



## The Teaching of College History

**Meeting place:** Lindley Hall (LH) 019  
**Meeting time:** 4:00-6:00 Tuesdays  
**Instructor:** Leah Shopkow  
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### Course Content

When you have emerged from graduate school, many of you will find that you are emerging into a rather different academic world than the one you have experienced both as an undergraduate and as a graduate student. The student population changes very rapidly. You may end up at a liberal arts college more selective than IU or at a community college that is open admission. Furthermore, tertiary education is under extraordinary pressure to demonstrate that it actually has some value and

teachers as a whole are under pressure to demonstrate that they know how to teach. This course is intended to introduce you to some of the truly vast literature that is available to help you understand your students (whatever their backgrounds and preparation), to highlight for you the nature of historical thinking and learning so as to be better prepared to foster it in your own classrooms, and to provide you with research tools to determine how well your students have mastered it.

### Course Philosophy

This course is firmly based in a learning-centered philosophy of teaching. The goal of teaching is for students to learn. If students do not learn, there has been no teaching. Furthermore, if students learn things that they have forgotten in a couple of years (or even the semester afterward), there has been no teaching.

Another premise of the course is that form follows function. A course intended to teach students to think historically has to be designed to do so. If one wants one's students to think, one has to lead them through the thinking process and allow them to practice thinking while assessing the task. It is not sufficient to demonstrate your own thinking to your students, just as if you want your students to dance, it is not sufficient to take them to repeated performances of the New York City Ballet. Therefore, I am a staunch advocate of engaged pedagogies and discourage lengthy lecturing, from which only a minority of students benefit.

The difficulty for us, of course, is that we were part of that minority. Furthermore, it probably formed the bulk of our experience as students, at least until graduate school, when the "German Seminar" took over. The unspoken premises of the lecture are these:

1. Students are not ready to think, because they have little content knowledge; therefore we will do their thinking for them.
2. The point of the history course is to convey content knowledge, so as to prepare future historians with the background knowledge they will need.
3. Information is scarce and hard to find and students need to get information from us or else they cannot get it.

The first of these premises is true only if one insists that one's students think as we do. If one doesn't want that, lecturing actually works against student independent thinking. Students conceive of their job as mirroring back one's thinking. And how can one say that students who have mirrored back our own positions are wrong?

The second of these premises is a long-held notion of the function of modern college education. Yet the roots of the liberal arts lie not in professional training, but in notions about what a free person (*liber, libera*) needed to know. So if we are not training future historians (and statistically we are not), what value can we give students? This is not an easy question, but it is a truly important one (a variant of the "so what" question we ask in our research and need to ask in all our work). I have personal answers to this question and some suggestions, but you will need to develop your own ideas about this as a guide for your work.

Finally, the third of these premises was true for a very long time. As Craig Nelson, an emeritus colleague in biology pointed out, when we started teaching it was extraordinarily difficult to do research anywhere but a major university library. Now there is more on the web than was available to me as a graduate student at a major university library. I use the library all the time, but most frequently electronically. We inherited slide collections when we began teaching. Now who uses slides? There are more images and more high quality images on the web than I could possibly use in

a lifetime of teaching. So students can get mountains of information. But do they know how to assess information and how to turn information into knowledge?

Consequently, THIS course will contain a few explicit premises:

1. Students need to begin thinking about course content as they acquire course content (as we do in a seminar). Therefore, guidance in thinking historically needs to be explicitly provided for a course to serve its proper function. Guidance implies practice and feedback as well as modeling.
2. The point of teaching history is that history, like other disciplines, is a way of creating knowledge. The point of teaching history is to provide all students with a way to create a “usable” past for themselves in the contexts in which they need it, as well as the ability to recognize those contexts.
3. Students come into a course with very different expectations about history. We think of ourselves as fashioning history, but they tend to see us as relaying facts or telling stories. We must therefore introduce them explicitly to one or another aspect of the epistemology of history, or how historians create knowledge and what kind of knowledge it is. This means that we also need to think explicitly about how we know what we know.

The exercises we will engage in during the semester will be intimately related to the above goals and premises.

### **Course Outline**

There are three major topics we will consider this semester, each of which will terminate in a project or product.

1. Pedagogy Literature. We will read some of the more important writing about history teaching and students will write an essay.
2. Course design. Students will read about backward design and will design a course in a topic of their choice backward.
3. Educational research. Lee Shulman has referred to student minds as the “black box.” We know what we put before them and we know what comes out, but we are grossly ignorant of what goes on in there, because students do not normally tell us. We learn about some of the techniques of doing educational research and you will participate in a real research project, with all that entails. You will join a research project for which I will already have secured authorization from our IRB (Internal Review Board); I will be the PI (principal investigator) and you will be investigators. We will be researching prior student narratives about history in the classes of faculty members who have given their permission.

We will actually do the reading for this topic early in the semester, although you will do the actual research in the third part of the semester.

### **Books**

Noel Entwistle, *Teaching for Understanding at University: Deep Approaches and Distinctive Ways of Thinking* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009). One of the foremost scholars on “deep approaches” in education to promote “deep learning.”

Linda S. Levstik and Keith C. Barton, *Researching History Education: Theory, Method, and Context* (London: Routledge, 2008). Sorry about the price of this one. However, the title is a bit

misleading. It will contain information about methods, but there are research studies among the papers. Keith Barton is one of the Big names in history education, along with Sam Wineburg, and Peter Seixas, Bruce VanSledright and is in the school of education at Indiana.

