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Philosophy of Teaching

As a cultural historian with an interest in intersectional analysis, I strive to create courses that introduce students to the broad currents of history while using cultural texts as well as the experiences of minorities to confirm or critique the chronological march taken by most history survey courses. From this analytical perspective, I can not only cover the expected historical content but also insert contemporary reactions that usually interest humanities and STEM students. This practice also expands the cultural knowledge of history majors, who are typically somewhat familiar with the political, social, and economic events that are covered in history courses. By exploring the interaction between politics, society, and culture, it is possible for students to develop a deeper knowledge of the past that reveals the fullness, diversity, and complexity of the human experience. My goal is not simply that students learn facts about the past, but that they interact with it from the present, too. In my courses, we access the past through various activities, such as listening to music, examining artwork, reading short stories or novels, and watching film clips or performances, so that we can weave together a more detailed historical tapestry by the end of the course.

History courses, whether general surveys or upper-level thematic classes, attract a diverse audience of students, and for this reason I focus on building a skillset that can be used to analyze the course content. Reading comprehension, critical thinking, and argumentative writing are incredibly important skills for students of history to acquire, and I introduce and begin developing this skillset during the first few meetings of each course. In order to provide an accessible approach to historical modes of thinking and writing, I encourage students to search for common themes across lectures and track major developments on timelines so they can locate change over time. Students can then take the details they have learned from lectures and readings and make supportable claims about the past before elaborating on the relationship between these themes and their evidence. By emphasizing this layered and relational approach, students have moved beyond memorization in order to engage with the primary sources and historiographical interpretations presented in lectures and readings. My evaluations repeatedly emphasize the

success I have had in building this skillset and pushing students to think and write with a historical mindset.

Because lecture classes are often the plowshare of departmental offerings, I have mostly focused on developing these types of courses that are infused with my cultural approach. My broad geographic training and transnational outlook enables me to offer general surveys in European, American, and Global history while ensuring that more specialized lecture courses on nineteenth or twentieth-century Europe, Modern Russian history, or the global Cold War are not beyond my capabilities. Furthermore, I have well-developed interests in cultural history and gender and sexuality studies, which allow for potential explorations of these subjects too. Please see my sample syllabi for a better perspective on the range of courses I can offer.

Generally, when lecturing I use powerpoints to help convey information, give visual aids, and link to important clips or online sources. In addition to sharing information during classtime, I typically highlight a short primary source and a cultural artifact in each lecture in order to have large or small group interactions with students. After reading, viewing, or listening to a source, I break the ice by asking for students' immediate reactions based on their feelings. Then I follow up with two more historically-oriented questions: How do you think people reacted to this in the moment? What makes this source historical? After some discussion, I remind students to consider the context of each source as it relates to broader themes we are addressing in the lecture or the course at large. Pairing historical content and key concepts with source interpretation diversifies the lecture experience, but I always end with some type of summation exercise to further emphasize the fact that arguments and conclusions are important when writing. Sometimes I will offer a short concluding paragraph that gives a tight summary of what we just covered in lecture, but other times I list themes that we have covered and ask students to write a detail that stands out in their minds about that particular topic. These activities allow me to reiterate my particular historiographical perspective from the lecture while giving students more practice relating details to broader subjects. Both of these practices will help students as they craft arguments in essays and further hone their historical skillset.

While serving as an adviser for Northwestern University's History Writing Center, I have noticed that many students can interpret primary sources relatively well, but they

really struggle at creating their own arguments or recognizing and responding to diverse scholarly interpretations. This happens despite the fact that most course syllabi have contrasting interpretations built into the assigned readings. On average I met with 64 students each quarter, and I realized that the pedagogical emphasis on primary source interpretation has not been balanced with attention to crafting arguments or comparing scholarly interpretations during instruction times. Within the short meetings I had with these students to discuss papers or assignments for other instructors' classes, I was able to push students to reason through the interpretations presented in their readings and lectures so that they saw similarities and differences in order to comment upon them for papers. Although few took daring positions, many students did craft historiographical "middle-of-the road" arguments that gave some detailed analysis of the positives and negatives of the different assessments posed by scholars by the end of our one-on-one sessions. So, a basic understanding of historiography is not beyond most undergraduates, and their argumentative writing skills would certainly benefit from more in-class activities on historiography or frank sign-posting of different interpretations in lectures or discussions. In my own lectures and discussion sections, I highlight my interpretations, present simplified understandings of key historiographical debates whenever pertinent, and push students to locate the arguments posed in their assigned readings by having them search for the author's thesis or assess whether their introductions or conclusions were clear or effective. Again, these short activities break up lecturing while reaffirming the importance of building skills needed for young historians.

My passion for working with students has been a major feature of my evaluations, and I greatly enjoy getting to know and interacting with them as each course progresses. I have been in the classroom for a decade, whether as a teaching assistant or instructor, and have had the privilege of working with students from three very different institutions. As a teaching assistant at the University of Cincinnati, I interacted with a variety of undergraduates from nearby inner-city public schools as well as high-performance magnet schools and private academies. While serving as a teaching assistant at Middle Tennessee State University, I had a mixture of students from inner-city public schools in Nashville, underperforming rural public schools, and from private academies and Christian schools. It was from working with students from these universities that I realized the importance of

building skills like reading comprehension, practicing better writing, and highlighting different perspectives in order to push students to engage with interpretations that may not fit their political or religious beliefs. Furthermore, at MTSU there was a large contingent of ex-military and nontraditional students, especially former factory workers who returned to college during the recession. I gladly rehashed key concepts with single mothers who missed classes but came children-in-tow to office hours or gave advice on reading comprehension and essay structuring to factory workers who had been out of school for decades. Working with these different types of students has really helped me to grow as a compassionate and effective instructor.

At Northwestern University, I was presented with new challenges such as working with non-native English speaking (ESL) students and STEM students in order to foster better writing skills and boost humanities enrollments by lessening their anxieties. It is incredibly rewarding to see these students improve as they learn better writing strategies and begin to engage with historical content. Recently, three ESL students in particular have signed up for more upper-level history courses and have even received coveted independent study slots with busy professors. Likewise, one of my STEM students changed her major from pre-med to history, and her passion and research skills resulted in her receiving a prestigious campus-based humanities fellowship within one year of switching her major. I have seen firsthand how students from all different backgrounds have the ability to succeed in history courses, especially if instructors focus on building skillsets that can be useful for other humanities and social science courses. For the past ten years, I have successfully used this building block style in discussion sections, lecture courses, and one-on-one meetings in office hours and the History Writing Center, and I look forward to teaching methods, research, and writing seminars in the future.

My commitment to the methods and practices of history pervades my teaching style, and I take my role as a transnational cultural historian seriously in order to boost interest in humanities education at a time when public funding for the arts and humanities is consistently a hot-button issue. I do not seek to be the most popular instructor on campus, but certainly covet the title of most effective. I am invested in seeing students improve over time and build skillsets that are transferable to other courses with the hope that they continue to be involved in the history department beyond my own classes. Within this

school year, I have successfully encouraged four students to either declare as history majors or add a minor to their program while helping them navigate course selections. I find interacting with students and enriching their knowledge of the past in order to prepare them for building our future to be incredibly rewarding. Fortunately, most students leave my discussion sections and courses with a more complex understanding of the past while knowing that their instructor was not only invested in their success but also that of the broader department. Wherever I have the opportunity to teach, my goal is to collaborate with other instructors in order to help the history department expand its impact on campus.