

## Failing to Teach, Disrupted Lessons, and Resistance in the “History for Teachers” Classroom

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“THE FULL DESCRIPTION of our next set of lesson plans—which will be completed as group projects—is on page four of the syllabus. Does anyone have any questions about it?” I asked my students brightly one afternoon. Seated in a circle around me were twenty juniors and seniors who hoped to graduate with degrees in Social Science, enter Teaching Credential programs, and then teach History in middle or high school. There were many more men than women (the reverse would be true among those aspiring to enter elementary education), but the group was remarkably diverse in ethnicity, race, and religion. Most had come from community colleges, where they had taken a General Education survey covering both halves of American History. Still, they had not entered our one-semester “U.S. History for Teachers” class confidently or willingly; it was a graduation requirement for Social Science majors, which few faculty relished teaching and many students dreaded and avoided for as long as possible.

When the “for teachers” courses were first introduced at San Diego State University (SDSU) by Frank Stites in U.S. history and Ross Dunn in world history in the 1980s, they represented pioneering

efforts to augment the History faculty's commitment to training K-12 teachers.<sup>1</sup> From the start, the courses challenged students to move beyond the content of typical surveys and engage with historiographical debates, primary sources, and probing questions. They were lecture courses, but they required reading outside of the textbook, along with substantial writing to be compiled in a portfolio at the semester's end. "U.S. History for Teachers" was divided fairly traditionally into two semesters, covering Contact to Reconstruction in the first "half," and Reconstruction to the Present in the second. Recruited to teach the first course of the two-semester sequence soon after my arrival at SDSU, I found the future teachers ill-prepared for the pace and intensity of the course. It was never easy to cover so much content, enhanced by primary source analysis, historiography, and weekly writing assignments.

Then, a course that was difficult for students and faculty became all but impossible. About a decade ago, in response to an external review of the Social Science program, the two-semester "U.S. History for Teachers" sequence was collapsed into a one-semester course. Still required to "cover" the colonial period to the present, introduce historiography and primary source analysis, and pose penetrating questions, the course was a killer for teachers and students alike. Most of my colleagues avoided it even more assiduously than in years past; others merely nodded at the Revolution and Constitution before diving into the period after Reconstruction. As an early Americanist, this solution did not appeal to me at all. I began to search for an alternative way to structure the course while remaining faithful to its original mission of preparing future teachers for the substantive and pedagogical challenges of life in a History classroom.

Meanwhile, cognitive and sociopolitical imperatives had led me to experiment with alternatives to the lecture format in several other courses.<sup>2</sup> I decided to restructure my "U.S. History for Teachers" course radically, jettisoning my well-crafted lectures in favor of an extended "flipped" class in which the students would create four separate lesson plans and present them to their colleagues for comment and critique. The first two lesson plans were individual and systematically designed to help students learn how to analyze historical arguments and primary sources, to pose probing historical questions, to develop active learning activities associated with the

reading, and to look forward and backward in synthetic conclusions. The reading for these first two lesson plans came from a book I had edited, with important historical articles and primary sources of various types from the contact of cultures to the eve of the Civil War. While I controlled the reading and the format of the lesson plans, the students chose their thematic emphases and active learning exercises; as five or six individual students presented on each set of readings in this first half of the course, different aspects of each topic emerged in each class session. Students who were not presenting were required to read the assigned material and comment constructively on their colleagues' ideas, as if they were attending a best practices conference. I added my comments and suggestions from our circle of teacher-scholars, often encouraging diffident students to take a few more risks with their lessons and the format. This half of the course also included a Constitutional debate and a convention of nineteenth-century reformers, to allow students to experience other active-learning situations. A midterm paper invited students to choose one primary source from a collection of Revolutionary histories, literature, art, and popular culture that I had published, and to design a lesson to convey its significance in the context of early American history.<sup>3</sup>

The second half of the course gave students much greater control of the content, as they designed lesson plans in groups of about five around two different broad topics (Civil War, Reconstruction, Imperialism, Populism, etc.).<sup>4</sup> While the topics were arranged chronologically, I openly acknowledged that they could not possibly "cover" the content. Instead, I encouraged each group to make a list of possible lessons within each of their broad topics (some listed a dozen or more), and then to choose and develop the one lesson that they thought would most interest their future students, for which they could find rich primary sources in a wide variety of media, and which was most conducive to active learning. Learning to plan collaboratively, to conduct intelligent historical research, and to present a cohesive lesson that also allowed diverse group members to contribute multiple perspectives, constituted our central learning objectives. Those of us not presenting could not read in advance of the group presentation (which often came together minutes before the presentation, giving new meaning to "just-in-time teaching"), but we participated in the group's active learning demonstration

and the primary source analysis, and we responded critically and constructively after each presentation. These presentations were punctuated with written and (optional) oral reflections on the process of creating and presenting group lesson plans, how they compared with individual lessons, and how we might improve the process in the future. The course concluded with a ten-page final paper, in which students were to choose a theme and design a coherent Advanced Placement U.S. History course with four lessons (drawn from three different centuries) that all illuminated and complicated their theme.

This new structure had several advantages over the traditional mode of instruction in the “U.S. History for Teachers” course. It gave pre-service teachers a taste of the future, as they experienced the joys and difficulties of creating and presenting lesson plans, individually and in groups, most for the first time in their careers. It involved them as participants in active learning exercises, as colleagues responding to others’ substantive and pedagogical ideas, and as reflective learners involved in shaping and critiquing their own progress toward our shared learning objectives. Its scaffolded assignments led them to build and demonstrate their expertise in posing historical questions, analyzing sources, assessing significance, and conducting historical research. As they willingly or reluctantly assumed control of the content and realized that we can never “cover” the material in the time we have in any course, they experienced the need to make and justify choices, and to allow their students to do the same. Most significantly, struggling to reconcile contradictory interpretations of a source or an issue in groups composed of students of diverse cultural backgrounds underscored the contested nature of historical narratives; hearing the life experiences that shaped these divergent interpretations voiced by their classmates brought America’s polyphonic past to life.<sup>5</sup> All of this was “experiential learning,” immersing students in deep, rich experiences involving active learning and critical reflection that opened new perspectives to them as students and future teachers of History.<sup>6</sup> This new student-centered (rather than content-driven) structure also allowed us to move from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century in a single semester, without gasping for breath or crying for mercy. Overall, my ongoing experiment with experiential learning seemed to be a success.

## Activities and Achievement vs. Anxieties and Assessment

On this particular day, however, things were not going well. Blank stares and dead silence greeted my attempt to open a conversation about our group lesson plans—every teacher’s nightmare. “The full description of our next set of lesson plans—which will be completed as group projects—is on page four of the syllabus. Does anyone have any questions about it?” I waited patiently, with page four of the syllabus open before me. Finally Alejandro,<sup>7</sup> a particularly advanced student, broke the uncomfortable silence.

“When will you tell us our grades on it?” he asked anxiously.

I could feel the tension rise all around me as my students’ attention fixated on their grades, deflating all hope of an enlightening intellectual discussion about learning objectives, the differences between individual and group planning, the scope and depth of the research required, the difficulties and possibilities of group dynamics, or any one of a myriad of rich topics the new assignment might have opened. As pedagogy, my “exchange” was a total failure.

It was also a teaching moment. Even if I had clearly failed to teach anything of value, and my students in “U.S. History for Teachers” had failed to learn anything as yet, we still had another opportunity: we could openly and self-consciously explore what had gone wrong in our classroom that afternoon. Drawing on Linda Nilson’s *Creating Self-Regulated Learners: Strategies to Strengthen Students’ Self-Awareness and Learning Skills* (2013), I had been attempting for some weeks to induce my students to take ownership of their learning processes, to create their own individual learning objectives to supplement mine, and to reflect upon their progress toward their goals.<sup>8</sup> This seemed especially important in a course for future teachers, many of whom had recently emerged from and would soon return to California’s perpetually underfunded, overcrowded, yet wonderfully diverse high schools. As students in state-funded schools with state-mandated requirements, they had obsessed about grades and tests for years, rarely rising above their anxieties about daily assignments and assessment to reflect upon their long-term progress or develop individual learning objectives. Taking a deep breath and summoning my courage, I decided to model this reflective mode right there, in our classroom, with my students.

“Well, that was a complete flop, pedagogically,” I told them cheerfully and in the terms of a fellow teacher. “So what went wrong here, and why? What did I do wrong, and how could I have done better?” Accustomed as they were to probing questions about pedagogy and learning in this inquiry-based, flipped class, my frank admission and questions still surprised my students. Apparently, they had never been asked to diagnose their professors’ failures before, certainly not publicly. Their interest piqued, they began to engage with our collective enterprise for the first time that afternoon. Acting as colleagues rather than consumers, one student noted hesitantly that it was difficult to come up with a question cold. Another admitted bravely that he had not looked at the syllabus or the assignment since the beginning of the semester; several others laughingly concurred. Two more claimed that they did not want to ask “stupid” questions. Welcoming these remarks about classroom concerns, I also acknowledged my own anxieties: I pointed out that, while required by policy, the subject of grades had introduced a traditional power relationship of teacher as grader/authority and student as passive recipient—which I sought to invert. It reflected and underscored the feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness that my ineffectual pedagogy had awakened in them.

