Delafield in the case which I am about to submit to your consideration, has been such, that I think it a duty which I owe both to myself and my fellow Cadets, to hesitate no longer.*

Stewart described the facts of the case.

> *A short time since and while I was 'orderly' of my room, one of the Assistant Instructors of Tactics entered my quarters and asked me, if any poultry had been cooked there on a certain night? As cooking in the barracks is forbidden by the Academic Regulations, and the question therefore being such as might have caused me by answering it, to report myself, I declined doing so. A day or two subsequently the same gentleman informed me that the Superintendent had given him directions to refer the question to me again. In the meantime however, I learned that Major Delafield, had lost some ducks of a very valuable species, and that he suspected the Corps of Cadets of having taken them; whence I concluded the object of his asking such a question to be, to ascertain the truth of his suspicions. As I thought in that case, that his question amounted to an accusation, and as I did not believe he had a right to require me to answer, when by doing so I might have given him sufficient reason to accuse one openly, of such a crime and as, moreover, the power of directing an inquiry such as he was then prosecuting, belongs not to Major Delafield, but to the President of the United States.*

In grave language—its grandiosity matched only by its sense of moral outrage—cadets gave rein to their

1 "Letter to the Secretary of War, the Honorable John C. Spencer," in *Adjutant Letter Book, Volume 1, 2 April 1838 to 30 October 1845* (West Point, New York: United States Military Academy, 1841), 118–23. The letters (five in total) to Spencer are recorded in the letter book in the following order and dated as follows: Selden, 24 October 1841; McLean, 02 November; Benjamin, 24 October; Chadbourne, 29 October; and Stewart, undated.

arguments in a series of what appear to be pre-coordinated talking points.

> *It appears that some person or persons secretly took from the premises of the Supdt. some private property (several fowls) on or about the night of the 15th instant. For the purpose of detecting the offender or offenders the Supdt. availed himself of the 215th paragraph Acad. Regs. by placing a construction upon it which in my opinion and in that of every one whom I have consulted on the subject is no less novel than arbitrary.*
> -Cadet Eugene McLean

> *In civil or a military court, a prisoner is not required to criminate himself, and he is always supposed innocent until proved guilty. Am I then as a Cadet to be denied the privilege which the Constitution of the U.S. guarantees to me as a Citizen?... I solemnly protest against his assuming such an inquisitioned [sic] right, a right never before assumed in the Mil. Acad. and one evidently hostile to the spirit of all free institutions. I make this protest in no capricious or contentious spirit, but conceive it to be a duty I have to myself to resist as far as possible all encroachments on my privileges as a Cadet, and a citizen of the U.S.*
> -Cadet Henry Selden

> *I believe that he has arrogated a power which has no legitimate existence in this country as the assumption of which is in violation of the 92nd Article of War; that his proceedings in this case were highly inquisitional and hostile to the discipline of the Corps and pernicious to the morals of the Cadets, especially with respect to a regard for truth, and averse to the formation of that manliness and independence of character, and the inculcation of those high principles and that pride of spirit which are essential to the Soldier.*
> -Cadet Calvin Benjamin

> *He has it in his power to compel us to accuse ourselves; which I do not believe can be done anywhere else, or by any other person in the United States.*
> -Cadet Alexander Stewart

> *I protest against this proceeding as eminently unjust, unprecedented, and inquisitorial as directly opposed to the spirit of our free institutions, to the principle of common justice and to the 92nd Art. Of War framed to protect those under military rule from unusual inquisitorial action. To give up the right of keeping our misdeeds to ourselves were to yield all freedom and put unheard of power into the hands of superiors.*
> -Cadet Theodore Lincoln Chadbourne

It just so happened that I was, that very semester, teaching a class on the shifting relationship between the US Army and American society, so I got to work on a lesson plan.

The class was HI101, Army of the Republic: Leading Citizen Soldiers. West Point freshmen, known as plebes, take it their first semester. Because it was a required course, my students were a cross-section of the general student population at the United States Military Academy (USMA). The Corps of Cadets includes representatives from every state and US territory. It is about three-quarters men and one-quarter women. More than one-third identify as minorities, and around one in eight cadets is a first-generation college student.[2] My cadets would play participants in the scenario, and those acting as the five letter writers would seek to convince the Secretary of War to take their desired course of action.[3] Potential outcomes included punishing or dismissing the cadets involved,

2 HI101 entered the curriculum in 2019. It inaugurates a four-year program of engagement with what it means to be a leader of character in the US Army that culminates with MX400, Officership, a capstone course. The figures in this paragraph reflect the profiles for the Classes of 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026. Office of Institutional Research, "Class Profile" *United States Military Academy West Point*, accessed March 31, 2023, https://www.westpoint.edu/about/west-point-staff/g5/institutional-research/class-profiles.

3 I developed the lesson format on my own but have since learned more about role-playing systems designed for classroom use such as Reacting to the Past. For more on these games, see: Mark Christopher Carnes, *Minds on Fire: How Role-Immersion Games Transform College* (Harvard University Press, 2014). For the results of research into the value of these teaching methods, see: Jan L. Plass, Bruce D. Homer, and Charles K. Kinzer, "Foundations of Game-Based Learning," *Educational Psychologist* 50, no. 4 (2015): 258–83; Meihua Qian and Karen R. Clark, "Game-Based Learning and 21st Century Skills: A Review of Recent Research," *Computers in Human Behavior* 63 (2016): 50–58.

punishing the Superintendent, taking no action, or changing USMA regulations.

Those were interesting classes. They included hasty crime scene sketches, fiery oratory, and a mix of verdicts. Some classes punished the Supe, and others found the cadets in the wrong. This very silly case produced big questions. We talked about what honor meant to the letter writers. We considered how their conception of it compared to ours. We asked how our responses to the documents revealed our views of officership today and considered what it meant, then and now, to be an officer as opposed to a civilian.

One student researched John Spencer and discovered that a year after the cadets sent their letters, the captain of the *USS Somers* executed Spencer's son, a midshipman, after the ship's officers convicted him of mutiny. The young Philip Spencer and his compatriots intended to take control of the ship to become pirates. The case generated public outcry and a consensus on the need to educate naval officers, which allowed Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft to establish the US Naval Academy.[4] We talked about how knowing that changed how we interpreted cadet resistance.

Likewise, in the years that followed, the cadets were no strangers to violence. During the Mexican-American War a few years later, Lieutenant Chadbourne died fighting in the Battle of Resaca de la Palma, one of the war's earliest US casualties. Lieutenant Benjamin died assaulting Mexico City. Selden, too, fought in Mexico and then spent much of his army career fighting the so-called Indian Wars. He campaigned against the Navajo, Comanche, and Kiowa before dying of illness in 1865 at Fort Union, New Mexico. McLean and Stewart fought for the Confederacy, becoming generals.[5] Did knowing these outcomes revise our opinions?

Later that academic year, cadets from West Point's oldest club, the Theater Arts Guild and Dialectic Society, volunteered to perform the letters as monologues for a short video—yes, a duckumentary.[6] The club began in 1816 as the Amosophic Society and combined with several other groups in 1837 to become the Dialectic Society. The 2021 cadets wore the same full-dress uniforms as their counterparts in 1841, still made by hand with cadet gray wool and covered in rows of distinctive spherical buttons.[7] It was a deeply personal piece of living history. During our best moments, an arc of historical empathy crackled across one hundred and eighty years.[8] West Point still enshrines honor as a cardinal value. Cadets still complain about the rules.

The fate of Delafield's ducks not only provides evidence of our earliest barracks lawyers. It also offers proof that illicit cooking is one of West Point's longest-standing traditions. In my cadet years, there were covert George Foreman grills, concealed hot plates, and hidden Crockpots. Now there are probably Instant Pots and air fryers. After our role-playing lesson, some of my students later told me about holiday food they made, special dinners and baked treats to share with friends. Perhaps this act of community, breaking the rules to feed your comrades in arms, meant something more as pandemic restrictions wrapped cadet life in increasing layers of restriction, isolating them from contact with much of the outside world.

People used these things in the service of others and as tokens of friendship. In discussing this piece with a friend, I learned that he and his roommate hatched a plan to raise chickens in Pershing Barracks: "There are so many cabinets and weird cupboards in Pershing. You can hide anything there." Every graduate has a story like that. Others conjured homemade chilis, pancake breakfasts, or kettles of tea. I like to imagine that someone had

4 John V. Quarstein, "Mutiny at Sea: Death and Destruction on USS Somers," *The Mariners' Museum and Park*, December 15, 2022, https://www.marinersmuseum.org/2022/12/mutiny-at-sea-death-and-destruction-on-uss-somers/.

5 George Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy* (New York: J. Miller, 1879), 46, 47, 66, 82, 93.

6 James L. Morrison Jr., *"The Best School in the World" West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1986), 75–76.

7 "Fact Sheet," Directorate of Public Affairs & Communications, *West Point Cadet Uniforms*, accessed March 12, 2023, https://www.westpoint.edu/about/public-affairs/news/fact-sheets.

8 For more on using games and role-playing to teach historical empathy, see: C. Edward Watson and Thomas Chase Hagood, *Playing to Learn with Reacting to the Past: Research on High Impact, Active Learning Practices* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Karen Schrier, *We the Gamers: How Games Teach Ethics and Civics* (Oxford University Press, 2021).Active Learning Practices} (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018

an Easy Bake oven, pumping out tiny cakes for birthdays (something I did as a platoon leader in Iraq).

My secret appliance was a rice cooker, which I still have. I bought it at the Post Exchange. It fit perfectly into the lower left drawer of my standard issue desk, which was meant for hanging file folders but accommodated the device's dimensions as though made for it. I never had cause to kill any ducks to make my dinner—such are the conveniences of the modern world—but I once brought a bag of apples picked that day in a Hudson Valley orchard back to my room and cooked them down into applesauce.

Graduates invoke a Long Gray Line that stretches in solemn reverence across the centuries, blessed by institutional authority. Yet, these secret meals are also a part of West Point's legacy. Cadets have always broken rules to take care of one another, always bedeviled the administration, always balanced mischief and sincerity. That is as it should be. In this spirit, I developed a simple role-playing game (included as an appendix to this essay) so that readers can explore this odd bit of history for themselves. Rather than seeing things from the vantage point of cadets, players are ducks on a quest for revenge.

Did Spencer respond to the letters? The answer may lie waiting in the archives. As for Delafield, some historians of West Point today might recall his early Superintendency, but most West Pointers know him for the place that bears his name.

Delafield Pond.

Appendix: Murder Most Fowl, the Game

How to Play. This game draws on Dungeons & Dragons. The person leading the game, the Duck Master (DM), describes the environment. The players communicate what they want to do, and roll a 20-sided die (a d20). Using the result of that roll, the DM describes what happens.[9] If a player rolls well (that is, a high number), they are more likely to succeed. If a player rolls poorly (a low number) they may fail. A roll of 1 is a critical failure. The player will fail spectacularly. A roll of 20 is a critical success. The player will be extraordinarily successful. Ducks have five different abilities. They are constitution, dexterity, intelligence, wisdom, and charisma. Different ducks are better or worse and certain things, so they have different scores for each ability. Therefore, the role sheet for each duck includes modifiers. A charismatic but foolish duck could have a +2 modifier for charisma, but a -2 modifier for wisdom. If that duck wants to charm someone, they get to add +2 to their roll, giving them a higher chance of success, but if that duck wants to apply wisdom, say to perceive whether cadets are nearby, they subtract -2 from their roll, meaning they are more likely to fail. Each one-page role sheet has the basic information a player needs to participate. Players should *not* read past their role sheet. The final pages of the game are *for the DM only* and have secret information such as the identities of the guilty cadets.

Easter eggs. There are easter eggs spread across locations in the game. When players are nearby, they notice the egg. Each easter egg grants its finder (not the group) a special, temporary ability.

Mission. Find the guilty. The year is 1841. The place, the United States Military Academy at West Point. And you are a vengeful duck. On October 14th under the cover of a moonless midnight cadets snuck into the Superintendent's garden and duck-napped a sweet drake and a little hen. You fear the worst. The Supe, Major Richard Delafield, is certain the cadets killed and ate them. It should have been a cold-cut case, but the cadets refuse to answer his questions, and military justice is not all that it is quacked up to be. Your goal is to identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like. Will you grant forgiveness or exact retribution? Are your yearnings to punish your kin's captors a flight of fancy? Will the guilty duck the truth? Or will you see their gooses cooked? Find out as your quest takes wing.[10]

Who you are. You are one of the earliest Cayuga ducks, an American breed recently domesticated from wild stock. Your plumage is black with iridescent green, much like the feathers on the cadets' dress hats. Your bills, legs, and feet are black. Your eyes are dark brown. Just a year ago, in 1840, a breeder purchased some of your ilk in Dutchess County, New York, a few miles across the river from your home, and brought them to Cayuga County farther upstate—hence the name.[11] You do not know this. You consider yourself to be Delafield's Ducks. He raised you from ducklings and maintained a pleasant area for you in the garden. You like to explore your highland home, full of mountains and valleys, streams flowing down to a mighty river, but you always return. You like to eat dandelions, clover, and bugs.

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9 *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook* (Renton, Washington: Wizards of the Coast Publishing, 2014), 6–7.

10 My thanks to Colonel Retd. Ray Kimball, who developed many of these puns.

11 "Cayuga Duck," The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, accessed March 12, 2023, http://albc-usa.org/cpl/waterfowl/cayuga.html. I chose this breed because the cadet letters refer to the ducks as belonging to "a very valuable species," and in 1841 the ducks soon to be known as Cayuga Ducks were a new breed that emerged from the Hudson Valley at exactly the right time for this story. Stewart, "Letter to the Secretary of War, the Honorable John C. Spencer." It is an interesting coincidence that the black, iridescent plumage of the Cayuga Duck is a close match for the cadet shako, known as the tar bucket, a hat worn with the cadet full dress uniform that features a plume of iridescent black feathers. However, the hat never actually included duck feathers, and today's tar buckets use rooster feathers.

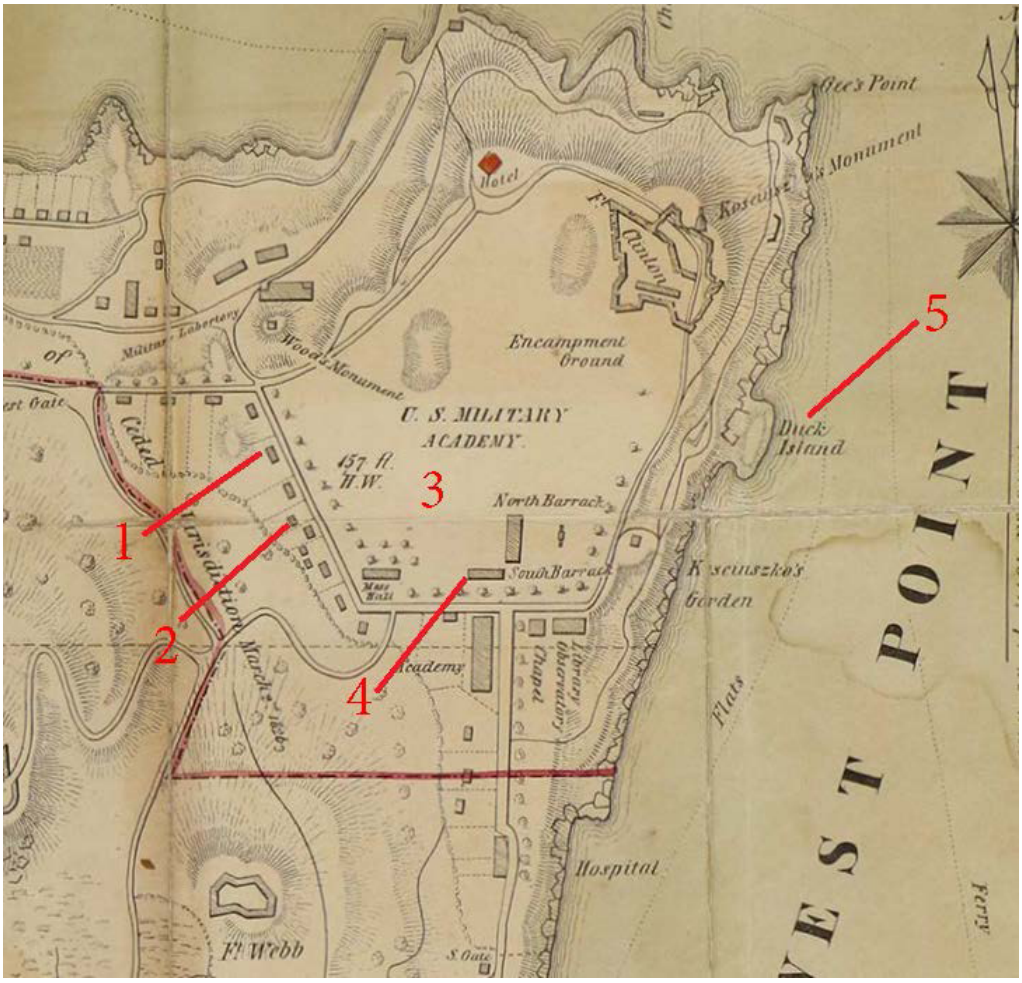

Figure 1: This is a historical map of West Point from 1844. Courtesy of the West Point Museum Collection, United States Military Academy.[12]

Locations

1. **The Supe's House:** Ducks can go into the Supe's house, but they must avoid Delafield himself so he does not shoo them outside. The ducks suspect there are clues in the study.
2. **The Thompson Dining Hall.** Ducks can listen for clues that help identify the guilty cadets.
3. **The Plain.** Another location where ducks can interact with NPCs.
4. **The Barracks.** If it is night, the cadets are there, if day, there are few or no humans present.
5. **Duck Island.** On this secluded island, the ducks can regroup and interact with wild ducks.

