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THE NEW YORK TIMES ASSIGNMENT

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Sometimes teachers develop favorite assignments that they use regularly in any number of their courses.¹ I have used and still use "*The New York Times Assignment*" in every history class I have taught since graduate school, whether at the college or high school level. This is probably the assignment I have changed the least, and it is certainly the most consistent assignment in my collection, because it continues both to be effective in accomplishing the three main objectives that I have for it, and because student feedback on the assignment, at all levels, has been consistently positive.

The Assignment

"*The New York Times Assignment*" is a simple yet powerful tool that I use to help students accomplish the three major goals that I have set for all of my history courses: to help students make sense of what they are learning, to realize the importance of historical study, and to develop the critical thinking skills of the historian. The assignment is as follows: Find a current news article that is connected to something we have discussed in class. Cut out or print the article, write a one-paragraph summary of the article, and write a one-paragraph explanation of how the subject matter illustrates one of the topics or ideas we have discussed in our class. For some classes, I'll add a third paragraph, explaining how the article illustrates as well one of the major themes of our course. As will become clear—or less clear—below, what I mean by "something we have discussed in class" is open to interpretation. Naturally, depending on the nature of the course and of the students, I modify the assignment to be more or less specific as needed. Otherwise, you now have the gist of it.

The Objectives

I have three basic objectives for "*The New York Times Assignment*" that I announce to my students. (Were my syllabi already not too long, I would include these objectives there as well.) One purpose of the assignment is, frankly, to have an easy grade available. Although, particularly in the classes I teach to adults, it turns out to be far more difficult for them than it sounds, this assignment that recurs throughout the semester offers a relatively painless opportunity to earn a good grade. This buffers the

¹Before I describe "*The New York Times Assignment*," I must give credit to Professor Tom Schwartz of Vanderbilt University for this idea. I learned of this assignment quite a few years ago as his Teaching Assistant, and have modified it since. Professor Schwartz required the use of *The New York Times* for this assignment, thus its name, although I no longer make that requirement of my students.

blows of the quizzes, tests, and other written assessments that prove, by design, far more difficult. A second intent of the assignment is to encourage students to stay abreast of the news. This is especially important for adult students, because I find on the whole that frequently they are not, in fact, avid readers of current news sources. Third and most important, the assignment serves as a way to move our class "outside the box," that is to say outside of our classroom during the time our class is designated to meet. I really work hard through this assignment and other techniques to get students to think about history, and particularly what they are learning in my history class, at some time other than when they are sitting in class with me. "The New York Times Assignment" is an effective way of doing this. If students do read the newspaper regularly, this assignment encourages them to think more carefully about what they are reading, as now they are searching for parallels to what they have studied in their history class. In any case, the assignment encourages students to take what they are thinking about in their history class and discover contemporary comparisons. Either way, I think, "The New York Times Assignment" helps history become not just something that happens "at school" or "in the textbook," but rather something both in the past and in the present.

The Connections

When I say "something we have discussed in our course," I do intend to be quite vague, because I want students to think big and I also want to give them the chance to think creatively. Too often, students will be very literal in their connections: We discuss "middle passage" and they will choose an article on the restoration of the ship *Amistad*. This is on the mark, but a bit simplistic. I want to press students to think bigger. I explain to students, for instance, that the obituary of a Florida governor whom we have discussed just is not a very interesting connection, despite its intimate connection to our course, whereas the obituary of a lesser known Floridian whose life illustrated the ideas, say, of agricultural development and the struggle for racial equality that we explored is a much more stimulating and, I think, rewarding connection. Other students, and this is what I most hope for, are wider ranging in their selections and their thinking. One student last year, for example, connected our discussion of the feudal labor system in Japan with an article detailing the lives of local migrant workers. The student noted specific similarities in living conditions, debtor status, and so forth, but pointed out as well dissimilarities such as government regulations of the work environment (perhaps *de jure* rather than *de facto*) and the mechanization involved in the process of farming. In this way, the student came to understand some universals of the human condition, with respect to labor and power, but at the same time the student got a richer understanding of both Japanese history and of the local community.

Occasionally, students become creative—and sometimes it works. One example that comes to mind is the student who submitted a weather map of Europe. At first, I thought the student was trying to demonstrate some sort of loophole in the assignment

or thwart my purposes. In fact, it turned out that the assignment was done very well. In that particular class, we had spent a great deal of time discussing the D-Day invasion. (It was a summer class, just when the movie *Saving Private Ryan* debuted—we went to see the movie as a class.) Coincidentally, some time not long after that discussion, the weather pattern in Europe was remarkably similar to the weather that was a contributing factor in making the preparations for the D-Day landing so difficult. The student crafted a thoughtful and lengthy discussion of the weather, the landing at Normandy, and how weather today in that region might or may not cause problems for military or civilian activities. It was a pretty cool connection. It is always nice to see students go out on a limb to perhaps “stretch” their connections.

Other creative connections that occur with some regularity are advertisements, following the installments on advertising in the Gilded Age and the 1920s that are a part of my U.S. survey course. Still it is important to stress to students that they must be explicit in the explanation of the connections they see. It is not uncommon for students to submit the assignment and leave me to figure out what connection they are trying to make (see “Assessment” below). Thus, the breadth of connections tends to vary—from the obvious and simplistic to those that are much more interesting, thorough, and imaginative.

Variations

I use several variations of “*The New York Times Assignment*” depending on the class and the aptitude of the students. In my high school Advanced Placement classes, the assignment is generally part of a substantial collection of written work, due four times per semester. In each case, students are confined to the period covered by that piece of writing. For example, in AP World History, when the large writing assignment is a series of primary source readings and responses on the period 500 BCE to 500 CE, students must find a news article that they can relate to something from that period. Sometimes from the beginning or sometimes only after the first couple of assignments in a course, I will add a third paragraph to the assignment to focus on themes, in addition to the article summary and the connection in our class. The third paragraph, in the case of AP World History, will ask students to describe how the article also illustrates one or both of the two major themes we have in our course: contact & exchange and identity.

In my History of Florida class, the title of the assignment changes to “The ‘Florida in the News’ Assignment” and the themes are geography and diversity. Similarly, in U.S. history courses, I might ask for a third paragraph connecting not only to a specific subject or idea we have discussed, but also to one of the “five themes” I identify as crucial for understanding the story of America: sectionalism, the context of class, the heterogeneity of Americans, American exceptionalism, and the role of morality in American life. These themes are recurrent throughout each of my American history courses, and I expect students to wrestle with them throughout the course.

Including this third paragraph helps students develop definitions of these themes and better understand them and their value in both historical and contemporary contexts.

With adult students, I have found that requiring more than this or limiting what they can discuss by time period (or by week of the course) is too challenging. I would like to require my History of Florida students to select articles only from the local or state section of the *Miami Herald*, but they have struggled too much to see connections in this limited number of stories. As of yet, I have not developed a modification that will both focus the assignment a bit more and make this more doable for them. Additionally, because my adult classes only meet eight times in total, there is not time to develop this practice with them. Perhaps with more time and therefore a larger number of assignments, by the end of the course I would be able to make the assignment a bit more specific. Thus, I leave the assignment open for them; literally they can find an article that is connected to anything we have discussed in the course, from the beginning to the end, so the assignment essentially gets easier as the course progresses.

With my high school students—who admittedly are a bright lot—I can make them focus a bit more. In fact, the assignment can be modified easily to match the abilities of most students. So, with my Latin American Studies students for example, they are required to hand in “*The New York Times* Assignment” weekly, but they are restricted to news articles specifically about Latin American life or affairs and to connections to ideas we are discussing in class in the current week. This increased specificity forces them both to be more careful and thoughtful about what they choose, but also to develop more sophisticated and deep explications. This also discourages repetition of the same idea by one student over and over, as sometimes happens in more open-ended assignments. The more specific requirements of the Latin American Studies assignment is also my way of forcing students to keep up with current events—by making them read relevant news stories at least for the purposes of this assignment—in the region that we are studying, which is an important aspect of our course.

Problems

I have encountered only a few significant problems with this assignment, primarily with students who were not already regular readers of a newspaper or other news sources. For these students, there were flaws in the assignment’s instructions that I have now remedied. The first problem is that for quite a while, rather than demanding that students use *The New York Times*, I allowed them to use any “news source.” I explained that this could be our local *Miami Herald* or *The New York Times*, but could just as well be *Newsweek* or CNN on-line. I explained just as clearly, so I thought, that *Seventeen* and *US Weekly* were not “news sources” for the purposes of this assignment. I thought some flexibility would be good, and would allow students to continue relying on whatever source was theirs for the news. What I found out in some classes, however, was that students had no source that they relied on for news. Rather they did

not consume the news at all. Moreover, I found out that many students did not understand the distinction I made between *The New York Times* and *Seventeen* or between CNN on-line and Wikipedia. I similarly found out that students did not understand the notion of “news” as they gave me articles not only from Wikipedia and the like, but also from websites that were neither reporting the news nor providing information for any general education purpose (i.e. trade websites, pages from books, journal articles, etc.).

This leads to a second problem. How, you can ask, would one come up with a connection from a book or journal article for this assignment? Simple enough, I found out. A number of students did not embrace the assignment as intended, that is read the newspaper—or a preferred “news source”—and come upon a connection to our class. Rather they simply did a Google search for “Florida” or “Teddy Roosevelt” and, as students often do, printed out whatever was high on the hit list and short in length. They gave little consideration to whether or not what they were using was “news” much less to the objectives of the assignment. Some provided articles from legitimate news sources, but ones they obviously did not read regularly. Living in Florida, I do not expect that a student giving me an article for this assignment from the *Times-Picayune* of New Orleans finds that newspaper to be his preferred “news source.” Others provided articles that they clearly had not read during the time of our class, citing articles dated years before our class, for example. This again led me to realize that students were simply doing Internet searches to find their articles rather than reading the newspaper. The solutions here were obvious: Restrict the definition of “news source” to a newspaper (either print or on-line) and insist that the news article be current. This latter requirement might vary some depending on the intervals of the assignment. For classes that submit the assignment only a few times in a semester, I require that each article be dated since the last assignment was due; for classes that submit the assignment on a weekly basis, I require that articles be dated within two weeks of the date they are submitted to me with the assignment. I am sure there are still students who use the search technique, but I hope the restrictions at least make that technique more difficult, and, if nothing else, require them to do a bit of reading of news sources within their searches such that they are at least approaching the fulfillment of the objectives of the assignment.

The other problem has been defining “connection.” In some courses—and again this tends to be the case more often with adult students than with high school or traditional college students—it simply takes time for students to understand that the main purpose of the assignment is not to find a story in the newspaper and merely explain that they personally find the story to be a compelling one. One student in my History of Florida class, for example, when asking me why she had received such a low grade on a particular assignment, had cut out and summarized an article on dogs. She had done nothing in her written piece to connect the article to our course, nor was there, as far as I could tell, anything in the article that could be related to our course (we had never discussed dogs or pets of any kind). When I explained this to her, she was

distraught because she insisted that the article was “interesting” and I was simply giving her a low grade because I clearly did not like dogs. Certainly, one objective of the assignment is to encourage students to follow the news, but more than simply following the news is required.

More frequently, though, students at least attempt to make the connection. The question then becomes, what is a “good” connection? Or at least, what is a connection that will be rewarded with a high score on the assignment? It is enough, for example, having discussed slavery in class, to select and write on a news article about slavery, perhaps a travel article on historic plantations or on the *Amistad* as a historical relic. Admittedly, there is some subjectivity to the assessment of this assignment. I hope that my assessment rubric (see below) addresses some of this. I try to encourage students to develop their ideas as fully and richly as possible and tell them that just seeing the same words that we have talked about is probably not a sufficient connection—or at least not one that is going to earn the highest possible score on the assignment. Sometimes, though, the connection is there and is developed specifically, and I must reward the student with a grade that is probably not consistent with the effort put into the assignment. I guess I haven’t figured out the answer to this dilemma yet—that is, a way to define “connection” such that students must think beyond simply first-level similarities.

Assessment

The grading rubric for “*The New York Times* Assignment” for my “America in the Twentieth Century” class follows. This class, offered in the School of Adult and Continuing Education at a local university, meets only eight times (once per week for four hours). The assignment is due at each of the seven class meetings after the first:

Grading Rubric (possible 10 points)

The key to earning full credit on this assignment is to be sure that you *make a connection between the content of the article you have selected and something we have discussed in our class and that you explain how the article illustrates one of the five themes!*

- 5 points: You turned something in, but it was not thoughtful and did not do what the assignment asked at all.
- 6 points: You turned something in, but it was not thoughtful and did not do what the assignment asked at all or barely did these things, but I was in a good mood.
- 7 points: You summarized the article you selected, but did not attempt to relate it to our class or a theme, or did so in a very superficial and remote manner.

- 8 points: You summarized the article and attempted to relate it to our class and/or a theme, but did so poorly, or made a connection only to either something we discussed in our class or to a theme, but did not do both.
- 9 points: You summarized the article and did a decent job of relating it to our class and a theme.
- 10 points: Well done! Very thoughtful!

Response and Feedback

The response of the students to the assignment has been good. For the most part, I think at all levels my students enjoy doing the assignment, and once they embrace the goals I have laid out for them, it seems that they appreciate what I am trying to accomplish. For some students, I think, it is a game of sorts that is fun, that is to “find the connection” in the newspaper. Other students genuinely value the course more, it appears, because they are in fact able—by force at first but soon much more eagerly—to take our course “outside the box” and in fact into their everyday world. They clearly appreciate the ideas we are thinking about, talking about, and struggling with everyday. And I think they find interesting the ways that differences in time and place make grappling with those ideas different for people in different eras and settings. In this respect, the assignment really does help to demystify history as some inaccessible list of names and dates and make it into an inquiry into the life and times of people just like us (or, we might learn, just like us, but not quite).