With this diagnosis of my failed pedagogy in place, we turned next to brainstorm some alternatives. I asked them for advice: How could I have invited them into the conversation more effectively and acknowledged their authority as active learners? Could I have built on what they already knew or had achieved in the course so far? One student suggested a pop quiz (his quick go-to solution for pedagogical challenges) on the description of the assignment in the syllabus; several others groaned in protest. I wondered if some other kind of low-stakes writing as a prelude to discussion might be more empowering. Could we possibly use a metacognitive wrap (literally, beyond cognition, or thinking about one’s learning to wrap up a paper, exam, or other exercise) in which each student would reflect on their individual goals and issues in a quick write, as a warm-up? They had done metacognitive wraps recently when turning in their midterm papers, and liked the idea of trying it here. With their input, I devised three questions on the spot to connect this new assignment with their previous work:

1. What are your personal learning objectives in the course? (A question posed on the first day of class and periodically revisited and revised.)
2. How did the first set of individual lesson plans help you to reach those objectives? (Looking back to the exercises we had just completed.)
3. What do you want to learn how to do in the group lesson plans? (Looking forward and connecting the next set of exercises with their goals and past experience in the course.)

After each student had written quick answers to these questions, I asked them to pair and share, one of our customary methods of breaking the ice for group discussion. Since we were sitting in our usual circle, we did not lose any time rearranging chairs or searching for partners. I then suggested that we change the pattern of reporting out of the pairs: for a change of pace, could they share with the whole class something particularly illuminating that their partner had written and how it resonated with or enhanced their own goals. This allowed us to hear the thoughts of the shyer, quieter students first, an interesting inversion of the usual pattern of class discussion; strikingly, as they heard their ideas voiced and affirmed by their peers, those students who usually held back began to smile and joined an unusually lively discussion.

After a while, I commented that my questions for the metacognitive wrap had all been positive—perhaps too positive. We probably needed one more, one that would invite reflection and discussion of the special challenges posed by group work. My students concurred, but were now warmed up enough to share their thoughts about possible challenges orally with the whole class. Many noted that time was precious because of their many school/work/family commitments, and that group work seemed notoriously inefficient. Would the single group planning meeting I had scheduled during our class time be enough to organize their research and presentation? Would everyone participate in electronic communications after this initial planning meeting? Others worried that group dynamics would be as problematic as in their previous experiences. Could so many take-charge individuals, each of whom wished to run their own class, listen to and learn from each other? Conversely, would all of the group members pull their weight and contribute equally?



Thanking them for honestly expressing their concerns, I observed that one faced such challenges in professional settings as well as student group work, and suggested that learning how to work well in diverse groups should probably be one of our collective learning objectives. I hoped that acknowledging the possible difficulties in advance would help us to address them more effectively, and asked them to remind me to do another metacognitive wrap at the end of the group work so we could assess our progress toward this goal.

The last step in this ad-hoc pedagogical experiment was to involve my students in a final self-reflection and evaluation of the experiment itself. Although we did this in class at the end of our discussion of the group assignment and its challenges, it could also be done as a follow-up metacognitive exercise at home. I asked my students what they had learned about teaching and learning from the experiment we had undertaken that day. What were the risks and advantages of openly acknowledging one's failures as a teacher and inviting one's students to diagnose them and suggest alternative pedagogical strategies? Did it matter that they had actually experienced the failure, and tried the alternatives? Was experiential learning deeper or more intense than hearing or reading theories about pedagogy? Although they were divided about whether they could risk so much loss of authority in their classrooms (declaring that I had more degrees, years of experience, and an abnormal amount of self-confidence as a teacher), my students were almost unanimous in preferring experiential learning as a mode of instruction. Even the staunchest advocates of lectures were certain that they had learned more about teaching and learning that afternoon in our experiment than any lecture or reading could have conveyed. Failing to teach, then, had been transformed into an important moment of experiential learning, as my students and I embraced this unexpected opportunity to reflect upon our individual and collective goals and formulate innovative pedagogies to reach them.

### **Theorizing a Disruptive Pedagogy**

The future teachers entered my course expecting to lecture. They defined teaching as lecturing, reflecting their experience in high school (for the most part) and in college (almost universally). Their professors in all of their other social science courses, not to



mention their huge General Education courses, lectured. When lectures gave way momentarily to discussion in the name of active learning, those discussions were carefully scripted and directed to lead to the outcome desired by the professor. Even apparently open-ended questions had “correct answers” that supported and returned to the central argument of the lecture. If someone strayed from the script, a good teacher found a way to bring it all back to the main point he or she was attempting to make that day. A really fine teacher coordinated all of the lectures in a course, making each one seamless and the series strong, unified, and coherent.

I understood all of this, for I, too, began my career as a university professor aspiring to give beautifully crafted lectures and coherent, linear courses. A lecture should imitate an academic paper or article, I had been taught, with a strong central argument that every section and example supported, leading to a seemingly inevitable conclusion. When pressed by my students to provide an outline so that they could follow my intricate lectures more readily, I objected that this detracted from the seamless beauty of the whole. I always valued “free” discussion of the readings I had assigned, but my early discussion questions followed directly from my prefatory lectures and led straight back to my interpretation. A student’s question or thought was most welcome if it assisted us in moving forward along the interpretive line I had envisioned and articulated in my lectures. Anything else appeared disruptive, perhaps even threatening—especially in the traditional teacher-as-authority power structure.

Over time, my encounters with cognitive psychology exposed the limits of lectures and awakened me from my pedagogical slumbers. Following the pioneering work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, “constructivist” cognitive psychologists in the late twentieth century theorized that children and adults actively seek knowledge, and organize and interpret what they are learning based upon their prior experiences, knowledge, and beliefs. Connecting new concepts and information to an individual’s prior skills, systems, and knowledge led to the deepest understanding, and this was most effectively achieved through an active, inquiry-based approach. Further, to maximize their ability to transfer their current knowledge to new situations, students must actively monitor their level of understanding of new material and concepts through critical reflection. By 2000, an official commission of the National

Research Council, composed of its Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning and its Committee on Learning Research and Educational Practice, concluded:

The new science of learning is beginning to provide knowledge to improve significantly people's abilities to become active learners who seek to understand complex subject matter and are better prepared to transfer what they have learned to new problems and settings.<sup>9</sup>

Cognitive psychology strongly suggested that active modes of instruction should lead to superior learning outcomes for students of all ages and levels.

### *Disrupting with Inverted Classes*

Quantitative studies of flipped or inverted classes across the science- and mathematics-based disciplines that pioneered an active-learning pedagogy over the last two decades have supported this hypothesis. Students in flipped classes in STEM fields performed significantly better on examinations within courses and on standardized national examinations than their counterparts in traditional lecture courses. In both the short and long term, they clearly learned more by viewing pre-recorded lectures outside of class and working collaboratively to solve problems during class time. As one recent meta-analysis of active-learning experiments in 225 STEM college courses dramatically concluded:

If the experiments analyzed here had been conducted as randomized controlled trials of medical interventions, they may have been stopped for benefit—meaning that enrolling patients in the control condition [traditional lecture courses] might be discontinued because the treatment being tested was clearly more beneficial.<sup>10</sup>

Some historians have been urging the profession to heed the lessons of cognitive psychology for more than a decade. In his 2006 article, “Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey,” Lendol Calder drew upon the National Research Council’s 2000 summative report and educational psychologist Lee Shulman’s study of various professions’ “signature pedagogies” to describe his skills-based introduction to “U.S. History since 1945,” a “hybrid” course that combined one “student-centered, active-learning” interpretative “workshop” and two “teacher-

centered” classes per week.<sup>11</sup> Calling upon American historians to move away from the “coverage” of factual information through traditional lectures in their introductory surveys, Calder opened a conversation about the discipline’s “signature pedagogy” that continues to draw responses.<sup>12</sup> By 2011, Joel Sipress and David Voelker credited Calder and other pedagogical theorists with transforming the discourse of the discipline, if not the teaching of History. Their dramatically titled article, “The End of the History Survey Course: The Rise and Fall of the Coverage Model,” declared that “the challenge to coverage” had reached “the center of the discipline,” although “the assumption that knowledge of a large body of historical facts must precede historical thinking continues to shape how students encounter the discipline” and the traditionally structured, coverage-oriented introductory survey “remains the norm for college and university history curricula.”<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the scholarship on teaching and learning presents no evidence of a discipline-wide pedagogical transformation in History. Although many historians undoubtedly mix interactive discussion with their lectures, or structure their survey courses in a hybrid fashion such as Calder described, few appear to have flipped their classes or abandoned their textbooks and lectures entirely. At least there is no trace of this revolution in the scholarly literature. Unlike in the STEM fields, there is a “paucity of studies”—and no meta-analyses—of inverted course design in History: an exhaustive search of ten electronic databases conducted in late 2016 yielded only five studies of flipped or inverted classes in History published in peer-reviewed journals, and one of these was of secondary school students.<sup>14</sup> As Daniel Murphree concluded in 2014, “researchers have produced relatively little scholarship in reference to the utility of inverted classroom approaches at the college or university level,” especially “regarding the teaching of History.”<sup>15</sup> More broadly, Calder noted the lack of “studies of understanding and remembering for students in history courses” comparable to those in STEM fields.<sup>16</sup>