12 Joseph Hutchins Colton, "Map of West Point" (New York: Endicott and Company, 1844), West Point Museum, Art Collection. I confirmed these locations by cross-referencing the Endicott map with Crackel's *Illustrated History*, which is a useful reference for anyone interested in how West Point changed over time: Theodore J. Crackel, *The Illustrated History of West Point* (West Point, New York: The Association of Graduates, 1991), *Map of West Point, 1833-1865*.

Role Sheets

DM assigns roles at random, perhaps by having players roll a d8 (a dice with 8 sides) because there are 8 possible ducks. Each player should be a different duck. Role sheets are mostly the same from duck to duck, with small variations in modifiers, so that different ducks are good at different things. Also, females (hens) can lay eggs, while males (drakes) cannot.

Name: Magret, drake, 7 lbs

Mission: Identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like.

Hit points: You have 6 hit points. If you fail a dangerous task, the DM can have you roll for damage. You can regain 1 hit point if you spend 1 hour eating bugs and/or plants. If you reach zero hit points, you die.

Modifiers: add this number to your d20 roll.

+2	Constitution
-1	Dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth)
-2	Intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion)
+1	Wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival)
0	Charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion)

You are not strong. You are a duck. No strength checks.

Powers

- Move. You can waddle or fly as much as you want unless restrained.

Roll a d20 to:

- Quack (charisma): Your roll determines the volume and tenor of your quack in accordance with your intent.
- Muck Up (constitution): You create an instantaneous and horrible brown muck for square footage equal to your roll.
- Befoul the Waters (constitution): You ruin a surface area with square footage equal to your roll. In an enclosed body of water (bathtub to very small pond) this effect lingers for several days. In a large or fast-moving one, it lasts minutes to hours at the DM's discretion.

Name: Mrs. Duckfire, hen, 7 lbs, +1 on persuasion

Mission: Identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like.

Hit points: You have 6 hit points. If you fail a dangerous task, the DM can have you roll for damage. You can regain 1 hit point if you spend 1 hour eating bugs and/or plants. If you reach zero hit points, you die.

Modifiers: add this number to your d20 roll.

+1	Constitution
-1	Dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth)
-2	Intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion)
-1	Wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival)
+3	Charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion)

You are not strong. You are a duck. No strength checks.

Powers

- Move. You can waddle or fly as much as you want unless restrained.
- Lay Egg: Females can lay 1 egg per long rest. Eggs are black when you lay them and lighten to pale green-blue over time.

Roll a d20 to:

- Quack (charisma): Your roll determines the volume and tenor of your quack in accordance with your intent.
- Muck Up (constitution): You create an instantaneous and horrible brown muck for square footage equal to your roll.
- Befoul the Waters (constitution): You ruin a surface area with square footage equal to your roll. In an enclosed body of water (bathtub to very small pond) this effect lingers for several days. In a large or fast-moving one, it lasts minutes to hours at the DM's discretion.

Name: Release the Quacken, hen, 6 lbs, +1 on stealth

Mission: Identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like.

Hit points: You have 6 hit points. If you fail a dangerous task, the DM can have you roll for damage. You can regain 1 hit point if you spend 1 hour eating bugs and/or plants. If you reach zero hit points, you die.

Modifiers: add this number to your d20 roll.

-3	Constitution
+2	Dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth)
+1	Intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion)
0	Wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival)
0	Charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion)

You are not strong. You are a duck. No strength checks.

Powers

- Move. You can waddle or fly as much as you want unless restrained.
- Lay Egg: Females can lay 1 egg per long rest. Eggs are black when you lay them and lighten to pale green-blue over time.

Roll a d20 to:

- Quack (charisma): Your roll determines the volume and tenor of your quack in accordance with your intent.
- Muck Up (constitution): You create an instantaneous and horrible brown muck for square footage equal to your roll.
- Befoul the Waters (constitution): You ruin a surface area with square footage equal to your roll. In an enclosed body of water (bathtub to very small pond) this effect lingers for several days. In a large or fast-moving one, it lasts minutes to hours at the DM's discretion.

Name: Mr. Duckles, drake, 8 lbs

Mission: Identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like.

Hit points: You have 6 hit points. If you fail a dangerous task, the DM can have you roll for damage. You can regain 1 hit point if you spend 1 hour eating bugs and/or plants. If you reach zero hit points, you die.

Modifiers: add this number to your d20 roll.

+3	Constitution
-2	Dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth)
+1	Intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion)
0	Wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival)
-2	Charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion)

You are not strong. You are a duck. No strength checks.

Powers

- Move. You can waddle or fly as much as you want unless restrained.

Roll a d20 to:

- Quack (charisma): Your roll determines the volume and tenor of your quack in accordance with your intent.
- Muck Up (constitution): You create an instantaneous and horrible brown muck for square footage equal to your roll.
- Befoul the Waters (constitution): You ruin a surface area with square footage equal to your roll. In an enclosed body of water (bathtub to very small pond) this effect lingers for several days. In a large or fast-moving one, it lasts minutes to hours at the DM's discretion.

Name: Drake, drake, 7 lbs, +1 on performance checks

Mission: Identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like.

Hit points: You have 6 hit points. If you fail a dangerous task, the DM can have you roll for damage. You can regain 1 hit point if you spend 1 hour eating bugs and/or plants. If you reach zero hit points, you die.

Modifiers: add this number to your d20 roll.

0	Constitution
+1	Dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth)
-2	Intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion)
-2	Wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival)
+3	Charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion)

You are not strong. You are a duck. No strength checks.

Powers

- Move. You can waddle or fly as much as you want unless restrained.

Roll a d20 to:

- Quack (charisma): Your roll determines the volume and tenor of your quack in accordance with your intent.
- Muck Up (constitution): You create an instantaneous and horrible brown muck for square footage equal to your roll.
- Befoul the Waters (constitution): You ruin a surface area with square footage equal to your roll. In an enclosed body of water (bathtub to very small pond) this effect lingers for several days. In a large or fast-moving one, it lasts minutes to hours at the DM's discretion.

Name: Lady Featherington, hen, 6 lbs, +1 deception checks

Mission: Identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like.

Hit points: You have 6 hit points. If you fail a dangerous task, the DM can have you roll for damage. You can regain 1 hit point if you spend 1 hour eating bugs and/or plants. If you reach zero hit points, you die.

Modifiers: add this number to your d20 roll.

0	Constitution
+1	Dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth)
-1	Intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion)
-3	Wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival)
+3	Charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion)

You are not strong. You are a duck. No strength checks.

Powers

- Move. You can waddle or fly as much as you want unless restrained.
- Lay Egg: Females can lay 1 egg per long rest. Eggs are black when you lay them and lighten to pale green-blue over time.

Roll a d20 to:

- Quack (charisma): Your roll determines the volume and tenor of your quack in accordance with your intent.
- Muck Up (constitution): You create an instantaneous and horrible brown muck for square footage equal to your roll.
- Befoul the Waters (constitution): You ruin a surface area with square footage equal to your roll. In an enclosed body of water (bathtub to very small pond) this effect lingers for several days. In a large or fast-moving one, it lasts minutes to hours at the DM's discretion.

Name: Duckworth, drake, 8 lbs

Mission: Identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like.

Hit points: You have 6 hit points. If you fail a dangerous task, the DM can have you roll for damage. You can regain 1 hit point if you spend 1 hour eating bugs and/or plants. If you reach zero hit points, you die.
Modifiers: add this number to your d20 roll.

+1	Constitution
+2	Dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth)
-1	Intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion)
0	Wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival)
-1	Charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion)

You are not strong. You are a duck. No strength checks.

Powers

- Move. You can waddle or fly as much as you want unless restrained.

Roll a d20 to:

- Quack (charisma): Your roll determines the volume and tenor of your quack in accordance with your intent.
- Muck Up (constitution): You create an instantaneous and horrible brown muck for square footage equal to your roll.
- Befoul the Waters (constitution): You ruin a surface area with square footage equal to your roll. In an enclosed body of water (bathtub to very small pond) this effect lingers for several days. In a large or fast-moving one, it lasts minutes to hours at the DM's discretion.

Name: The Befouler, hen, 7 lbs, +1 on befouling the waters, as described below in powers

Mission: Identify the guilty cadets. Once you discover that information, you can act on it however you like.

Hit points: You have 6 hit points. If you fail a dangerous task, the DM can have you roll for damage. You can regain 1 hit point if you spend 1 hour eating bugs and/or plants. If you reach zero hit points, you die.

Modifiers: add this number to your d20 roll.

+2	Constitution
0	Dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth)
-1	Intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion)
+1	Wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival)
-2	Charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion)

You are not strong. You are a duck. No strength checks.

Powers

- Move. You can waddle or fly as much as you want unless restrained.
- Lay Egg: Females can lay 1 egg per long rest. Eggs are black when you lay them and lighten to pale green-blue over time.

Roll a d20 to:

- Quack (charisma): Your roll determines the volume and tenor of your quack in accordance with your intent.
- Muck Up (constitution): You create an instantaneous and horrible brown muck for square footage equal to your roll.
- Befoul the Waters (constitution): You ruin a surface area with square footage equal to your roll. In an enclosed body of water (bathtub to very small pond) this effect lingers for several days. In a large or fast-moving one, it lasts minutes to hours at the DM's discretion.

Duck Master (DM) Only

The game establishes the minimum context necessary to play along with some historical vignettes and figures to add detail. The DM determines everything else. Do the players want to know whether it is day or night? You decide. If you want to add uncertainty, you can try rolling a die to determine an outcome. For instance, you can say an even-numbered roll means it is day, and an odd-numbered roll means it is night. You can determine whether a player succeeds in an action by using the difficulty class table below. If you decide the task is easy, then the player only needs a 10 or higher. If you believe a task is difficult, they need a 20, and so on. You can use physical dice or virtual ones.

Difficulty Class (DC). The DM assigns a DC for tasks based on the numbers below.

Difficulty	The player must roll this number or higher to succeed.
Very easy	5
Easy	10
Moderate	15
Hard	20

The Cadets: The Corps of Cadets includes about 200 young men, but there are only 5 cadet suspects in the game. Each cadet has 16 hit points. They have no modifiers, and use straight d20 rolls for constitution, strength (acrobatics), dexterity (acrobatics, sleight of hand, stealth), intelligence (arcana, history, investigation, nature, religion), wisdom (animal handling, insight, medicine, perception, survival), and charisma (deception, intimidation, performance, persuasion). The DM provides information on the guilt or innocence of cadets through NPCs. If the ducks engage the cadets in combat, the cadets can make a single unarmed strike or a single attack with a cadet sword per turn.

Cadet sword: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft one target, 1d6 piercing damage. +3 to hit means that you roll a d20 and add 3 to the result. If the duck tries to get out of the way, the player rolls a d20 for the applicable skill (say, acrobatics to dodge the attack). If the cadet's roll is higher than the duck's, the cadet hits, at which point you calculate damage. 1d6 means you roll 1 standard die with 6 sides. That number is how much damage the duck takes. Subtract that amount from the duck's total hit points.

Unarmed strike: +0 to hit, reach 5ft, one target, 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

Theodore Lincoln Chadbourne (Graduate #1181). Chadbourne is not guilty. He just loves an underdog, saw his chance to challenge the Supe's authority, and shot his shot.

Calvin Benjamin (Graduate #1120). Benjamin is not guilty. He is Chadbourne's best friend and very loyal.

Henry R. Selden (Graduate #1197). Selden did not capture or kill the ducks, but he knows who did, and he ate some of the duck dinner.

Eugene McLean (Graduate #1157). Mclean is guilty. He killed the drake.

Alexander P. Stewart (Graduate #1122). Stewart is guilty. He killed the hen.

Locations and Non-Player Characters (NPCs)

Location 1: The Supe's House. Ducks can go into the Supe's house, but they must avoid Delafield so he does not shoo them outside. The ducks suspect that the study contains clues. The house, known as Quarters 100, dates to 1820. It is a three-story house with a basement and four chimneys. The ducks are mostly interested in the first floor, which has four rooms. As you enter the front door, there are two connected rooms on the right and two connected rooms on the left.[13] For simplicity's sake, tell players the parlor is on the right and the study is on the left.

NPC present: Major Richard Delafield, Superintendent. Delafield loves the ducks and treats them with kindness, but if he sees he will gently move them outside. Roll a d4 to determine Delafield's location (1 = first floor, 2 = second floor, 3 = third floor, 4 = not home). If the ducks can sneak into his study, they will find Delafield's list of the 5 cadets he suspects: Chadbourne, Benjamin, Selden, McLean, and Stewart. On an intelligence roll of 10 or higher, they notice a note in the margins that reads "I believe Cadet Selden knows more than he has said."

Location 2: The Barracks. Ducks can search for information in the barracks about five cadets who may have been involved with the duck-napping. There are two sets of barracks, South Barracks and North Barracks, both labeled on the map. For the sake of simplicity, South Barracks is the only one in play for this game. It is a long, narrow, three-story stone building made of gray granite with a slate roof. It has 48 rooms that house 2 cadets each. Each cadet room has 2 iron-frame beds with trunks underneath for storage, as well as books, muskets, bayonets, swords, and miscellaneous other items.[14]

NPCs present: If it is night, the cadets are there, if day, there are few or no humans. All of the five named cadets—Mclean, Stewart, Chadbourne, Benjamin, and Selden—live in the barracks.

Location 3: The Thompson Dining Hall. This simple restaurant, an extension of the Thompson women's boarding house, serves cadets who want to eat outside of the mess hall. Ducks can listen for clues that help identify the guilty cadets.

NPCs present: Souverine, Amelia, Mary, and up to 12 cadets. Mrs. Amelia Thompson, the widow of Captain Alexander Thompson (a Revolutionary War veteran who died in 1809) established the dining hall, but her adult daughter and namesake Amelia runs it these days. Amelia hired a woman of color to run the Thompson dining room. Souverine is from Haiti and speaks French and English. She works as the maitresse d'hotel and chief waiter. One cadet wrote that after he missed dinner and wandered into the Thompson dining room, Souverine generously fed him an "abundant supper."[15] She has a great sense of humor and engages customers in lively, witty conversation. About a dozen cadets at a time had permission from the academy to eat at Mrs. Thompson's boarding house, so if the ducks arrive during a meal, up to 12 cadets may be present. Cadets chosen for this privilege relished the home-like and relaxed atmosphere and the escape from mess hall food. This became such a highly prized honor that each graduating cadet passed on his seat to a chosen successor.[16]

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13 Sherman Fleek, "Quarters 100: The House That Thayer Built" (West Point, New York, April 2020), 23, 25.

14 Theodore J. Crackel, *West Point: A Bicentennial History*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 74, 121.

15 George Cullum and George Ramsay, "Recollections of the Cadet Life of George D. Ramsay," in *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, 1802-1867*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1868), 615–17. Ramsay describes Souverine as he found her in 1814. I assume for the sake of the story that she still worked for the Thompsons in 1841.