Some students have noted that, having found contemporary parallels, they are better able—through comparing and contrasting—to understand issues in the past that were at first somewhat fleeting. For this reason, it is not uncommon for me to ask one or two students to volunteer to share their articles and connections with class on the day they are due. This activity frequently results in good discussions and often evokes further connections from other students. It is not uncommon for students to say “I wouldn’t have thought of it that way until now” once they are enlightened to a contemporary comparison or, just as important, contrast. The best discussions, in fact, are probably those when one student presents a news article and points out the many similarities to what we have studied and another student responds with “but those really aren’t similar at all because....” Sometimes the discussion becomes too focused on exclusively contemporary events, so when time or adherence to the syllabus is a factor, use caution when opening up this assignment for discussion.

For other students, the benefits of this assignment are that they come to realize the importance and pleasure of reading a daily newspaper and keeping abreast of the news in their world, country, state, and community. It would be difficult to count how many students have told me at the conclusion of the class that “one of the best things about your class is that I never really read the newspaper before, and now I read it everyday. And I’ll keep doing it!” This might not be the primary purpose of a history class, but if I can get students more engaged and more interested in reading in the first

instance and in their world on the other hand, I will count that as a positive accomplishment of the course.

Results and Reflections

Although some historians might cringe, I think the assignment helps high school and undergraduate students realize the importance or at least the value of knowing history. Of course, I am not hoping that students will come to learn that "history repeats itself," and admittedly that is a danger of this assignment that I must be careful to address. But, at the same time, there are many conditions, topics, themes, and ideas that arise in the historical record that continue to be a part of the human experience. By noting both points of comparison and contrast, students become both more invested in their study of the past and more curious about the present. I have also noticed that over time students become more careful and more creative readers. Especially when connections are shared in class, and thus the range of possibilities are revealed to everyone, students seem to accept the challenge of trying to draw connections that are less than obvious. When they do this, and consequently develop more sophisticated and analytical ideas about their chosen article and the issues we are studying, they reveal a much more precise and thoughtful reading of, in this case, the newspaper. But I can't help but think that this task helps them become more critical readers.

In a small way, "*The New York Times Assignment*" does all of the things a good history course should do. It offers students a venue to develop as critical readers and a venue through which to develop as articulate writers. It encourages them to think critically and to see history as something that requires interpretation, synthesis, and creativity, not merely memorization. "*The New York Times Assignment*" reveals that sources for historical information might be texts other than those assigned for class, and that historical understanding goes well beyond lists of facts. Not unlike the journal assignments that are common in history classes, "*The New York Times Assignment*" is complex enough to be valuable, yet simple enough to be assigned on a regular basis without placing an excessive burden on students. It forces them consistently to reflect on—and write about—what they are studying in a way that is not totally abstract to them, again without the burden that comes with studying for a test or quiz or preparing a lengthy essay. Naturally, the assignment is not perfect, and clearly I have made many minor modifications over the years. Yet, "*The New York Times Assignment*" has been a venerable and valuable part of my classes throughout my entire teaching career and will, I suspect, continue to be in my syllabi for years to come.

**AN AMERICAN FOUNDER'S DREAM:
USING BENJAMIN RUSH'S SUBCONSCIOUS
AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF HISTORY**

Christopher J. Young
Indiana University Northwest

For a number of years my students in both the first half of the American history survey and in an upper-division course on the Early Republic have started their semesters by analyzing the subconscious of Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician and a prominent member of the American revolutionary generation. Rush's recounting of one of his dreams offers an excellent opportunity for introducing students to the craft of analyzing primary sources for what they reveal about a particular time period or place in the past. Moreover, Rush's dream allows for considerations regarding the nature of history itself.¹

Writing and reporting on dreams was nothing new for Benjamin Rush. He was fascinated with this facet of human existence and spent time studying and lecturing on the topic.² The vividness with which Rush was able to communicate his dreams was admired by John Adams who declared in 1805, upon reading Rush's account of a dream, "I admire the brilliancy of your invention when asleep." Four years later, in 1809, Adams wrote to his friend, "If I could dream as much wit as you, I think I should wish to go to sleep for the rest of my life, retaining, however, one of Swift's flappers

¹Benjamin Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush: His "Travels Through Life" together with his Commonplace Book for 1789-1813*, ed. George W. Corner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 357-360. In the index for the autobiography, Corner puts the word "fictitious" in parentheses before the page numbers of this particular document. However, Corner never explains why he doubts that it was an actual dream. After reviewing the literature on Rush and his dreams as well as a number of the dreams Rush recorded, I believe this was an actual nocturnal dream. While this point is debatable (by historians and students alike), for the purposes suggested in this piece, it does not matter whether the dream was real or imagined. In fact, the disagreement on this point can be harnessed and put to work in a discussion centered on the problems encountered while studying and writing history. The author would like to thank Myriam Young, Stephen Kneeshaw, the anonymous readers for *Teaching History*, and students, Hilary Huguenard and Kristel Rey.

²Rush's title as "Father of American Psychiatry" stems not only from his writing on mental illness, but also his discussion of dreams in a scientific context. Even though Merle Curti says that it is "not improbable that Rush referred to his dreaming in a figurative sense" (he suggests Rush's dream of a reconciliation between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson was such a case, though he gives no evidence to support this assertion), he also says that Rush "was the most significant explorer of dreams." Merle Curti, "The American Exploration of Dreams and Dreamers," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27 (July-September 1966), 391-416. The quotations appear on 398. See also, Eric T. Carlson, Jeffrey L. Wollock, and Patricia S. Noel, *Benjamin Rush's Lectures on the Mind* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981), 385-402.

to awake me once in 24 hours to dinner, for you know without a dinner one can neither dream nor sleep."³

When Rush and his dreams are discussed, it is usually in the context of his extraordinary correspondence with John Adams, his fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence and good friend. Rush and Adams agreed to share their dreams with each other. The interchange of dreams by these two Founding Fathers reveals the depth of thought these two men gave to the experiment in American republicanism.⁴

Rush's most famous dream is the one in which he dreamed that his son's book on the history of the United States stated that the great event in 1809 was the renewed friendship between the second and third presidents of the United States, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Adams responded enthusiastically to Rush's dream. "A DREAM AGAIN! I wish you would dream all day and all night, for one of your dreams puts me in spirits for a month." He continued, "I have no other objection to your dream but that it is not history. It may be prophecy."⁵ And indeed it was, for Adams and Jefferson had a rapprochement, resulting in a remarkable philosophical and historical exchange that lasted over a decade.

Unlike the politically oriented dreams that Rush and Adams shared with each other, the dream that I use in class is religious in nature and is the last entry recorded in Rush's commonplace book. It is uncertain as to when the dream actually happened since it is undated. Moreover, Rush begins by saying he heard "the Revd. Dr. ---- preach some time ago...." Presumably the dream occurred between 1810 and 1813. The editor tried to put the commonplace book in chronological order, at times using the changing handwriting of an aging Dr. Rush as a guide.⁶

When Rush attended this particular service, the minister discussed the "general Resurrection" and suggested that "persons would rise from their graves ... with the

³John A. Schutz and Douglass Adair, eds., *The Spur of Fame: Dialogues of John Adams and Benjamin Rush, 1805-1813* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001, orig., San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1966), 25, 143.

⁴For the dreams that include these two Founders' thoughts regarding the American experiment, see Schutz and Adair, *The Spur of Fame*, 24-26, 127-129, 141-143, 170-171, 276. For a psychological interpretation of the Adams-Rush correspondence, see Miriam Elson, "John Adams and Benjamin Rush Exchange Dreams," *Progress in Self-Psychology*, 19 (2003), 269-286. See also, Carl A.L. Binger, "The Dreams of Benjamin Rush," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 125 (June 1969), 1653-1659.

⁵Schutz and Adair, *The Spur of Fame*, 173; Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, orig., 1959); L.H. Butterfield, "The Dream of Benjamin Rush: The Reconciliation of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson," *The Yale Review*, 40, No. 2 (December 1950), 297-319.

⁶Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*, ed. George Corner, 12-13.

same habits of virtue and vice which they ... had laid down in them." Rush was "so much affected with this thought" that it stayed with him throughout the day. This idea regarding the resurrection was so compelling that once he was overtaken by sleep he had a dream that was so vivid and bizarre that he found it necessary to write it down when he awoke. And this is where Benjamin Rush's decision to record his dream leads to an introduction to history.

Because the idea held that people would rise from the dead as they were while alive, we get a chance to see how people were, in one man's estimation, in early nineteenth-century Philadelphia. We can consider how different they were from today, while at the same time so similar and familiar. It is an excellent opportunity to explore the social history of the early United States, while reflecting on our own time in the flow of American history.

When I use this piece in class, I begin with two points. One, the fact that Rush dreamed, and had a strange dream, is something to which we can all relate. It is easy to overlook the fact that people in the past also had weird and memorable dreams. This reminder helps to establish the humanity of the people we will discuss throughout the semester. I believe it is important to remind students that we are not only talking about ideas, but also people, who *really lived*. Two, this document introduces students to the reality that historians can only work with the remnants that have survived time and space. However, before something can survive and become a remnant from the past, it needs to exist. We can talk about Rush's strange dream because he wrote it down. If it is not written down or preserved in some other way, it is lost. I ask students how many of their conversations, observations, or even dreams they have written down. I also point out that what they wrote must then survive fire, water, mold, war, and relatives who are not packrats!

Benjamin Rush's description of his dream is short enough that students can read it as well as discuss it in one class session. There are a number of ways for instructors to approach an in-class analysis of Benjamin Rush's dream. One way is to encourage students to consider the document as if it is the *only* remnant from the past regarding this society. This might help them to become cognizant of the assumptions they bring to their reading of historical documents. Another approach is to supply students with different documents to read alongside or as background to the dream. It would be instructive for students to comment on how the document changes as Rush's dream is gradually contextualized by the other documents. Finally, since students come to the classroom from a number of educational backgrounds and experiences, and consequently enter the class with different levels of preparedness, it would no doubt be interesting and beneficial for all present if students are encouraged to use the historical knowledge that they bring to the class to comment on the document.

Certain aspects of Rush's dream are always noticed by students, while in other classes some students offer singular insights that had escaped all classes up to that point. For the purpose of this article, I will focus on some of the generalities that can

be discussed when exploring history, specifically early American history, via Benjamin Rush's subconscious.

One of the first things that students generally point out is the fact that Rush must have been a Christian because he attended a service and had his imagination stirred by the minister's interpretation of the resurrection. So, students first conclude, based on available evidence, that the Early Republic was a time when people took their Christianity seriously. This conclusion is reinforced by a scene in the dream in which "a little boy" reads the Bible to a man. Besides raising questions regarding literacy and education, the scene reinforces the idea that Christianity was important to early Americans.

Usually someone will ask if other religions were present in early America. The fact that only Christian ideas and imagery are available in this document encourages students to consider what we as historians can or cannot conclude from negative evidence. What does the absence of information mean? For many students, this is their first realization that historians contend with limitations when imagining the past.

At this moment students begin to get an understanding of how to analyze the document. They begin to identify certain aspects of the dream or of early Philadelphia that we can discuss in class. Students generally raise points about gender characterizations, domestic relationships, relationships between strangers, and, finally, class and immigration. These aspects of the dream resonate with students partially because the depictions seem so shockingly similar (for some, familiar) or different from today.

The gender characterizations in Rush's dream are revealing for what they tell us about roles and expectations of gender in the Early Republic. In Rush's dream of the resurrection, we can see men discussing books or making inquiries regarding "the price of the stock of the Bank of the United States." Meanwhile, women are either gossiping about the looks of another woman or comparing the material that was used to make their shrouds. Rush recalled, "Upon turning I saw a woman lifting up her shroud, for it cost 5/ a yard, and yours ain't worth 2/ more it ain't." So, while this document is telling of gender in early America, it also provides an opportunity to examine our own expectations and images of each gender and to consider how far and in what respects we have departed from these supposed gender norms since the early nineteenth century.

Students are struck by two marital scenes depicted in the dream. One is of a husband who "meekly bowed and made no reply" to his verbally abusive wife. In the other a husband physically abuses his wife. The man in Rush's dream is seen "kicking his wife and dragging her by the hair of her head along the ground." He then leaves her lying there, but before he walks away he says to his wife, "There, take that, you bitch." The violence of this scene is stunning. This image of domestic violence in early America easily leads to a discussion of the contemporary problem of domestic violence. Sadly, by the silent nodding of heads, it becomes clear that statistics of household violence are disturbing realities for some students.

Rush leaves "these miserable couples" and tells his readers about a scene between a "young lady" and a "little girl." The lady asks the girl to pick up some novels from the "circulating library" and to purchase a pack of cards for her at the stationery store. Students are often impressed with the respect between generations and the trust between strangers. This stands in stark contrast to our own time when we believe that it is never too early for parents and "officer friendly" to teach children about "stranger danger." The friendliness and neighborliness that this image conveys is found in a number of other scenes in the text. Perhaps scenes of people caring for each other are not so surprising since we are peeking into the mind of a conscientious and compassionate physician in early Philadelphia.

When students are finished reading Rush's dream, it becomes clear that a social network of people cared for one another. For many, this network served as the only available safety net in times of crisis. In his dream, some of the resurrected are looking for the people they had been taking care of before they died. They worried and cared for others before they died and rose again as they were when they had lived. For instance, Rush asks a "young man walking with a quick step" why he was in such a hurry. The man told Rush that he wanted "to know what has become of my father and mother." He continued, "They were old and poor when I died, and subsisted only by my labor." Not long afterwards, Rush encountered in his dream a young woman whose eyes were "red [and] watery as if she had been crying." Rush asked the young woman what was wrong. She replied that she was "in search of a poor widow and five children who I had supported with the aid of a few friends for several years." The young lady recounted how the widow stood by her while she took her last breath and looked "to heaven, and cried out, 'Ah! My only friend will soon be gone.'"