Yet the few documented history case studies in peer-reviewed journals found inverted course design to be effective for college students in a world history survey, a U.S. history survey, and an upper-division course in European history. Out-of-class assignments in these flipped courses included reading in textbooks

and primary sources (sometimes from online databases), video lectures, and possibly online discussions, quizzes, or writing; in class, students engaged in discussion, presentations, and writing. Teachers found their students in inverted classes better prepared for class and more engaged than in traditional classes, although some students declared the video lectures “boring” (overly long, factual, impersonal, or difficult to follow) and truncated or skipped them.<sup>17</sup> The two studies that used control groups and/or quantitative measures of assessment traced an improvement in students’ historical knowledge (ranging from 8% to 13%) and reported high student satisfaction with the inverted class structure (88% to 94%), albeit these figures were not tested for statistical significance.<sup>18</sup>

My own classroom experiments and qualitative assessments in the history and social science courses I flipped over the last five years confirmed these positive conclusions: active, inquiry-based learning was not only more engaging for college students at all levels from first-year to graduate, but more effective pedagogically by almost every objective and subjective measure I could devise. It promoted critical thinking, sharper questions, stronger arguments, clearer connections, self-awareness, and a desire for lifelong learning. Even in the large General Education lower-division course, “American History to Reconstruction,” dreaded by many students who associated history with memorization and standardized tests, a flipped course structure and an emphasis on “uncoverage” led to unusually high attendance, participation, and engagement. Measured quantitatively by the completion of in-class “minute papers” near the close of every class session, between 130 and 140 of my 150 students were present on any given day, even toward the end of the semester; an average of forty students participated substantially (speaking at length to make and support an argument, to interpret a primary source, or to report the results of group consultations) in each seventy-five-minute class period, while the entire class participated in paired or small-group discussion; and nearly half of the students chose to complete most of the extra-credit research papers that punctuated the semester. Students also remarked positively upon their engagement and awareness of their own intellectual growth in periodic metacognitive reflections and in end-of-semester evaluations administered by the university.<sup>19</sup>

*Disrupting with Personal Experiences*

Inverting the course structure was just the first step in the development of my disruptive pedagogy. Beyond these cognitive considerations, my concurrent reading in post-structural, gender, and critical race theory led me to probe the political/regulative dimensions of traditional course design and culture. The lecturer’s desire to maintain control of the argument, the course, and the classroom mirrored and supported the power relationships embedded in race, class, gender, colonial, and other unequal social structures that I fervently wished my students to question and resist. Lecturing, I came to believe, was a form of social control, an assertion of dominant power and cultural authority that undermined my deepest goals as a teacher and scholar. Admittedly, the lecturer might feel compelled to teach this way due to the requirements by yet another authority. The fact that this exercise of power was so subtle, intellectual, and universal made it seem natural, exalted, or invisible—just as other forms of socially constructed power appeared in our society. Even the “flipped” class model pioneered by many STEM courses and slowly adopted in other disciplines did not go far enough to reverse this structure, in my view, as the professor still controlled the content/interpretation through lectures delivered and consumed in various media before each active-learning class meeting.

Further, post-structural, gender, and critical race theories suggested that historians’ customary preference for seamless, omniscient, third-person narratives in lectures and textbooks, in which personal experience was devalued and objectivity enshrined, obscured the contests of power under the master historical narrative.<sup>20</sup> As scholars of gender and critical race theory such as Derrick Bell, Patricia Williams, Richard Delgado, and Mari Matsuda insisted, only by privileging individual experience and first-person narratives of those long silenced in history and in law—in teaching, in scholarship, and in court—could we hope to disrupt centuries-old myths of objectivity and the rule of law.<sup>21</sup> Their personal stories of discrimination and unequal opportunity, told in their own powerful voices, exploded from the pages of staid law reviews. Reading and experimenting, I began to develop and practice a new historical pedagogy that inverted traditional relationships of power and authority, and invited polyphonic first-person narratives based on personal experiences

that did not fit comfortably within the master historical narrative. Following the lead of these post-structural, gender, and critical race theorists, I privileged multiple voices/polyphony, first-person narratives, metadiscourse, and disclosure of personal experience in the classroom and in my scholarship—as in this article.

Quite late in this process of experimentation and revision, I stumbled across the interdisciplinary scholarship of critical pedagogy. In his influential *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), the Brazilian historian and educational philosopher Paulo Freire examined the many ways that education in schools and other institutions perpetuated systems of class inequality, exploitation, and domination. Freire and his followers sought to empower the poor (and later other marginalized social groups as well) through critical inquiry in the classroom and beyond. Reflecting its origins in the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School as well as in global liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, critical pedagogy also involved radical *praxis*: guided by their “social activist” teachers, the oppressed would apply their education to “assuage human suffering” and redistribute power in their communities and around the world.<sup>22</sup> Mirroring my own social concerns and lending them global reach, critical pedagogy expanded my vision and inspired me to move theory into *praxis*. Increasingly, my courses historicized history’s claims to objectivity, examined the politics of historical narratives, encouraged students to connect past and present problems, and sought to empower them to take ownership of their education and their world by finding their own voices in our polyphonic classrooms.

### *Disrupting with Neuroscience*

The third and final piece of my disruptive pedagogy developed from an unexpected source. Inspired by my younger daughter’s fascination with neuroscience, I began to explore the latest research in this exponentially growing, interdisciplinary field of the early twenty-first century. While some current research in cognitive and biological neuroscience underscores the conclusions about active learning reached by cognitive psychologists and educational theorists of the late twentieth century, other research strands promise to extend and redirect our attention toward the power of emotion to enhance learning and memory.

Drawing upon “neuroanatomy, the molecular and cellular biology of synaptic change, and the organization of brain systems,” and new methods such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) of experimental animals and humans with lesions in the hippocampus (the center of memory in the brain), neuroscientists have discovered multiple memory systems involving different parts of the brain.<sup>23</sup> These memory systems process different kinds of information and appear to compete for neural space: for example, memorization of a body of factual information can impede visual-spatial learning and memory.<sup>24</sup> Further, as new learning crowds out older memories throughout childhood and adulthood, “more frequently reactivated traces are strengthened,” with “only the most frequently reactivated memories prevailing and less frequently reactivated memories eventually being over-written and forgotten.”<sup>25</sup> This research helps to explain why the information so efficiently conveyed in lectures, crammed into short-term memory during sleepless nights, and recalled just once on examinations, is so quickly forgotten. Active learners may hear less, but remember more—particularly if they reactivate their memories through critical reflection and repeated discussion.

The most startling and significant finding of neuroscience for history educators might be the importance of emotional affect in creating lasting memories. Because it “responds to an emotional stimulus in the environment rapidly, before awareness and, generally, irrespective of attentional focus,” the amygdala (the brain’s emotional center) focuses perception and attention so that “emotional events receive priority.”<sup>26</sup> After accelerating the encoding of emotionally charged memories, often embedded in personal narratives, the amygdala then plays a “critical” role in “enabling us to acquire and retain lasting memories” by “modulating the consolidation of long-term memories.”<sup>27</sup> Acting “in concert when emotion meets memory,” the brain’s independent memory systems endow memories of emotional experiences with “a persistence and vividness that other memories” lack.<sup>28</sup> Multiple animal and human studies point to the greater strength, depth, and endurance of emotionally charged memories. This strand of current research in neuroscience appears to strongly favor pedagogies based on experiential learning tinged with emotion for the creation of strong, vivid, long-term memories.

To test this hypothesis, educational psychologists are avidly conducting experiments at the crossroads of education and



neuroscience among students at all ages and stages of learning, and have begun to confirm the interconnectedness of cognition and emotion, and the power of emotional experiences to enhance memory. After reviewing much of this very recent educational literature in *The Spark of Learning: Energizing the College Classroom with the Science of Emotion* (2016), psychologist and “affective scientist” Sarah Rose Cavanagh concluded that “considering the emotional impact of various aspects of your course design” can “capture the attention, harness the working memory, bolster the long-term retention, and enhance the motivation of your students.”<sup>29</sup> While Cavanagh generally emphasizes the importance of creating positive emotions in the classroom to support learning, one of the most interesting findings of the research she presents is the crucial role of confusion and uncertainty in the cognitive process: identified in a 2014 meta-analysis of twenty-one experience-sampling studies as the second-most common emotion present during “deep” learning, “confusion arises when a learner tries to ascertain how new information fits with his or her existing understanding of the world, finds that it doesn’t fit, and adjusts knowledge structures to accommodate the new information”; this and other research “demonstrate that confusion is actually *positively* related to learning outcomes.”<sup>30</sup> This finding suggests that experiences which induce a variety of emotions may be the most conducive to deep learning.