16 Crackel, *West Point: A Bicentennial History*, 89–90, 113, 138–39.

Amelia's widowed sister-in-law Mary Thompson (née Nexsen) also resides here. Mary's husband Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Ramsey Thompson died in combat during the Second Seminole War on Christmas Day, 1837. While fighting at the front of his regiment during the Battle of Okeechobee in Florida, the Seminoles shot Thompson twice. Thompson continued to advance with his soldiers, but a third shot mortally wounded him. He propped himself against a nearby tree, still facing the enemy, and shouted his last words to his soldiers: "Keep steady men. Charge the hammock. Remember the regiment to which you belong!"[17] The word hammock refers to a small hill covered in dense vegetation, a typical terrain feature of the region. News of this misfortune prompted Mary to memorialize her husband. Her tireless work eventually secured a monument to his memory in the West Point cemetery with the inscription "This monument is the joint tribute of his affectionate widow and admiring regiment."[18]

Location 4: The Plain. This is another location where ducks can interact with NPCs. The Plain is a flat, grassy area where the cadets practice marching and conduct other military training.

NPCs present: Any NPC can be in the vicinity of the Plain at the DM's discretion.

Location 5: Duck Island. This small rock is a real island that happens, by glorious coincidence, to make a lot of sense in this game. It is a secluded place where the ducks can regroup. If the DM wants, they can describe a small duck-built altar (maybe a cairn of rocks, or a ring of driftwood) at the island's center, which contains the Giant Duck easter egg (the most powerful easter egg, described last in the list below).

NPCs present: Players can interact with wild ducks and/or other animals here.

17 John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967), 228.

18 Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy*, 123; The Historical Marker Database, *Lt. Col. Alex. R. Thompson U. States 6th Infantry*, accessed March 12, 2023, https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=216888; Morrison Jr., *"The Best School in the World" West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866*, 78.

Easter Eggs.

The DM places each egg in a location from the game. If a duck passes within 10 ft of an easter egg, they find it. There are 6 eggs and 5 locations in total.

Easter Egg: Seducktive. Humans find the player to be the most beautiful duck they have ever seen. +4 on charisma checks for 1 hour.

Easter Egg: Eggscellent. If a female, the player gains the ability to shoot out eggs at the velocity of artillery. Player can fire 1d6 of 3-egg bursts before returning to normal laying capabilities.

Easter Egg: What the Duck Was That? Your iridescent black feathers turn matte black, and you gain +4 on stealth checks for 1 hour.

Easter Egg: Undead Sheep Army. The ducks gain the allegiance of a flock of ghostly sheep murdered by cadets decades ago. The sheep must fulfill their need for vengeance so that their souls can journey to Baaa-lhalla, the afterlife. According to then-cadet George Ramsay, in 1816, a mess hall steward named Divins kept a flock of sheep on the Plain. The sheep kept the grass short and Divins fed the cadets mutton. But the cadets quickly tired of it. Ramsay wrote that "On one occasion, as we marched into dinner and discovered on the tables the ever-present mutton, we were seized with a feeling of disgust, and without preconcerted action marched round the tables and out of doors. This muttonous maneuver was construed into mutinous by Captain Partridge," then the Superintendent, "who was always on hand, and caused us to return to the mess hall, when some compromise was made with the steward, and bread, butter, and molasses substituted as a peace-offering. This flock of sheep held the undisputed pasturage of the Plain, and it was a lucky straggler found near the precipitous cliffs that escaped being hurled into the depths below. In this war of extermination, the cadets became expert, and the flock was thus more than decimated."[19]

Easter Egg: Spirit of Margaret Corbin. Player channels the spirit of Margaret Corbin to triple their hit points to 18 for one hour. They also gain advantage on all actions taken in combat for one hour. That means they get to roll twice and choose the higher roll. Margaret was a Revolutionary War heroine. She lived out her years at West Point, a poor woman known for swearing and drinking, much like the other soldiers who fought and won the Revolution. The player channels her rough manners and fighting spirit. Camp followers performed important military labor like laundry, cooking, sewing, and nursing. Like Margaret, many camp followers served alongside husbands who had enlisted to fight. Margaret's husband John was an artilleryman. By November of 1776, the Continental Army had suffered defeats at the Battles of Long Island and White Plains. Several artillery batteries remained in possession of Fort Washington, on the northern tip of Manhattan, and continued to fight. On November 16th the British attacked. John took up his position as an assistant gunner, with Margaret beside him. When British fire killed the gunner, John took over the cannon and Margaret stepped in as assistant gunner. When British fire killed John, Margaret took over the cannon and continued loading and firing it alone. Grapeshot from a British cannon struck her shoulder, chest, and jaw, and she collapsed. Soldiers rushed her off the front lines and placed her in the care of other camp followers, who tended her wounds as the battle raged. After the Battle of Fort Washington, the British paroled wounded soldiers, including Margaret, who permanently lost the use of her left arm because of her wounds. She made her way to the invalid regiment at West Point, where Congress granted her a veteran's pension in recognition of her service and sacrifice. She drew rations and clothing from West Point and lived out her life in the village of Highland Falls.[20]

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19 Cullum and Ramsay, "Recollections of the Cadet Life of George D. Ramsay" 618.

20 Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence,* version First Vintage Books Edition, February 2006, First Vintage Books Edition, February 2006 (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 60, 138–39, 151. For more on

Easter Egg: Giant Duck. Player becomes a giant duck for 1 hour. Stats are comparable to a giant eagle. Armor Class 12, Hit Points 26, Speed 10 ft, fly 80 ft. Modifiers are +3 for strength, +3 dexterity, +1 constitution, -1 intelligence, +2 wisdom, and 0 charisma.

Actions.

- Multiattack. The giant duck makes two attacks, one with its bill and one with its feet.
- Bill. +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target, 1d6+3 bludgeoning damage.
- Feet. +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target, 1d6+3 slapping damage. Feet make a wet slapping noise when they hit a target. Roll a d20 to determine how embarrassing the slapping noise is. On a roll of 10 or higher, the target takes an additional 1d4 emotional damage.
- Emotional support duck. Costs 2 actions. Duck creates a shimmering, magical shield around a creature that it wishes to protect within 60 ft of it. Attacks against the target have disadvantage until the end of the giant duck's next turn.

Ending the Quest

The quest ends when the ducks find the guilty cadets and carry out a plan based on that information. Whether they expose, fight, or forgive the cadets, the DM can end the story with a final scene where the descendants of Delafield's ducks land on the surface of Delafield Pond one hundred years later, telling stories of their heroic ancestors. The DM can ask players to describe the legends their descendants invoke.

Revolutionary camp followers, see: Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community During the American Revolution* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

The Timeline Game: Constructing Historical Narratives in History Survey Courses

Caitlin Monroe
University of Northern Colorado

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As someone who frequently teaches survey courses that have broad chronological and geographic scope – including Global history and African History classes – I often think about how I can help my students understand key events while avoiding too much emphasis on "coverage" or memorization.[1] Even more important to me is getting my students to think about the choices involved in constructing these sweeping historical narratives: How we decide what is included and, crucially, what is left out? Whose perspectives do narratives focused on large-scale change and world-historical events obscure? What regions of the world are ignored, marginalized, or done a disservice by many of the traditional narratives? What makes an event worthy of inclusion in a history class?

I found myself thinking about these questions and goals at the mid-way point of one of my African history survey courses. Important considerations in all courses, questions of inclusivity/exclusivity in historical narratives were top of mind for me for several reasons. As a white woman teaching about African history, it is especially important that my classes question and critique how I (and white people who engaged in African history before me) have constructed historical narratives about Africa. Many of my students in this class were future high school history teachers who also care deeply about these questions. I also knew, based on midcourse feedback from students, that some were looking for help "keeping track" of the basic chronology of certain events and processes in our class so they could teach this material themselves one day. Furthermore, being a new assistant professor and convinced by research demonstrating the many benefits for learning, inclusion, and motivation of a vibrant classroom community, I wanted to come up with a fun in-class activity or game that would build rapport and have the added benefit of breaking up the mid-semester slump.[2] To tackle all these seemingly disparate objectives, I developed a timeline game. Students played the game in teams, and it centered around the construction of a collective timeline. In this game, which we completed in two 75-minute class periods, groups of students competed to nominate a set of historical events onto a final class-wide "Final Timeline." The team that successfully got the highest number of "their" events onto the "Final Timeline" would win the game.

Crucially, students could not simply nominate the "most famous" events. Rather, they had to demonstrate certain historical thinking skills through their nomination process. They could make an argument about causation, explaining how many future class events their event had caused, or they could argue that their particular event did an especially good job of drawing out a number of important course themes. They could suggest that their event, while not obviously "significant," provided an important perspective that is often overlooked in macro-historical accounts and therefore deserved inclusion in ours. In short, students had to practice historical thinking skills and grapple with those questions about constructing historical narratives – what we include and what we leave out – through this game. I have since used this game in both African and Global history surveys, in classes with both majority history majors as well as majority non-majors, while teaching at a mid-sized public university in Northern Colorado. I believe that it can be a fun, engaging, and pedagogically useful activity – easily adaptable to any number of course subjects and institutional contexts – for anyone looking to encourage students to grapple with questions of historical significance, causation, and the politics of how we construct historical narratives.

1 Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1358–1370.

2 For more on these benefits, see Wendy Rouse, "Lessons Learned While Escaping From a Zombie: Designing a Breakout EDU Game" The History Teacher 50, no. 4 (August 2017); Osvaldo Jiménez, "Leveraging the Social Aspect of Educational Games" *Theory Into Practice 54*, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 101-108; Sarah Rose Cavanagh, *The Spark of Learning: Energizing the College Classroom with the Science of Emotion* (West Virginia Press, 2016); "Belonging" and "Motivating" chapter in James Lang, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*, 2nd edition (Jossey-Bass, 2021).

Objectives

Timelines – and classroom activities or projects using timelines – have of course been used in history classes for many years. Catherine Denial has written about challenging conventional approaches to timelines with her students whereas others have used different kinds of timelines to assess change over time arguments or as a first step in developing understandings of chronology and causation.[3] This game builds on some of these benefits but also targets different objectives as well. In addition to giving students needed practice establishing the chronology of class material, I also wanted students to practice thinking critically about how we construct historical narratives and the politics of knowledge production. And, I wanted to give them practice with other important elements of historical thinking, including causation, complexity.[4] Because there were far more events that we discussed in class than there were spots available on the final "Final Timeline," each group of students had to make an argument, in the form of a presentation to the rest of their class, about why their chosen event(s) warranted inclusion. Students had to make arguments for historical significance in various ways including (but not limited to): articulating how it caused other events, how it represented important course themes, how it challenged dominant Eurocentric narratives about world history, or how their event provided an important perspective that was underrepresented on the timeline thus far. This meant that they could not simply tell the class that World War 2 should be included because it was famous, but rather, they had to explain how it, for example, connected to themes of nationalism or imperialism. It also meant that, with the right argument, students could promote "smaller" events, including micro-historical biographies, failed revolts, introductions of new commodities, thus embracing recent trends in global history scholarship as well.[5]

Set-up

I have played this game with classes ranging from 30 to 55 students, taking two 75-minute class periods to complete. Much of how I structured the set-up of this game (how many students per group, how many minutes per game phase, how many events total, how many spots on the Final Timeline, how many class periods you use, etc.) can be adjusted depending on your priorities and class context. I will discuss those potential alternative models at the end of this paper, and for specific instructions that I used in class, please see Appendix A.

To begin, I made some decisions about what form the Final Timeline and the student groups would take by following the following steps before class:

1. Determine how many "slots" the Final Timeline will have: For each slot, there is a class debate in which teams who have nominated an event from that time period debate with each other over whose event should win. The event that wins takes that slot on the timeline. In a class covering 1850-1960, I had a "slot" for each decade, resulting in a Final Timeline with one key event from each decade. In a class that started in the year 1500, having one slot per decade would have led to too many debates and taken up too

3 Catherine J. Denial, "Atoms, Honeycombs, and Fabric Scraps: Rethinking Timelines in the Undergraduate Classroom" *The History Teacher*, 46:3 (May 2013): 415-434; Sharon Cohen, "The Challenging Concept of Change Over Time," World History Connected, Elise Fillpot, "Teaching with Timelines" *Teachinghistory.org*, Accessed March 20, 2023, https://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/24347l; Denis Shemilt, "The Caliph's Coin: The Currency of Narrative Frameworks in History Teaching," in Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, Sam Wineburg, eds., *Knowing Teaching and Learning History, National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

4 Flannery Burke and Thomas Andrews identify both contingency and context as two of the "Five Cs of historical thinking." See "What does it mean to think historically?" *AHA Perspectives* (January 2007), https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2007/what-does-it-mean-to-think-historically.

5 Amy Stanley, "Maidservants' Tales: Narrating Domestic and Global History in Eurasia, 1600-1900" *American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (2016): 437-460; Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?" *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011); Natalie Zemon Davis, "Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World." *History and Theory* 50, no. 2 (2011): 188–202; Caitlin C. Monroe, "Searching for Nyabongo: An Unconventional Ugandan Intellectual and the Limits of Global History" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 42*, no. 2 (2022): 389-403; Joshua Specht, "Commodity history and the nature of global connection: recent developments" *Journal of Global History 14*, no. 1 (2019): 145-150.

much class time than I could give to this activity. So, I created "eras" that were roughly 70 years, although I adjusted this time span for certain eras based how many events from each era we had discussed in class.

2. Form the student groups: It is easiest if you have the same number of groups as you do slots on the Final Timeline. In my World History class of 60 students, I had 9 groups and 9 eras. (You may have different numbers of students per group; this is okay for the purposes of this game.)
3. Pick the set of events and create the deck of "event cards": This is the most time-intensive part of this activity for teachers. During the game, each group will end up with 1 event per era, so to determine how many events you need, multiply the number of slots you have on the timeline by the number of groups you have. Make sure that those events are distributed evenly across each of the eras. In my World History class, I had 9 groups and 9 eras, so I needed to decide on 81 events. In determining what events you choose, it is useful to take into account the following considerations:
    a. What events have we talked about in class and would I like to reinforce their understanding of?
    b. If this game is being played in the middle of the term, what events will be especially important for them to have a better understanding of moving forward?
    c. Do I have a mix of world regions (if appropriate for the class) covered?
    d. Do I have a range of historical actors and populations represented?
    e. Do I have a variety of events that shed light on a combination of social history, military history, political history, cultural history, intellectual history, gender history, material history, etc.?
    f. Do I have both obvious and "non-obvious" events included? Macro- and micro- historical events?
    g. Do I have events that connect to all course themes?
    h. Do I have events that relate to as many of the course objectives as possible?
    i. Are there ways to include events that would capture broader processes that aren't otherwise easy to distill into event-based history?
    j. And finally, double-check: do I have the same number of events in each era?

After deciding on these events, I printed out each of these events (along with their date, but with no other description) and cut them into "cards" that would be passed around the room.

4. Prepare the cards for circulation: Group all the events of the same "era" together, ready to give one era of cards to each group. Once you have done this, you are ready for the class to play the game.

Playing the game

Phase 1: Event selection

In class, after explaining the instructions (Appendix A), give each group a stack of event cards from one era. Organizing the game in this way ensures some fairness: each group will have first pick for one of the eras. Give each group a few minutes to select what event they want (see Appendix B for timing instructions). This is an important phase of the game! Students should be discussing what they know about the events they're choosing from, how they might be able to make a significance argument, or strategizing about how they might make the case for their event, knowing what other events it will be up against. Once time has run out for their selection, students pass their "rejected" events clockwise to the next group, and the selection process starts again. This repeats until each group is passed 1 single event card (the event that all the other groups have chosen not to select) with no other options. Upon receiving this final event, their "hands" have been assembled.

Phase 2: Research

In the versions of the game I have played, I had each group choose to nominate three of their events to the Final Timeline. Nominating all their events would have involved a much longer debate process. Nominating fewer would have meant far less competition for the Final Timeline slots. I suggest choosing somewhere between 3-5 nominations, though this can depend on class size and number of event cards in play. After instructing students to select their top three, I gave them time to research their chosen events and make their case for the significance

of their event. Depending on your class's preparation and your goals of the game, you can allocate more or less time to students to look through their notes (and/or readings and the internet) to prepare. In my classes, I required that a different student from the group present each event, and I found that quieter students appreciated being given time to prepare for their presentation.

Phase 3: Debate + voting

Once groups have researched the events that they are going to nominate, they place their three nominated events on the Final Timeline. They could do this on a whiteboard, but I found it easy to use an online platform like Google Jamboard. Once all the events have been placed, we proceeded era-by-era. Students gave their presentations (ranging anywhere from 1-3 minutes) and after all the presentations from a given era had been given, the non-presenting portion of the class voted on what argument they found most compelling. The amount of time that it takes to debate the winner for each era will vary because some eras are more "crowded" than others. (If you ask students to complete a reflection assignment at the end of this activity, it could be worth asking them about why they think certain eras received more attention than others.) I provided the option for each group to have one "rebuttal" which they could use at any point in the game, but they only had one. This is an optional addition, but it follows the spirit of arguments in favor of allowing revisions – and the rebuttal arguments did sometimes lead to better arguments than the first attempts had achieved.