If anything, Rush's dream gives us a window into the social history of early nineteenth-century Philadelphia. We can see that class issues stemming from immigration and social mobility in America have always been with us. Rush comes across two young men. One man was "venting his rage against a person apparently his own age and figure." Rush approaches them and asks what was the problem. He soon discovers that one man is angry because the other had the "impudence" to speak to him. Rush tells the man that that should not matter since "You are all upon equal footing here." The angry young man replies to Rush by declaring, "An equal footing here! No, no, I deny it. Why that fellow's father was a porter." Soon we get a brief family history from the abused young man who states that both of their grandfathers came to America on the same ship from Ireland and had been sold as indentured servants—a history the haughty young man did not know. This scene yields rich information regarding class, immigration, and even the transition from a hierarchical eighteenth-century America to a more egalitarian nineteenth-century United States.

This essay has emphasized a social and gender reading of Benjamin Rush's dream. The comments that students have made most often in class over the years dictated that direction. One reason for the students' social and gender analysis of the dream might be that the document lends itself to this type of interpretation. For

instance, one student suggested that the dream contains "a great deal about women in society." Another reason, perhaps, is that students are revealing their own interests.

Student interest in social and gender history might stem from the fact that they are invariably impressed that Rush's dream features a number of characteristics that remind them of their own society—and perhaps even their own lived experience. One student noted with surprise that "many situations that came up in the dream still occur in today's time period." Students are able to connect with these familiarities, and, in some cases, the discovery of recognizing certain aspects of life in what they thought was an unfamiliar past has the potential to open the doors of curiosity.

In closing, Benjamin Rush's dream is a way to draw students in on the first day of class. It is a vehicle to introduce students to the historian's craft while at the same time serving as an inaugural use of primary documents. Following the in-class reading there is invariably a discussion. An active first class, like an active subconscious, is always fascinating.

FROM CONTENT TO PROCESS: A WORLD CIVILIZATIONS TEACHING EXPERIMENT

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As a historian-teacher, I relied on my own experiences as a student to shape and structure my own teaching. The instructional method preferred by my mentors, colleagues, and even students has always been lecture, with minimal student participation, and I adopted that approach for myself. Lectures often included a smattering of visual arts, music, and video. We told students what to look at, what they were seeing, and how to interpret it. We relied on the benign ignorance of students as we faced the demands of academia: content limited by time, space, exams, cramped schedules, and a heavy teaching load. The students, particularly in survey and general education classes, simply did not know what they were not getting. Semester after semester I fought to get students involved in their own learning. More by instinct than by training, I insisted on student participation in the classroom.

Like most professors teaching World Civilizations, I feel challenged to cover the world in fifteen weeks.¹ During most terms the schedule dictates pace and coverage. Table 1 provides a brief overview of how I traditionally organized the course and materials I covered.

Unfortunately, nothing got covered satisfactorily. The students felt overwhelmed and I often felt pressured to focus on large thematic approaches (frequently frustrating myself and the students) or to pick and chose from the text's coverage rather than lead a real context-rich exploration of the material. Rarely is the learning process itself addressed; assessment is based on a student's mastery of "factoids" and the ability to choose the right answer (in multiple choice exams) or somehow to articulate a coherent recounting of five or more class weeks of information in a rushed essay exam.

A recent faculty development experience opened my eyes to new research on learning and teaching and transformed the way I approach all my classes. This article addresses how I shifted my World Civilizations 1500 course to a learner-centered, process-focused class.

¹At Oklahoma City University we offer two World Civilizations surveys sequentially, but students rarely take them back to back. Frequently, students take the classes out of order and with several semesters between them.

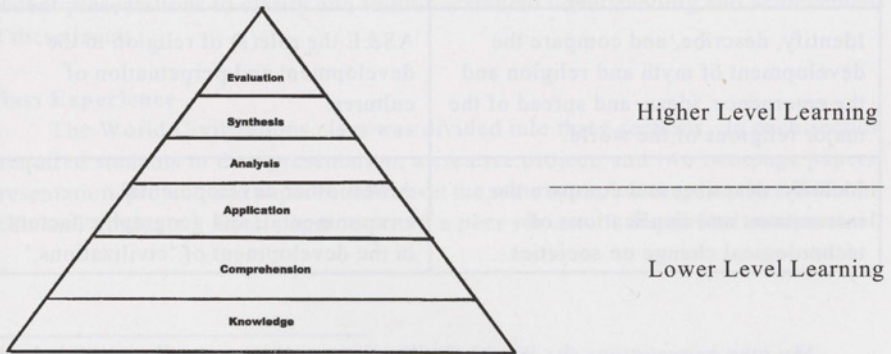
Table 1: Content and Schedule of World Civilizations Classes

	World Civ to 1500	Since 1500
Weeks 1-4	Introduction to history and to periodization and its problems (why end at 1500); Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China, paganism, Zoroastrianism, social hierarchies, political developments, artistic and literary conventions, and changes in technology	Introduction to history and to periodization and its problems (why start at 1500), Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas pre and post-Columbus, Christianity, the Renaissance in Europe, philosophical developments, social hierarchies, political developments, artistic and literary conventions, and changes in technology
Week 5	Review and Exam 1	Review and Exam 1
Weeks 6-10	Classical Greece, Classical Rome, India, China, Africa, nomadic societies, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Daoism, Confucianism, animism, social hierarchies, political developments, artistic and literary conventions, and changes in technology	European exploration and colonialism, internal and external responses, the Reformation, Asia, Africa, Japan, industrialization, social hierarchies, political developments, artistic and literary conventions, and changes in technology
Week 11	Review and Exam 2	Review and Exam 2
Weeks 12-15	Fall of Rome, Europe, Christianity, the Crusades, Islam in Africa and Asia, China, Japan, Vietnam, Korea, the Americas, the Renaissance in Europe, social hierarchies, political developments, artistic and literary conventions, and changes in technology	Focus on 20 th century: World Wars, industrialization and development, imperialism and anti-imperialism, decolonization, dependency theory and its challengers, modernization, political theory and philosophy as seen in the streets around the world, social hierarchies, political developments, artistic and literary conventions, and changes in technology
Week 16	Review and Final Exam	Review and Final Exam

World Civilizations to 1500 Reconsidered²

Over a summer, after reading the work of Benjamin Bloom and other writers on teaching and learning, and discovering what that research indicated (and my own experience validated) on rates for retention of knowledge, I realized that in good conscience I could no longer present a straight lecture-based course. Research suggests that students retain only about ten percent of what they read, twenty percent of what they hear in lectures, thirty percent of what they see (graphics, charts, and so forth), fifty percent of what they hear and see (for example, videos), seventy percent of what they say or write, and, at the top end, ninety percent of the information when they say and do an activity.³ This research challenged my understanding of effective pedagogical method and prompted me to refashion my World Civilizations class for the next fall term and to incorporate student learning into the objectives. This required a frank appraisal and reworking of my syllabus and an acknowledgment that for years I simply had done what many history professors do: I had listed my objectives for *teaching* rather than focus on objectives for student *learning*.

Figure 1: Bloom's Taxonomy⁴



²See <http://web.mac.com/critterdom/iWeb/Hooper%27s%20Study%20Pages/Welcome.html> for the class syllabus, blog, rubrics, and all associated materials.

³The Learning Pyramid on retention of knowledge had been attributed erroneously to a study by Jerome Bruner. My own research indicates that that attribution was not only false, but that the data itself is suspect. I include it here because the pyramid acted as a significant portion of the rationale that I used to restructure my courses. Based on what I had been given, I presented it to my students as a result of a study by Bruner. To see the Learning Pyramid, go to <http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/polovina/learnpyramid/about.htm>.

⁴The graphic on Bloom's Taxonomy is adapted from Benjamin S. Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Education Goals* (New York: Longman Green, 1956). Also see http://www.pnl.gov/cogInformatics/learning_thrusts.stm.

Based on my new understanding of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), I reworked the objectives for Western Civilization to 1500, changing them significantly from those I had used for the same course in the previous year. The biggest change was the shift from a focus on content to a focus on the learning process.

Table 2: Course Objectives

Original Course Objectives	New Course Objectives
Identify, describe, and compare the major achievements, events, and ideas of the period and the development of political and social institutions.	Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate (AS&E) social, cultural, and political developments that led to the emergence of civilizations across the world.
Identify, describe, and compare the interactions and implications of technological change on societies.	AS&E the impact of nomadic peoples on those societies.
Identify, describe, and compare the development of myth and religion and the emergence, ideas, and spread of the major religions of the world.	AS&E the role(s) of religion in the development and perpetuation of cultures.
Identify, describe, and compare the interactions and implications of technological change on societies.	AS&E other developmental, environmental, and geographic factors in the development of 'civilizations.'

My own expectations for World Civilizations students actually expanded. As Table 2 shows, the new objectives shifted from lower-level learning to higher-level learning. Rather than expect students to simply know the facts and processes of history (information that they had always argued was of little use in the "real world"), I now expected them to demonstrate their abilities to *analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and communicate* those processes, events, or issues. To accomplish any higher-level learning, students still had to learn and incorporate the lower-level "factoids."

I expected that, with new objectives in place, the issue of relevance of the material and the course would diminish and students would more readily accept that the *skills* developed in this approach were indeed relevant to their futures. Each student received handouts explaining the taxonomy and the learning pyramid. In class, I explained Bloom's Taxonomy, and as a group we went through Bloom's various levels using everyday examples of identification, understanding, application, etc. We

identified the lowest three levels as LLL: Lower Level Learning. HLL referred to higher levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. I explained to students that to achieve a "C" grade in the class, they had to demonstrate their abilities to the synthesis level, while a "B" required evaluation. They could only earn an "A" grade by demonstrating an ability to discuss the ramifications and implications of their evaluation, what we called Hooper's Historical corollaries (HHC).⁵ At multiple points throughout the term, I (re)explained and (re)modeled all three levels and debriefed students' work to reinforce and clarify objectives and expectations.

In all three of my classes, student buy-in was immediate and universal.⁶ They agreed that lecture was largely ineffective in their own learning, even as some continued to argue that lecturing equaled teaching. Most acknowledged that a lecture-based class was easier for students than classes taught by other instructional methods. A good portion of the class noted that they learned little from reading texts, as reading was something they rarely did except for classes. More than one admitted to being an unskilled reader.⁷ Few were eager to participate fully in class presentations, although the prospect of creative projects and no exams proved popular. Virtually all of the students were unsure they could differentiate between Bloom's levels of learning. Thus, we spent considerable time throughout the semester reviewing and debriefing student presentations to clarify and reinforce student understanding and achievement of these levels.

Class Experience

The World Civilizations class was divided into three sections. In each section I required students to do a presentation, a creative project, and two two-page papers. Presentation, project, and papers could be on the same topic, but they required different skills and products.⁸ Each paper required a peer review. I distributed rubrics to all

⁵The HHC were intended to get students to look beyond the immediate context and discover what some of the implications and ramifications of a process or development might be. For example, an HHC for Roman economic dependence on slavery could be how that dependency influenced contemporary Roman society and their neighbors or rivals, how those groups viewed future social and political developments, or how slavery influenced the way the Romans lived.

⁶The other classes were both second-year level: Ancient Egypt and Women's Studies: Nineteenth-Century European Women. The discussion that follows is based on term-long conversations and debriefings conducted in all three classes.

⁷In fact, 24 of the 29 students surveyed considered themselves unskilled readers, unsure of their own reading comprehension.

⁸The syllabus for the class is on the web link cited above.

students for all required work and made them available through the class website.⁹ We went over the rubrics for each kind of assignment to ensure that students were familiar with the expectations and criteria for each project.

In Section One, student performance was marginal to good. Too often the presentations were simple restatements of text materials (LLL) and only occasionally challenged students to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate (HLL) the materials in light of the class objectives. The presentations ran long as well, making the first section nearly half again as long as expected and scheduled. The creative projects were little better, as students spent more time on product than content or process. For example, one student built a model of a pyramid but could not answer basic synthesis questions raised by such monumental structures. Most posters—a favorite creative project—were ill-considered and poorly designed, demonstrating clearly that students did not consult or consider the poster rubrics. The papers suffered the same fate. Many were extremely poor, and almost one third of the class submitted failing papers (eight of 27). Peer reviews were required, but they were little more than afterthoughts for nearly all students. Again, few students bothered to follow the instructions or take the peer review seriously. Even the most cursory reading of the poor papers made it clear that students were not reading the text unless it was for their own presentation. In class, they readily admitted that they had not read the required texts and had not done so because “there’s no test.”

The end of the section provided an excellent opportunity to review the problems, enhance the quality of student work, and re-emphasize the importance of higher-level learning. In one of the most rewarding conversations I have ever had with a class, the students and I walked through the Learning Pyramid and Bloom’s Taxonomy again, and I shared with them what employers often tell academics: Employers need, value, and hire people who can read, understand, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources and then communicate that information clearly to various audiences. The students then speculated on how those skills were manifest in various jobs and careers. More importantly, several students shared with their peers their own growing awareness of how they used and developed these same skills in their other classes. Students became fully engaged in revising the remainder of the term’s assignments. We decided to drop the presentations and creative projects for Section Three but to keep the papers. We also changed the overall grading scheme to account for the changes.

This session was extremely fruitful, as presentations, creative projects, and papers for Section Two improved greatly. Several students consciously incorporated Bloom’s Taxonomy into their presentations, building their work around explicitly moving students from one level to the next as a part of their material. Presentations were more sophisticated and concentrated on achieving not just the higher levels of

⁹All rubrics are linked off the website cited above.

learning (HLL) but making a concentrated effort to reach the HHC. For example, one team of students created a large floor map of the continents and had the class try to position the pieces. The class was astonished at their own misconceptions of relative space and distance; they were pleased to be able to locate successfully the civilizations they had studied on the resulting map. We used the map to explore issues such as trade, nomadic movements, and the spread of diseases. In another presentation, students used colored yarns to illustrate trade between groups and the growing interdependency of trade groups and routes. I was given a pair of scissors, and acting as "War" literally cut connections. This prompted an excellent discussion of the social, political, and economic impacts of non-economic forces (e.g. war, disease, and climate change). The groups addressing Africa and Islam divided the larger class into culture and climate groups to generate discussions of language, cultural diffusion, and trade. They asked me to act as a slaver, and I raided one group to sell to another. This sparked more discussion of the impact of slavery on raiding, raided, and receiving cultures. These sorts of activities generated intense discussions of the implications of such processes and served as dynamic examples of HHC work.