### *Experiential Learning vs. Lecturing*

Experiential learning thus offers a powerful approach to infuse active, inquiry-based pedagogy with emotion. Immersed in rich, complex learning experiences with intellectual, social, and emotional dimensions that challenge their assumptions and connect to their lives, students perceive the authenticity of their education. The critical reflection that follows these experiences underscores and reinforces their emotional charge. A key characteristic of experiential learning, as of life, is uncertainty or contingency: although the teacher may hope to achieve certain learning objectives, student-centered learning takes on a life of its own. Acknowledging that “The educator and learner may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of experience cannot totally be predicted,” the Association for Experiential Education urges educators

to “recognize and encourage spontaneous opportunities for learning” through course design that “includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes.”<sup>31</sup> I have found the emphasis on spontaneity, risk-taking, and learning from mistakes or failures to be especially valuable for future teachers, who are often risk-averse and overly conservative pedagogically for fear of failing. Experiential learning may include role-play simulations, problem-based learning in which “students are engaged in solving complex multifaceted real or realistic problems,” in-class group projects, debate and deliberation on controversial issues, to be followed by “discussion of the process and the result” orally or in “reflective analysis papers.”<sup>32</sup> I employed all of these forms of experiential learning in my course for future teachers, selecting and scaffolding the exercises progressively to achieve the learning objectives of each section of the course.

Convincing the future teachers under my charge to experiment with various modes of active, critical, inquiry-based, experiential learning thus became one of my principal objectives in “U.S. History for Teachers.” This was easier said than done. Most of my students were first-generation college students, many from working-class Latinx or Asian families, working hard to succeed in the system, not to overturn it. As a first-generation college graduate myself, I recognized and understood education as a path to the middle class. Yet there also seemed to be subtler, less apparent forces behind their resistance to critical pedagogy. Eager to escape the silence enforced on them during years of listening passively to lectures, or the assent coerced from them as they participated in scripted discussions, always searching for the “right” answer and fearful of asking a “stupid” question that might jeopardize their grades, my students wanted to taste the power of speaking in their classrooms and courses as much as they wanted as teachers. They did not understand or articulate the roots of this will to power—they had little experience with self-reflection or (post-)structural analysis—but this made the position of teacher all the more irresistible. They yearned to lecture.

My semester-long effort to free my students and their future students from this cycle of domination by experimenting with alternative pedagogies assumed four interconnected forms. First, engaging in metadiscourse, I conversed collegially, openly, and often with them about the cognitive and political theories supporting active, student-centered learning. Second, I modeled inverted, critical pedagogy

during every class meeting: sitting next to and chatting before class with different students in our circle of equals; sharing my latest enthusiasms, pedagogical experiments, successes, and failures (and inquiring about theirs); reducing the anxiety surrounding assessment by using binary credit/no credit grades for our first two sets of lesson plans; and demonstrating my eagerness to take risks—including “failing to teach”—and to value their guidance and experience in evaluating my experiments. Third, I required them to construct their four lesson plans around open-ended discussion questions and interactive class exercises/ activities rather than lectures, and then to offer each other suggestions to expand the interactivity and open the questions while I drew out and augmented their ideas. (My mantra when asked repeatedly why I “hate” lectures was that I felt about lectures as they did about quizzes: I liked giving them, but I did not enjoy receiving them. Many students laughed appreciatively, but few pondered the political implications of my statement.) Finally, whenever possible, I taught them how disrupting their linear, unified, controlled lessons to introduce emotionally charged experiential learning could enrich their students’ understanding and help bring history to life.

### **Disrupted Lessons and Experiential Learning**

My interventions to illustrate the pedagogical power of disruption were most effective when my students were struggling to understand and/or connect with the historical content they were presenting. This is when they resorted most often to lectures, perhaps to reassure themselves as much as their listeners that they were in control of the material. One such moment came just two weeks into the course, as several of my students were presenting lesson plans on Philip Greven’s classic article, “Family Structure in Seventeenth-Century Andover, Massachusetts.”<sup>33</sup> Inexperienced with social history and especially with demographic analysis, my students had trouble making sense of Greven’s charts; the concept of family structure also seemed difficult for them. Rather than examining Greven’s central argument, they chose to define his italicized terms (e.g., patriarchy) or, worse still, to abandon the article and lecture about Puritan religion as “background,” making it as bland and boring as possible so as to offend no one. When each had finished presenting/lecturing, I asked how they thought the

children of the Puritan founders of Andover felt about their lives and families. Dumbfounded by the question, they asked me how they could know, to which I responded with another question: “Is there some way that you can help your students to experience what the second generation of Puritan Andover might have felt?”

Serendipitously, in our icebreaker introductions before class began, one of the students had mentioned that she loved to bake. “Suppose,” I wondered aloud, “you had baked (or bought, if your culinary talents resemble mine) a large, beautiful cake and placed it on the table in front of the classroom as your students entered to discuss Greven’s article. You cut it into pieces, but you did not distribute the pieces. Your students could see the cake and smell the cake and almost taste the cake all class period, as they tried to answer your questions about Andover. How would they feel?”

“Hungry! Frustrated! Distracted! Rebellious!” my students shouted. “The class would be terrible, since they would only be thinking about the cake.”

“It would certainly disrupt your lecture or discussion,” I agreed, “but would this experience help them understand how the second generation in Andover might have felt about having to wait so long to inherit the land they had worked since they turned six years old?” After several students commented that they would probably never forget the feeling—or forgive their teacher—we all agreed that they had better distribute the cake while asking their students in a final discussion or metacognitive wrap what they had learned about Andover’s families and the importance of intangible emotions in history. My students referred to this disrupted lesson and the power of experiential learning all semester (calls of “remember the cake!” punctuated future lessons); they had empathized and identified with the second-generation Puritans of Andover as most of them would never have imagined possible when the lesson began.

Our next opportunity to taste the injustice of history came three weeks later. The students presenting lesson plans to teach Gary Nash’s article, “Social Change and the Growth of Prerevolutionary Urban Radicalism,” struggled to make sense of the statistics or to convey Nash’s central argument.<sup>34</sup> Boston, New York, and Philadelphia all seemed the same to them (unfathomable to this Easterner), and the political discourse unchanging and impenetrable. Certain that no one would be able to follow an argument that seemed abstract and remote

to them, they turned instead to the conventional “background” that they had memorized year after year, lecturing about the origins of the Revolution in imperial act after act. Once again, I challenged them to disrupt their lesson and inject experiential learning to help their students understand Nash’s argument about the revolution at home.

Accompanied by calls of “remember the cake!” from my students, I suggested another experiment—hypothetical, of course, as a pedagogical simulation:

Suppose you hand out individual pieces of candy as your students enter the room to discuss Nash’s article. Most students get one or two pieces, a few get none, but a small number of students get huge handfuls of candy. You direct the fortunate few to sit in the front of the room at your big table to discuss the situation of the colonial elite, while the rest sit in three groups to discuss life for artisans and the poor in Boston, Philadelphia, or New York. Inevitably, the elite will start playing with their candy, counting and stacking it in decorative piles; what better representation of the ostentatious display of wealth that Nash describes could they give? Meanwhile, you will ask one of the elite to collect taxes/candy from the artisans (taking one of their two pieces) or the poor (taking their last piece), and bring it to the front table. What do you think they will feel and do?

“Rage! Revolution!” my students cried. “Against whom?” I asked. As the light dawned on Nash’s argument for them at last, one student asked how the colonial elite escaped annihilation. “Ah,” I replied, “to convey Nash’s concept of the dual revolution, you will need one more prop—a crown that you will don at this point, as you demand your (lion’s) share of the candy from the elite.” Convinced that their future students would never forget this taste of injustice or the feelings it created (tokens, dice, even pencils would be highly visible, yet less incendiary substitutes), my students did not even mourn their disrupted lessons. They were starting to comprehend the power of experiential learning.

It was no accident, of course, that both of these experiments in experiential learning disrupted my students’ recitation of central aspects of the master narrative of American history (Puritan religion and American Revolutionary resistance to imperial control) to create emotional connections with the oppressed or disempowered (Puritan children and the urban artisans/poor). I wanted my students to hear, see, and empathize with the people whom the American

master narrative silenced, rendered invisible, or demonized. As I also wanted this experiential learning to transform their educational vision and the way they would teach the next generation, I openly discussed my pedagogical and political goals with my students and asked them to reflect self-consciously on their experiential learning in discussions and metacognitive wraps. As they observed themselves participating in these pedagogical experiments as both researchers/future teachers and experimental subjects/students, they acquired the self-awareness necessary for metacognition and lifelong learning. We were disrupting their lessons, the master narrative of American history, and their accustomed role as passive consumers of both of these staples of traditional pedagogy.