Pay-offs

Perhaps the most obvious lesson learned – one that students themselves immediately recognized – was the opportunity afforded by this activity to have fun in the classroom, engage every student, and review content knowledge. In addition to witnessing thorough understandings of events covered in our class, I heard students make arguments about causation like, "this event, while less well-known, established the conditions for several of the other more famous events up for discussion and therefore should be included over those others." Crucially, the game asked students to engage in understanding of chronology in a particularly useful way. As Daniel Immerwahr has argued, we as instructors should ensure that we "distinguish between students who can repeat dates and those who actually understand narratives." [6] In asking students to argue for causation and situate their events within a broader narrative, this game prioritizes the more important kind of chronological understanding.

As survey courses – and especially world and global history courses – increasingly move away from "cafeteria-style" and coverage-based approaches and embrace purposeful themes or organizing principles, this activity also helps students take a break from learning new content and reflect on those broader frameworks.[7] In formulating their arguments for an events' significance, students had to think about our courses' thematic organizing principles – in World history, for example, that included nationalism, environment, imperialism, social hierarchy, and globalization – and try to test out their applicability to different contexts and events. Discussions of recurring themes in various lectures throughout the course – challenges to Eurocentrism, issues of archival silences, and examples of contingency – also frequently made their way into the activity's discussion. Oftentimes, a particular group was able to make a compelling argument for an event that many other groups had passed on, which in turn helped remind students to look beyond the most "famous" events and instead prioritize broader takeaways and course themes. For example, one group made an argument about the significance of the emergence Ottoman coffee houses. They did so by emphasizing the Ottoman's influence on European enlightenment, connecting the eventual demand for sugar (sometimes to put in coffee) with the rise in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and arguing for the importance of challenging Eurocentric accounts of the past.

Finally, when I use this activity in my classes, I am consistently struck by how well students draw on these historical thinking skills while also showing important understandings of the politics of how we construct

6 Daniel Immerwahr, "The Fact/Narrative Distinction and Student Examinations in History" *The History Teacher* 41, no. 2 (February 2008): 201.

7 Antoinette Burton, *A Primer for Teaching World History: Ten Design Principles* (Duke University Press, 2012).

historical narratives. This activity prompts them to discuss the tension between traditional narratives and attention to more overlooked histories. For example, in my African history class, I often heard students argue for including events that showcased the way that archives silenced African voices – particularly non-literature African women's voices. In my world history class, students made arguments about "top down" versus "bottom up" approaches to historical narratives. Others discussed how certain events had ongoing legacies -- ranging from conversations about reparations to repatriation of museum artifacts to changes in human interaction with the environment -- for our world today and therefore merited inclusion. At other points, students noticed when timelines were disproportionately filled with political and military histories and therefore argued for the importance of including cultural or social histories on the timeline to more fully understand what different people and populations experienced in the past.

Alternative models

There are endless ways that this game could be adapted or adjusted to suite particular professor or class needs. One idea would be to have students generate their own event cards, rather than having the professor give them a pre-established set of options. Doing so would provide an opportunity for retrieval practice and perhaps provide students with more ownership over the game. While I chose to list the date of the events on the card itself, a professor who wanted to prioritize chronological comprehension more explicitly could choose to let the students date the events themselves. A more complicated version of this game could depend on students correctly identifying which events came from which era, thereby hinging their chances for success in the game on their ability to maximize how many Final Timeline "slots" they could compete for (if they mistakenly chose two events from the same era, they would be competing against themselves, whereas if they correctly chose one event per era, they would have the most opportunities for nomination to the Final Timeline.) I did not choose to do this – in part because of my preference to move away from the memorization of facts and dates – but if a class was structured around a final exam or a state-mandated or Advanced-Placement exam that did require such knowledge, this could be a useful strategy.[8]

Though I think this is most successful with a group of students who are already familiar with the rules of the game, you could also do a "rapid fire" version of this game, where the activity is condensed into one class period instead of two. (I did this, upon student request for another round of this game, with my African history class for an end-of-term activity after they had already done the two-day version at the mid-course point.)

Depending on your goals and priorities for this game, it may be worth asking students to complete a brief reflection assignment after participating in the activity. If your focus is on remembering content (perhaps in preparation for an exam), you could ask them to follow a retrieval-practice type summary of one or two events they learned more about that day.[9] Another version of this assignment could ask them to simply reflect on what they learned, or it could provide them with examples of historical thinking (arguments about causation, arguments about contextualization, etc.) or course themes (nationalism, imperialism, etc.) and subsequently ask students to identify instances in class – with specific examples – where they demonstrated knowledge of one of those skill sets or themes. Such an activity might help them solidify what they did in class. And, importantly, it will help them see how much they have learned and what kinds of sophisticated analysis and reasoning skills they used, emphasizing to them that while it was indeed a fun game, it also had significant intellectual and pedagogical value.

Finally, one important consideration in using this game in class is the degree to which it relies on oral presentation and debate skills to be successful. In a class that has participation and oral presentation as a learning objective, this may be an appropriate skill to assess. However, audience reaction to debate performance is famously

8 Because AP History exams have preestablished units that (mostly) correspond to particular eras, this could be a useful strategy for those classes.

9 James Lang, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*, 2nd edition (Jossey-Bass, 2021); Pooja K. Agarwal and Patrice M. Main, Powerful Teaching: Unleash the Science of Learning (Jossey-Bass, 2019). See also "Retrieval Practice" website at www.retrieval practice.org.

biased and is especially affected by factors like race, gender, and English-language background. Especially if class credit is being attached to this assignment, instructors should take extra care to ensure that votes aren't disproportionately being given to the loudest, most confident, white, male, students with a history major or upper-class-person status. Although the in-person debate often lends to a significant (and important) degree of classroom comradery, if bias towards presentation styles is a significant concern, instructors could choose to have students submit their arguments via writing (using jamboard or another platform) instead.

Yet there are other ways to address this potential pitfall as well. In my previous classes that involved debate, I have included explicit conversations about identity and prejudice often shapes notions of expertise and credibility. Depending on your goals and the ways that this timeline game is being used in your class, this could be a useful approach. Afterall, a discussion about how factors including race, gender, and other forms of identity shape what voices are listened to in the classroom would be particularly appropriate in a classroom activity that is, at its heart, about thinking critically about what voices and perspectives we include in historical narratives.

Appendix A: Student Instructions (handout)

Timeline game instructions

As a class, we are going to construct a timeline of course events that features 9 key events – one per era. However, we have learned about a lot more than 9 events in this class, so it's going to involve a selection – and debating – process to create this final timeline. At the beginning of class, your group will select a handful of "event cards," each of which could end up on the final timeline – ***IF*** you make the case for the significance of your event compellingly enough. Out of the 80+ event cards that are in circulation during this game, only 9 will end up on the final class timeline. You will be allowed to put your top 3 events up for consideration on the final timeline. At the end of the activity, you as a class will debate and then subsequently vote on what key events make it onto this timeline. (You won't be allowed to vote for your own events.) For every event that your team gets placed in the final timeline, you get a point. The team with the most points (i.e. the most events voted onto the final timeline) wins.

Learning objectives that we're achieving by playing this game: spending more time learning chronology of course (mid-course survey request), practicing articulating why certain events are important to world history, critically examining/reflecting on what kinds of significance our arguments promote (are we promoting social histories? Political histories? Histories that emphasize Europe vs. "rest of world" agency?)

Game instructions:

Round 1: Event selection

1. We will start with 80+ event cards, which will be distributed evenly between the groups.
2. Your group will start with 9 cards from one era. You will have 5 minutes to decide on ONE event card that you want to keep. The rest you are going to pass to the next group.
3. Your group will receive another group's un-selected event cards from a different era. You will now have another opportunity to choose a SECOND event card and the rest you will pass to the next group. This will continue until each group has SELECTED a complete set of cards, one for each era.
4. After the steps above are completed, you will have the full set of cards you're going to need for Round 2. Get ready!

Round 2: Prepare the Class Timeline

5. You are going to be able to put forward THREE cards for consideration on the timeline – not all of them. You'll choose your cards based on what you think has the best chance of ending up on the final timeline. You will have 15 minutes to research/review your event, so you do not need to make your argument for its significance and worthiness all based on memory. It's up to you whether you research all your cards and then decide on your final three, or if you decide right off the bat on a smaller group of cards you're going to focus on. As you consider what cards to put forth, it is likely worth remembering the following:
    a. There will be one event PER ERA that makes it onto the final, voted-on, class timeline. We will vote "by era" in the final competition, meaning that events between 1650-1750, for example, will be "up against" each other.
    b. Remember that your team will be tasked with persuading the rest of the class to vote for your event. **You can only vote in debates that your team did not participate in.**
    c. The way you justify an event's significance can basically fall into a few different categories: 1.) how many other things it influenced 2.) how much of a turning point it was in world history 3.) How emblematic it is of important processes or events in world history 4.) How well it highlights important course themes or things you think are important to remember when studying world history. You're welcome to make whatever kinds of arguments you want, but just remember that you don't have to vote for a final timeline that simply has the most well-known events on it.

6. Everyone will then put their cards onto the jamboard (see QR code and link on the powerpoint) and put them in order, one by one.

Round 3: Vote on the final Class Timeline

7. We will then go card-by-card and you will explain your event and justify its significance.
8. Depending on time: Each group gets ONE rebuttal where they challenge another group after the first round of cases have been made.
9. The team with the most cards that get voted onto the board wins!

Appendix B: Timing calculations

Sample timing breakdown for a 75-minute class with nine eras and nine groups:

Class #1

Introductions, announcements, and game description: 15 minutes

Phase 1: Selection of events

- 3 minutes per round + transition time for passing cards (3x27 + transition time = 30 minutes)

Phase 2: Research

- 30 minutes to research, students should also decide who which group member will present which of their 3 events
- Have students take a photo of their chosen events before they leave class this day!

Class #2

Intros, announcements, reminder of rules, regrouping, pulling up chosen events and research notes, answering questions (10 minutes)

Putting events on the jamboard (8 minutes)

Phase 3: Argumentation

- 1 minute presentation per event per event, plus transitions and vote-counting (27 + 10 minutes transition and counting voting = 37 minutes total)
- 1 rebuttal per group, plus transition time (9x1 + 1 minute transition = 10 minutes)
- Discussion of winning strategies and arguments + any recap assignment students will be asked to complete (10 minutes)

Is Including Games in a College Class Beneficial?

Peculiar Joseph
SUNY Plattsburgh

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This semester I was in a class called "Introduction to Political Thought" and instead of our professor just explaining how the French Revolution expressed political thought, we played a semester-long game. Was this an effective way of learning? In this short essay, I explain why I answer "Yes!"

My name is Peculiar Joseph and I am discussing my experience as King Louis in the French Revolution gameplay. The French Revolution Game Play was part of the requirements for the introduction to political thought class, a political science class. I took the class in the Spring of 2023.

Personally, I very much enjoyed playing the French Revolution *Reacting to the Past* game. It was an effective way for students to learn about the French Revolution and political thought. and have fun with it. But more than just fun, playing the RTTP game was a challenging task in a good way. It was challenging because we had to understand the concept of the game and the politics of the Revolution to be able to play it well while trying to reach our victory conditions at the same time. The concept of the game was basically understanding the dynamics of the real-life French revolution between the monarchs, Feuillants, Jacobins, mobs, and clergy and nobility.

In particular, it was challenging because I had a different personality from my character, King Louis XVI. One example was when I had to make the decision of what to do with the other factions when I won the game. Usually, I will just forgive everyone and look towards a common goal, but in the game, I decided to kill everyone. I decided to kill everyone that was not part of the clergy or the nobility because that would be something King Louis would have done in 1789. Doing this helped me understand the reasoning of King Louis and equipped me more to be in his Character, which is a pure monarch. Also, I love to act and usually involve myself in theater with already-written scripts, but in the case of this game, there was no script and we had to utilize our critical thinking and problem-solving skills to play the game, which was different from what I am used to. The uncertainty of the game even provided more room for my personality to clash with King Louis's, especially when I had to make certain decisions.

In terms of the challenges I faced playing King Louis, it was being uncertain about how the members of the National Assembly were going to vote. I could not vote, but whatever was being voted on can affect me directly or indirectly. I was with the Clergy and Nobility whose main purpose was a complete Monarch as well, and we were against the Jacobins whose main aim was to destroy the monarchy and create a constitutional democracy. The mobs hated the king, while the Feuillants were in the middle of everything (They had to be convinced every voting period to be able to pick a side to vote in favor of). I feel that at the beginning of the game, I understood that I had to be close to the Clergy and Nobility so that they could help me, especially in wanting them to vote for the Royal Veto to be part of a new Constitution. It was still challenging at the beginning even if we stuck together because the Jacobins and Feuillants were always voting against us. One example of the hard times I had was the very first vote to adopt the Civil Constitution of the Clergy to Constitution, which passed 750-250. It was discouraging for me but I had faith that we could still make it and took every aspect of the game seriously.

The required reading assignments were not too challenging for me because I knew what the game was about and just expressed myself while remaining in my character. The readings were mostly the textbook which was Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791 (Reacting to the Past).

When the royal veto passed at 625-250. I was really happy because I worked really hard on my writing, and in-class speech, as well as communicating effectively with my close factions (Clergy and Nobility). The end of the game was tricky, but it paid off because I ended up successful: I was luckily able to escape to my allies in the Austro-Prussian invading force, and that force won a dice roll to defeat the Revolutionary forces.

I learned about the French Revolution and the dynamics of how it played out in the time period covered by the game. I got to see other characters and gain insight into how other people were playing in the game, as well as a glimpse of how intense the Revolution was in 1789. The biggest thing I utilized and honed in the Revolution game will be my critical thinking skills. I learned that the Jacobins and the Crowd did not like the King and

wanted him dead or at least out of power. I also understood that the Feuillants were in the middle of everything, in that they needed to be convinced of the side that would have benefited them more.

Regarding other types of professional and academic skills, I learned that working in a team is very hard especially when not everyone is as enthusiastic as you are in the Revolution and game, particularly in the historical scenario and its conflicts. I love the idea of teamwork but it is good to understand that even though we were in teams some people might still have different interests and ideas that might not relate to a defined consensus for the team. These skills were related to the format of the game: I already had some of the skills and the game helped me practice and learn new ones.

I think this game format should be used in courses because the French Revolution is harder (and can be boring) to learn when you have to sit in class and only listen to a lecture. I also think that it is a good work balance in the class because we did a bunch of readings at the beginning of the course and then we did the game, which referred back to readings. I think it makes sense for the class to look like this. I usually referred to the textbook whenever I wanted to do my writing or my speeches because the foundation was always explicit in the book. Also, students get to practice what they learned from class in the game. An example would be the concept Rousseau theorizes about the "general will." Everyone kept on using that phrase throughout the game, whenever they wanted to make a political point, either to support it or reject it.

In conclusion, the game was a good and memorable one.

All African People's Conference Game Reflection: Learning Through Gameplay - The Impacts and Implications of a Unique Style of Education

Ava Moore
MICDS

Kamryn Reed
MICDS

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When our African History teacher first mentioned roleplaying the All-African People's Conference, we were intrigued and excited. This was different from typical assignments we'd completed in the past as two juniors attending an independent high school in St. Louis, Missouri. Like most high school students, lectures, projects, and essays... But a roleplaying game? This was new to us and allowed us to engage in studying the past in a way we had never before.

Each student was assigned a different delegate to roleplay and using the historical background our teacher provided of each character, we then began role-playing the conference. We discussed our stances with other delegates, gave speeches, and developed and voted on resolutions. Through this experience, we learned that the All-African People's Conference, hosted by Kwame Nkrumah, held from December 8th, 1958 through the 13th, in Accra, Ghana—consisted of hundreds of representatives from many African colonies and independent states. This diverse group of delegates came together to discuss the end of colonialism, democracy, non-segregation, and the methods by which colonies were to gain their independence. Because the two of us were assigned different roles, our experiences of the project slightly differed; however, we both can attest to the creativity of the activity that allowed us to demonstrate our knowledge about a historical event and our historical research and thinking skills in a new, engaging way.

