

# Reimagining the Introductory U.S. History Course

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IN RECENT YEARS, the American Historical Association's Teaching Division has demonstrated great interest in the teaching and learning of history. The Division is working towards developing initiatives to improve student learning in introductory courses across instructional settings, and at different levels, as both the association's involvement in the NEH Bridging Cultures and the recent *Perspectives on History* issue on dual enrollments attest. Rethinking the introductory history course is a logical outcome of the Tuning process. The organization's involvement with the Tuning Project has led historians across the country, in all kinds of institutions, to question what a history major should know, understand, and be able to do upon graduation. Having explicated a History Disciplinary Core 2.0 statement,<sup>1</sup> members of the Tuning groups and the organization have naturally thought about curriculum mapping and skills scaffolding, which in turn has led many of us to look carefully at the history curriculum in our own departments, and thus back to the introductory course. This essay outlines the *methods* through which my colleagues and I at Long Beach State developed a new introductory course, in response to my active participation in the Tuning initiative. The Tuning process can help us reimagine

the introductory history course, address gaps in student knowledge, and in response, develop innovative courses that meet disciplinary objectives, institutional requirements, and student needs.

### **The Tuning Project: Reflective Practice**

Although AHA's "Tuners" developed a Disciplinary Core Statement after extensive meetings and wide consultation, the Tuning Project is far more than a process of designing learning outcomes and assessing them.<sup>2</sup> Further, the Disciplinary Core Statement is in no way prescriptive. As Anne Hyde writes so eloquently of the core statement, "We assume it will be revised, taken apart, added to, or winnowed down to reflect the distinct character of each institution and its students."<sup>3</sup> At its core, the Tuning process is a reflective, evidence-based inquiry designed to improve student learning and help us articulate to others the value of a degree in history. As such, it mirrors our professional practice of posing questions, gathering data, sharing our results with others, and answering our research questions. It is what historians do, but with our view directed toward our classrooms, not the archives. Some Tuners may limit their activities to adopting and altering the core competencies to their own particular institutional contexts, then develop rubrics or other means to assess student learning. For others, like myself, participation in the Tuning Project has meant much more: determining specific roles of courses within the curriculum, learning about barriers students face in pursuing their education, embracing innovation and experimentation in teaching, and demonstrating what career paths are open to students with history degrees.<sup>4</sup>

### **Challenges of the Introductory Course**

At many institutions, the standard United States history surveys (or some variation thereof) are considered "introductory" courses in history, for history majors and minors, pre-service teachers, and in the suite of courses that satisfy General Education requirements. Yet the introductory U.S. history course is one that serves many masters. There may not be a more critical course in the collegiate history curriculum than the U.S. introductory course. In an era of declining history enrollments nationwide, it is a course that many

consider essential to recruiting new majors. Pre-service teachers must master the content of the course in order to teach the survey to future students. Students must take it to satisfy major requirements in history and other fields, or to meet graduation requirements. At the same time, a greater proportion of first-year students are exempt from these requirements, as they have passed the Advanced Placement U.S. exam or taken the course as dual enrollment students in their secondary schools. Community college courses that satisfy the U.S. history requirement may not even conform to the traditional two-semester U.S. survey, and they may not even be *history* courses—among those courses in California community colleges that satisfy the American Institutions requirement are offerings in Economics, Labor Studies, Environmental Studies, Sociology, and Ethnic Studies.<sup>5</sup>

Long Beach State is part of the twenty-three-campus California State University system, the largest university system in the nation; it is, as we like to say, the “elephant in the room,” loosely akin to what Texas is to school textbook publishers. What happens here often reverberates across the country. Within many public institutions of higher education that use enrollment-based budget models, like the California State University system, the U.S. survey courses are the “bread-and-butter” courses of every history department: the courses that generate the highest enrollments, and thus “pay” for everything else we do. Faculty at other institutions understand this budget conundrum very well: in the SUNY system, students may graduate without ever taking the U.S. history survey—or any other history course. History enrollments within the SUNY system have plunged, creating budgetary crises driven not by the remnants of the “Great Recession,” but by administrative action that eliminated the state GE requirement that all students take one course in history.