Two weeks after our discussion of Nash's work, we were ready to "settle" the Revolution with the adoption of the Federal Constitution of 1787. One could hardly imagine a more sacred, central moment in the American master narrative. Indeed, it had been enshrined as an American Institutions requirement for graduation by the California legislature; like it or not (usually not, given the difficulty of the Federalist and Anti-Federalist writings for twenty-first-century readers), every student had to learn about this defining moment in American national identity in order to earn a Bachelor's degree. Like the celebration of Puritan religious "freedom" or the American Revolutionary resistance to British imperial tyranny, the adoption of the Federal Constitution of 1787 was represented as the triumph of good (the rational, unifying, visionary Federalists) over evil (the Anti-Federalists of little faith and local interests) in the national narrative. To see this as a genuine debate between worthy opponents, both of whom contributed crucial perspectives to American political discourse, and then to think about what was missing in both of their visions, would challenge the key origins myth of the national narrative, as well as these aspiring civil servants' official role as guardians of American civil religion. This would require multiple disruptions, and a rather intense dose of experiential learning.

To allow my students to experience the disruptions directly, and to give us all a change of pace from the individual lesson plans they had been presenting, I designed this lesson to involve the entire class in a role-playing constitutional debate. Unlike in their political science courses, however, this debate was not to replicate the constitutional convention, involve only the leading founders, nor center on the

eternal verities they penned. Our very informal debate was set in my tavern in Philadelphia in 1787, and my students were to create characters from around the nation who had wandered into my tavern to support either the Federalist or Anti-Federalist position. To help them get started, I chose the most accessible and controversial readings from *The Federalist Papers* and Anti-Federalist writings, randomly assigned half the students the Federalist position and documents and the other half the Anti-Federalist, and charted the political positions of various social groups (merchants, small farmers, plantation owners, artisans, and so on), based on their voting records and recorded views. Of course, this skewed the choice of characters to white male voters within the political nation, but none of my students seemed to notice this limitation. At the start of the debate, after a brief caucus, each student spoke in character to explain *his* view of the federal constitution, grounding it in both that character's experiences before and during the Revolution (militia or continental army, local or larger allegiances, education, occupation, etc.) and in the assigned documents. Then they engaged in free-wheeling debate, tossing questions and charges back and forth, and answering in character. I moderated lightly, asking questions to clarify or sharpen the debate while trying to stay in my role as a politicized yet ill-read Philadelphia tavern-keeper ("Will this solve currency and tax disputes between New Jersey and Pennsylvania?" "What in the world does three-fifths of a person mean?"). This inversion forced my students to refer to the documents they had read and to teach me about intricate constitutional provisions from opposing perspectives around the political nation.

Just as my students were about to resolve all of their differences peacefully and compromise on a Bill of Rights, re-inscribing the national narrative's happy ending, I disrupted my own lesson. Suddenly, I revealed that my character was a *female* tavern-keeper, a widow who had lost her husband in the Revolution. Speaking from outside the political nation, but very much inside the commercial world of Philadelphia, I demanded rights for women. Throwing caution to the winds, I also made my character one of Pennsylvania's early abolitionists, and demanded that they seize this moment to rid our new nation of the sin of slavery. It was a powerful double disruption of the lesson as well as the founding myth of the national narrative.

The disruption shocked my students into silence; this was not in the script they had rehearsed over the years in their history and political



science courses. When they found their voices (in character) again, they protested that such demands were impossible at this political moment, that the nation would fall apart, and that I should be quiet and serve the drinks in my tavern and leave the thinking to the men. I then asked them to reassume their own persona to reflect on the debate as historians and future teachers. Before opening the floor to their historical and metacognitive observations, though, I asked them which side they thought had more merit. The results were surprising, given that the initial assignment of roles had been random: those students who had played Federalists staunchly supported their wisdom and expansive vision (echoing the national narrative), but those who had played Anti-Federalists almost all defended the Anti-Federalists’ civic virtue and valiant support of individual rights. We then discussed this stunning result, which underscored the power of historical role-playing, particularly in a competitive setting, as experiential learning.

Responding to the larger question of what they had learned as historians from the debate and my disruption of it, they agreed that they all now saw the Anti-Federalists as real, serious, thoughtful people rather than the straw men of the national narrative—and that my disruption of their compromise from outside the political nation dramatically revealed another gaping hole in that narrative. They noted that, although they initially assumed the roles for purposes of the assignment, they had felt acutely uncomfortable defending the exclusion of women and slaves, especially since it had come just at the moment when they had reached their happy resolution, and thought they would remember that feeling of discomfort for a long time. How many Revolutionary Americans had also felt uneasy or unhappy about their compromise? Was the Revolution really settled? As active participants in emotion-infused experiential learning and a disrupted lesson, my students had learned just how powerfully this pedagogy could shake and reshape the most deeply entrenched myths in our national narrative.

My final disruptive intervention of the semester was completely spontaneous. Our most adventurous group had planned an elaborate interactive exercise to open their lesson on WWI. Dividing the class in half and the classroom down the middle with two sets of string separating an empty aisle in the middle, they handed out “ammunition” (balls of paper), strung paper flags on the strings, and informed us all of the “rules of engagement.” We were to be WWI

soldiers engaged in trench warfare. The object of the game was to cross no-man's land without being hit by ammunition, capture the flags on the other side, and return unharmed. While holding on to our string, we were safe. They advised us to crawl, move quickly, and be careful, because when hit, we would be paralyzed. The game began and my college juniors and seniors competed as vigorously, noisily, and joyfully as kindergarteners.

After observing this game for about ten minutes, I could be still no longer. "Have you thought about the implicit lesson you are conveying here?" I asked. "Do you really want to teach your students that war is fun, and that WWI trench warfare in particular was a game? Perhaps that accurately conveys the attitudes of many soldiers and civilians at the start of the war, but does it do justice to the gritty history that followed—or the suffering of the soldiers on both sides?" Amid some grumbling from the trenches that history should be fun, the presenting group asked me for a disruptive suggestion. I offered, "Suppose a few minutes into the game, you interrupt the fun with a screeching siren, darken the room, and then read the English poet/soldier Wilfred Owen's devastating poem, '*Dulce et Decorum Est*.'"<sup>35</sup> One obliging student located the poem on his smartphone and read it to the class. Several students expressed their shock at the poem's violence; it seemed so contemporary, they observed, except for the Latin. I continued, "You could complement this reading with images of WWI trenches, doughboys, and veterans."<sup>36</sup> The group quickly found some photos of injured WWI veterans and projected them; some students had to lower their gaze. "Then perhaps you could ask your students to share their emotions and reflect on whether this disruptive experience taught them anything about how it might have felt to live through the dramatic changes in warfare and society wrought by WWI." I asked, "Might this work, both to teach history experientially and to demystify warfare for the sixteen-year-olds in your class?" Several students observed that this "emotional roller coaster" from euphoria to horror was their most intense lesson of the year, and might really have an impact on an adolescent. After a heated discussion about whether one should censor history for high school students (the majority deciding that any sixteen-year-olds planning to join the military should experience this lesson first), the presenting group unanimously vowed to disrupt their lessons and inject experiential learning in their future classrooms. We had all captured the flags.<sup>37</sup>

## Resistance and Metacognition

It was as deliberately provocative as a slap in the face. His resentment had singed the page and burned my hand as I read it. He knew what good teaching was, and I was not doing it. He had often lectured in the Marines, pounding his fist on the podium to drive his point home and even walking on tables for emphasis. (Could there be a more transparent illustration of the connection between lecturing and power, I wondered.) A simple lesson and direct language—and knowing your stuff—were all it took to teach. All this other stuff was a waste of time.

I already knew that Jake was one of my inveterate resisters. His disengagement from our collective efforts was manifested in his body language (arms crossed over his chest), his refusal to converse with his peers or to learn their names, and his minimal participation in our class discussions. His individual lesson plans had both been lectures, and his responses to other students’ suggestions for possible interactive exercises had been defensive and curt. While he was not overtly discourteous to me, he made it clear that he would not be in this class were it not a graduation requirement for social science majors. After all, he already knew how to teach.

But now the pent-up frustration flowed in a torrent from his pen. The occasion was our first metacognitive wrap. As my students prepared to hand me their midterm papers, I asked them to “wrap” those papers in a self-reflection. I was reading Nilson’s *Creating Self-Regulated Learners* at the time and was eager to try this experiment with them. On the back of the last page of the paper, they addressed the following questions: “What did you find most satisfying about your paper? What did you find most challenging? What would you most like to improve before the final paper?” Most of my students wrote that they enjoyed the freedom to choose their own topics and primary sources from a collection of documents I had collected.<sup>38</sup> Many had found organization and time management most challenging, and a few noted that they had been all but paralyzed for a while by so much freedom of choice. Almost all hoped to improve the clarity and power of their writing on the final paper. Sidestepping the specific questions I had posed, and the opportunity the wrap offered to reflect on his cognitive processes, Jake threw down the gauntlet.