Kamryn was tasked with taking on the role of one of Kenya's representatives, Tom Mboya, who served as chairman of the conference. With this role, I was given automatic power to help decide the agenda of the conference, which topics would be discussed, and which would be left out; however, I had to avoid being voted out while still trying to encourage my ideas. My stances mostly revolved around Pan-Africanism, non-violence, anti-communism, and positive relations with the West. Learning about and defending these viewpoints in the role allowed me to dive deeper into their meanings and engage more with these important topics than I would from simply taking notes about them. I was excited to take on the role of the chairman, but also slightly nervous about the responsibility of carrying out and maintaining that position. In order to prevent getting voted out, I tried to find some ideas that I could agree with from every representative without compromising my stances so that I had somewhat of a supporter in every other player, even if our beliefs didn't align in every way. In preparation for the conference, I wanted to be really knowledgeable on Tom Mboya's ideas as well as the way he would express them, so along with the role sheet, I read some of his articles and watched some YouTube videos of interviews to really understand his personality, demonstrating how easy it was to become motivated on a whole new level as a student with this activity as I was willing and excited to go beyond the expectations of the activity–something I would not typically do–in order to play my role accurately. This was particularly useful when writing my primary speech—a speech we were assigned to write and give to the class on an assigned topic that was important to our representative. I gave my primary speech on a freedom fund, a proposed system of economic collaboration between colonies to help achieve total liberation of Africa.

I am a student who struggles with public speaking and usually, I am intimidated by assignments that involve it, but this speech allowed me to face this fear differently as I was able to incorporate Tom Mboya's personality and take on a persona. It wasn't simply a presentation where I had to memorize historical facts and regurgitate them formally to the class, but instead, an opportunity to introduce an idea that I took on as my own, allowing me to feel much more comfortable and enjoy it in a way that I have never experienced with public speaking before. This primary speech ultimately turned into a resolution, another part of the activity in which each player laid out the status of their topic and changes they would like to have made in the format that was done in the actual historical conference. My resolution called for the creation of the freedom fund and a permanent secretariat to control the

funds with myself, Tom Mboya, as the Secretary-General. Trying to appoint myself as Secretary-General of this fund and figuring out the way I could do so without facing pushback for trying to have unfair influence was an obstacle. I tried to present it to the other players as if I would not have that much power or influence to get their vote, which ultimately failed because that section of my resolution was removed. However, for the rest of my freedom fund resolution, I stated that the fund would be beneficial for everyone, in an attempt to get full support, and it worked.

Through this process, I gained a real understanding of the abilities needed in order to work with others in an environment where opinions may differ. I learned about the importance of negotiation, cooperation, and advocating for my ideas, which all played a large part in my success in the activity and are skills that I can take with me to all aspects of my life. To be successful in this activity, it was essential to learn about each player's viewpoints and their colony's circumstances to find areas of disagreement or commonalities that could be utilized for an alliance. Through this, I learned about different forms of colonialism that took place in Africa and the challenges associated with each colony in their attempt to reach liberation. Taking on the roles and acting out the conference through first-hand experience as opposed to learning about it in a lecture allowed us to deeply understand the topics of conversation, differences in opinion of how independence would be won, and how the continent would function after in the actual historical context, while also giving me a chance to practice and utilize public speaking, writing, and interpersonal skills.

Ava took on the role of playing Marthe Moumié from Cameroon, meaning I was the only woman represented in our activity. Filling in this role really meant advocating for myself and proving my worth to the men in power. I loved advocating for Cameroonian women, as well as highlighting the struggles they were facing from not just French colonial rule, but from the oppressive men in the state as well. This project differed from typical class assignments, in that recreating a historical figure's persona made me examine more closely and think more deeply about that that person's life and their beliefs than I ever had done before when studying the past. When I mention the love I have for not only my character but for the impact she made on Cameroon, it speaks to the importance of this assignment and the demand for students to take on roles they would never have envisioned for themselves.

On the first day of the conference, I gave my primary speech which mainly discussed what was taking place in French Cameroon, promoted the use of violence as a method to gain liberation and spread information on women's rights. In doing so, I gained historical context on all three topics but found myself gravitating towards the information I learned about the protests women had been participating in. Having the opportunity to go up and speak in front of the other delegates plus guests and reporters made this activity feel so real, and it opened my mind to all the historical debates and discussions about the best way for African countries to achieve liberation. This speech unlocked discussions with other leaders which happened to be my favorite part of the game. Being able to hear everyone's opinions and different goals allowed me to consider the different techniques they offered. Compared to the actual historical events, it was extremely interesting to see myself getting elected to the Steering Committee, the group of delegates that formatted the structure of the conference, despite Marthe Moumié not getting this opportunity in the actual conference. This showed not only the power I had when taking on this role but also the strength of women in negotiation and fighting for their rights. My role allowed me to explore the complexities of the historical context pretty well. My political party, UPC (Union of the Peoples of Cameroon), was labeled communist and many other conference attendees agreed that this is not the best political stance the African people should take. Despite the majority's repression of my idea of promoting communism, I prevailed and had multiple leaders stand alongside this thought.

All of these historical details I obtained about Ms. Moumié were accessible to me through the gamebook our teacher created, alongside some research I did on my own. Contrary to what most of my peers in class wanted, after the official conference, most independence leaders resorted to violence to gain independence as non-violent protest got them nowhere. Overall, the main skills and knowledge I gained from this activity, such as communication, leadership, and poise continue to be prevalent in my home and academic life. I had to communicate with others to reach my agenda, while also trying to play the role of someone who agrees with their views solely to get my resolutions and point across. This simulation kept me engaged through all steps and

reintroduced a more engaging way of learning, while also emphasizing key events and concepts from the official conference. I believe these three characteristics of communication, leadership, and poise, will help with academic papers and speeches in other classes and even at home with leading my younger siblings or possessing poise in front of an audience.

This activity gave us a deep understanding of the AAPC through first-hand experience that incorporated many aspects of learning such as argumentative reasoning, creativity, and persistence through adversity. The two of us had positive experiences with this simulation, including positive and memorable interactions with our fellow classmates. In our view, using games as an interactive way of learning instead of traditional teaching methods gives students a particularly engaging way to understand challenging historical material. It allows students to use critical thinking skills, imagination, and everyday life skills, such as negotiation and compromise when working with others, while also participating in a fun activity. Typically, students write and memorize notes for one quiz or test without retaining the information. In our experience, a game like this effectively facilitates more authentic learning and increases students intrinsic motivation to stay on track for successful completion of the learning outcomes. In sum, a game makes learning fun for students as well as allowing them to practice important skills that are essential for other areas of their life. After being able to experience a less traditional way of learning, we believe it's vital that history teachers around the world incorporate games into their classrooms to help students fully engage with the concepts and events that they are learning.

An Interview with Dr. Tori Mondelli

Jessamyn Neuhaus
SUNY Plattsburgh

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For the special section titled "History Fun and Games" in the fall 2023 issue *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods*, I'm delighted to include my recorded interview with Dr. Tori Mondelli.

Dr. Mondelli serves as the Founding Director of the University of Missouri's Teaching for Learning Center. She is also a faculty member in the College of Education & Human Development and the College of Arts and Science. She holds a Ph.D. in early modern European history. Her training as a historian led her to prize writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines pedagogies. From there, she became an expert in coaching faculty and other educators to incorporate the full gamut of evidence-based and creative practices to maximize student engagement and deepen learning. Her passion for game-based learning was ignited while at the City University of New York and led her to facilitate workshops nationally, often with her co-author, Dr. Joe Bisz. Their collaborative, highly interactive pedagogy was in need of a scholarly design method to leverage research-based principles known to improve learning. After years of research and praxis, their book *The Educator's Guide to Designing Games and Creative Active-Learning Exercises: The Allure of Play* was published in 2023 by Columbia University Teacher's College Press.

This interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Welcome and thank you very much for being here. Tell us about your new book, *The Educator's Guide to Designing Games and Creative Active-Learning Exercises***.**

Tori Mondelli: Thank you for inviting me, Jessamyn, and I'm so happy to talk about this topic for your special issue "History Fun and Games." As we talk, you reference[d] the book by its correct title, but I'm so accustomed to referring to it by its subtitle, I'll probably say *The Allure of Play* a bunch of times because I love the word "allure." And, it's an acronym for our six step method to guide readers in the design process, and we always thought that would be the title of the book.

So, *The Allure of Play* offers a step by step, guide for professors, graduate instructors, all educators without any previous game design background. The idea is, we want all educators to feel confident and competent to know that they can create something purposeful and fun, using the ALLURE spectrum, which is what we describe as being anything from light, playful activities right on up to deeply immersive serious games for any and all history courses--all levels of learners, undergrads and grad students.

Besides being a design guide this book is our views, in general, for more play in the classroom as a much needed active learning pedagogy, you know, moving into the twenty-first century with learners who want more than just lectures and discussions. So readers will see that we are great proponents of game based learning and really point to it as a very compelling subset of active learning that at its core has problem solving, co-creation of content and meaning, and feedback for students players. And those are all elements that we know adult learners crave for meaningful, educational, and I'll say, workplace experiences.

In the book, we also wanted to showcase some examples of learning games from a diverse group of colleagues across the disciplines, and to show how we can infuse a good measure of fun even for heavy duty learning outcomes. And, fellow historians, rejoice if this is a topic that interests you: we created a hypothetical historian/faculty member named Jackie who goes through our ALLURE process step by step, and she does a lot of thinking aloud on many of her design moves, so I just want to throw that in there for this group.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: That really sounds like a must read for so many reasons! You hold a masters and doctorate degree in modern and early modern European history. In what ways do you think your background in history informed your interest and research in using games and other creative activities in the classroom?

Tori Mondelli: I can literally only point to one playful and creative activity that I experienced as part of my own work in history: our history of science professor asked us to each write a letter to a would-be Renaissance patron to fund our research, or our art artwork or creative projects. This role playing opportunity combined writing, and for me, it was hands down the most fun I had in my entire doctoral program. So while I can't say that my background in history, my preparation, led me to my obsession with game based learning, I did have that one direct experience, and it was, you know, *fantastical*. It required me to use my imagination in nontraditional ways. So that that was pretty cool.

I would have to wait several years until I would meet my coauthor and other faculty members from City University, of New York, before the fire would really get lit. The fuel came from the English department at the community college where I was working. It was fascinating what they were doing. Many of them were teaching English composition at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, and they got the sense themselves as teachers that the students found courses dry and boring. It was mostly grammar, and the students were crumbling--and it was wearing down the faculty. They determined that they were going to make their classes the best classes. By using their own creativity and engagement tactics, and working collaboratively and really sharing and supporting each other, these courses became some of the students' favorite classes.

As it turned out, this group of people, many of them had grown up on things like *Dungeons and Dragons*, and were just playing a lot of games on their own anyway, and they brought that knowledge to the learning environment. So when I started observing and seeing this transformation of the student experience, and the learning process was so positive I became invested very quickly. In time I found it easy to extend these ideas and tactics to other disciplines, especially history.

Retrospectively with history, I can say that there are aspects of history that are just a natural fit for game based learning. And now it's different for me, because I have the conceptual language of simple and complex game mechanics, that framework, and that that's what our book teaches.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: I love that story about the English Department, and especially how they could acknowledge [that the class was], to use the "B word," boring. Getting over themselves a little bit to say, "Hey, this content might be boring!" Just straight up admitting that, and not going to where a lot of professors tend to go [saying] "Well, that's too bad. Students have to do it." Instead, they just leaned into it saying "So, how can we make it more engaging, more interesting, less boring?"

So thinking about history again, and like you said, there is some real natural overlap in history. What specific history skills and abilities could a gamification approach to studying the past helps students build?

Tori Mondelli: Thanks for that great question. I definitely have some specific recommendations, but if you'll let me, I'd like to maybe think about it a little more generally. First, because I really think that that the power of the ALLURE method is in that sequencing of steps and for faculty to design playful gameful experiences.

Working in the space of faculty development for over a decade, I always want faculty to apply a method that's directly going to what I sometimes call a pain point. You know, where is the student learning breaking down? Is there a bottleneck? Are there common misconceptions? And you know, if something is working well, that's not the place to apply game based learning, Instead, let's go to the pain point. So Step A is ask where to apply [game based learning].

In the book we walk you through what questions to ask yourself about. You know, like what skills do you want students to practice, and when, and you know those kinds of things that helps to start to narrow down what I think of as infinite choices. We want to boost student engagement. We want to deepen student learning, and we just have to be strategic about, I'll use a business-y term, you know, like the return on investment.

I would recommend that for those wanting to teach students or help students learn about historical events, my favorite mechanic is the roleplay and simulation. Because it helps the students kind of immerse themselves, and there are different ways you can structure it. It will typically motivate students to do reading ahead of time, so that they can be very good at their role. There's a performative piece there.

And I'm gonna use some of our lingo from the book, if that's okay. So if another skill we are helping students learn is how to construct or critique an argument. I would recommend one of our complex mechanics called Find the Clue. It can help students handle sources, and it prompts them to use deductive and inductive thinking for that. Another one of our complex mechanics is called Meaning Play and this one is great to help students practice various interpretations of history. I think it's a really super at opening the door for things like more associative thinking, creative juxtaposition, [that] wonderful quality where we can try to become more comfortable with ambiguity.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: You already touched on this, maybe you could just add to it a little bit, because the Foreword to your book was written by Mark Carnes, creator of *Reacting to the Past*, which is probably the best known and widely used gamification of history education. So in what ways did your research build or draw on concepts from *Reacting*?

Tori Mondelli: Oh my goodness, it is such a such an honor for Joe and me to have Mark Carnes write the Foreword. It really gave us that affirmation of our work because we do draw heavily on *Reacting to the Past*, and then we extend from there in some ways. Mark, in his own book, *Minds on Fire*, explains RTTP, and I would recommend it to any of your readers who haven't checked out it out. It is just fascinating stuff, and you can see what other historians have to say about its power if you join the Faculty Lounge on Facebook.

This is an immersive, collaborative role playing game, *Reacting to the Past*. And you know what Mark says, and what we've seen, is that it really is a superb way to motivate our students to do the reading, to do the thinking, the writing, and the participating in your course that you've always hoped they would do. Roleplaying in the *Reacting* incarnation [gives] students a secret objective and it's subject to chance, [it's] random. That's one of our simple mechanics. And it's really an exciting proposition for students. There's the performative aspect, and in the classroom, the students will form different factions. They're accountable to one another, and they're more responsive to each other than you would see for regular group projects or class discussions. So our book explains why role playing is effective, as does Mark's.

And he also makes a great observation that students crave experiences that aren't so prescriptive, linear, and purely logical all the time. Joe and I definitely agree! And in learning games, you can set them up so that they offer a great deal of uncertainty [so] that there can be subversion of norms. You can open up imaginative spaces that students don't often get to traverse in traditional academic settings, and so philosophically, I believe, that's where Mark Carnes is, we share that.

But I also want to say that games and the *Reacting* community pays attention [to trust and safety]. Games can be structured, like if you're making your own games, to be safe places for [students to learn and thrive in] that kind of uncertainty and for risking things, even failing. I mean, sometimes failing is okay, sometimes even desirable in a game. So I guess I'll go on record and say, of all the mechanics and history games you can do, role playing is my favorite. When I discovered *Reacting* and got to meet Mark and experience it with Mark and with others, I definitely found my people.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Thank you. That was really helpful. So I did want to touch on something else, a question I also discussed with Dr. Carnes in my interview for this special section. History educators face new challenges every day, and some issues have become significantly more difficult [in the past few decades]. In what ways can a gamification approach help teachers and college instructors meet the demands of teaching historical thinking today in the age of "alternative facts?"

Tori Mondelli: Well, games don't necessarily have to do it all! But [I have been thinking about] "alternative facts" and [teaching and learning in] the age of generative AI, artificial intelligence, and what power do games have? I did write a blog post for the Teachers College Press site, if anybody wants [to read] some ideas I have about incorporating things like ChatGPT into games, but also, like you know, in-class games as an alternative

and a compelling experience that students will opt into, because it's fun and cool, rather than want to lean on an AI tool.[1] But you know in our conversations here on campus we have been looking at pedagogically what to do about AI. Discussion of syllabi statements and choices around that, and just overall philosophy. And I think most people are landing on: "If we want to use games, and we want to not just shut down use of a generative AI, how about we find ways for students to best the Chatbot as game opponent? And I think I think that's a pretty cool thing to explore. Students can point out where it's inaccurate, incomplete, out of date, lackluster, right?