Despite the many masters the U.S. survey courses serve, the traditional chronological organization of the introductory U.S. survey course is remarkably uniform. This uniformity is undoubtedly familiar to most readers; its content framework is reflected by titles of textbooks and chapter organization within those texts. The most widely adopted collegiate textbooks include *The American Pageant*, *The American Nation*, *America Past and Present*, *The American Journey*, *America's History*, *The American Promise*, *Out of Many*, and *Give Me Liberty*. Regardless of author, publisher, or political bent, chapter organization within these various texts is strikingly very

similar, outlining a course that begins with some form of pre-colonial “American beginnings,” is divided neatly at Reconstruction, and depending upon the edition, ends with some discussion of American neoliberalism, the terror of 9/11, and the election of our first African American president. These texts are structured explicitly for the utilitarian purpose of “coverage” over a fifteen-week semester.

Pedagogical practices often reflect textbook organization. On many campuses, instructors privilege content over skills, especially within the lecture format. The arguments for doing so will be familiar to many: “How can students *do history* if they don’t *know* anything about history?” Yet as Lendol Calder, Joel Sipress, David Voelker, and others have so cogently argued, student learning in typical content-based U.S. history surveys is uneven, at best.<sup>6</sup> Students often do not retain much of what they learned beyond the semester in which they took the course. In many cases, students resent the General Education requirement, as they see no relevance to their majors, intended careers, or even their lives. The liberal use of publishers’ test banks, standardized course outlines, auxiliary compendia of primary sources, and tools for evaluating student learning—such as the short-answer format exam—all reinforce a view that content knowledge is of utmost priority. How many of us have heard our students plead, “Please just tell us what will be on the test?”<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, some faculty members view the course in a similar way: unable to articulate *why* the survey is relevant to students *beyond that it is history* (in their minds an enjoyable subject), though at the same time they may profess to enjoy the opportunity to “mold young minds.” Or they view the assignment to teach the course as a necessary evil, never updating their syllabi or altering readings or assignments. We are all familiar with the instructor, perhaps a colleague or a professor at our own alma maters, who has taught the U.S. survey so many times that he or she goes on autopilot when approaching the lectern, delivering, as one student from the United Kingdom described online, “the same damn facts, over and over.”<sup>8</sup> Sometimes, faculty are fond of teaching the survey, not because of its place in the curriculum, but because they enjoy teaching a course that features their favorite lectures—or, as it was once described to me, “all the biggest hits”—from their other (largely upper-division major) courses. Within the California State University system, some historians prefer to teach the survey in a large lecture format,

variously called “oversized” or “jumbo” classes, because high enrollment classes carry more weighted teaching units, and thus reduce the number of one’s separate preps. Tuners will readily acknowledge these multidimensional challenges of reimagining the introductory U.S. survey course.

### Uncovering Institutional Contexts

Confounding these pedagogical challenges are the ways in which institutions define a course’s “purpose.” One must unravel the institutional contexts within which the introductory course is embedded in order to understand the local purpose of U.S. survey courses. The Tuning process can help here. Let’s think about the U.S. survey: What is it *supposed* to do? It is essential to pay close attention to a course’s context within any institutional structure.

At Long Beach, there are specific departmental as well as CSU system and state contexts to consider. Our history department is known for its long-standing commitment to student learning. Some of our departmental colleagues participated in the Quality in Undergraduate Education (QUE) project.<sup>9</sup> For well over a decade, we have had in place measurable programmatic learning objectives (PLOs) that focus on the skills and competencies we want our history majors to develop. These PLOs resonate with those of the Tuning Discipline Core Statement. Like many Tuners, though, I worry that the student learning outcomes (SLOs) of our introductory history courses do not align well with the Tuning core statement (see **Figure 1**, which provides a visualization of the challenges to “tuning” the introductory U.S. survey). Furthermore, there are overlapping objectives for GE courses. Long Beach State adopted the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) essential learning outcomes for all General Education offerings.<sup>10</sup> In 2013, the CSU endorsed the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP), as part of its “Quality Collaborative,” and has endorsed its use in the formation of GE Pathways and “integrated minors” at its Northridge and other campuses, which rightly have been faculty-led initiatives.