Suppressing the urge to pound on a podium and assert my authority, I reminded myself that resistance could be valuable and that democracy begins in conversation. I decided to respond to this challenge as an honest reflection of Jake's concerns. As soon as I read it that evening, I e-mailed him and asked if he could explain a bit more about his learning objectives in the course. Professedly astonished by this show of respect for his views, he "apologized" for not using his customary "filter" to disguise his contempt. I responded that I would like to understand his thoughts, so that I could help him meet his personal learning objectives. After a few more initial skirmishes (to adopt Jake's military language), we opened a frank and open discussion about gender, class, and power, and their intersection in education. Using one of my own searing experiences with social injustice along with the polyphonic history we were studying as catalysts, I invited Jake to explore the socio-historical roots of the rage that had inflamed his metacognitive wrap.

Subtly, Jake's attitude began to change. When I mentioned in class that recent studies had found no evidence to support the widely accepted theory of learning styles, he jumped on this as "proof that anyone can learn from a lecture if they try" and asked for references to these studies. (I sent these as well as links to other studies supporting active learning of various kinds.) He started to participate in class discussions, contributed substantially to his group presentations, and even bantered with me in class about the superiority of lecture as a mode of instruction. While I certainly did not convert him into a fan of active learning, his blanket resistance gave way at some moments to genuine dialogue.

Most startling, during our discussion of the disrupted WWI lesson, Jake shared with the class his feelings of frustration at not being able to participate in the game because of his military injury; while the class discussed the need to accommodate students with disabilities in their plans for active learning, I marveled that Jake now felt comfortable enough to discuss his pain with the class. His final metacognitive wrap of the semester actually reflected on the changes in his thinking and the growth of his skills as a future teacher, and he conceded that his "arsenal" of pedagogical techniques had been enlarged considerably. Like many of my students, he also noted that this course had seemed more "real" than any others he had taken. Miraculously, his resistance had been disrupted—and the transformation was wrapped up in metacognition.

## Notes

1. In continued admiration of their dedication to History and teaching, I would like to dedicate this article to Frank Stites and Ross Dunn, both emeriti faculty of San Diego State University.

2. See the “Theorizing a Disruptive Pedagogy” section in this article for more on these theoretical imperatives.

3. Eve Kornfeld, *Creating an American Culture, 1775-1800: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 2001).

4. For a complete list of these topics, see the course syllabus in Appendix A.

5. These interrelated themes of the politics of narrative and America’s polyphonic past, as central to my teaching as to my scholarship, draw from post-structural, gender, and critical race theories. For further explication of how these theories shaped my teaching and writing, see pages 647-648 of this article.

6. The Association for Experiential Education, the professional organization devoted to articulating experiential theory and practices, defines experiential learning as “*Challenge and experience followed by reflection leading to learning and growth*” (emphasis added). Association for Experiential Education, “What is Experiential Education?” <<https://www.aee.org/what-is-ee>>. Barbara Jacoby further defines experiential learning as “a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experience” accompanied by “critical reflection” in Barbara Jacoby, “Should I Encourage Experiential Learning during Class? How?” *Magna 20-Minute Mentor* (November 2017): 1.

7. All student names are pseudonyms.

8. Linda B. Nilson, *Creating Self-Regulated Learners: Strategies to Strengthen Students’ Self-Awareness and Learning Skills* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2013).

9. John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, eds., *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2000), quotation on 25.

10. Scott Freeman, Sarah L. Eddy, Miles McDonough, Michelle K. Smith, Nnadozie Okoroafor, Hannah Jordt, and Mary Pat Wenderoth, “Active Learning Increases Student Performance in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 23 (June 2014): 8410-8415, quotation on 8413. Zamzami Zainuddin and Siti Hajar Halili, “Flipped Classroom Research and Trends from Different Fields of Study,” *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* 17, no. 3 (April 2016): 8-11, also charts significant improvement in students’ achievement, motivation, engagement, and interaction in twenty articles documenting flipped STEM courses between 2013 and 2015.

11. Lendol Calder, “Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey,” *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1358-1370, quotation on 1369.

12. Among the quite diverse reflections on changing signature pedagogies in history courses at various levels and institutions are Eric Otremba, “A Case Against Facts: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Survey,” *The History Teacher* 48, no. 1 (November 2014): 37-54; Leslie A. Schuster, “Working-

Class Students and Historical Inquiry: Transforming Learning in the Classroom,” *The History Teacher* 41, no. 2 (February 2008): 163-178; and most recently, Susannah Walker and Gustavo Carrera, “Developing a Signature Pedagogy for the High School U.S. History Survey: A Case Study,” *The History Teacher* 51, no. 1 (November 2017): 65-88.

13. Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, “The End of the History Survey Course: The Rise and Fall of the Coverage Model,” *The Journal of American History* 97, no. 4 (March 2011): 1050-1066, quotations on 1052, 1061.

14. Chung Kwan Lo, “Toward a Flipped Classroom Instructional Model for History Education: A Call for Research,” *International Journal of Culture and History* 3, no. 1 (March 2017): 36-43, quotation on 36.

15. Daniel S. Murphree, “‘Writing wasn’t stressed, accurate historical analysis was stressed’: Student Perceptions of In-Class Writing in the Inverted, General Education, University History Survey Course,” *The History Teacher* 47, no. 2 (February 2014): 209-219, quote on 211.

16. Calder, “Uncoverage,” 1367.

17. Judy E. Gaughan, “The Flipped Classroom in World History,” *The History Teacher* 47, no. 2 (February 2014): 221-244; Murphree, “Writing wasn’t stressed”; Daniel Murphree, “Flipping the History Classroom with an Embedded Writing Consultant: Synthesizing Inverted and WAC Paradigms in a University History Survey Course,” *The Social Studies* 106, no. 5 (2015): 218-225; Edward B. Westermann, “A Half-Flipped Classroom or an Alternative Approach? Primary Sources and Blended Learning,” *Educational Research Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (December 2014): 43-57. Gaughan’s students reported learning more from the in-class discussion of primary sources than from her videotaped lectures that they viewed (or did not view) outside of class; Gaughan characterized her lectures as “content” rich or informational (p. 229), and notes that some students complained of “boredom and length” (p. 230). Similarly, Murphree’s students in two concurrent flipped General Education surveys based on “Writing Across the Curriculum” found the in-class writing more effective and significant in improving both their writing skills and knowledge of history than their preparatory reading, writing, and quizzes outside the classroom (Murphree, “Writing wasn’t stressed,” 215).

18. Lo, “Toward a Flipped Classroom Instructional Model for History Education,” 38, 41. Only Murphree’s studies employed quantitative and comparative assessments using control groups. See Murphree, “Writing wasn’t stressed,” 216.

19. Student evaluations from my 150-person General Education course on American history to Reconstruction also showed markedly improved student satisfaction after I flipped the class. The pedagogical success of this first-year GE course led me to experiment more fully with disruptive pedagogy in my “U.S. History for Teachers” course, as described later in the article.

20. Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001), 12-13, indicts history textbooks in particular for eliminating “metadiscourse,” in which the author “intrudes to indicate positionality and stance,” in favor of “the omniscient third-person.”



21. Patricia Williams, "The Obliging Shell: An Informal Essay on Formal Equal Opportunity," *Michigan Law Review* 87, no. 8 (August 1989): 2128-2151; Mari J. Matsuda, "Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story," *Michigan Law Review* 87, no. 8 (August 1989): 2320-2381; Derrick A. Bell, *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Derrick Bell "The Final Report: Harvard's Affirmative Action Allegory," *Michigan Law Review* 87, no. 8 (August 1989): 2382-2410; Richard Delgado, "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative," *Michigan Law Review* 87, no. 8 (August 1989): 2411-2441.

22. Joe L. Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 2, 3, 8, 34. Kincheloe's focus on teacher education and the "politically contested spaces" of schools of the twenty-first century is particularly relevant to our topic.

23. Larry R. Squires, "Memory Systems of the Brain: A Brief History and Current Perspective," *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory* 82, no. 3 (November 2004): 171-177, quotation on 175.

24. Katherine Woollett and Eleanor A. Maguire, "Acquiring 'the Knowledge' of London's Layout Drives Structural Brain Changes," *Current Biology* 21, no. 24 (December 2011): 2109-2114; K. Woollett and E. Maguire, "Navigational Expertise May Compromise Anterograde Associative Memory," *Neuropsychologia* 47, no. 4 (March 2009): 1088-1095.

25. Paul W. Frankland, Stefan Köhler, and Sheena A. Josselyn, "Hippocampal Neurogenesis and Forgetting," *Trends in Neurosciences* 36, no. 9 (September 2013): 497-503, quotation on 500.