The creative projects also improved as a result of the post-section-one review. We had fewer posters (still of poor quality despite clear rubrics) and more individual work. Some of the more intriguing projects explored the ways that cosmetics and their use illustrated the social and cultural constructs of their society. Another group brought in candy, cookies, and muffins made with sorghum and described where and how sorghum was grown and used. They had ordered sorghum off an EBay site, thus generating a lively discussion of the ways technology changes lives, and again prompted an HHC discussion. One student made ritual masks and led an animated discussion of ritual, religion, and the ways humankind has seen its place in the world. Another student made hand puppets of an Aztec family unit; her presentation required her peers to join her in the presentation as puppet masters. This pulled nearly half the class into active participation in the presentation and generated a vigorous comparison of family structures in societies we had discussed throughout the term.

Section papers showed some improvement, but students continued to ignore the rubrics intended to clarify expectations and requirements. Peer reviews continued to be cursory and ineffective. The number of failing papers dropped from eight to four. In all, four students' grades were lower than on their first efforts, but twelve students showed significant improvement.¹⁰ Several things were noteworthy: The number of students seeking individual guidance and help increased, the types of problems within papers changed, and the occurrence of HLL rose significantly across all papers. Many students were unable to achieve the HHC, although nearly all tried to do so.

¹⁰Here, I define significant as a full grade increase/decrease. See Attachment A for the term grades. One student quit coming to class or submitting assignments (medical problems). That failing grade is included in the numbers shown.

Section Three work largely repeated the kind of performance and problems exhibited in Section Two papers.¹¹ This was due, I suspect, to the short period between the two assignments (less than two weeks).

Assessment

I used three kinds of assessment to evaluate this experiment. The first was a class debriefing during the period allotted for the final exam. The second was the grades that students earned. The third, and most useful for me, was the on-going personal assessment of teaching methods, inputs, and outcomes.

In the final in-class debriefing, students were open in their responses to my questions, something that I had encouraged by open and frank discussions we had had throughout the term. Many students liked the creative projects; nearly all liked the no-exam format. Few liked the papers, and virtually all students noted that they did not like writing any paper in any class. More than 20 of the 26 students who completed the class agreed that they had learned more by teaching the materials themselves than they had ever learned through an instructor's lecture. They did note that they had rarely read or done any significant preparation prior to class for material they themselves were not presenting. Students agreed that their preparation did increase after the first section for a variety of reasons, including my threat of a pop quiz if non-presenting students appeared unprepared (none were ever given). Students also learned that having more factual information enabled them to contribute more effectively in class discussions. For some that was enough to get them to prepare for all classes. Others still came to class unprepared. Many supported the suggestion that each week include a mini-lecture that covered text materials. This precipitated another discussion of students' reading problems and habits. Those who routinely read outside of class requirements expressed mild astonishment in their peers' admissions of reading comprehension problems. Perhaps half of the students declared themselves in favor of the overall learner-centered approach, but nearly all admitted that they still would rather have a lecture class as it was easier for them (i.e. they did not have to engage actively with the material).

The grades were more problematic, in that, even with the rubrics, the traditional measures of achievement did not seem flexible or telling.¹² The rubrics continued to evolve to provide increased feedback to the students, but the overall grading structures seemed to be problematic. Excellent HHC work in my class resulted in an A; the same letter grade in another class rewarded less intense lower level learning, skills, and achievements. As a class, we struggled to find ways to measure the different kinds of creative thinking that were apparent in the class work, but we were increasingly aware that institutional parameters offered little appreciation for the different kinds of learning

¹¹We had eliminated presentations and projects in the reworking of Section Three.

¹²Final grades for the course are provided in Attachment A.

demanding by different classes, disciplines, and approaches. In the final recording, the letter grades for classes that demand extensive preparation, higher participation, and more creative approaches to learning are comparable to those that demand little more than rote memory and minimal attendance. A student record or transcript does not reflect the qualitative differences between such experimental approaches and more traditional lecture-and-exam classes. In a system in which GPA fluctuations might well mean the loss of a scholarship or even dismissal from the university, my students declared themselves reluctant to risk changes in approaches to learning or different assessment techniques.

The most meaningful assessment is my own continuing review of the process, inputs, outcomes, and issues illuminated by the experiment. During the term, I did a weekly assessment that appeared in the class blog. That was enormously helpful in processing the immediate problems and issues. I announced the blog on H-Teach and received several early responses from interested faculty around the country. I also announced it to the university provost, within the College of Arts and Sciences at the university, my own department, and the faculty learning community with whom I had worked on faculty development. Unfortunately, the peer feedback from other faculty from those forums was minimal despite repeated and public pleas for more. The blog was also open to students: A few read the posts, but no one commented on the blog itself. Several students mentioned that they really enjoyed my posts and thoughts, but declined to share their own. I shared progress and problems with my on-campus faculty development group periodically and those conversations proved helpful in finding new approaches to problem solving and in affirming my commitment to stay on track despite obstacles. Since the end of that fall term, I have continued to assess the experiment in an effort to build another course.

Essential Lessons Learned

Clear and focused learning objectives: I am determined to continue to focus on process rather than content and to couch the objectives in terms that students can readily understand, accept, and achieve. The objectives need to be revisited periodically during the class itself to verify understanding and acceptance.

Constant and consistent feedback: The students benefitted and learned from immediate feedback and so did I. Timely interjections, clearly identifying successful HLL and HHC components of student presentations and projects, clarified to students what worked and what did not. Those presenting students who had achieved the HLL and HHC knew they had hit the mark. Those in the audience recognized different levels and knew what they needed to do to achieve similar success. It also kept the class lively and engaged as we moved from cognitive to meta-cognitive work and back.

Clear and evolving rubrics: Students are unaccustomed to using rubrics when creating their work, be that work written or oral. I based my rubrics on models I found online; they continue to evolve. Students did not use the rubrics routinely or effectively. I will direct more in-class attention to the utility and use of rubrics. My

goal is that students will use rubrics as they create and prepare every assignment. I will also make the rubrics available online to all students and increase their use in the classroom as I introduce and debrief each class. I will also create and post a step-by-step overview on rubrics in podcast form.

Patience and flexibility: Patience is essential. Students, as many professors have found, resist change and the kind of work I expect out of them is new for them. Flexibility and the willingness to work to meet evolving needs usually result in a student group more willing to try new things and be engaged. In this case, we agreed on various changes to the syllabus and the grading system, and the students were thus more receptive to my insistence that writing remain a fundamental component to assessment.

Institutional support for experimentation: I am fortunate to have an administration that supports such classroom experiments.¹³ The administration from the Dean to the Provost has been supportive: they monitored the blog and encouraged my innovations. Without such support, experimentation and innovation would wither in the face of student resistance, peer pressure, and the time requirements inherent in heavy teaching loads and service on university committees.

Very Important Lessons Learned

Peer support and feedback: I benefitted greatly by having weekly access to the on-campus faculty development group. Colleagues outside my department committed to teaching in non-lecture formats also helped keep me inspired. While departmental colleagues questioned my new approach, they never questioned my commitment to students. In fact, in the midst of the experiment I had to compile and submit a promotion portfolio. My colleagues praised my efforts, citing my experience as evidence of my commitment to professional development.¹⁴

Conclusion

Overall, I believe that the experiment was a successful failure. Student engagement was high, but there were only slight gains in student learning. The creative projects were a great success but only after a dismal performance on the majority of the first attempts. Students were ill-prepared for most class sessions and had great difficulty in using rubrics in meaningful ways. Students reported considerable anxiety with the unfamiliar format and expectations; many noted that their standard and

¹³The Center of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at Oklahoma City University provided guidance and support and continues to serve as an on-going resource.

¹⁴In the last two years, a new issue has emerged: The Promotion and Tenure Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences challenged the recognition of the scholarship of teaching as true scholarship. This is being appealed by CETL and the faculty development group of which I was a member.

previously successful study strategies were inadequate to the different expectations in this class. At term's end, a majority of students reported that they had worked harder for "less knowledge" within this format. When questioned, they responded that while they knew more about the materials they themselves had taught, they had not retained much from the presentations by other students.

When I compared grades for the two versions of World Civilizations—the traditional versus the new approach—there was only a light difference.¹⁵ The biggest difference is that the types of learning being assessed were radically different and were more clearly articulated in the new class. The original class demanded lower level learning skills, and the grades reflect student achievement of those more limited objectives and goals. An A grade in the first class could be earned by comparing processes, cultures, impacts, and so on. The more demanding expectations of the revised class required that a student demonstrate in multiple ways the ability to articulate the implications and ramifications of processes, cultures, impacts, etc. Thus, the final grades suggest that students in the new course learned more, learned in more engaged ways, and increased their learning skills than those in the original class. The figures themselves illustrate the grading issues I have raised, that the letter grades and the numbers do not reflect the reality of the very different kinds of learning that took place.

For future classes, I will adjust this approach in various ways. I will introduce materials and highlight the structure and overall themes in short mini-lectures and discuss the rubrics that I will use to evaluate and assess student work in each week's assignment. Adequate assessment tools must also be developed to encourage students to develop more sophisticated reading skills to help them prepare to be active learners in the classroom environment. Written work will become an even more important element in the course that the students will do as take-home exams to be completed within the parameters of writing rubrics. I will require peer evaluations (PE) and require that the reviewers do more than rubber stamp the submissions. I will grade the PE, with the peer reviewer receiving the same grade as the student author. The grading process and outcomes must be reconciled with existing institutional grading structures, a daunting prospect.

I am considering introducing a different format for the papers, one that requires students to reflect and clearly articulate which of Bloom's levels of learning the writing achieves (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, etc.). Another goal is to integrate art more systematically, by having the students analyze a particular piece of art, demonstrate their ability to synthesize their knowledge of the producing society with their analysis, and articulate their evaluation of that work's utility in illuminating the society under study. Requiring students to identify and articulate the links between the levels of

¹⁵See Attachment A for that data.

learning might help students understand more clearly the relationships between those links as well as the relationships between the art and the society that produced it.

The experiment was a success in that it introduced students to a new way of thinking about their own learning and shifted the responsibility for that learning onto the students themselves. Students from that class have sought me out to enthuse about the experience and to note that they are more aware of their own learning and learning strategies than ever before. This teaching and learning experiment illuminated problems regarding assessment and measurement of learning within a traditional grading system. More importantly, from a personal standpoint, the experiment invigorated me to find more and better ways of teaching a difficult class to and with student partners.

**ATTACHMENT A:
Final Student Grades**

**Original World Civilizations (WC) Course
versus
Revised World Civilizations Course**

Letter Grade	Original WC	Revised WC
A	6	10
B	6	6
C	5	5
D	1	3
F	6	2

In the original WC term a total of four students withdrew over the term; in the revised WC term only two withdrew. One of the failing grades in the revised WC went to a student who, due to medical problems, abandoned his studies but did not formally withdraw.

TEACHING WITH ONLINE PRIMARY SOURCES:
DOCUMENTS FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

GLOBAL MUCKRAKING:
THE INTERNATIONAL IMPACT OF UPTON SINCLAIR'S
THE JUNGLE

Michael Hussey
National Archives and Records Administration

Background Essay as Introduction

On October 9, 1907, Robert Bacon, Acting Secretary of State, wrote to the United States ambassador in London, Whitelaw Reid, that satirical postcards regarding the U.S. meat industry were circulating in South Africa. Originally published in England, these cards depict the plight of a rooming house lodger attempting to eat various samples of "Chicago tinned meat." In one scene, a scrawny fowl emerging from a can of potted chicken cries out, "Was anyone asking for me?" In another, the unfortunate lodger turns away and holds his nose as a can of "awful, rotten, [and] putrid" ham and tongue is opened.

R.L. Graycroft, Cape Town general manager of the meatpacking firm Armour and Company, complained to the U.S. consul in that city that the postcards were libelous to "Chicago and damaging to our business." British colonial authorities had rejected Graycroft's allegation of libel since the cards never mentioned a particular meatpacking firm.¹

State Department correspondence on these cards raises several questions. First, why did the publisher choose to satirize the American meat industry? That is, why did it think that these cards would sell? Second, why did a major corporation react so strongly to a set of comedic postcards? In other words, why did it fear that the cards would sell?

The answers lie in the history of the industrialization of the food industry and the growing call for safety regulations by Progressive era reformers. By the early twentieth century, large-scale corporations had become the dominant business model in the American economy. Since the close of the Civil War, the U.S. economy had grown rapidly due to an abundance of material resources and an inexpensive immigrant labor supply. It became clear, however, that such rapid and unregulated development posed risks to workers and consumer safety. Reformers and "muckraking" journalists and novelists revealed to the American public shocking details regarding those concerns.

¹File 9106, *Numerical and Minor File, 1906-1910*; General Records of the Department of State, Record Group (RG) 59; National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).

In terms of food safety, perhaps the most notorious of these revelations came in 1906 from the then-28-year-old novelist, Upton Sinclair. The outrage caused by his novel *The Jungle* is often credited with hastening the passage in 1906 of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act. While often considered solely in U.S. domestic political terms, these events had implications far beyond Progressive era politics. This story can be followed around the globe, from the slaughterhouses of Chicago to British colonial South Africa. Our guides on this journey will consist of government reports, Presidential correspondence, and the satirical set of postcards that caused Graycroft such agitation.