The U.S. survey courses, however, do not exist solely within the vacuum of our discipline or local institutional context. The U.S. history survey plays a critical role in the curriculum at Long



**Figure 1:** Challenges in Tuning the introductory U.S. history survey.

Beach. Our General Education program requires that all students pass a college-level U.S. history course “to foster an awareness of the United States experience and of the people, institutions, circumstances, and events in...United States history that have shaped contemporary conditions,” as a means to “*enable students to function as responsible citizens*” (emphasis added).

This requirement is mandated by state law. California’s Code of Regulations, Title 5 (Education Code), Article 40404 states that all students in the California State University system undertake “comprehensive study of American history and American government including the historical development of American institutions and ideals, the Constitution of the United States and the operation of representative democratic government under that Constitution, and the processes of state and local government.”

Educators within the CSU refer colloquially to this mandate as the “AI” (American Institutions) requirement.

The AI requirement has been a matter of contention in recent years. First, in 2011, the Chancellor’s Office reconfirmed a 1981 Executive Order, stipulating that campus presidents have the authority to determine which courses met the AI requirements. On at least one campus, Sacramento, the campus president has certified that a non-history course—in this case, Anthropology 101—satisfies the AI requirement most commonly taught in History and Political Science departments.<sup>11</sup> On other campuses, the AI requirement may be completed by passing a history course taught by historians in another department. In some cases, AI courses may be “cross-listed,” or dually listed in two departments, one of which *may* be history, and in which the instructor *might* be a historian. At some CSU campuses, students may satisfy the AI requirement by passing the College Board’s College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams in U.S. History and government, or by passing a specific challenge exam in these subjects.

Secondly, the state’s Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act, signed into law in 2011, requires that community college students holding the Associate in Art for Transfer degree and transferring into the CSU system be held to no more than 120 units, unless external accreditation bodies mandate additional training. Implementation of this law paved the way for calls among some that the AI courses were irrelevant, especially to students in traditionally high-unit majors like business, nursing, and engineering. As CSU faculty and administrators worked to shoehorn existing high-unit majors into the 120-unit legislative “box,” they sought ways to cut units without slashing into courses taken within the major. GE courses were thus on the chopping block. I recall in particular a 2011 meeting in which a ranking member of the CSU system-wide General Education Governing Committee pronounced U.S. History as “of no use whatsoever to business majors” at his campus; he saw only slightly more value to the U.S. government requirement. I was just one of a large group of CSU historians and political scientists who argued vociferously against this view, and in the end, most campuses have not issued wholesale exemptions from the AI requirement. But this could change at any moment, with a change in campus leadership or shifting political winds.

Despite a body of legislation that specifies “civic education” as the proper goal of the U.S. survey course, though, there is little agreement among administrators or historians what a “civic education” actually encompasses. Is it citizenship training, or, in other words, should we hold all students to a U.S. citizenship test or the 1998 NAEP twelfth grade civics exam? Or, more provocatively, should we administer the 2014 NAEP civics assessment given to eighth graders, of whom only 23% scored at or above *proficient* level?<sup>12</sup> Within these many constraints, what opportunities exist for innovation, for reconceptualizing the U.S. survey course? And how were we doing in meeting the requirements as they existed? To answer these questions, we turned to our past assessments, as well as created a new assessment in the Fall of 2014. These assessments helped us design a new U.S. introductory course, not to supplant the traditional U.S. survey, but to offer a supplemental version designed especially for non-majors.