26. Elizabeth A Phelps, "Human Emotion and Memory: Interactions of the Amygdala and Hippocampal Complex," *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* 14, no. 2 (April 2004): 198-202, quotations on 199.

27. James L. McGaugh, "The Amygdala Modulates the Consolidation of Memories of Emotionally Arousing Experiences," *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 27 (2004): 1-28, quotations on 18 and in abstract.

28. Phelps, "Human Emotion and Memory," 198.

29. Sarah Rose Cavanagh, *The Spark of Learning: Energizing the College Classroom with the Science of Emotion* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2016), 212.

30. Cavanagh, *The Spark of Learning*, 135-136.

31. Association for Experiential Education, "What is Experiential Education?"

32. Jacoby, "Should I Encourage Experiential Learning during Class?" 1, 3, 6. See also Thomas E. Smith and Clifford E. Knapp, eds., *Sourcebook of Experiential Education: Key Thinkers and their Contributions* (New York: Routledge, 2011); and Scott D. Wurdinger, *Using Experiential Learning in the Classroom: Practical Ideas for all Educators* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2005).

33. Philip J. Greven, Jr., "Family Structure in Seventeenth-Century Andover, Massachusetts," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (April 1966): 234-256.

34. Gary B. Nash, "Social Change and the Growth of Prerevolutionary Urban Radicalism," *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, ed. Alfred F. Young (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois Press, 1976), 5-36.



35. Wilfred Owen, “*Dulce et Decorum Est*,” in *A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Illustrated Poetry of the First World War*, ed. Fiona Waters (Hertfordshire, United Kingdom: Transatlantic Press, 2007), 83. Owen was killed in action in 1918; his poem was published posthumously in 1921.

36. Photographic images of WWI from the *Daily Mail* are reprinted in *A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Illustrated Poetry of the First World War*, ed. Fiona Waters (Hertfordshire, United Kingdom: Transatlantic Press, 2007).

37. Student evaluations from my “U.S. History for Teachers” for Spring 2017 are reproduced in full in Appendix B.

38. Kornfeld, *Creating an American Culture*.

## Appendix A

San Diego State University  
Department of History

**History 410**  
**U.S. History for Teachers**

**Spring 2017**

**Professor Kornfeld**

**Goals:** This course prepares future teachers to develop conceptually sophisticated and pedagogically challenging courses in U.S. History at the high-school level. Students will be invited to articulate and explore the central questions and themes of U.S. History, to locate primary sources to engage students in these questions and themes, and to develop pedagogical strategies for active learning. The course also seeks to help students to enhance their skills in critical analysis and clear expression. Through weekly discussions, individual and group presentations, and various writing assignments, students will practice speaking and writing clearly and powerfully about some of the most controversial issues of the past and present.

**Requirements:** As a “flipped” class, this course depends upon the active engagement and informed participation of each student. Students are expected to read the material assigned each week prior to the class meeting, to look up whatever they need or wish to know to understand it, and to join in the discussion of this material. A spirit of respect for each other and for our historical subjects must mark all of our discussions. Beyond this, there are **four** interrelated course requirements:

- 1) **Informed participation (30% of the course grade)** in class discussions of the reading assigned each week the first requirement. You are expected to attend, sign in, and share your insights with the class each week. You should not speak incessantly; listening to others is also an important part of discussion. But you should be prepared to contribute your thoughts on a regular basis. I will do everything I can to make our discussions enjoyable and stimulating, and you should do the same. Your participation grade will also include presentations of two individual lesson plans (described on page 3) on different weeks during the first half of the semester. I will consider your attendance as well as the quality and regularity of your contributions to class discussions in determining your participation grade.
- 2) **A midterm pedagogical paper (15% of the course grade)** will be due on **2/27** at 4 p.m. in class and electronically to *turnitin.com*. The assignment is to choose one of the primary sources in Part II of *Creating an American*

*Culture, 1775-1800*, after reading Part I of the book. In a coherent essay (not an outline) of about five pages, you should make and support an argument addressing a central question/theme the source opens about early American history, and create a lesson using the source for an Advanced Placement U.S. History class. You must cite your sources in footnotes or endnotes with specific page numbers. No late papers will be accepted. Papers will be evaluated for clarity, strength of argument, pedagogical creativity, and intelligent use of the course materials.

- 3) **Two group lesson plan presentations (20% of the course grade)** in the last half of the semester. You will form small groups and work together to choose a specific focus within a broad topic (e.g., Civil War and Reconstruction), to develop a central historical question/theme, to locate primary sources in a variety of media, and to create a plan for active learning (not lecture) centering on those sources. See page 5 for a description of the group lesson plans and pages 5-6 for the broad topics from which your group will select two, during a group organizational meeting in class on February 27.
- 4) **A culminating final essay (35% of the course grade)** will be due on 5/1 at 4 p.m. in class and electronically to *turnitin.com*. In a coherent essay of no more than ten pages, design an AP U.S. History course around a central theme or issue that will engage your future students in active learning. You should articulate and justify your central issue or theme, and provide at least four examples of lessons that address this central issue/theme using a variety of primary sources. Describe your interactive exercises and assessments and include all four centuries of American history (17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup>) that we will study this semester. You must cite your sources in footnotes or endnotes with specific page numbers, and include an annotated bibliography of all print and electronic sources you use. You may include important visual sources in an appendix. No late papers will be accepted. Final essays will be evaluated for clarity, strength of argument, pedagogical creativity, and intelligent use of the course materials.

**Academic honesty** is essential to the life of the mind and the university. Your papers for this course must be your own individual work. If you use the words or ideas of anyone else, you must put quotation marks around them and cite your source, with page numbers, in footnotes or endnotes. You should avoid paraphrasing the work of others. Those guilty of committing plagiarism or cheating in any way will receive an “F” for both the assignment and the course, in accordance with SDSU policy.

By taking this course, you agree that all papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to *turnitin.com* for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the *turnitin.com* reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. You may submit your papers in such a way that no identifying information about you is included.

**Readings:** Readings in the first part of the semester will be drawn from the historical interpretations and primary sources/documents below (#1-3). All reading should be done before the class for which it is assigned. The books below are available for purchase at the campus bookstore, and some are on reserve at the library. Please bring readings to class the day they will be discussed.

1. Eve Kornfeld, ed., *America's Polyphonic Past* (third ed., 2013) **\*third edition needed\***
2. Eve Kornfeld, *Creating an American Culture, 1775-1800: A Brief History with Documents*
3. Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*
4. Kelly Schrum, Alan Gevinson, Roy Rosenzweig, *U.S. History Matters: A Student Guide to U.S. History Online* (second ed., 2009)

**Office Hours:** After class or by appointment. I am also very open to answering questions—or just hearing your thoughts and concerns—via e-mail, which I check several times a day.

**SDSU Senate Policy Statement for Students with Disabilities:**

“If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.”

### **Schedule of Classes**

#### **I. Early America**

**Lesson Plans 1-8:** In most of our class sessions in the first half of the semester, several students (selected in advance by alphabetical division) will each present an individual lesson plan for active learning (not lecture) based on the assigned reading for that day. Each student will turn in a paper copy of her/his lesson plan at the start of the class period, and keep a second paper copy or electronic copy to use for her/his oral presentation. The lesson should be presented to fellow teacher/colleagues, not read or taught to a class. Following these individual presentations, the entire class will reflect on the pedagogy and content in these lesson plans. You will have the opportunity to present two lesson plans on different weeks in the first half of the semester.

**Written Assignment for Lesson Plans 1-8:** In one typed page, design a lesson to teach AP U.S. History students the reading assigned for your plan. Outline your goals (skills and content); brief opening icebreaker/interactive exercise; overarching thematic question; discussion questions about the reading; final synthetic/connective question (looking backward or forward); and conclusions (what students should carry away from the lesson).

1. **Introduction (1/23)**  
**The Contact of Cultures/Analyzing Primary Sources**  
 Reading: *America's Polyphonic Past*, pp. 5 and 425 (Smith and Powhatan).
  
2. **Chesapeake Society (1/30)**  
 Reading: *America's Polyphonic Past*, pp. 7-43 (Morgan, "The First American Boom"; and documents on "Bound Labor: The Indentured Servant").  
**Lesson Plan 1 due**, as described above (last names A-C).
  
- Puritan New England**  
 Reading: *America's Polyphonic Past*, pp. 45-70 (Greven, "Family Structure"; and "The Examination of Anne Hutchinson").  
**Lesson Plan 2 due**, as described above (last names D-G).
  
3. **Witchcraft (2/6)**  
 Reading: *America's Polyphonic Past*, pp. 71-102 (Boyer and Nissenbaum, "Salem Possessed"; and documents on "Witchcraft").  
**Lesson Plan 3 due**, as described above (last names H-R).
  
- Slavery and Freedom**  
 Reading: *America's Polyphonic Past*, pp. 103-134 (Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom"; and documents on "Bound Labor: Slavery").  
**Lesson Plan 4 due**, as described above (last names S-Z).
  