***The Jungle* and Government Investigations**

In 1904, Upton Sinclair spent roughly seven weeks in Chicago conducting research for what would become *The Jungle*. His fictional depiction of Jurgis Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant stockyard worker, and his family revealed poor working conditions and unsanitary meat processing techniques. In a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt, Sinclair described his own observations upon which he had built the fictional Rudkus story:

I saw with my own eyes hams, which had spoiled in pickle, being pumped full of chemicals to destroy the odor. I saw waste ends of smoked beef stored in barrels in a cellar, in a condition of filth which I could not describe in a letter. I saw rooms in which sausage meat was stored, with poisoned rats laying about, and the dung of rats covering them.²

The novel appeared in serial form in 1905 editions of the socialist journal *Appeal to Reason*. On January 25, 1906, Sinclair gained a wider audience when Doubleday published *The Jungle*, catapulting it to near instant national and international notoriety. The New York Public Library reported it as one of its "books most in demand" in June of that year.³ The novel's influence, however, quickly spread far beyond American shores. The British publishers of the novel, for example, stopped importing copies from the United States in June 1906 and began printing their own edition "due to the big demand for it." The *New York Times* reported that it was to appear serially in several languages: "Arrangements have been completed for its publication in *L'Action*

²Upton Sinclair to President Theodore Roosevelt, March 10, 1906, page 3; *Letters Received, 1893-1906*; Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, 1839-1981, RG 16; NACP.

³"Books in Demand," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1906.

of Paris, *Il Tempo* of Milan, in an underground revolutionary paper in Russia, and in a Dutch paper at Amsterdam."⁴

The issue of food safety had been a heated one for many years. In 1895, Congress passed a food inspection law, although it was relatively weak. Several investigations followed, including one in 1898 that looked into the "embalmed beef" allegedly sent to U.S. troops serving in the Spanish-American war. Yet, Sinclair's novel captured the attention of America and the world. A committed socialist, he had hoped that his work would encourage Americans to enact sweeping changes in the U.S. economic system. Instead, his work led to regulatory reforms that left capitalism intact. In Sinclair's words, "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach."⁵

The federal government responded to Sinclair's and others' claims by launching several investigations. On March 10, 1906, staff from the Agriculture Department's Bureau of Animal Industry traveled from Washington to Chicago "for the purpose of conducting an investigation ... [into] the manner in which the meat-inspection work is carried on at that place." A.D. Melvin, Chief of the Bureau, noted that this was necessary due to "discussions during the past several months regarding the conditions existing at the Union Stock Yards." These "discussions" had appeared in medical journals but got spread by "certain persons who had apparently made only a superficial inquiry."⁶

These "certain persons" likely included Upton Sinclair. Indeed, the Bureau's Chicago inspection committee took Sinclair to task for numerous statements in his novel, from which the report quoted. For example, Sinclair had written:

This Government inspector did not have the manner of a man who was worked to death. He was apparently not haunted by the fear that a hog might get by him before he had finished testing. ... This inspector wore a

"The Publishers," *The New York Times*, June 30, 1906.

⁴See Upton Sinclair, "What Life Means to Me," *Cosmopolitan Magazine* (October 1906), 594. This citation is provided in Arlene Finger Kantor, "Upton Sinclair and the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906," *American Journal of Public Health*, 66 (December 1976), 1202-1205.

⁵"Report of the Department Committee on the Federal Meat-Inspection Service at Chicago," 23rd *Annual Report of the Bureau of Animal Industry for the Year 1906*, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Washington, DC: GPO, 1908), 406.

blue uniform, with brass buttons, and, as it were, put the stamp of official approval upon the things which were done.⁷

The Bureau of Animal Industry report noted, however, that "The Government inspectors ... do not wear blue uniforms with brass buttons ... It is, therefore, not unlikely that the person referred to in the above statement was not a Federal inspector, but a house policeman or fireman."⁸

Sinclair also had written that:

There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms, and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats.

However, the Bureau inspectors observed:

[M]eat piled upon the floor in many places, and in some cases a small amount of water ... was dripping upon it. The committee visited each and every room in the 21 establishments which have Federal inspection ... In all of the rooms in which meat was stored the committee made it a point to observe carefully to see if any rat dung could be detected. The committee was unable to find any rat dung on meat.⁹

The Bureau's report did find, however, that those facilities without Federal inspection were less sanitary than those with such oversight. Regarding one non-inspected slaughterhouse they reported, "A general air of slovenliness pervades the place.... The interior bears evidence of having been whitewashed at some time in the remote past. The windows were dirty ... [s]ome ... were covered with cobwebs. The water closet

⁷"Report on Certain Publications," 23rd *Annual Report of the Bureau of Animal Industry for the Year 1906*, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Washington, DC: GPO, 1908), 454.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, 456.

was located on the ground floor, and contained one seat. It was without any flush and appeared filthy and unkept."¹⁰

The Bureau's committee praised the quality of its inspectors, who operated under adverse conditions. It concluded that "the [federal inspection] force at Chicago is doing its full duty intelligently, squarely, and unflinchingly. But ... the force employed at Chicago is ... inadequate numerically."¹¹ Further, the Bureau's inspectors conducted their work under an 1895 law that required ante-mortem (pre-slaughter) inspections of all cattle, sheep, and pigs whose meat would be involved in interstate commerce. However, "no specific provision was made for funds with which to perform this work, and the annual appropriation has never been sufficient to enable the Bureau to cover all establishments carrying on an interstate business. Indeed, many establishments which applied for inspection had to be refused on account of lack of money to carry on the work."¹²

President Roosevelt, after receiving the Bureau's report in April 1906, decided to send two investigators of his own, James Bronson Reynolds and Charles P. Neill, to determine the state of Chicago's stockyards. In part, the President sent these additional investigators because of complaints that he received not only involved "the packing houses, but also to a certain extent reflected upon the action of the Government inspectors, and I came to the conclusion that it was best to have an investigation by outside individuals who could not be charged with being in any way interested in the matter."¹³ Had the Bureau cast its own inspectors in an unrealistically positive light, the President seems to have been wondering? On June 2, 1906, Reynolds and Neill reported back to Roosevelt that they had found generally unsanitary conditions:

[W]e saw meat shoveled from filthy wooden floors, piled on tables rarely washed, pushed from room to room in rotten box carts, in all of which processes it was in the way of gathering dirt, splinters, floor filth, and the expectoration of tuberculous and other diseased workers. Where comment

¹⁰"Report of the Department Committee on the Federal Meat-Inspection Service at Chicago," 23rd *Annual Report of the Bureau of Animal Industry for the Year 1906*, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Washington, DC: GPO, 1908), 431.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 442.

¹²"Report of the Chief of Bureau," 23rd *Annual Report of the Bureau of Animal Industry for the Year 1906*, U.S. Department of Agriculture (Washington, DC: GPO, 1908), 11.

¹³Message from the President of the United States Transmitting the Report of Mr. James Bronson Reynolds and Commissioner Charles P., Neill, Special Committee Appointed to Investigate the Conditions in the Stock Yards of Chicago, June 4, 1906, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., H.Doc. 873, 1 [Serial Set Volume 4990].

was made to floor superintendents about these matters, it was always the reply that this meat would afterwards be cooked, and that this sterilization would prevent any danger from its use. Even this ... is not wholly true. A very considerable portion of the meat so handled is sent out as smoked products and in the form of sausages, which are prepared to be eaten without being cooked.¹⁴

The investigators found, however, that overall the federal inspectors were doing their jobs well. Nevertheless, they agreed with the Secretary of Agriculture that "the present number of inspectors is certainly inadequate."¹⁵

International Impact

Reynolds and Neill's report was not immediately made public; still Sinclair's and others' exposés had a broad audience. Apart from any public health concerns, the U.S. government and corporations such as Armour and Company also feared the economic effect of such adverse publicity. After all, if American goods were less popular or even banned, other nations' meat industries stood to gain at U.S. expense.

These were not ungrounded concerns. In Germany, for example, the German Butchers' Association petitioned the government not to enter into a treaty with the United States that would allow for increased imports of American beef. Their petition included "copious extracts from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*."¹⁶ The London *Daily Telegraph* supported British import duties that would favor British colonies' meat products over those from the United States.¹⁷ If the *Daily Telegraph*'s position gained support, U.S. meat packers stood to lose a prime customer, the British Empire.

Reynolds and Neill had reported that a "particularly glaring instance of uncleanness was found in a room where the best grade of sausage was being prepared for export." A worker transported sausage meat in a wheel barrow that was "filthy with grease." He then threw the meat out on tables and proceeded to climb on the table and handled the meat with unwashed hands. Reynolds and Neill noted that "there was no

¹⁴"Conditions in the Stock Yards of Chicago," June 4, 1906, 59th Cong., 1st Sess., H.Doc. 873, 6 [Serial Set Volume 4990].

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶"Argue Against Our Meat: German Butchers Quote Accusations of Lax Inspection Methods," *The New York Times*, June 3, 1906.

¹⁷"London View of Message: Englishmen Urged to Avoid American Meats, Pending Sweeping Reform," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1906.

water in this room at all, and the only method the man adopted for cleaning his hands was to rub them against his dirty apron or on his still filthier trousers."¹⁸

This news would not have been comforting to British importers of American sausages. Indeed, Arthur Giles, Secretary of the Federation of Grocers' Associations of the United Kingdom, wrote to Roosevelt that "The present state of alarm is almost paralyzing the trade in American canned meats." Apparently the British public had read Sinclair's descriptions of the Chicago meat industry if not the Reynolds and Neill report. Giles was unclear as to the efficacy of the recently passed Meat Inspection Act of June 30, 1906, for he hoped that "we shall receive some intimation from you that you are satisfied that such alterations have been made in the methods of packing canned meats in the United States, that we may be assured that the Government will now give its Certificate [of safety] to all such goods, so that the distributors in this country may be able to assure the British public."¹⁹ President Roosevelt quickly informed the U.S. ambassador in London that he was "at liberty to inform [the] Grocers' Federation that under the new law we can and will guarantee the fitness in all respects of canned meat containing [the] Government stamp. If any trouble comes therewith, protest can be made not merely to sellers of goods but to [the] United States Government itself."²⁰

However, legislation and presidential pronouncements did not immediately alter perceptions either at home or abroad. In July 1906, the British government sent Lt. Colonel Percy E.F. Hobbs of the United Kingdom's Army Service Corps to Chicago. His task was to inspect the quality of American canning factories since the British government purchased U.S. "preserved meat" for its troops.

Hobbs found that the inspection regimen instituted through the Meat Inspection Act had "very materially added to the protection of the purchaser and show[s] that the United States Government is determined to greatly strengthen, and if necessary purify, the inspection service." He also observed that "Although the Plants vary very much,

¹⁸"Conditions in the Stock Yards of Chicago," June 4, 1906, 59th Cong., 1st Sess., H.Doc. 873, 6-7 [Serial Set Volume 4990].

¹⁹Letter of Arthur Giles, Secretary, Federation of Grocers' Associations of the United Kingdom to President Theodore Roosevelt, July 3, 1906; *General Correspondence, 1906-75* (Entry PI-191:17), Box 4; Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, 1839-1981, RG 16; NACP.

²⁰Telegram from President Theodore Roosevelt to Whitelaw Reid, U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, July 7, 1906; *General Correspondence, 1906-75* (Entry PI-191:17), Box 4; Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, 1839-1981, RG 16; NACP.

so far as the *handling* of the product is concerned, the methods, *on the whole*, are satisfactory and not universally disgusting, as has, I am told, been suggested."²¹

Nevertheless, Hobbs recommended that "at a time when thousands of live cattle are annually imported into the United Kingdom from both North and South America, the question of establishing in England a Government Factory for canning meat for the British Army and Navy should be given serious consideration." In spite of American safety improvements, England would be better off (from both a health and cost perspective) if it controlled the canning process itself, Hobbs argued. "Such [a canning] establishment would free us from dependence on foreign—as opposed to Colonial purchase" and "would give employment to a considerable amount of British labour."²²

Hobbs's investigation did not go unnoticed at the highest levels of the American government. On August 17, 1906, Roosevelt met with him at the President's summer residence in Oyster Bay, New York. The President was interested to hear, wrote Hobbs, if there "were any matters connected with my investigations which I considered should be brought to his notice." The President also wished to see a copy of Hobbs's report.²³ The President realized that the United States' economic well-being—in addition to its physical health—could be affected by unsanitary industrial practices.

U.S. industrialists also reacted with dismay to the possible loss to the American economy from the publicity regarding meatpacking processes. Sinclair himself estimated that the "canned meat trade had dropped off 17 per cent" since the publication of *The Jungle*.²⁴ The exact effect of his novel and other reports on the meat industry is likely too difficult to measure with any precision.²⁵ Industrial giant John D. Rockefeller, however, implicitly berated Sinclair for any damage to U.S. trade:

We are giving the enemy ammunition to fire at us ... Take the attacks we made upon our own packing business.... Those fellows abroad snatched at our own charges against our own business with the greatest glee. They

²¹Lt. Col. Percy E.F. Hobbs, Army Service Corps, "Report of Inspections at Certain of the Meat Canning Factories in the United States of America as Affecting the Supply of Preserved Meat to the British Army," July and August 1906, 37. Located in *General Correspondence, 1906-75* (Entry PI-191:17), Box 6; Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, 1839-1981, RG 16; NACP.

²²*Ibid.*, 38.

²³*Ibid.*, 38-39.

²⁴"The Boycott of *The Jungle*: Upton Sinclair's Book in Trouble in the Packing Centres," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1906.

²⁵One source noted that, while there had been a decrease in the amount of U.S. canned beef exported, this could very likely have to do with a decrease in Japanese wartime demand following the conclusion of its conflict with Russia. See "Meat Trade Facts," *The New York Times*, July 17, 1906.

used them promptly as ammunition with which to attack America and everything American, especially American manufactured products and trade."²⁶

J. Ogden Armour, head of the meatpacking firm Armour and Company, stated that he believed that Reynolds and Neill's report was "unfair," and that *The Jungle* was an attempt at sensationalism. He was not opposed to inspections, he stated, "within reasonable bounds.... There is a danger that the inspection would involve so much red tape ... as to be useless." Armour added, however, that the "agitation" of Sinclair and others had "done us much harm. European countries are wondering why our Government is thus crippling its meat industry, and foreign packers have not been slow in telling their people not to purchase American goods. The harm that can be done in a minute may take a long time to correct."²⁷ As the London *Daily Telegraph* stated in June 1906, "Americans will not expect our confidence in the wholesomeness of their food products will be restored for many a long year."²⁸

The quick spread of information—particularly through the global British Empire—may have added to their dread. For, as Rockefeller might have said, the "ammunition" of bad publicity spread around the globe, from Chicago to the British colony of South Africa.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the issue of the allegedly libelous postcards described at the beginning of this article was forwarded by the American embassy in London to the British Foreign Office. The British informed the U.S. government that under the Empire's postal laws the cards were not libelous "from the mere fact that the word 'Chicago' appears on them."²⁹ Whether Armour and Company or any other Chicago firm ever sought further legal action is unclear based on the records examined for this article.