### Adventures in Assessment

As a self-reflective practice of evidence-based inquiry, the Tuning process demands thoughtful assessment of educational practices to improve learning. Perhaps this is the reason for some significant misunderstanding about what Tuning is—and is not. Assessment is not simply something done to satisfy institutional, state, or accreditation requirements, but to inform course-level and programmatic development, improvement, and change. In its many forms, assessment is an integral part of the Tuning process.

In the last several years, we completed several assessments of our introductory U.S. history courses (see **Figure 2** for a review of our assessments of the U.S. introductory survey). We examined syllabi and assignments, leading to a revision of our standard course outline. In this case, we replaced outdated learning objectives, such as “Students will be able to explain the meaning of” specific content items (e.g., Roosevelt’s “Big Stick” speech) with objectives that focus on more global subject matter content as well as historical thinking skills. We have used pre- and post-test procedures to measure student learning, using a short-answer question from a previous AP exam, chosen collaboratively by our instructors. We have tried teaching the survey courses in small seminar format





Figure 2: Review of assessments of the introductory U.S. history survey.

to our most at-risk students, stressing developmental reading of content, writing practice, and academic advisement, and have tracked students' progress longitudinally. To help students improve their writing in the introductory courses, in 2011, we instituted a

departmental writing program that utilizes a set of formulaic writing tools, most notably Steven Posusta's "Instant Thesis Maker," which developmental writers have found particularly helpful, even though some educators caution that it is "reductive and pedagogically problematic."<sup>13</sup> In the Fall of 2014, I struggled to understand what our U.S. survey course was *supposed* to do—that is, promote a somewhat Whiggish "awareness" of how U.S. history has "shaped contemporary conditions," focusing on civic education, in order to help students become better citizens. I needed to know more about what our students knew.<sup>14</sup>

Until last year, we had not put a fine point on our assessment inquiries: we had not asked students an open-ended question about the concepts and skills they learned in the course. Critically, we had not asked them what they learned about "American citizenship," which the state mandates must be covered in the U.S. survey. While citizenship, or "civic education," is normally a topic in the U.S. survey courses—think, for instance, Reconstruction Era amendments—it is not clear that all instructors emphasize this topic explicitly in their courses.

At the end of the Fall 2014 term, I asked all instructors teaching U.S. survey courses to distribute the assessment instrument, a questionnaire that asked students to list three concepts or items (things) that they had learned in the course that "are helpful to you in understanding American history and citizenship." We also asked them to list any "educational or intellectual skills" that they gained from the course. Finally, we offered students the opportunity to suggest ways to improve the educational experience in the course.<sup>15</sup> Of approximately 1,200 students enrolled in multiple sections of the two U.S. survey courses, we received 697 responses, for a response rate of 58%, a robust return for a voluntary survey. Students had much to say in their responses. But what they left out was even more revealing.

Of the 697 responses, 41 students (5.9%) did not provide any answer to the question about what content they learned in the course that helped them learn about "American history and citizenship." Most of these students did not simply leave the questionnaire blank, but instead wrote "N/A" or "None" or provided other commentary, some of it unfit to print. Whether or not these students actually *learned* anything in the course cannot be determined, but their

non-answers illustrate their resentment at having to take the course at all. We cannot conclude that this subset of students was wholly disinterested and resented having to complete an assessment instrument. Most of these content/concept non-responders (n=39) provided answers to the question about “educational or intellectual skills.” And many had quite specific things to say about ways to improve the course, as was the case with a Political Science major with a career goal of becoming a U.S. Senator, who implored, “Make it more interactive, don’t read PowerPoints, hand out study guides, don’t say ‘Remember Everything.’”