I think we need to look at traditional ways that we teach critical thinking and information literacy and if we have signs that it's not working well, we can absolutely incorporate more games. There's a spotlight game in our book that teaches information literacy. It's by Maura Smale and she is a librarian within the City University of New York system, and it's just so cool and creative. So it may not mean that we have to reinvent the wheel as individuals, but get more in touch with open access materials, and her game is available open access. [We can look at] what resources are already out there, tried and true by colleagues, and come at it that way.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Listening to what you just said also made me think that there's an element in the games approach that kind of directly empowers students as learners in a way that the top down transmission model doesn't. And it seems like [that's] one of the very first things we need to do, to help students build digital literacy [skills]. To help them navigate AI is to empower them, as thinkers, to empower their academic agency, and seems like a games approach would really encourage that.

Tori Mondelli: Yeah, I'm so happy to hear you say that! I'm glad that's coming across as we're having this conversation because there's a research based principle that we know about, sometimes called co-design/agency. This goes back to self-determination theory around what motivates human beings as adult learners. Games are a fantastic way for students to, you know, be empowered in just that way, and I've seen that taken to the max when professors invite students to design learning games about courses content as [for example] a capstone or a final exam. So that's also really fun. [But] not all students want to do that, so let's give them choice. Let's empower them.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Oh, that sounds so interesting! I kind of want to get off this call and start doing my syllabus right now! [laughs] But I have a couple more questions, and you have already touched on this, but just to specifically address one of the most pressing problems I think everybody's heard college instructors share recently is how to best encourage student attendance and active participation in on-site classes and in-person, face-to-face classes. How do games and other creative activities facilitate, encourage student attendance and participation?

Tori Mondelli: Yeah, attendance can be, is, a significant challenge. You know, especially if you don't have a solid attendance policy. And we saw what COVID-19 did to attendance policies. We're still building back and trying to navigate everything. That said, and this is just general commentary, [attendance and participation increases] if students perceive that their peers and instructors will be looking for them to do [things] in class. For example, you have a role to play. You are responsible for this, so that I think that benevolent peer pressure helps people show up. [And] once they're in the classroom, the structure and the fun experience of that activity [or] game really help students kind of, well, to cite Csikszentmihalyi, play allows us to escape the tyranny of needs.

You know, at least for a little while. We can put everything aside and really find *flow* in a game experience and a playful experience. And so when you're thinking about attendance, and when you're thinking about active participation, that's what you want to do. You want to help students achieve a flow state so that even if they come in and they are maybe a little low energy, or in a bad mood, or you know whatever, that they have this

1 Tori Mondelli, "Fun and Games at a Time Like This?" *Teachers College Press Blog*, March 13, 2023: https://www.tcpress.com/blog/fun-games/

opportunity to shift gears pretty profoundly. Help them settle in, help give them some focus, time on task, and positive feedback. I mean, that's what a good game does for you. So how do we achieve that? The first chapter of our book is all about engagement and we share five simple mechanics. They're called the Five Rs: Random, Rapid, Rival, Role, and Reward. These mechanics when you apply them to an activity, or you're building a game, they immediately deepen engagement. And that's because they introduce interactions that humans love.

And I'm thinking of our colleague, Josh Eyler's book, *How Humans Learn*.[2] He talks about curiosity. Good games are going to pique your curiosity, in addition to the five simple mechanics, which are really based on these larger engagement principles, curiosity being one of them. But when we design games, we want to intentionally use other engagement principles [such as] narrative, fantasy, sensory environment, frequent rewards, and feedback. In addition to that curiosity piece, we have to set the challenge at just the right place and we have to be imaginative and creative ourselves. Yes, give students powers, abilities and give them the freedom to explore and to collaborate and even integrate social interactions as part of the learning experience. All of those things will contribute to higher attendance and certainly more active participation.

I have one more example to spotlight. One of my favorite playful recommendations for any discipline to increase the active participation, but also to kind of balance the discussion, you know, how some students love to talk and can monopolize, right? So let's give the introverts a moment, Jessamyn, right? [laughs] It's called Talk Tokens and Carlos Hernandez, who's professor of English at City University of New York came up with this, and we describe it in our book. But I'll just give a quick summary and any reader should feel free to use this if it resonates. So as students are arriving, you give them three colored poker chips, maybe two red and a blue. Depends how long your discussion is. If it's going to be a short discussion, maybe give them less chips, one or two chips, and then tell them the object of the game is to get rid of your chips by the end of the class session, and that there is a prize for doing so when you hold the discussion whether that's in small groups, or with the whole class. The students, before they ask a question or answer a question, they have to play a red chip. They play a blue chip if they're offering a counterargument or alternate interpretation. Now, they can also trade red and blue chips within their group. Really, there aren't too many rules for this little game, this little playful interaction. But you can make a rule that prevents the same person from speaking until maybe three or four [other students speak]. It depends how large the class is. This minor accoutrement of these little poker chips works wonders for a discussion. It helps students meet our expectations in that setting. They're just a little more motivated. There's more structure to it. And you can certainly tell them about this beforehand, because I think it helps people mentally prepare and so they're not like "Oh my gosh, what's happening?!" That will give them a little more motivation to do the reading more closely and carefully. So then, the question of prizes, there should the prizes be, right? I always try to keep [prizes] low cost and no cost, and there's good reasons for that. We get into that in the book about not trying to do too much with prizes. You know, little things. Hershey kisses, class participation points, college stickers that you just pick up around campus, and that that kind of thing. I mean it doesn't have to be anything fancy.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: I love that example, and I think it's a great way to implement some of this that wouldn't require a massive restructuring of your syllabus. A small change you could make to give students a role in class to help them see the role in participation. So my last question, and again, you've definitely touched on it, but I just wanted to see if you could address it more specifically. This special section of this issue of the journal is called "History Fun and Games." So why is fun important to teaching and learning history?

Tori Mondelli: Bringing some playfulness, some fun, to history is a very humane thing to do and it will result in better student learning--if you use the ALLURE method, I can say that. So why is it humane? I mean, everyday life is difficult. Stress is high, and [we need to look for where] we can insert a kind of pressure relief valve for our students to relax and reach a positive, affective state of mind. When they're having fun, they are better able to

2 Joshua Eyler, *How Humans Learn: The Science and Stories Behind Effective College Teaching* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2018).

engage in challenging cognitive tasks, and learn new things and receive and integrate feedback. Not sure if folks have read Cia Verschelden's recent book on bandwidth, it's one of my favorites, and she shares that especially minoritized students and many students from low socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from bandwidth recovery activities, and games and play are bandwidth recovery activities.[3] Cia's research is helpful pointing to [if] you want an inclusive and equitable classroom, doing some of these interactives [will help].

If you are getting started in this, and you don't want to go through a whole game design process, you might just want to intersperse some moments of playfulness. You can do that too, , especially if you're in a 90 min or two-hour seminar or something like that, you know, finding places to have a little playful breaks is a good idea.

Another reason why it's important to bring fun to teaching and learning history is because it will actually help [reduce] faculty burnout. It will help professors achieve more joy in our work lives. And Mark Carne speaks to this in his book, too, right at the beginning, when he's talking about why he was initially motivated to use roleplaying in history courses at Barnard. I see it with mid-career faculty and later career faculty that when they come to my workshops, it's a whole new world. So if you need that in your work life, this is a wonderful place for more of that vitality. [One of] my biggest hopes [is] if historians are moved to bring more fun into the classroom, they will avail themselves of all of the great open access resources that exist. CUNY has a great site on this.[4] Harvard has a great site on this specifically for learning games.[5] Joe and I are so pleased that our publisher agreed to make all of our ALLURE worksheets open access.[6] People can print [them] out, centers for teaching and learning can use them, and structure their own workshops around these step by step design guides.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Thank you. Is there anything else we didn't get a chance to talk about that you wanted to add?

Tori Mondelli: Just that faculty piece. You know, we're all very student-centered. We're always talking about what will this do for student learning and engagement? Being an educational developer and working with faculty, and as a director of the Center for over eleven years, I think of faculty, and I know that this is just a wonderful area for them to explore and come at their discipline in in a new way.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Yeah, just recently, I've started saying at the beginning of every workshop, every consultation: "I will never recommend or suggest anything to you that will not make your teaching life better and more enjoyable."

Tori Mondelli: Yes!

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Thank you so much for your time and for talking with me today.

3 Cia Verschelden, *Bandwidth Recovery: Helping Students Reclaim Cognitive Resources Lost to Poverty, Racism, and Social Marginalization* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2017).

4 The CUNY Games Network, https://games.commons.gc.cuny.edu/

5 https://ablconnect.harvard.edu/game-description

6 Worksheet available on the College Teachers Press site at https://www.tcpress.com/the-educator%E2%80%99s-guide-to-designing-games-and-creative-active-learning-exercises-9780807767726?page_id=31

An Interview with Mark Carnes

Jessamyn Neuhaus
SUNY Plattsburgh

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For the special section titled "History Fun and Games" in the fall 2023 issue *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods*, I'm delighted to include my recorded interview with Dr. Mark Carnes.

Mark C. Carnes, Professor of History, joined the Barnard faculty in 1982. His academic specialty is modern American history and pedagogy. His courses include "The United States, 1940-1975" and several courses featuring the Reacting to the Past pedagogy, which he pioneered in 1996. Professor Carnes served as General Co-Editor (with John Garraty) of the 24-volume *American National Biography* (Oxford University Press/American Council of Learned Societies). He is Executive Director Emeritus of the Reacting Consortium, which directs the Reacting to the Past pedagogical initiative, now used at over 500 colleges and universities. His most recent book is *Minds on Fire: How Role-Immersion Games Transform College* (Harvard University Press, 2014).

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Welcome, Dr. Carnes, and thank you very much for being here.

Reacting to the past is easily the best known and widely used gamification of history education. But for those who may not be familiar with it, how would you summarize its structure--its learning goals, and implementation in the classroom?

Mark Carnes: First, thank you so much for having me. I'm always pleased to talk about Reacting. Reacting consists of complex games set in the past, where students take on roles informed by important texts. A Reacting game is comprised of three basic elements: 1) a game book, which sets out the historical context, lays out the rules of the game, [and] often includes primary sources that can inform and] help students develop their position; 2) role sheets, which outline each player's objectives and guides them; and 3) an instructor's manual, which provides guidance on how to teach the game. Students can get the game book from the University of North Carolina Press, either in hard copy or as an e-book. (https://uncpress.org/series/reacting-to-the-past/). Instructors download the role sheets and the instructors' manuals from the Reacting Consortium website (reactingconsortium.org). There are now 32 published games; another 200 are in development.

Consider, for example, the game that is set in ancient Athens after its defeat in the Peloponnesian war (https://uncpress.org/book/9781469670751/the-threshold-of-democracy/). Most students are assigned to one of four factions: Radical democrats who seek to continue the direct democracy and eliminate its enemies; the moderate democratic faction seeks to preserve the democracy as Pericles conceived of it, which included restrictions on rights for immigrants; the Socratic faction seeks to create an educated elite of philosopher kings who would replace the democracy; and a faction of oligarchs seeks to restrict political activity to land-owning people. So this reflects basically the political alignments of ancient Athens. And then there are cluster of various other individual players who reflect historically complex elements.

There's usually a setup week or two, when students are exposed to the materials. Also much of a "setup" period allows students to work in their factions to figure out how they're going to make arguments and function as a team. The setup is followed by the game itself, as factions struggle to achieve their goals--meeting in the Athenian Assembly and in the Athenian law courts. So after the game play, in the final one or two sessions, there's a briefing session where students discuss the game.

This is a sort of standard structure for a Reacting game: several setup sessions; then two or three weeks of game play, where students will be acting in their roles, trying to achieve their objectives; and finally a "debriefing" session to discuss the game and the ideas it generated. . That's the structure of Reacting.[1]

1 Another explanation of Reacting was provided, after this interview, by students at Newman University and Eastern Michigan University and elsewhere. See the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wwACK1uKqI.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Thank you. That's very clear. So following up on that, what specific history skills and abilities does playing a Reacting game help students build?

Mark Carnes: Throughout the game, students make arguments in order to win over those players who have "indeterminate" roles. So students are always arguing from historical facts. A big issue in the Athens game, for example, is: Why, if democracy is so good, did Athens lose the Peloponnesian war to the antidemocratic state of Sparta? Those students playing Athenian oligarchs will argue that Athens needs to be much more like Sparta to prevail in the future. Radical democrats will counter that Athens lost the war because some oligarchs—"like those among you today"—conspired with Sparta to overthrow the democracy. So students must learn the facts of the Peloponnesian war, and understand the ideas of Pericles and Plato's Socrates. Often students conduct research to find additional facts to build their arguments, especially relating to causality. Why *did* Athens lose the war?

The Reacting experience also gets to causality in a deeper way. I'm the author of an American history textbook, and it's 1,000 pages long. [*The American Nation: A History of the United States*] It deals with hundreds of topics in American history. But to make this complex narrative clear, I'm obliged to simplify everything, especially causation: "This led to this which led to this, and this, and so on." If I were to add nuance, and explain that things might at any point have gone in a different direction, my narrative would confuse students. The text would balloon to 30,000 pages. So we historians—in our texts and lectures—make causation simple and crystal clear. We make everything look deterministic. But that is wrong.

A Reacting game not only restores the complexity of the past, but also its contingency. Students see how they or their peers "change" history. Perhaps a student makes a powerful speech, or a charismatic leader emerges who galvanizes a faction to power. Such persons change history [in the game], just as could have happened in history. We historians tend to neglect contingency—that the past might have unfolded in a different way—because we're so preoccupied with trying to chronicle what actually happened. Thus we neglect and even suppress the contingent elements in history. But we know that history could have unfolded in a different way. Reacting students learn this truth.

Let me add a related point. Students often regard history as boring because our books and lectures often suggest that individual human agency doesn't much matter. But Reacting shows otherwise. Students see it in their own games. Students see that they can and do make a difference, that individual actions can change the course of history. That's a very powerful lesson.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Almost like humanizing history.

Mark Carnes: I'm a textbook writer, and Reacting has completely changed my own philosophy. I used to think of myself as a social scientist, and social scientists seek to explore forces with universal import. We aspire to something as clean and powerful as Newton's laws, which are always true (until an Einstein comes along to complicate matters). Social scientists, too, seek to describe causal forces that drive history in particular directions, such as Marxism, or modernization theory, or innumerable other theories. We want to explain human behavior as something governed by such forces. But after seeing Reacting classes, I've learned that no social science theory can account for the complexity of human beings. I think that we social scientists have failed to adequately account for the vagaries of personality and individuality. And they are what make history so relentlessly fascinating—and also so difficult to fit into universalizing theoretical models.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: I'm interested in the history of Reacting. I know that the Reacting Consortium, Inc. recently became an American Historical Association affiliate. It's used at over 500 colleges and universities, so I think it's safe to say that it's a well-established and widely embraced pedagogical technique. But when you first created it in the late 1990s, did you encounter any resistance or skepticism from teachers and professors? What form did that take if so? And when did you see it start to change? If you did encounter resistance.

Mark Carnes: At the outset. Reacting generated enormous skepticism, especially from professors. It still does. That hasn't changed! Usually critics say something like this: "I'm a serious scholar. You can't reduce the pursuit of knowledge to fun and games. It is hard work, and that's what I teach my students. If students don't want to learn, they shouldn't be in college." Frankly, if I hadn't myself seen a Reacting class, that's what I would say, too!

But while skepticism of Reacting was strong and remains so, some things have changed. For one, more and more people are worried that nearly half of entering college students drop out. Now I teach a large history survey lecture course, and my students—from Barnard and Columbia—are highly motivated. My course is always oversubscribed. But on any given day, a third of my students are missing. Recently a senior auditor met with me after class. He had been sitting at the back of the classroom, and he noticed that a bunch of students were shopping or playing video games during the lecture. They were good students. I think I'm a good lecturer. The fact is that lectures are not an especially effective way to teach.

We've known this for a long time. Learning research has made this clear for four decades. Derek Bok, the former president of Harvard, in *Our Underachieving Colleges*, was baffled that professors, who exalt research and insist that we take nothing on faith, ignore research on learning and persist in lecturing, even though the learning research shows that lecturing isn't very effective.

But declining enrollments now threaten the survival of many colleges. Administrators especially worry about the viability of their institution when half of its students—its customers—drop out. And history survey courses are among the most lethal in that respect. And so administrators are among the most vocal proponents of active learning. Faculty who embrace Reacting often find that administrators are their biggest supporters.

More people [are using RTTP] because it is spread by word of mouth, for the most part from faculty, who find it to be an exhilarating way of teaching. Yes, sometimes lecturing can be satisfying. Sometimes you give a good performance and you know it: You make a point effectively. Students laugh at the jokes. Everyone seems to be awake. But always there's tension, and the experience is usually draining. But a Reacting class is exciting because of what students do, and sometimes what they do is spine-tinglingly wonderful. That's why so many Reacting instructors have become zealots. That's why Reacting has spread to so many people and institutions.