Armour's reaction, however, reflects a concern for its public image not just at home but on the global stage. A consumer of canned meat in Cape Town would likely never step foot in a Chicago stockyard. Yet, the international food trade would bring

²⁶"Rockefeller Urges National Upbuilding," *The New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1906.

²⁷"J.O. Armour, Home Again, Defends the Packers," *The New York Times*, June 27, 1906.

²⁸"London View of Message: Englishmen Urged to Avoid American Meats, Pending Sweeping Reform," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1906.

²⁹File 9106, *Numerical and Minor File, 1906-1910*; General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

a can of Chicago meat to him or her. Global information networks also ensured that consumers would have information in a variety of media regarding that same can of potted meat. Companies such as Armour stood to gain financially from the increased geographical reach of both the meat trade and information. As the comedic Chicago "tinned meat" postcards indicate, however, these developments also enabled unfavorable news to spread widely and rapidly.

Teaching Suggestions

- 1) Provide pairs of students with copies of the postcards and Cartoon Analysis Worksheets. Ask them to study the cards and complete the worksheet. Then lead a class discussion based on their responses. Generate a list of questions on the board that the postcards prompt.

[For access to the postcards, visit <http://archives.gov/research/arc/>. In the search box type the identifying ARC number 2657925. This document is from the *Numerical and Minor File, 1906-10* of General Records of the Department of State, National Archives Record Group 59.]

[The cartoon analysis worksheet is available on the National Archives website at http://archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf.]

- 2) Ask your students to read pages three and four of Upton Sinclair's letter to President Theodore Roosevelt. Then direct them to write a "letter to the editor" by Sinclair in which he offers his opinion of the postcards. Suggest that they consider whether he would have thought that the postcards supported his findings and whether he believed that there was adequate government food inspection.

[For access to the letter from Upton Sinclair to President Theodore Roosevelt, visit <http://archives.gov/research/arc/>. In the search box, type the identifying ARC number 301981.]

- 3) Share with your students information from the background essay about how these postcards came to the attention of the federal government. Then ask them to read the excerpt from the Reynolds-Neill report. In light of this document, discuss to what extent they think that the concerns of Armour and Company's R.L. Graycroft were valid.

[For access to the Reynolds-Neill report excerpt, visit <http://archives.gov/research/arc/>. In the search box, type the identifying ARC number 595296.]

- 4) Divide your class into groups of three to four students. Direct them to play the role of advisors to President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. Inform them that he has asked for a recommendation on whether or not the federal government should take action to regulate the meat packing industry.

Within their groups they should consider the evidence presented to them through Sinclair's letter, the excerpt from the Reynolds and Neill report, the postcards, and any additional information you think necessary.

Upon completion of their discussions, assign them to write a one-page recommendation memorandum to the President. It should be justified by evidence from the primary sources. Invite students to share their recommendation with the class.

- 5) Assign students to conduct general research on a current food safety issue and the governmental (local, state, or federal) response to it.

The www.foodsafety.gov website might be useful in their research. It provides a gateway to food safety information from several organizations, including the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control, and others.

Then direct them to create postcards that reflect a current food safety issue. They should carefully consider the message that they want to convey and the tone they want to set. Ask them to consider whether a comic or a more serious approach would be best.

[The author would like to express his appreciation to his colleagues Lee Ann Potter, Stephanie Greenhut, Judy Luis-Watson, Missy McNatt, Rebecca Martin, and David Rosenbaum for their generous assistance and creative suggestions regarding this essay and the accompanying Teaching Suggestions.]

BOOK REVIEWS

John K. Wilson. *Patriotic Correctness: Academic Freedom and Its Enemies.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008. Pp. 263. Paper, \$22.95; ISBN 978-1-59451-194-3.

The Chicago writer and liberal activist John K. Wilson observes near the end of *Patriotic Correctness* that violations of academic freedom in higher education are exceptions to the rule. That conclusion might surprise his readers; *Patriotic Correctness* otherwise tells a depressing story of the relentless efforts of interest groups, legislators, and college administrators to silence dissent and debate. Conservatives can be targeted, especially by bureaucrats who fear controversy and criticism even more than radical politics. Yet, Wilson writes, it is "a dirty little secret of higher education ... that left-wing political activists encounter the most discrimination of anyone." The results are apolitical teachers, complacent campuses, and apathetic students.

Wilson acknowledges that with 4,000 colleges and universities, 1.1 million faculty, and 15 million students in the "vast industry" of American higher education, "anybody can find three anecdotes about universities to prove anything." To be sure, anecdotes abound in *Patriotic Correctness*. A few stand out as particularly shameful. Florida State University attempted to quash protests against Nike's sweatshops after the company paid the university \$3 million to endorse its athletic wear. Predictably, Wilson finds Catholic and evangelical Protestant schools to be the worst abusers of academic freedom, and school newspapers to be the most common targets of censorship. Abortion, gay rights, and the Arab-Israeli conflict perennially seem to be beyond the realm of intelligent debate. By contrast, some recent spasms of censorship are already passing into history. The days when opposition to President George W. Bush, the war in Iraq, or the war on terror provoked an indignant backlash seem like distant memories. Conservative agitator David Horowitz and his proposed Academic Bill of Rights receive special scorn. Wilson depicts Horowitz as an unsavory character whose seemingly innocuous Bill of Rights would stifle debate in the name of "balance." No discussion can represent every possible viewpoint equally.

Patriotic Correctness is a polemical work, with flaws of its own. Wilson apparently would put no meaningful limits on academia's most intemperate ideologues. He could say more about what he calls the "Wal-Mart University"—the attempt to adopt cost-cutting corporate practices in higher education. The rapid increase in the use of adjunct professors, who suffer from low status and less job security, might be the most insidious threat to academic freedom today, but Wilson gives the issue only a few pages. Ironically, Wilson does not make a strong case for academic freedom. Given the rarity, which he acknowledges, of intellectual freedom in the work place and its frequent absence from public places, the oversight is troubling. Many readers might not understand why teachers and students ought to be allowed wide latitude to express unpopular views. Whatever lip service they pay to critical thinking, colleges tend to

function primarily as job-training centers for employers who want technically proficient but docile workers, and in that case, who needs freedom?

Drawing extensively on traditional media and the Internet, *Patriotic Correctness* should interest both general readers and students of educational policy. Its fast-paced, straightforward style will make it accessible to undergraduates, but it might not be the best fit for any American history survey course; Wilson does not put his subject in much historical perspective. On the other hand, *Patriotic Correctness* is likely to provoke spirited discussions among more advanced students, and it will help introduce aspiring teachers to the realities of academic life.

Barton College

Jeff Broadwater

Robert L. Badger, ed. *Ideas That Work in College Teaching*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008. Pp. 165. Paper, \$17.95; ISBN 978-0-7914-7220.

This book of articles by professors from a wide range of disciplines at SUNY Potsdam is a pleasure and a great source of practical guidance and information. The scholars who came together to write the book are engaged—teaching twelve hours each semester, working on freshman seminars, and actively involved in a reflective practice. It was out of this practice that the book emerged: Professors from thirteen different disciplines—art, biology, computer science, education, geology, history, math, modern languages, philosophy, physics, politics, psychology, and sociology—had been reading books on education, and after reading one book that enraged the group, those gathered agreed that they could do better. The volume works especially well because it includes teachers from one institution with a set body of students, most of whom come from working class background in which “education has been neither a top personal nor a family priority,” and the faculty from one institution engage their students.

Several important themes and many useful tips emerge from this volume. Teachers should be prepared, flexible, creative, willing to take risks, and capable of setting and sticking to high standards. They should dare to experiment, and not kick themselves when they fail. As Oscar Sarmiento puts it in “Through the Comfort Zone or Just One More Go at College Teaching,” instructors should try to retain and pass on the intellectual excitement that led all of us to embrace the academy as our profession in the first place. College instructors should connect students to their communities and surroundings through service learning projects or group work that focuses on actual issues in students’ lives.

In terms of practical advice, many of the authors advised instructors to save the crafting of homework assignments for after class, since these often need to be altered to fit what might or might not have been understood during classtime. Others provided some great tips; for example, the volume’s editor, geologist Robert Badger (“You Can

Teach a Rock New Tricks), has his students write letters back home to imagined benefactors (uncles and aunts) who are to be kept informed of their wards' educational progress. The third-party writing exercise has proven extremely successful in encouraging students to synthesize course material and retain essential information. Historian Ronald Woodbury ("From the Traditional Lecture Toward Dialogical Learning: Changing Patterns in the Teaching of History") offers helpful advice for historians who have stuck to the lecture as the end-all and be-all of knowledge transfer: He encourages lecturers to stop and ask students to write down one question, or to have them write down the main point of one section. In asking lecturers to engage students in a dialogue, Woodbury encourages instructors to take the chance of being challenged by student's views. And professor of physics Lawrence Brehm ("At Home in the Universe") urges instructors to engage fully with students and get inside their heads. Ultimately, there might be nothing particularly novel about the approaches described here, but the book is a sign of the dedication of these teachers and evidence of the many ways that we can all hope to reach our students.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Eve M. Duffy

Justin Reich and Thomas Daccord. *Best Ideas for Teaching with Technology: A Practical Guide for Teachers, by Teachers.* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2008. Pp. 312. Paper, \$34.95; ISBN 978-0-656-2132-0.

Part roundup of websites, part manual for the use of computer applications in the classroom, Justin Reich and Thomas Daccord's *Best Ideas for Teaching with Technology: A Practical Guide for Teachers, by Teachers* is, as the title acknowledges, a practical work. Coauthors Reich and Daccord co-direct the website www.EdTechTeacher.org. The two offer workshops for teachers and consulting services for schools. Their experience using computer applications in the classroom qualified them to write this book. Reich has taught world history and topics in modern history at Noble and Greenough School in Dedham, Massachusetts, and has designed courses with a computer-applications component. He is a doctoral candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Daccord is the author of *The Best History Web Sites*, and he taught seven years in a school where students and staff had laptops and wireless access to the Internet.

Despite the title, *Best Ideas for Teaching with Technology* is not a broad treatment of the use of technology in the classroom but rather a work that treats one aspect of technology, albeit an important one, the use of computer applications in the classroom. Its practicality makes the book ideal for instructors who are eager to incorporate computers in their classes but who might not have extensive experience in this area. Reich and Daccord do not assume that readers are familiar with computer applications. Rather they lead readers, mouse click by mouse click, through the use of

PowerPoint, for example, to augment a lecture. The authors urge instructors to mine websites for primary sources and illustrations. The unit on the Great Depression, for example, includes websites with photographs of migrant laborers, stories of teenage hobos, the recording of a Fireside Chat, and much more. Reich and Daccord know that websites vary in quality. One of the virtues of their book is that the authors have done the legwork of tracking down websites with excellent content on a variety of historical topics. Both instructors and students might read several sections of the book, notably "Taking Notes with Computers." Indeed an instructor might photocopy these sections for distribution to students.

The book is particularly valuable as a compilation of websites. The authors do not, however, provide a central listing of websites. Rather the reader must search the index for a topic. As the examples in the book reveal, much of the content is aimed at middle and high school teachers. The college and university instructor accordingly must choose material with care. The authors acknowledge that students who are ostensibly taking notes with their laptops might instead be emailing friends, checking sports scores, or playing games, but they offer few solutions to this problem beyond vigorous policing of students. The authors admit, as they should, that technology cannot substitute for inspired teaching. Good teachers will use technology not as an end but rather as a means to making the classroom experience richer. *Best Ideas for Teaching with Technology* succeeds to the degree that it helps instructors stimulate students to think.

Independent Scholar

Christopher Cumo

Ian Tattersall. *The World From Beginnings to 4000 BCE.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. 143. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 978-0-19-533315-2.

Human evolution is defined as both the biological and cultural development of humans. Ever since the existence of scientific research, human evolution has been a central topic in the crossfire of scientific fields such as physical anthropology, linguistics, and genetics. Through the examinations done in paleoanthropology, we know today that human beings evolved from the homo sapiens species. Thanks to the results achieved in studying human origins and species, we are nowadays able to estimate that the history of human evolution began more than 4,000 years ago.

This complex history of human evolution is the topic of Ian Tattersall's *The World From Beginnings to 4000 BCE*. In an effort to provide a comprehensive, thoroughly readable overview of the "new world history," Tattersall's work is the first volume in the series *The New Oxford World History* published by Oxford University Press.

The World From Beginnings to 4000 BCE is clearly ambitious in providing the reader with an overview of the first 4,000 years of evolutionary history within 143

pages. The writing style is simple enough to understand, though it is assumed that the reader knows well the basics of early human history in order to follow the content. Each of the seven chapters covers a significant step in the development of the human being. The book does not skip any major historic period, beginning with evolutionary biology and ending with the settlement of homo sapiens, the species from which the modern human directly descended. While all chapter titles concretely follow a "bottom-up" structure in historical order, the content mainly focuses on research (and research methods) of notable human evolution researchers, from evolutionary biologists to primatologists. Tattersall discusses all significant discoveries, including the Heidelberg man, and provides a nine-page summary of the discovery and research on *homo neanderthalensis*. Readers find themselves exposed to results of scientific research of the past and the present, and, if they haven't been familiar with them so far, learn about anthropological methods such as the potassium/argon (K/Ar) technique or the more recent mtDNA technology.