Of the 656 students who did respond to the content/concept question, only 386 students (58.8%) clearly articulated as their first (of three) responses a concept or issue that can be reasonably classified as related to “American history and citizenship.” When all three responses are aggregated, this percentage of positive answers declines slightly to 55.4% (n=970).<sup>16</sup> Importantly, in our analysis, we used historian Alan Taylor’s definition of civic learning and its relation to the study of history, a concept he terms “depth perception in time.” As he writes in the July 2013 issue of *The Source*:

By depth perception in time I mean that people in the present have a much clearer sense of who they are and how their government and courts operate if they know how the nation originated and what challenges it has faced in the past. A sense of development through time and an understanding of past crises (such as the Alien and Sedition Acts, the Civil War, the Civil Rights movement, or the McCarthy purges) will best persuade students that they have an ACTIVE rather than a PASSIVE role to play as citizens.<sup>17</sup>

Students’ answers that broadly addressed “past crises,” in Taylor’s words, or both general and specific concepts relating to rights, citizenship, and the development of our government and laws were included as answers related to U.S. history and citizenship.

Besides such items as the Civil War, women’s suffrage, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Bill of Rights were other answers that qualified as within the “depth perception of time” category of civic education. Slavery was a common response; given our nation’s history, in which race and citizenship were so closely intertwined, I consider this a valid response. In one case, a respondent made a clear association, as the first answer in the list of three was “Slavery,” followed by “14<sup>th</sup> Amendment,” and capped off with

Category A: History, Citizenship & Law	Category B: Events	Discarded or irrelevant answers
Amendments (general & specific) Voting/Voting Rights Act Suffrage Who is a citizen Constitution, Bill of Rights Slavery & rights, 3/5 rule native-born citizenship fluidity of citizenship how amendments work Supreme Court War takes away rights Basis of our country Literacy tests, poll taxes Separation of powers Inalienable rights of Americans how minorities got rights citizenship not available to all citizen rights civil disobedience need to be legal to vote process of enacting laws, acts not everyone is equal civil rights role of president coverture & such citizen tests for immigrants <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> & others own property to vote seizure of persons & property	Civil war American revolution Civil Rights movement Red Scare after WWI Reconstruction World War I & immigrants Indian removal World War II women's movement Japanese American internment 9-11 & racism, war on terror market revolution Triangle Fire & reform Populist movement Emancipation Proclamation	Disney honor The Things They Carried culture Manifest Destiny Lewis & Clark expedition music U.S. history more to history than I got in K-12 I can't think of anything else everyday life in colonies Columbian exchange consumer society war (generic only) social improvement business not always a positive force corruption white peep r the worst teacher anecdotes economics education government hides lots from us improvement powerful in power important people unity colonization what Columbus really did Al Capone
	Category C: Issues/Challenges	
	immigration segregation (legal & otherwise) unfairness oppression of women discrimination past & present #blacklivesmatter racism past still affects U.S. today inequality religion/religious freedom	

**Figure 3:** Classification of student responses to the prompt, “Identify three things that you learned about American history and citizenship.”

“#blacklivesmatter.” Given the time period in which this survey was distributed—the Fall of 2014, a point in time between Ferguson and Baltimore—references to contemporary civil rights struggles were not uncommon. Other answers could be related to the issue of citizenship, especially the oft-cited “immigration” response. A generic answer “immigration” is far different than one more specific, such as “Asian Exclusion Laws” or “‘repatriation’ of American citizens to Mexico in the 1930s.” In this analysis, the generic “immigration” qualifies as a “positive” response, e.g., one that indicates a student’s understanding that in the past, as well as the present, immigration status often determines citizenship, in the same way that gender and race do, especially since Long Beach State is a Hispanic-Serving Institution with a number of Dream Act students. Overall, I erred on the side of inclusion, not exclusion<sup>18</sup> (Figure 3 shows the classification scheme for “positive” responses)

Most interesting were the ways in which some respondents remarked on the contingency of citizenship, justice, and liberty in our history. Many students gave responses along the lines of “civil rights and liberties are something we had to fight for,” or “Constitutional amendments changed who could be called a citizen.” Such responses demonstrate acquisition of specific content as well as students’ synthesis of content and historical mindedness. Nonetheless, a significant minority of students were unable to provide a relevant response to the query. Very few students were history majors (or self-identified as minors), and thus this was likely to be the only history course they would take in their college careers. How might we think about deepening their comprehension of U.S. history and sharpening their abilities to explain the relevance of our history to their lives now, and in the future?