Okay, now, I've given you a long lecture on the inadequacy of the lecture as a pedagogical mode [Laughter]. [So to summarize]: what has happened is that more people have heard about Reacting, and the Reacting community is larger and larger.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Building on what you have just been talking about, I have a question about something I know everyone reading this journal is going to be concerned about. One of the most pressing problems I've heard college instructors [identify] in the past year or so is how to encourage student attendance and active participation and engagement. I have a hunch, but can you tell us more about how Reacting facilitates student engagement?

Mark Carnes: Over 2,600 instructors and administrators belong to the Reacting Facebook Faculty Lounge, a restricted access website. These online discussions provide lots of feedback. And quite often instructors report that they have had perfect attendance for the entire semester in their Reacting classes. I've seen that too! While nearly a third of my students are missing from my large lecture classes at Columbia, I'm surprised if I have more than three or four absences for the semester in my Reacting classes. So the question is, why do students come so regularly

Partly, in Reacting, no one knows exactly what's going to happen. It's student-run. That's an important fact. Although every game is carefully scaffolded, to make sure certain issues are raised and debated, students can and do take the game in unexpected directions. Moreover, you never know who is going to rise to the challenge of a difficult debate, or how a crucial vote will go, and so each class has inherent drama.

Another part of the engagement comes from the factions, the teams. So if a team is working well, it will make sure that everyone shows up –to vote or to provide support. Even the slackers.

And a Reacting class is fun. Often, it can be loud. There will be laughter, and there will be shouting. If a Reacting

class is adjacent to a regular class, sometimes there will be complaints, too! But it'll be interesting and fun. And even students who don't like Reacting—who dislike speaking in public, for example—they will nevertheless show up. Chiefly because they're curious to see what will happen. If you're looking to engage your students, Reacting is a radical solution. I doubt you can find anything more engaging.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: It's so interesting how many student engagement tools [Reacting] hits on. I hear: student accountability to each other, empowering students as learners, and also that element of curiosity because it's not clear how it's going to shake out.

Mark Carnes: The curiosity draws them in, but another aspect of the engagement is competition. And yet another is "make believe:" It's fun to "become" someone other than yourself. It's scary at first, especially because students are asked to play the part of someone very different from themselves. But then, by the second week, most students figure out what they stand for and come to understand the world they've been asked to inhabit. It can be exhilarating--just living that fantasy. So, yes, Reacting ticks off a whole bunch of motivational boxes.

Some students, once they're in the game, hate to see it come to an end. They've figured out this other world and where "they" belong in it. They can argue reflexively without thinking where "they" stand: "I support this position. I believe this." Students can and do make "their" arguments in an impassioned way, because they've inhabited that world, and they understand it. But of course, once they understand that world, then they've learned what they need to learn—and so it's time to move on. Ideally, to another Reacting game.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: We know history educators are facing new challenges every day and some issues have become significantly more difficult since the late 1990s. In what specific ways can a Reacting game help teachers and college instructors meet the demands of teaching historical thinking of "alternative facts" and decreasing digital literacy?

Mark Carnes: I think different Reacting instructors would answer this in different ways. In my view, Reacting teaches students that facts can be manipulated. Students need to refer to texts and facts to make arguments that likely are far-removed from their own, real lives. To act like a Puritan theologian during the trial of Anne Hutchinson, or a Confucian scholar during a succession dispute in Ming China, or a member of the Kentucky legislature in 1861—these are difficult challenges! Students must gobble up lots of facts, and then arrange them to support their objectives, their victory goals. They see how to use facts to make a persuasive argument, so that teaches them something important right there.

Students also learn that everything is much more complicated than any simple argument can make it. Every debate has multiple perspectives. Human affairs are complicated! And the past is always filled with infinite roles, each of which is complex and demanding.

Students, I think, learn the complexity of history, and how simplistic talking points that pass for discourse in contemporary life just don't suffice. The real world is complicated, and facts and texts can be easily manipulated.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: I'm going to follow up by addressing another hot button issue that educators are facing and discussing. Recently there's been a lot of concern among educators at all levels about artificial intelligence, the Chat GPT tool in particular, and its potential impact on student writing and learning. How could Reacting possibly mitigate plagiarism in the history classroom and facilitate authentic student learning and demonstration of their learning?

Mark Carnes: I think we've all been stunned by the power of artificial intelligence and text generators. And it's obviously going to improve rapidly. I had initially thought that Reacting was relatively insulated from the AI threat. I had assumed that AI would not be able to generate useful speeches for most Reacting roles, because students often are playing minor figures known only to scholars. But AI will improve, surely. The Reacting community is chewing on this, and there's probably been scores of posts on how we cope with this during the

past month.

One solution that occurs to me is for instructors to require that students make reference, in every speech and essay, to something that has specifically occurred in their class. I don't see how AI's trolling of the internet could build up the class-specific context for a student speech, but maybe I'm wrong. This is something that the consortium as a whole is struggling with. This is going to be an ongoing challenge but because the Reacting pedagogy is so unique, it's going to be harder for ChatGPT to break than most of our other classes. It's a much more serious problem in regular classes.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Well, it seems like too, as you're describing, students become invested and engaged with the material, their motivations turning to any kind of [plagiarism are lessened].

Mark Carnes: Yes, except that they *are* college students. They're supposed to give a speech on immigrant rights in ancient Athens. But they haven't done anything and it's due tomorrow. . . We've all been there.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Reacting is history based and this is a teaching history journal. But I know that it also appeals to instructors across disciplines. In what ways have you seen it adapted for use in non-history classrooms?

Mark Carnes: The Reacting community has expanded over the past two decades, and hundreds and hundreds of professors have joined the enterprise. The faculty discussion group has over 2,600 members. And one of the first things that occurs to Reacting instructors is that **their** subject or specialization would be perfect for a game. And so different instructors design new games—and in nearly all disciplines. Instructors in art history have created games in art history; and scientists have created games in the history of science, Darwin and Galileo, that led to history of science games. Then games in nursing—such as a game on the origins of cholera in 19th-century London. The Black Death game became popular during the Covid pandemic, as many instructors thought it would provide an ideal foundation in epidemiology. Also games in philosophy and political science. Political scientists in many ways were the easiest recruit to Reacting because they studied simulations as a graduate mode of pedagogy. Probably half the Reacting instructors are historians. Then I would say 20% are political scientists, and then 30% are humanists of various stripes, English professors, philosophy, professors, religion, professors. And we have a strong religion department component over the past 5 years. It's spread rapidly in foreign languages and English composition classes. Those would be our biggest growth spurts in recent years: foreign language and English composition.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: You've already addressed this somewhat but this special section is titled "History Fun and Games"—what makes Reacting to the Past Fun? Why is fun important to teaching and learning history?

Mark Carnes: When I decided I needed to write a book about Reacting, *Minds on Fire*, I thought I had all these wonderful stories and anecdotes; these extraordinary experiences that I'd experienced with students, and then all the stories Reacting faculty had recounted, and I wanted to share them.

I figured I could group these stories into different categories. And then I would just tie these stories to the literature on the philosophy of education, invoking all of the philosophers who had said playing is the best way to learn. That would be the intellectual [framework] that would give heft to the stories.

But when I looked carefully at Plato and Rousseau, and Dewey and Erickson, and other titans in the philosophy of education, I found that while they all endorsed play as the best way to learn, they defined play in ways that were not much fun! Rousseau thought that the ideal experience for young persons was scoutcraft: He told Emile, his putative student: "We don't want your mind to be encumbered with book learning or anything like that. That will stick the ideas of other people into your head, and diminish your own sense of self. So you must not read books, and you should just stay away from other people, because they will corrupt your own pure self. So we'll keep you out in the woods and you'll learn scoutcraft." Well, I was a Boy Scout and I quickly learned that too

much scoutcraft becomes the army, okay? After you've tied your tenth knot, or whatever, it's not that much fun! John Dewey, similarly, always advocated play, but he was concerned with helping educate the immigrant masses, bringing them into schools, and then getting them into industrial jobs. So he generally conceived of play as pre-work. There is a point where he met with parents at a high school and said, "You know, we can make education more fun. You can give boys shovels and girls brooms. Even washing dishes can be fun!" And the parents just looked at him. Our philosophers of education have said, yes, we need play, but they have defined play in ways that aren't fun.

I learned that there are several elements that make things fun. One is "make-believe." And what does Plato's Socrates say about make believe? It is the one thing that he wants to keep out of his ideal republic, because it's false. It deprives people of their sense of self. It inflates their imaginations, by encouraging them to identify with gods and mythic heroes. And once their imaginations have been inflamed, they won't perform their proper (boring) tasks in society. Rousseau's favorite author is Plato and so Rousseau says the one thing he doesn't want [anyone doing is] make-believe, because once he imagines he's someone other than himself, his sense of self is corrupted. So Rousseau wouldn't give [students] any books, especially novels and things that will take excite his imagination. Dewey says he doesn't want his play to turn into fooling because it becomes abstract or silly. It's not going to help people find jobs in the industrial workplace. So we've got this philosophy that play should be preparation for work. [It] leaches out the make-believe elements, the imaginative elements that can be wild and dangerous and subversive.

That, to me, is what fun is: fundamentally subversive. It subverts the natural order of things, or it subverts the social order. It exalts the imagination. It takes people to places that can even be dangerous. Educators sometimes view this with alarm: "No, no, no, you're fooling around! You're going in these dangerous, unpredictable directions." That opposition to fun—to subversion—has been embedded in the philosophical bedrock of Western Civilization. And it surfaces, often unknowingly, in our graduate schools of education. And so we have this weird discourse, which says that we must promote active learning that's playful; but then, teachers who dutifully follow in the footsteps of Dewey and Company end up creating really dead play forms that aren't fun. And so young teachers, bent on playful innovation, give up on play—and revert to lecturing.

What we've learned with Reacting is you've got to empower students, give them control of the class but then create a structure that is filled with knowledge. Put the course content into the furniture and decorations, and then push students into that structure and encourage them to explore it, especially within their peer group. In the process, they will engage in all types of imaginative subversion. And they'll have fun.

That's what Reacting is, these games that have taken years to develop. They've been tested and refined, in 50 or 60 iterations in classes. These games are hard to develop but it's where higher education should be going, creating intellectual structures and then nudging students into them. The instructor functions as cheerleader: "Go in there! You can do it! Here are some tools to help you. Here are some critical sources. Here's how to write and speak more effectively. Here's how you can lead a team better, or be a better teammate."

This mode of teaching is absolutely exhilarating, and it's why Reacting is spreading. It's because people have found joy in teaching. We imagined we would find that in graduate school, but then we began teaching in traditional pedagogical modes that aren't very effective. Worse, we find traditional teaching to be wearying; it grinds you down. Of course, sometimes you'll have a Reacting class that's as boring as a traditional class, but more often, with Reacting, you will have magical classes that are far better than you could have ever imagined.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: I love the idea of fun being subversive and empowering for students and encouraging student learning, but also empowering and energizing for educators. It's been such a tough few years for all educators. Fun is maybe just as, or even more important for us, for the instructors.

Mark Carnes: Absolutely. And people say, you know, how did you do it? They sort of look at the Reacting Consortium, Inc. edifice—the dozens of published games, the hundreds more in development, the extensive

editorial board, the entire membership organization. . . How, they ask, did it ever come about? The point is, I had a glimmer of an idea and then others joined the initiative, bringing with it their ideas and energy. Soon, there was this infusion of hundreds of people for whom Reacting became a big part of their lives, their professional lives, and they they've created this great structure. I wrongly get lots of credit for it, which is a real hoot, because, you know, I'm just having fun.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: That's right! My last question is what is your most important piece of advice for someone who might be interested in using Reacting to the Past for the first time?

Mark Carnes: The best way to learn about Reacting is to come to a workshop, come to a conference. When you come to a conference you'll sign up to play one or two games. About a month before the conference, you will receive your gamebooks and role sheets. And during a day or two, you'll play a compressed version of a game. We always have our major workshop in New York in June, but we also have lots of other conferences during the year. Find out more at https://reactingconsortium.org/.

One of the special features of our conferences, too, are veteran Reacting students who function like guides, or mentors, to different factions. The students, having spent a dramatic month of their lives playing the games, know them inside and out. And instructors, who probably didn't begin reading the gamebook until they got on the plane to come to the conference, are very needy. They didn't realize the game was so demanding. And so, during the initial faction meetings, the student "preceptors" provide guidance and encouragement, while the instructors soak up the students' advice. This glorious inversion astonishes faculty, who begin to realize how powerful the Reacting experience is for students.

So one of our standard sessions at the at the workshop is a session where the new instructors to Reacting ask questions of a panel of students. At one of these sessions a few years ago, a professor asked what advice the students would give to new Reacting instructors. And a student named Jessica Howells, from Eastern Michigan University, replied: "You've got to surrender control of the class to the students. You've got to let it be their class. You need to step back and not intrude too much. In one class, where I was serving as a student mentor, I was trying to encourage a shy student to speak. Finally, an issue emerged in a debate that she had written a paper on, and she went up to the podium to speak. And then the instructor intervened, to make exactly the point the student was going to say. So the student just sat down."

Perhaps this is the hardest part about Reacting. We instructors are used to showing off, to controlling things. It's hard to sit in the background and let the game unfold. Yes, you can shape things by meeting with factions beforehand, by grading papers quickly with useful feedback, by jotting notes and sending encouragement.[2] By cheerleading when students encounter a difficult challenging. By consoling when they lose a pivotal vote. Teaching in this way is glorious, but it does not entail dominating the classroom. But there is a greater joy in seeing students do wonderful things.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: Oh, that sounds so great. I've often said that if I could just give one piece of advice to instructors it would be try to talk less.

Mark Carnes: It is one of the main lessons I've learned from Reacting is that I teach better by shutting up.

Jessamyn Neuhaus: You made this sound so, so fun.

Mark Carnes: So I hope you—and your readers!—will apply for funds to come to a Reacting conference, especially the big Summer Institute. You will have a ball, and it will forever change how you think about teaching.

2 During the Pandemic, many Reacting faculty began to use Slack and Discord to encourage students within factions to interact and share materials. Afterwards, many of us continued to use Slack and Discord to provide instant (private) advice or encouragement. Before, we would pass a note.

From the Reviews Editor

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

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

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

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

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

Natalie Mendoza
Reviews Editor, *Teaching History*

Noreen Naseem Rodriguez and Katy Swalwell. *Social Studies for a Better World: An Anti-Oppressive Approach for Elementary Educators.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2022. Pp. 233. $29.95.

Noreen Naseem Rodriguez and Katy Swalwell's *Social Studies for A Better World: An Anti-Oppressive Approach for Elementary Education (SSFBW)* is an insightful and practical resource for elementary educators working to shift, and ultimately transform, their classroom practice. This book, both practical and inspirational, is a valuable addition to the literature available to support equity and social justice education, explicitly engaging with social studies instruction in the distinct, and often overlooked, context of elementary school classrooms. With this thoughtful text, Naseem Rodriguez and Swalwell offer elementary practitioners—who often feel isolated and overwhelmed in their commitment to anti-oppressive social studies instruction—a clearly articulated path forward and, importantly, reassurance that they are not alone.

As pedagogy instructors invested in incorporating social justice into elementary social studies curriculum, *SSFBW* provided us with the toolkit that we had been looking for. Over ten semesters, the three of us—Brianna Padilla, Phyllis Goldsmith, and Rachel Reinhard—co-taught the social studies methods course for elementary pre-service teachers at the University of California, Berkeley. When Reinhard encountered *SSFBW* in the Fall of 2021, she and Goldsmith immediately integrated it as the anchor text the following semester, and Goldsmith and Padilla continued using it the subsequent year when they co-taught the class. *SSFBW* pulled together conveniently and impressively the core ideas in the scholarship on the teaching of history while also speaking to the aspirational nature of anti-oppressive social studies instruction in elementary classrooms. Based on our use of *SSFBW*, we anticipate this text not only being a go-to resource for instructors in teacher preparation programs but also for professional development opportunities, led by district instructional specialists or self-organized cohorts of teachers.

SSFBW is divided into three parts that engage broad understandings and offer discrete examples, attending to planning and instructional practices all while taking seriously the intellect of elementary teachers. Part I consists of two chapters and makes a compelling case for the transformative role of social studies instruction for younger students, explaining the connection between the core disciplinary modes of thinking and critical pedagogies. Part II includes four chapters that delve deeply into common "pitfalls," as characterized by the authors—inherited practices that are counter to the goals of equity and social justice education. In two chapters, Part III provides guidance for deliberately planning for critical inquiry, while also acknowledging the very real-world risks facing teachers committed to disrupting traditional and harmful practices and narratives.