4. **Great Awakening (2/13)**  
 Reading: *America's Polyphonic Past*, pp. 135-154 (Isaac, "Evangelical Revolt").  
**Lesson Plan 5 due**, as described above (last names A-C).
  
- Urban Origins of the Revolution**  
 Reading: *America's Polyphonic Past*, pp. 155-180 (Nash, "Social Change and The Growth of Prerevolutionary Urban Radicalism").  
**Lesson Plan 6 due**, as described above (last names D-G).
  
5. **Independence and War (2/20)**  
 Reading: *America's Polyphonic Past*, pp. 181-240 (Paine, *Common Sense*; Declaration of Independence; *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*).  
**Lesson Plan 7 due**, as described above (last names H-R).

**The Founders’ Debate (everyone participates)**

Reading: *America’s Polyphonic Past*, pp. 241-290 (Constitution of the United States of America; Federalist and Anti-Federalist writings; and the Bill of Rights, 1789-1791).

Note: Your particular assignment for the debate will be announced after census date.

6. **Midterm paper due at 4 p.m. (2/27)**

Reading: *Creating an American Culture, 1775-1800*, pp. 3-80 and one document of your choice from Part Two.

Note: Be sure to submit your paper electronically to [turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) via the course page on Blackboard before bringing a hard copy to class at 4 p.m.

**Group Organizational Meeting**

Form groups and select your broad topics for the group presentations in the second half of the semester. Begin to organize/research your first group presentation. (Assignment details on next page.)

7. **The Market Revolution and the Middle Class (3/6)**

Reading: *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium*, introduction, chapters 2, 5, 6, and afterword.

**Lesson Plan 8 due**, as described above (last names S-Z).

**A Convention of Reformers (everyone participates)**

Reading: *America’s Polyphonic Past*, pp. 291-306 (Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*);  
*America’s Polyphonic Past*, pp. 307- 336 (selections from Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*);  
*America’s Polyphonic Past*, pp. 337-352 (selections from *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*);  
*America’s Polyphonic Past*, pp. 353-422 (Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, chapters 1-5, 9, 30, 33, 40, 41, 43, 44).

Note: Your particular assignment for the convention will be announced after census date.

8. **Group Planning Meeting I (3/13)**

Prepare and practice your first group presentation. (See below for details.)

## II. Modern America

**Lesson Plans 9-16:** In this half of the semester, small groups of students will create and present lesson plans together on topics from the Civil War to the present. During an organizational meeting on Feb. 27, you will form a group and select two broad topics from among those listed below. The group will work together to choose a coherent focus within the broad topic for its lesson, to develop a central question/theme, to locate primary sources in a variety of media (appealing to multiple intelligences), and to create a lesson plan featuring active learning (not lecture) around those primary sources. On the date listed for its topic below, the group will present (not read) its lesson plan to fellow teachers/ colleagues, demonstrate its icebreaker and/or interactive exercise(s), share its discussion and synthetic questions, and explain the pedagogical and historical significance of its themes and sources. Every member of the group should share in the oral presentation. Following the presentation, the entire class will offer constructive comments on the lesson's pedagogy and content. Each group will have the opportunity to present two lesson plans on different weeks during the second half of the semester.

**Written Assignment for Lesson Plans 9-16:** At the start of the class period on the date listed for its topic below, the group will turn in a written outline (probably several pages) of its lesson plan, including the goals (skills and content); annotated bibliography of sources (noting the source of the materials used and why they are historically and pedagogically valuable); opening icebreaker and/or interactive exercise(s); overarching thematic question; discussion questions about the primary sources; final synthetic/connective question (looking backward and/or forward); and conclusions (what students should take away from the lesson).

9. **Civil War and Reconstruction (3/20)**  
**Lesson Plan 9 due**, as described above.

**Industrialization, Urbanization, and Populism**  
**Lesson Plan 10 due**, as described above.

10. **American Imperialism (4/3)**  
**Lesson Plan 11 due**, as described above.

**Progressivism and National Reform**  
**Lesson Plan 12 due**, as described above.

11. **Group Planning Meeting II (4/10)**  
Prepare and practice your second group presentation.



12. **The Great War in America and “The New Era” (4/17)**  
**Lesson Plan 13 due**, as described above.

**Great Depression and New Deal**  
**Lesson Plan 14 due**, as described above.

13. **Cold War America (4/24)**  
**Lesson Plan 15 due**, as described above.

**Civil Rights and Vietnam**  
**Lesson Plan 16 due**, as described above.

14. **Final Paper and Annotated Bibliography due at 4 p.m. (5/1)**  
Note: Be sure to submit your paper electronically to *turnitin.com* via the course page on Blackboard before bringing a hard copy to class at 4 p.m.

## Appendix B

### Official San Diego State University Student Evaluations “U.S. History for Teachers,” Spring 2017 (Selected Responses)

#### Quantitative

*Scale: 1 (low) to 5 (high)*

Question No.	Question Prompt	Count	Pct.	Mean	St. Dev.	Median
<b>Group 1</b>						
1	Rate the instructor's overall organization and presentation of the course material.	16	100%	4.75	.58	5.00
2	Rate the instructor's focus on the student learning outcomes listed in the syllabus.	16	100%	4.88	.34	5.00
3	Rate the instructor's teaching overall.	15	94%	4.67	.62	5.00
<b>Group 2</b>						
4	Rate the instructor's use of a variety of teaching methods.	15	94%	4.47	.83	5.00
5	Rate the instructor's choice and design of assignments (such as tests, papers, etc.).	16	100%	4.56	.89	5.00
Group Totals				Mean	St. Dev.	Median
Group 1 Total				4.77	.52	5.00
Group 2 Total				4.52	.85	5.00
<i>Overall Total</i>				<i>4.67</i>	<i>.68</i>	<i>5.00</i>

#### Qualitative

#### 14. What were the instructor's strengths?

- A: Her class was set up differently, it was a flipped class. She was able to teach us how to teach by giving us free reign on assignments. Very interesting course, and I learned a lot. She is a great teacher that truly knows how to effectively guide her students into becoming future teachers.
- A: Dr. Kornfeld excelled at allowing us as students to have the freedom to create our own lesson plans. She also challenged us to step outside of the box while we were creating our lesson plans.

- A: Her strengths were using a flipped class method which allows for more student participation.
- A: Her obvious knowledge of the material, her ability to use her experience to bring the best out in her students, her ability to make students think about how things can be better, and her overall mastery of teaching how to teach.
- A: great at leading group activities
- A: Her ability to flip the class and have the students be responsible for their own learning.
- A: attention to detail, passion
- A: The instructor’s non-traditional approach to teaching opens students up to new and different ideas on how to teach
- A: Giving us the freedom to think outside the usual lecture lesson plan.
- A: Really challenged students to get out of comfort zone
- A: Such an amazing flipped course. Did not lecture! loved this course

*Note: 5 students did not respond to this question.*

**15. In what ways might the instructor improve this course?**

- A: Include the final grade on blackboard
- A: I cannot think of any ways this course can be improved.
- A: Maybe actually teach some material before students try to develop lesson plans
- A: Nothing, it was great!
- A: Nothing major
- A: Improve the assessment of group projects. I felt like I did much of the work in my group but was not graded on it.
- A: No comment.
- A: can’t think of a way the teacher could improve the course
- A: continue with current structure
- A: more lesson plan making and evaluation
- A: I think it would be helpful for this course to traditionally cover some types of teaching rather than the students needing to find styles online.

*Note: 5 students did not respond to this question.*

**16. What was the most interesting and/or important thing you learned in this course?**

- A: Lesson plans
- A: History is alive! not to lecture and to really engage the students
- A: personal ability

- A: I learned how to work in groups and prepare lesson plans. I also learned many fun activities that I will use with my future students.
- A: I learned how to be a significantly more inclusive teacher and to not focus solely on lecturing and making the students feel as if I am the only one in charge. Through this I also learned how inclusivity can create a more comfortable learning environment and foster debate, critical thinking, community, useful social dialogue, and intelligent outcomes.
- A: Challenge the master narrative in teaching the next generation.
- A: The sense of community in a classroom is very important. It allows the students to open up and be encouraged to come to school
- A: How to construct activities for the classroom.
- A: I learned the work entailed in making lesson plans
- A: Different activities to use with my future classes.
- A: How to develop a lesson plan.

*Note: 5 students did not respond to this question.*

**18. What is your major?**

- A: Child and Family Development
- A: social science - single subject teaching focus
- A: Social Science single subject teaching
- A: Social Science (Single Subject Teaching)
- A: Social Science Single Subject Teaching
- A: Social science Single Subject Teaching
- A: social science
- A: Social Science Single Subject Teaching
- A: Social Science Single Subject Teaching
- A: Social Science
- A: Social Science - Single Subject Teaching
- A: social science
- A: Africana Studies

*Note: 3 students did not respond to this question.*