Grant P. Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 1st edition. (There is a second edition, but it seems to me to be largely longer rather than better. The second edition addressed the critique that the book does not provide examples from tertiary education and that it would be more likely to be adopted if it did so. However, it seems to me to be quite sufficient as it was. Besides, getting a used copy of the first edition will be much cheaper—\$.99 last I looked.)

Other readings will be available on Oncourse.

### **Course Assignments**

Leading class discussion once during the semester (10%)

5 Response Papers (15%)

Syllabus for a College-Level History Course with accompanying explanation and discussion of assignments (preferably a survey) (15%)

### **Research assignments**

Interview transcriptions (25%)

Coding and write-up of data from interviews (25%)

The first three types of assignments are clear, even if you're not sure how to do them (you'll be led through them when they come up). The last two are less clear and they are half of the grade, so I'll explain here, but at greater length when we embark on the research. By taking this class, you will be participating as an investigator in an educational research project. We will be interviewing undergraduate students in the classes of cooperating teachers in the History Department about the narrative about the past and also about history as a discipline that they bring into class. These narratives can have a powerful effect on what students learn and how they learn it, but there hasn't been much research on what these narratives actually are and how they interact with course materials and methods. I have already secured Human Subjects authorization for the project from our IRB. However, before you can collect or analyze data, you have to be Human Subjects certified through the on-line course. You will work in a team of 2 or 3 to collect ten interviews. Your team will transcribe your interviews. We will then create a coding rubric together and teams will exchange their transcriptions with other teams, who will code them. The spreadsheet will be given back to your team and you will write up your data. We will consider the individual write-ups and talk about how we can turn our research into an article.

## Course Calendar

Date	Topic and Reading	Assignments due and questions to think about
<b>Unit 1</b> <b>What does it mean to learn History?</b>		
<b>August 21</b>	Sam Wineburg, "Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts" (Oncourse) Bob Bain, "Rounding up Unusual Suspects: The Hidden Structures of Authority in the Classroom." (Oncourse) David Pace, "The Amateur in the Operating Room" <i>American Historical Review</i> 104 (2004): 1171-92. History Learning Project: "The Union of Teaching and Epistemology." (Oncourse)	What is the task when we teach history? Where are the students coming from? What does it mean to think historically?
<b>August 28</b>	Barton and Levstik, <i>Researching History Education</i> , essays 1, 4, 11, 13, 14	How do young students conceptualize history? Is it different from the way students in tertiary education do so? How can one explore this issue?
<b>September 4</b>	Barton and Levstik, <i>Researching History Education</i> , essays 9, 15, 18 Gaea Leinhardt, "Lessons on Teaching and Learning in History from Paul's Pen" in <i>Knowing, Teaching and Learning History: National and International Perspectives</i> , ed. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg (New York: New York University Press, 2000): 223-245	More explorations from within the "black box."  Please complete your Human Subjects Certification by this week. Make sure to include my email among the ones to which your results are to be sent.
<b>September 11</b>	<i>How Students Learn</i> , chapters on History (Oncourse)	How can the teaching of history be brought into line with what we know about how people learn?

Date	Topic and Reading	Assignments due and questions to think about
<b>Unit 2 Parameters for Learning</b>		
<b>September 18</b>	William Perry, <i>Forms of Intellectual and Emotional Development in the College Years</i> , chapter 5, “The Development Scheme.” (Oncourse) <i>Teaching College Freshmen</i> , Chapter 1 (Oncourse)	Cognitive and Emotional Stages—where do college students fall?
<b>September 25</b>	Entwistle, <i>Teaching for Understanding</i> , through p. 90	Deep approaches to learning, and how they differ from surface approaches
<b>October 2</b>	Entwistle, <i>Teaching for Understanding</i> , 90-end	Research and deep approaches Recruitment visits for Unit 3
<b>October 9</b>	Wiggins and McTighe, <i>Understanding by Design</i> .	The principles of backward course design.  What are the most important things you want your students to know and to be able to do? How could you assess their ability to do so?
<b>October 16</b>	<i>Classroom Assessment Techniques</i> , selections Jerome Bruner, “Folk Pedagogy” (on-line)	What kinds of assessments could you use to chart your students’ learning (as opposed to their performance)? Course syllabus to be submitted by October 21.
<b>October 23</b>	Read all the syllabi	Course syllabus to be submitted by two days before class.
<b>Unit 3 Adding to the Teaching Commons (Research)</b>		

<b>October 30</b>	We will not meet this week to free up time to do your interviews.	Critique of two syllabi as assigned
<b>Week 12</b>	We will not meet this week to free up time to do your interviews.	Revision of syllabus in the light of critique
<b>Week 13</b>	We will not meet this week. Instead, you should be transcribing your interviews with the students.	Your interviews should be completed by this week (many students won't be around this week and in the remaining two weeks of the semester, they will be quite frantic.
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Qualitative Methods, to be assigned Bring a transcription of at least one interview (please include the questions as well as the answers). We'll be talking about how we can make sense of the data.	Swap interviews with another pair of interviewers and code each other's interviews. Return the coding to the interviewers. Interviewers to do a draft write-up of the data.
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Considering the results:</b> Read everyone's data write-up. We'll consider our data and discuss writing an article using it.	Submit your data write-up by two days before class.
<b>Finals Week</b>	Final data write-up is due on Wednesday of finals week. Final version of syllabus is due on Wednesday of finals week.	