Part I grounds readers in a research-based understanding of the disciplines of social studies (history, civics, economics) and makes a case for their importance in developing critical pedagogies, such anti-oppressive reasoning, in elementary classrooms. Naseem Rodriguez and Swalwell explain that questioning strategies is essential to framing critical inquiries for students. The authors provide an academic grounding in social studies sub-disciplines for elementary school teachers while reinforcing the "need to consider what the dominant narratives are to these disciplinary questions…[to] make sure we're attending to the counter narratives." (10) This attention to unpacking dominant narratives and inviting the construction of counter narratives is central to the "anti-oppressive" stance advocated by the authors. The authors explain, "We use the term anti-oppressive to describe an education that explicitly addresses functions and impacts of oppression as well as the courageous and inspiring struggles against it." (27) The text provided us a framework for inviting our pre-service teachers, who will be trained as generalists, into the disciplinary specificities of the social studies in a way that could align with their deep-seated commitments to social justice.

Part II takes a magnifying glass to habitual practices and activities in elementary classrooms that often pose an obstacle to an instructor's own commitment to anti-oppressive education. In four chapters, Naseem Rodriguez and Swalwell provide useful and non-judgmental explanations of four practices they characterize as "pitfalls": Normalization, Idealization, Heroification, and Dramatization and Gamification. As instructors of pre-service

teachers, we found these chapters to serve as an easy reference for spot-checking specific lessons. In looking at the "pitfall" most common to the grade they were teaching, our pre-service teachers critically analyzed an individual activity against the broader goal of developing an anti-oppressive classroom. For experienced teachers, this section will be useful as a quick entry point for making discrete, though impactful, changes to begin the process of disrupting instructional practices they may not have previously recognized as a "pitfall."

Part III includes two chapters centered on the practical task of beginning this work, filled with real-world considerations and anecdotes. The first chapter in this section provides concrete first steps for transforming curriculum, and the second acknowledges the political pressures (and outright censorship) some teachers face, providing counsel on "how to not get fired." These chapters focus on the "how" of building better curriculum alongside making clear-eyed instructional choices in increasingly contested spaces. Grounded in the latest research and frameworks, Naseem Rodriguez and Swalwell provide examples of critical inquiry activities, assessments, and the integration of English language arts within the context of state standards and time constraints in elementary classroom schedules. The authors convincingly show that planning for inquiry becomes one of many "easy" first steps on the journey to creating an anti-oppressive classroom for instructors who may feel hesitant about taking on these changes. Additional suggestions for entry points into this work include connecting instruction to student experience and current events, creating space for conversations with colleagues, making time for self-reflection, and recommitting to ongoing learning. The authors, always pushing the reader not to shy away from working for a better world, remind us that we cannot "stop believing that a better world is possible" and "we must constantly sharpen our critical consciousness to be aware of problematic practices and build our tool kit to disrupt them." (156 -157) One of their most important reminders is that we cannot do this work alone.

SSFBW is the text we needed to support our work training educators in anti-oppressive social studies methods. This text introduces elementary school teachers to the most current research on historical thinking, instructional frameworks for social studies, and anti-racist and social justice frameworks and instructional practices. Naseem Rodriguez and Swalwell provide concrete steps for implementation in a format and tone accessible to practitioners, providing a "how to" for the many "what ifs" that often stop classroom teachers in their tracks as they seek to transform their instruction in pursuit of a better world. The authors regularly acknowledge the aspirational nature of this book. In the epilogue they write, "Part of equity and justice work is recognizing that you will likely mess up when you venture into new ways of thinking and knowing, particularly when those new ways are in opposition to what you've always learned and done." (170) In a time when our world is rapidly changing, and increasingly complex global issues arise at a near daily pace, this book serves as a resource to empower educators to meet these challenges and fears with confidence and purpose, and in community.

Phyllis Goldsmith
UC Berkeley History-Social Science Project, Berkeley, CA

Brianna Padilla
San Rafael City Schools, San Rafael, CA

Rachel Reinhard
Oakland High School, Oakland, CA

Greg Lockard, Tim Fish, Hector Barros, and Lucas Gattoni. *Liebestrasse*. New York: Dark Horse Books, 2022. Pp. 119. $19.99

With recent book bans targeting accessible literature, history, and LGBTQ+ stories, it is encouraging to find a narrative that speaks to the importance of all three categories. Monographs over the past several decades have highlighted the importance of non-heteronormative archives for telling stories about the past, and secondary and post-secondary educators have continued to demonstrate the crucial role of those stories in their classes. There are, however, additional opportunities to expand the accessibility of these texts beyond traditional readings, like monographs, and create an even more diverse body of literature within the classroom. *Liebestrasse* provides one such opportunity by telling twentieth-century queer history through an innovative and accessible media form: a historically based graphic novel.

Written by Greg Lockard and designed by Tim Fish, Hector Barros, and Lucas Gattoni, *Liebestrasse* follows the lives of a fictional couple as they navigate queer romance in 1930s Berlin. Sam Wells, a traveling American, recounts the story of meeting his former partner, a German man named Philip Adler, while in Berlin on an extended business trip. The graphic novel follows Sam's memories of their life together, with their romance unfolding against the backdrop of the slow-building horrors within Nazi Germany. The couple share intimate moments and experience the support of a shared community, with Philip arguing all the while that it should not be a crime for either of them to express their affection publicly. The sentiment, one that echoes throughout queer histories and fictional accounts alike, unsettles Sam, who remains nervous about the growing unrest in the nation. Despite their ideological differences on the social place of queer romance, the couple remain together—up until Philip's arrest and implicit murder by the Nazi secret police. Though it is unclear if Philip perishes as a victim in a death camp or is executed prior, his death is intrinsically linked to concepts of political dissent and sexual "deviance." Viewed as a "pervert" himself in the eyes of the state, Sam is deported shortly after Philip's disappearance, and though the couple are never reunited, Sam narrates the events as though he lives them every day. Even as he recounts the story for the reader in the aftermath of the war, for Sam, "time moves in one direction" while "love stands still." (94)

Reminiscent of other Second World War graphic novels, particularly Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and George Takei's *They Called Us Enemy*, *Liebestrasse* highlights the tenuous relationship between minority identities and the cultural moment of World War II. It digs into the depths of the era's history, beyond a heteronormative archive, to tell a compelling story—albeit an imagined one. As Lockard notes, "previous representations of gay/queer life in Berlin have been somewhat chaste;" thus, there is a uniqueness to *Liebestrasse* as a history that depicts "two men truly in love" in the World War II era. (100) The graphic novel's title even translates to "love street," speaking to Lockard's goal of visualizing and representing queer romance. It is a reference not to a physical place, but to the concept of remembering queer spaces. Despite outside threats to their safety, Sam and Philip made every space they shared together a "love street." Importantly, the narrative demonstrates the struggles and perseverance of LGBTQ+ individuals within an era of persecution and in a history that often ignores their existence.

Though the couple may be fictional, their story connects to incredibly tangible images of the past: underground gay bars, police raids, public antisemitism, and the rise of the fascist state. Lockard and co-creators offer readers a glimpse into the research process used to depict this history in a section they title "Creating *Liebestrasse*." This section sets the book apart from more traditional graphic novels and instead places it more in line with a conventional monograph. Lockard includes, for instance, a list of his references with annotations about the primary and secondary sources that informed *Liebestrasse*'s creation. (106) In outlining the research process, Lockard and co-creators have invited readers to understand the history told in *Liebestrasse* while also providing a guidebook for pursuing further information.

Liebestrasse would make a powerful addition to an undergraduate syllabus because it embodies the best of what a graphic novel can do within history instruction: it offers students an accessible starting point in their learning of history. Though art as a form may make these narratives seem less argumentative than a traditional

monograph, the visual nature of comics advances an argument through the combinations of color, text, characters, and creators' storylines, all of which can be analyzed in a classroom setting. Moreover, comics as a visual media offer readers the chance to see, rather than imagine through the verbal or written word, specific realities. In the case of stories like *Maus*, *They Called Us Enemy*, and now *Liebestrasse*, readers engage with the darkest elements of the past in ways that remind them of the lived consequences of atrocities. They are encouraged to see the past as complex—a place where historical subjects negotiated their identities in terms of their societies, rather than a desolate landscape of facts and dates.

Crucial to using a graphic novel successfully in the classroom is acknowledging that no single book can capture the entirety of history, or even of a single historical moment. Graphic novels are often critiqued for their brevity, which contributes to the misplaced belief that comics as an art form are simplistic or juvenile. Such a view ignores the power that a short narrative possesses. A historical graphic novel like *Liebestrasse*, particularly because of its bibliographic entries, has the ability to spark larger conversations about the snippets of time it depicts. It is not intended to be the single authoritative text on queer representation in Germany. Instead, it and other graphic novels are narratives that encourage their readers to ask questions.

In the case of *Liebestrasse*, Lockard and his co-creators crafted a story predicated on questions of what and how. How do historians understand sexuality in relation to the Holocaust? How do we understand the place of memories and loss when crafting historical narratives? What stories remain to be studied in traditional archives? These core questions could be the foundations of undergraduate coursework that introduces students to both content and process. Underground gay bars, for instance, is content that can be spun out into a robust lecture. Similarly, students could gain invaluable insight into queer histories by comparing Sam and Philip's stories to oral histories or memoirs, thereby broadening what they learn from the graphic novel. In a methodology class, students could use the annotated bibliography to embark upon research, aligning the depictions of Nazism, sexuality, and memory in the graphic novel to both primary and secondary sources they explore on their own. The core questions and history presented in *Liebestrasse* can guide instructors and students down any number of paths like these, demonstrating the high adaptability of the text in a classroom setting.

In the classroom, *Liebestrasse* provides a unique and accessible gateway into larger discussions around queer life and the power of memory in twentieth-century history. For the skeptical educator, it is an excellent candidate for introducing the graphic novel into undergraduate curriculum. Importantly, in a moment where the narratives of marginalized communities remain under threat, *Liebestrasse* is a tangible reminder of how powerful representation, particularly visual representation, can be in the classroom.

Viola Burlew
University of Colorado Boulder

Yemi Bamiro, Yemisi Brookes, and Shianne Brown. *Fight the Power: How Hip Hop Changed the World*. PBS, 2023. 4 episodes.

Over the last five decades, hip hop artists have found ways to fearlessly provoke the powerful while inspiring those who feel powerless. With music, performance, and fashion they've embodied the spirit of protest. No surprise that they've also earned enemies: the police, politicians, and even members of their own communities. Still, in the face of fierce criticism, these artists sought change. They responded to social and economic injustices, called out the police for abuse, and championed free speech. They fought to protect Black lives and the rights of the underserved while also subverting mythologies about gender and sexuality. And they insisted on taking space and being seen. It's this expansive history that "Fight the Power: How Hip Hop Changed the World," a new series now streaming on PBS, seeks to narrate.

Leading viewers through this four-part documentary is Chuck D, front man for Public Enemy and author of the famously defiant rap song for which the series is named. He's joined by an impressive lineup of rap artists representing various generations and perspectives –– including Grandmaster Caz, Roxanne Shanté, Fat Joe, Warren G, and Killer Mike –– along with culture writers and scholars, like renowned hip hop journalist Danyel Smith and Leah Wright Rigueur, an associate professor of history at John Hopkins. Built around interviews, archival video and news footage, "Fight the Power" carefully pieces together the social, cultural, political, economic, and ideological contexts within which hip hop bloomed and bristled.

What we first get is a clear demonstration of why hip hop emerges when it does, and, importantly, that this story begins long before that legendary Bronx house party in 1973. Indeed, viewers learn in Episode 1, "Foundations," that the 1960s are critical to this history. This is the decade when the first hip hop artists were still small children collecting formative memories about state violence, political crisis, and Black revolution. Melle Mel recalls watching his father cry in response to news of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. Chuck D remembers footage of the war in Vietnam and, relatedly, his mother explaining to him the concept of conscientious objection. Others reflect on early exposure to celebrations of Black Power in the music of Curtis Mayfield, the Chi-Lites, and Stevie Wonder.

Similarly, in Episodes 2 and 3, which center on the 1980s and 1990s, artists and scholars explain the intimate connection between cultural expression and the lived realities of systemic racism and militarized police power. This is an especially useful framework for understanding not only the rise of gangster rap artists like Ice-T and N.W.A., but also the broader anti-state turn that hip hop takes by the 1990s, exemplified by artists such as 2Pac, KRS-One, Ice Cube, and Dead Prez.

The final episode, titled "Still Fighting," begins powerfully, in 1999, with the police murder of Amadou Diallo and the protests following the acquittal of the NYPD officers involved. Rapper and producer Jon Forté reflects, "You felt the gravity of the moment and our responsibility as emerging artists to use our platforms." It's a poignant start to an episode that ultimately suffers from being rushed and disjointed. "Still Fighting" leaps from event to event: 9/11, Eminem's reflections on White privilege, the explosive success of hip hop moguls, Hurricane Katrina, Obama's election, Trayvon Martin's murder in 2012, Black Lives Matter, Trump's election. Teachers using the series may find their students left wondering how these crises and developments fit together, and why, or if, these moments represent inflection points in the contemporary history of hip hop music.

In this way, the series would have benefitted from a fifth, and perhaps even a sixth, episode to allow breathing room to explore the contours of each of these more recent topics. For instance, greater care could have been taken to provide context for the impact of Hurricane Katrina on Black southerners along the Gulf Coast, including a segment detailing how the region's unique concerns and cultural expressions are tied to southern rap. Instead, we only get brief mention of southern hip hop artists and their efforts, alongside rap celebrities like Puffy and Jay-Z, to raise money for disaster relief. Similarly, an opportunity was missed in the segment on 21st century fights against police killings; the national scope of hip hop activism would have been better represented had the filmmakers touched on local hip hop cultures outside of New York and Los Angeles. For instance, the protests that

followed the police killing of Oscar Grant in 2009 would have provided an important historical lens for examining Bay Area hyphy culture and the radical leadership of Oakland rap artists like Mistah F.A.B. and Boots Riley in the years prior to the rise of Black Lives Matter.

In addition, for a documentary that purports to show us how hip hop "has chronicled the emotions, experiences and expressions of Black and Brown communities," this one does not give us much hip hop music. We get some familiar clips from Queen Latifah's "Ladies First," Ice-T's "6 in the Mornin'," and Kendrick Lamar's "Alright." Of course, Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" is a centerpiece. We hear Young Jeezy's "My President is Black." Curiously, we get a deep dive into "Where Is the Love," an anthem from the Black Eyed Peas that is arguably a dance-pop production, not hip hop. Yet, we don't hear the music made by the myriad hip hop artists, including those shown and interviewed, who confronted structures of oppression –– Boogie Down Productions and KRS-One, MC Lyte, David Banner, Lil Kim, and the Fugees, to name a few. Notably, we also hear no music from 2Pac's catalog, even as narrator Chuck D makes the case that "Brenda's Got a Baby," "Keep Ya Head Up," and "Dear Mama" are some of the greatest rap records of all time for how they critiqued institutional racism. Perhaps music licensing posed a challenge here, but even on-screen text of the written lyrics or descriptions of the music would illustrate the profound importance of the sonic element of this history. Teachers choosing to use the documentary might want to compile a hip hop playlist as an accompaniment.

That said, to its great credit, the narrative arc of the four episodes of "Fight the Power" does allow for a wide range of hip hop artists from various eras, regions, and subgenres to define their own approach to resistance. Viewers learn that with the release of "The Message" in 1982, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five became a beacon for other MCs who wanted to use their music to inform and educate. Darryl "DMC" McDaniels reveals how his group's activist impulses intersected with Run-DMC's desire for crossover success. Ice-T compares his own street raps to the music of his politically outspoken contemporaries who, he says, were "more about the world. And I was more about the neighborhood." Women rappers, including Roxanne Shanté, Monie Love, and MC Lyte, speak about the struggle within the culture of hip hop to be seen, heard, and respected. We see the biggest hip hop stars of the 21st century stumping for Barack Obama and using the power of celebrity to get out the vote. The documentary even confronts the murky relationship between the pursuit of wealth and the goals of resistance.

"Fight the Power" is compelling documentary TV. Hip hop fans, casual viewers, teachers, and students alike will find it thoroughly informative and entertaining – a wonderful backdrop for understanding the record of hip hop as an insurgent art form.

Felicia Angeja Viator
San Francisco State University