It does not come as a surprise that the author's conclusion is an anthropologist's viewpoint. According to Tattersall, the development of human history has been influenced mainly by external factors that in turn led people to "write" history the way we learn it in classrooms.

This book is well written and structured, though it seems difficult to use "as is" for a classroom book assignment. It is appropriate for an introductory history or anthropology course at the university level. However, the research-rich content will require group discussions led by the teacher. In general, one could say that a strength of the book is the delivery of good teaching material resources. They are useful even at the high school level, such as the chronological overview table or the maps displaying human evolution through migration. A "weakness" of this book is its strong orientation toward academic research of this complex topic. Though it contributes without doubt to provide a better understanding of academic research in this field, this book is not easy to read, nor is it easy to use for a publication series ambitious to offer a comprehensive and readable overview of world history.

Independent Scholar

Elizabeth Do Lam

Paul J. Dosal. *Cuba Libre: A Brief History of Cuba*. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2006. Pp. 152. Paper, \$14.95; ISBN 978-0-882-95246-8.

At a time when many scholars are producing works of big history, Paul J. Dosal and the editors of the Global History series at Harlan Davidson have chosen to produce a work of very small history and have done so with great success. With much recent historiography, particularly in world history, focusing on international developments, multinational occurrences, and issues of global consequence, Professor Dosal's 152 pages of text serve as a reminder of the utility of national histories in undergraduate

courses. This book's usefulness is due in large measure to Dosal's skillful integration of the local and the global. Despite its brevity and focused content, *Cuba Libre: A Brief History of Cuba* addresses issues of global significance in microcosm. Primary among such issues are the nature and impact of relationships between the big (meaning stronger) and the small (meaning weaker) nations of the world and the evolution of cultures and national identity, in this case *Cubanidad*, in that context.

Dosal's thorough yet concise history of Cuba from the arrival of the Spanish to nearly the present day persuasively makes the case that the freedom and independence generations of Cubans fought to achieve perpetually evaded them. International events, including colonization, the Atlantic slave trade, neocolonialism, and the Cold War, conspired to keep the island nation continuously dependent upon other, more powerful nations. Each of these global issues addressed in detail about Cuba provides excellent opportunities for classroom discussion and comparison of Cuba's situation to that of other former colonies and underdeveloped nations.

Dosal's juxtaposition of this unfortunate, dependent status for Cuba with the evolving, thriving richness of a uniquely Cuban culture is similarly useful for class discussions. The unique convergence of diverse peoples in Cuba, indigenous, African, European, and North American, that gave rise to the island's dependent status also fostered the development of a truly unique hybrid culture exemplified by syncretic religious traditions like Candomble and the vibrant musical tradition of son. Culturally Cuba achieved a level of independence that it failed to reach politically or economically. Dosal's treatment of *Cubanidad* opens the door for detailed discussions of cultural theory as applied to Cuba, Latin America, and elsewhere.

However, an element of Cuban history about which much more could be said is Cuban internationalism post 1959. Cuban policy as guided by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara (until his death in Bolivia in 1967) succeeded in providing a voice for the developing world during the Cold War. Castro's promotion of national liberation and national sovereignty proved important not only in Cuba, but in much of Latin America as well. Cuban action and ideology also had a significant impact on leftists throughout the region and around the world, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. Such a discussion would solidify the link between Castro in the twentieth century and Jose Marti in the nineteenth century, an important link for undergraduates who are likely more familiar with Castro than Marti to make. Further, a detailed discussion of the legacy of Cuban internationalism would once again allow Dosal to use Cuba as the microcosm to explain global events, in this case, the increasingly complex relationships between the superpowers and developing nations during the late Cold War.

In conclusion, while histories of Cuba are numerous and varied, this text is a welcome and useful addition to that literature. Its thoroughness, tone, and readability make it a good candidate for classroom use in courses ranging from introductory world history surveys to more advanced Latin American history and international studies classes.

Rafe Blaufarb. *Napoleon: Symbol for an Age. A Brief History with Documents.* The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston: St. Martins, 2008. Pp. 256. Paper, \$14.95; ISBN 0-312-43110-4; ISBN 13: 978-0-312-43110-5.

Like other titles in the Bedford Series in History and Culture, this one focusing on Napoleon and his age is of high quality, accessible to students at different levels, and useful in a variety of contexts. Rafe Blaufarb packages an excellent and rich set of primary source documents supported by an introduction that underscores Napoleon's dynamic and complex relationship with the political and ideological currents of the period. While Blaufarb sketches the meaning of Napoleon's impact in necessarily concise but nevertheless substantial terms, he still manages to suggest those areas where historians have and continue to debate, illustrating the vital element of historiographical controversy so crucial to an appreciation of Napoleon as historical subject. The volume provides other pedagogical opportunities along the way, making it a valued resource for instructors in and out of the classroom.

Blaufarb addresses nine major topics, each section in the introduction corresponding in the book's second half to a set of relevant documents drawn from a wide range of sources, many plucked from archives and/or previously unpublished or untranslated. Since Blaufarb seeks to situate Napoleon "in his time," he explores Napoleon's Corsican background, his military education, and early political flirtations in the introductory essay. Later, in the documentary section, we glimpse Napoleon as he makes an impression on political friends and foes alike while putting down a royalist revolt in the Parisian streets or engaged in discussion at one of the many salon gatherings that helped launch his political career. Episodes and issues from the Consulate through the Empire are seen from above, below, and in between: Speeches, proclamations, and official instructions from Napoleon are included alongside memoirs, recorded debates, letters from prominent figures of the regime as well as popular views captured in imagery, song, even departmental archives. Worth mentioning is the attention Blaufarb pays to the Napoleonic regime in a global context—Haiti, Latin America, the U.S., and Egypt. Readers will *not* find much on Napoleon as a military strategist, the emphasis instead on the social and political repercussions of this essential element of his power and influence. The final section deals with the Napoleonic image as an enduring political touchstone into the mid-nineteenth century. This section really ought to have stretched into the twentieth—even the twenty-first—century to underscore the deep resonance that Napoleon has had culturally in France and beyond.

The volume is compact enough to assign as a supplementary text in a survey class, but substantial enough to serve various needs in upper-level courses. Instructors could also use certain selections from the volume around which to build lessons and assignments. I chose to flip back and forth through the book from an introductory section to the corresponding primary source documents, much as I expect I would assign the book in the classroom. The provenance of the documents themselves serves as a pedagogical tool, illustrating to students the diverse set of materials historians track down to get a comprehensive view of an historical figure or period. Each document is

preceded by a paragraph that provides its specific context, often information about the author, which allows instructors to explore questions of perspective, reliability, and bias. The "Questions to Consider" appearing at the end of the book might have been more effectively integrated into relevant places of the documentary section. Also, while it's understandable that the illustrations featured in another section aren't in color, perhaps the editors could reference websites where these images could be experienced in their full visual grandeur. These minor criticisms wouldn't deter me, however, from acquiring the book for my instructional toolkit.

Gwynedd-Mercy College

Michael Clinton

Jeffrey Brooks and Georgiy Chernyavskiy. *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State: A Brief History with Documents.* The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. Pp. 192. Paper, \$14.95; ISBN 0-312-41266-5; ISBN 13: 978-0-312-41266-1.

With this latest work, award-winning authors Jeffrey Brooks (Johns Hopkins University) and Georgiy Chernayavskiy (Kharkov University, Ukraine) have crafted a superb supplemental text for the classroom. Well-written, logically-ordered, brimming with documents, yet concise in its presentation, this slim volume is an engaging and easy read. Undoubtedly, many will find it an authoritative work as well, but leftists might be dissatisfied with the image of Lenin that it projects.

The authors' stated intent is to let "Lenin speak for himself." Thus, the "history" that comprises part one of the text truly is brief. In less than three dozen pages, Brooks and Chernyavskiy sketch Lenin's life and the Russia in which he lived. The second, and largest, part of the monograph is given over to documents. Brooks and Chernyavskiy present 59 writings culled from Lenin's 45-volume *Collected Works* and from editor Richard Pipes' *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archives*. Published in 1996, the Pipes sourcebook contains some of the 3500 Lenin manuscripts that the editors of the Soviet-era *Collected Works* excluded.

Though the number of documents included in *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State* is minuscule when compared to the complete corpus of Lenin's writings, the orders and communiqués selected for inclusion range wide in topic and far in chronology. Brooks and Chernyavskiy open their documents section with Lenin's "Urgent Tasks of Our Movement," "What Is to Be Done?" and other pieces that the authors believe reveal the Soviet leader's theory of revolution. The document arrangement of subsequent sections leads readers through the Bolsheviks' rise to power, the civil war, the Terror, War Communism, and the New Economic Policy—standard subjects for a monograph on Lenin. But Brooks and Chernyavskiy also include a section devoted to Lenin's writings on spirituality and culture in the Soviet Union and another that raises questions about Lenin's mental health toward the end of his life.

Short author commentaries precede each document, place the writings in their historical context, and provide transition.

The overall impression conveyed by the documents is that Lenin was a brutal leader, willing to use "Draconian measures" to accomplish his ends. Historians from those nations outside the Soviet Union have tended to give Lenin a "pass" for his sometimes violent tactics. Lenin's behavior is justified as an extension of his committed idealism. Most criticism is reserved for Joseph Stalin, who is portrayed as a violent pragmatist with loyalties only to himself. Historians native to the former Soviet states consistently have proffered a darker image of Lenin, and the book under consideration follows that trend. Lenin the monster is visible. Lenin the idealist is not. The authors' point of view is clear from the beginning of the text, when Lenin is mentioned alongside Hitler, and at the end when the authors refer to a Leninist cult.

Still, *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State* is a strong work that belongs in college, and some high school, classrooms. For the student, it offers an easy-to-follow format, moving from brief history, to supporting documents with commentary, to a three-page timeline of Lenin's life. For the instructor, the book includes suggested questions. Further, the use of secret documents encourages classroom discussions on censorship, propaganda, and authoritarianism. And lastly, the authors' language choice and their document selection process could lead to consideration of research methodologies and historiography.

Lubbock Christian University

Kregg M. Fehr

Howard Zinn, Mike Konopacki, and Paul Buhle. *A People's History of American Empire: A Graphic Adaptation.* New York: Henry Holt and Company (Metropolitan Books), 2007. Pp. 273. Paper, \$17.00; ISBN 13: 978-0-805008744-4.

Howard Zinn's *magnum opus*, *A People's History of the United States*, was originally published in 1980 and sales are approaching two million. Surely a major part of its success has been its use by teachers. This book is a "graphic adaptation," but not of Zinn's entire work so much as those portions related to the theme of empire. Those responsible might not be comfortable with the book being called a "comic book" version of Zinn, but essentially that is what we have here. Is there potential for such a book being used by teachers, and thus having Zinn's message reach many more students? Probably so. Whether that is a good thing or a bad thing depends on one's point of view.

A People's History of the United States, most readers of *Teaching History* probably do not need to be told, was a direct outgrowth of the various movements for peace and justice that dominated the 1960s, including the civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam War movement, women's movement, and environmental movement. Thus, Zinn made himself, with this book and several others, including *The Politics of History*,

one of the leading members of the "radical" or "revisionist" or "New Left" or "conflict" historians of that era and since. This approach often has been called history "from the bottom up," suggesting that it focuses on common people rather than on presidents, royalty, generals, and the rich. But it is also history "from the outside in," in the sense that Zinn's heroes and heroines are those radicals who worked for change, such as those who fought to abolish the evil of human slavery, those who worked for equality for women, and those who struggled against the various wars in U.S. history.

One right-wing critic on the Internet has referred to Zinn as "the most influential historian in America." Personally, I hope so! And this book should spread his important message to even more and younger students. I had the experience, a few years ago, at the Woody Guthrie Free Folk Festival in Woody's hometown of Okemah, Oklahoma, of approaching one of the Burns Sisters, a wonderful folk-singing trio from upstate New York, to ask for her autograph on one of their albums. She complied, then asked me, interestingly and unusually, about my own work. I told her I was a retired history professor, and the conversation led to my mention of my book on the life and writings of Zinn. She responded enthusiastically: "I'll have to get that book! I'm reading his *People's History* right now, and I love it!" She knew about Zinn, she said, only because her daughter was using it in high school and recommended it to her.

This volume is an outgrowth of the work of The American Empire Project, described in the back of the book as a group that responds critically to the fact that "Empire, long considered an offense against America's democratic heritage, now threatens to define the relationship between our country and the rest of the world." Their earlier publications include works by Noam Chomsky and Anthony Arnove's *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*. Surely even those who differ with Zinn and with the Project can see the value of introducing students to this important point of view and to this "graphic adaptation" of his classic "people's history" as one way of doing so that might hold their interest.

Professor of History *Emeritus*
East Central University

Davis D. Joyce

Walter LeFeber, Richard Polenberg, and Nancy Woloch. *The American Century: A History of the United States Since the 1890s*. 6th ed. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008. Pp. 624. Paper, \$42.95; ISBN 978-0-7656-2064-4.

The American Century: A History of the United States Since the 1890s is a powerful book that comes from a noted press and is written by well-respected authors. This sixth edition text includes new online content and updated material on the 1990s through the present. Unlike many texts for the second half of the United States history survey that begin either at the end of the American Civil War in 1865 or at the end of Reconstruction in 1877, *The American Century* begins in the 1890s.

The first chapter concisely tackles the major issues facing the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, including race relations, industry, economics, inventions, and foreign policy. Common to many texts, a chapter is devoted to the Progressive Movement, while another discusses U.S. foreign policy from 1900 to World War I. Hereafter the chapter subjects resemble those found in most standard textbooks.

The significant difference, however, between *The American Century* and other texts is how the material is presented. The work reads like a monograph, while maintaining its twentieth-century focus. The authors don't treat their readers necessarily as students, and, rather than lecturing to them, they present the material in a reader-friendly format. Other highlights of the book come in the authors' coverage of modern American politics and history in the last two chapters. "1993-2000: The Road to the Twenty-First Century" provides a plethora of new and updated material about the Clinton administration and the major events that shaped the years leading to George W. Bush taking office. The final chapter, "9-11: Causes and Consequences," is especially useful, as students are often looking for a way to make sense of the current political situation and foreign affairs. These foreign policy issues are where LaFeber is at his best, and the reader can see how he skillfully weaves this into certain chapters of the book. The frequent sidebars, about one per chapter, that illuminate the biographies of important people, help maintain the textbook feel. Even these are set into the backdrop of the chapter and appear as interesting and useful rather than distracting.

As many professors lament that they are not able to cover the most recent twenty years of U.S. history in one semester, they will enjoy the change of pace provided by *The American Century* by beginning their lectures in the 1890s. Students will find the work easy to read, well-indexed, and despite the length of the work, it is still very concise and reasonably priced.

If professors and students are looking for a book that is chock full of maps, highlighted terms, illustrations, and review questions, however, this will probably not be the textbook for them. Also, while the chapters are neatly organized into subheadings, there are no important terms highlighted in bold, no review questions at the end, and no ideas to ponder at the beginning. If, however, a professor wants a work that does an excellent job of weaving the major events of U.S. history into a format that is both enlightening and thought provoking then this work is highly recommended.

Austin Peay State University

Antonio Thompson

Barbara Dianne Savage. *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008. Pp. 368. Cloth, \$27.95; ISBN 978-0-674-03177-7.

Today it is common to hear people speak of the "African American community" and the "Black Church" as if they were cohesive, clearly-defined institutions. Barbara

Dianne Savage, professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, looks at the complex history of such terms in her book *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion*, effectively chronicling the debates of African Americans over the role of religion in political activism and social reform in twentieth-century America. Specifically, Savage identifies three "paradoxes" present at "the nexus between black religion and black politics," namely, the rich diversity and idiosyncratic manifestations of religion among individual African Americans that elude clear demarcation, the largely localized and decentralized organization of predominantly African American churches that confound any notion of an all-inclusive Black Church, and the tendency within African American churches toward male leadership and female dominance.

Your Spirits Walk Beside Us is an intellectual history of prominent African Americans thinking about and critiquing what it meant to be black and religious in the United States. Savage joins black men like W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Benjamin Mays, and E. Franklin Frazier with black women like Zora Neale Hurston, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Nannie Helen Burroughs, in order to describe the negotiative, dynamic qualities of black churches. Yet despite such diversity, Savage concludes that "the emancipatory potential of spiritual belief" runs throughout the history of black religion in the United States, and it is this consistent thread that has played an essential role in the political activism of African Americans during the twentieth century.

Broken into seven chapters, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us* provides a chronological narrative of how black intellectuals and activists conceived of a so-called "Negro Church" in the early decades of the twentieth century, followed by their incorporation of religion into the Civil Rights Movement after the 1940s. Perhaps most interesting, Savage includes in her conclusion a discussion of "reconcilable differences" among African Americans today as made evident in the controversy surrounding the relationship between Barack Obama and Jeremiah Wright during the U.S. presidential campaign of 2008. Both Obama and Wright, according to Savage, "were guilty of collapsing the diversity and distinctiveness among black churches for the sake of political argument," though they reached this end by taking somewhat different paths.

In summary, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us* is a lucidly written history of African American intellectuals who thought long and hard about the relationship between religion and politics in the twentieth century. It demonstrates in an accessible format the complexity of black and religious identities in the United States. That being said, Savage's emphasis upon well-educated African Americans limits insight into the role of the large majority of black men and mostly women who filled the pews and marched the streets of America but whose activities were often overshadowed by the towering legacies of men like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Teachers of high school and undergraduate courses will find in this book avenues for inquiry into the rich intellectual tradition of African Americans and the pivotal, complex role of religion in the Civil Rights Movement.

Ronald D. Eller. *Uneven Group: Appalachia Since 1945*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008. Pp. 376. Cloth, \$29.95; ISBN 978-0-8131-2523-7.

The poet William Blake once wrote that "Great things are done when men and mountains meet. This is not done by jostling on the street." Ron Eller quietly has done "great things" for those who live in Appalachia, assuredly through intense "jostling" with academics, local leaders, poverty agencies, environmental groups, and with state and national policy makers and planners. As a former Director of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky and also as a scholar, activist, advocate, and writer, he uniquely is qualified to tell us much of what has occurred in Appalachia since 1945. In all, he has devoted most of his adult life to studying and examining the nexus between Federal antipoverty programs and their impact upon the lives of those who live in Appalachia. The title of his latest work, *Uneven Ground*, reflects his belief that those designs and plans frequently have an ill-matched yield.

First, *Uneven Ground* should be looked upon not as a comprehensive history of Appalachia since 1945 but rather as a chronicle of the politics of economic development within the region. Little of topics like southern mountain music, crafts, religion, or the history of African-Americans, Hispanics, and women can be found. Yet as a monograph it simply stands alone as the best analysis and account of the attempt since 1945 to "modernize" Appalachia through social engineering and economic development. As such, it should prove indispensable to any study of Appalachia, whether academic or otherwise. Indeed, most classroom teachers would welcome Eller's *Uneven Ground* into the assigned readings for almost any course on Appalachia and, from that, of appropriate regional or state histories. It both informs and frames debates on any number of subjects like grassroots activism, Federal programs, growth development, civic leadership, the economy, poverty, coal mining, the environment, labor unions, education, floods, industrialization, class structure, political manipulation and corruption, and the effects of interstate highway systems in Appalachia. Still, the idea that Eller's work should only be used in the classroom diminishes its importance. Almost anyone involved in public policies concerning the southern mountains, especially any in civic leadership, would benefit from his thorough analysis. In truth, general readers also will find much in Eller's well-written *Uneven Ground* that is both provocative and enlightening.

Perhaps Eller's last chapter on "the New Appalachia" not only is his longest but his best. In it, he ended by quoting Larry Gibson, the "keeper of the mountains," who obstinately kept his family farm in West Virginia from being ravaged by Massey Energy Corporation, the very symbol of all that seemed to be wrong with development in Appalachia. Surrounded by 180,000 acres of dead trees, Gibson declared that "We have a conversation with the land here.... This is a symbol of what the history of the

mountains is about." So is Eller's *Uneven Ground*. This work just might be Eller's disquieting parable for his long career as well.

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Milton Ready

J. M. Dempsey, ed. *Sports-Talk Radio in America: Its Context and Culture*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, 2006. Pp. 222. Paper, \$17.95; ISBN-10: 0-7890-2590-6.

The obsession with sport in America is responsible for the growth of sports-talk radio, an often crude and ugly manifestation of the national sporting culture extolling sexist and racist attitudes. With professional athletes and coaches earning enormous sums of money, frustrated fans seem to believe that as the ticket-buying public it is their prerogative to verbally assault athletes, and this activity is encouraged by radio personalities. While sports-talk radio does not include a large audience, the demographic of males between ages 25 and 54 is an attractive one for advertisers.

The phenomenon of sports-talk radio is addressed by J.M. Dempsey, an associate professor of radio/television at Texas A&M University-Commerce, who also serves as a play-by-play announcer for the university. Dempsey's collection of ten essays, prepared by academics from communications and journalism departments, analyzes the format of successful sports-talk radio stations across the country. These essays indicate that there is a degree of diversity within this niche market. For example, KTCK in Dallas-Fort Worth does not hold broadcasting rights for any big-league sports franchise and relies upon a format of man talk extending beyond the realm of sport, while WEEI in Boston, headed by a rare female general manager, prides itself as providing more sophisticated "adult" sports commentary for its audience. Nevertheless, WEEI radio personalities were censured in October 2003 for comparing a gorilla escaping from a local zoo to an African-American student.

In July 1987, WFAN in New York City became the nation's first all-sports radio station, carrying New York Mets baseball and the controversial *Imus in the Morning*. The success of WFAN encouraged such stations as KOZN in Omaha, KJR in Seattle, WIP in Philadelphia, WGR and WNSA in Buffalo, WHB in Kansas City, WWLS in Oklahoma City, and WQTM in Orlando, all of which form case studies for the Dempsey volume. Despite the growth of national programming such as ESPN Radio and the syndicated *Jim Rome Show*, this collection of essays suggests that localism remains a significant factor in the sports-talk radio format. Dempsey concludes that sports-talk radio will continue to play an important role in the market, but he implores program directors to keep tighter reins on their radio personalities to restore a degree of civility to the nation's air waves.

The essays in *Sports-Talk Radio* tend to rely upon interviews with radio personnel and will constitute a relatively easy read for students. Accordingly, *Sports-*

Talk Radio in America should make for a lively text in media and sport history classes. The volume, however, lacks the sustained critical analysis of a cultural studies approach that would place the phenomenon of sports-talk radio in broader historical and cultural context.

Sandia Preparatory School, Albuquerque, NM

Ron Briley

Gary W. Reichard and Ted Dickson, eds. *America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to U.S. History*. Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 2008. Pp. 352. Paper \$25.00; ISBN 978-0-252-07552-0.

After reading *America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to U.S. History*, one might feel depressed and excited simultaneously. Depressed at how little you might be covering in your own survey course, but excited at the prospect of incorporating many of the concepts and teaching strategies contained in the book. Fourteen essays, all previously published in the Organization of American Historians *Magazine of History*, accompanied by teaching strategies that offer practical approaches to incorporate the essay's content into the survey class urge historians to rethink American history in a global age and how they teach the survey course.

Using a loose chronological and thematic approach, the book provides us an uneven breadth of coverage. The first three chapters dealing with the Atlantic world, the Declaration of Independence, and the origins of slavery are all wide ranging in scope and cover the colonial era. The next four essays explore the global nature of religion, the West, urbanization and industrialization, and the Civil War and Reconstruction in nineteenth-century American history. Rounding out the volume for twentieth-century American history are the themes of reform, migration, civil rights, race and citizenship, popular culture, women, and the Cold War. All of the essays, written by historians with extensive expertise in their respective areas, provide excellent content summaries and connect the most recent research in the field with traditional approaches. True to their charge, each essay reiterates the theme that American history has not occurred in a vacuum but is intertwined with ideas, events, and people from all over the globe.

The teaching strategies that accompany the essays offer a wide variety of methods to integrate the theme of globalization into survey courses. For example, suggestions include using tea and sugar as focal points for the global nature of the Atlantic world, exploring the Ellis Island website for migration history, analyzing posters portraying women during World War II from several different nations, and comparing independence movements and declarations from different locations and dates. Historians will find clear and detailed information on where to locate the teaching materials and how to apply any of the pedagogical techniques. Yet, many might question whether incorporating too many of these techniques would take away from covering the basic material standard to any survey course.

This brief summary does not do justice to the essays or the teaching strategies. The content of the essays might contain little that is new for those who keep abreast of recent scholarship, but the extensive bibliographic material and detailed teaching strategies should provide innovative material for lectures and discussions. Considering the breadth of an American history survey, not all topics could be included in this volume: Economic, military, and political histories play less of a role here than social, cultural, and diplomatic history, and those who stress American colonial history might be disappointed at the emphasis on nineteenth and twentieth-century history. Yet this criticism should not detract from the book. *America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to U.S. History* should be required reading for all of us who teach American history survey courses at the secondary and college level.

Hutchinson Community College

Thomas Percy

Peter F. Nardulli, ed. *Domestic Perspectives on Contemporary Democracy*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008. Pp. 192. Paper, \$23.00; ISBN 978-0-252-07521-6.

This collection of original essays concerning democracy and the challenges it faces throughout the world is the result of events beginning with the establishment of an endowed center, The Cline Center for Democracy, at the Urbana-Champaign campus of the University of Illinois. The intentional focus is on "the big picture" for democracy in the world in view of increasing diversity and "Information Age innovations." The essays originally presented at a conference in 2004 generated discussion among attending scholars representing "a variety of subdisciplines." Revisions based upon scholarly input resulted in the final collection presented here. The collection is invaluable as a tool to evaluate democracies at their various stages in the world today, to offer learned considerations and options for improving or stabilizing existing democracies and to offer best chance scenarios for establishment of lasting democracy in transition countries such as Iraq. (It is worth noting that "the companion volume, *International Perspectives on Contemporary Democracy*, deals with ... the prospects for a fourth wave of democratization and the challenges that globalization poses for democratic governance.")

This text is for serious scholars of democracy and those involved in policymaking for governing authorities. It would be better used in upper-level courses as a text. However, it is a wonderful source for an instructor of lower-level courses. Various chapters could be assigned for students to write essays on or an instructor could enrich his own knowledge and capacity to expand discussion by reading this.

The focus is on government, politics, and the future. While historical examples are frequently examined, the main emphasis is not historical. The research presented and discussed is extensive. Essays cover challenges to democracy presented by demography, technology, transition in divided societies, citizenship and identity in

diverse societies, technological advances and individual liberties, and the Internet. Chapter 5 regarding electoral engineering and institutional design as a tool in particular addresses an underserved topic that could prove to be a key to stability in fragile democracies.

While each of the essays reflects a writing style unique to that author, as a whole the essays are very direct, extremely well organized, and lacking legalese. Paul Sniderman's discussion in "Democracy, Diversity and Leadership" leans more toward the science aspect of a political science treatment of the topic.

There is no comprehensive conclusion to this text other than the proposition that democracy worldwide is facing dramatic challenges and changes due to increased diversity, technology, and communication. Each essayist presents his own conclusion which often is more in the form of a query. In "Engineering Consent," W. Lance Bennett wonders "Will the growing disillusionment with politics and the media force a regime change toward more transparent, citizen-to-citizen communication networks as organizational foundations for issue and electoral politics?" And, "The speed, reach, and ever-lowering costs of these stealth technologies represent attractive alternatives for political consultants and their clients, but they also threaten to limit the broad public exchange of ideas as individuals become 'a democracy of one.'" "The public life of democracy may wither as communication becomes an endless appeal to *The Daily Me*, as Negroponte (1995) called the self-defined information service of the future."

Georgia Highlands College

Rebecca L. Sims

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