### **Test Driving a Prototype of a Reimagined Introductory Course**

In the Fall of 2012, I attended a meeting of our local K-16 collaborative, the Long Beach Promise, formerly known as “Seamless Education.” This meeting introduced the essentials of the Common Core to secondary and post-secondary instructors, and for me, was an immediate stimulus for rethinking the introductory survey. If the Common Core, with its explicit attention to *applying* knowledge and skills with its co-requisite stress on active learning pedagogies, were to really take off, how could we best accommodate our future students? In the future, would first-year students who were used to actively solving problems be content to sit passively in lecture classes? Concerned that our future enrollments would plummet, I sought out new ways to approach the introductory survey course. What would happen if I ceded content to the textbook, didn’t lecture at all, and acted more as partner in learning than authoritative imparter of Knowledge? What would happen if I asked students to create a history “product” that would be “consumed” by others? Would non-majors even be able to take charge of their own learning? A more important question: Why do we teach the survey, organized as it is, much the same way it was taught fifty years ago—especially given a student clientele of non-majors?

As a Tuning Project participant, I found it critical to understand these challenges and our past assessment results. At the same time, Dr. Leslie Kennedy, then our campus Director of Educational Technology, presented a unique offer to our history department: the opportunity to use high-tech enhanced “Active Learning Classrooms” (ALCs) that support inquiry-based pedagogy. A colleague, Sean Smith, and I pioneered the use of these instructional spaces. In my case, using the “backwards design” concepts proposed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe,<sup>19</sup> I utilized the methods of “Tuning” to create a prototype for a redesigned U.S. history survey course, one that, like the traditional surveys, satisfies the AI requirement. I taught this course in Spring 2013 in an ALC. Forty-two students, all freshmen and sophomores except two, enrolled in this experimental course.

First, though, an explanation of an ALC: each ALC has a central instructor’s podium, with seating for 35-72 students at large tables placed around the perimeter of the room. Against the wall at each table is a flat-screen monitor; each table also has a PC, with connections for other devices. Walls are painted with high-performance dry erase paint, which allow students and instructors to write on them, from floor to ceiling. While many institutions do not yet have ALCs, other institutions are adopting them rapidly, usually for science, engineering, and business courses.<sup>20</sup> With funding from a U.S. Department of Education grant, designers at North Carolina State University created similar spaces in their Student-Centered Active Learning Environment with Upside-down Pedagogies (SCALE-UP) SCALE-UP program; other institutions have used the SCALE-UP acronym to brand their ALCs. Active learning pedagogies are not confined to our ALCs; indeed, many instructors use audience-response systems (i.e., “i>Clickers”) to involve students in the learning process, as formative assessment tools (checking for understanding). The ALCs are a different breed of classroom: ideal for cooperative (collaborative) inquiry- and project-based learning, organized to promote open communication between students, with room for both instructor and students to move around during the class period.<sup>21</sup> It is an *active* learning space.

The ALC is a valuable instructional space for those instructors who wish to experiment with course design. ALCs are not organized for, nor are they optimal for, lecturing; thus, they are not suited to every

instructor. In my experience as department chair, instructors who use these rooms effectively are well trained and often quite experienced, are willing to embrace a level of creative chaos in the classroom, are flexible and innovative, and are comfortable with allowing students to take control of their own learning. Effective instructors must also “frontload” the course before the first class meeting. This last point is a critical step that cannot be underestimated, as it is a critical step in the Tuning process. The central question: *What did I want my students to know, understand, and be able to do once they completed the course?*

I had a good sense of what I wanted my students to know, understand, and be able to do. I wanted them to develop an appreciation for the experiences of those who struggled for liberty, justice, and equality in the past to make our lives better now. I wanted them to develop “historical thinking” skills: to pose appropriate historical questions, source documents, consider multiple points of view and develop empathy, contextualize events within larger themes and trends in our past, identify historical significance, explain cause and consequence. I wanted them to understand the contingent nature of historical evidence, to be comfortable with uncertainty and ambivalence and our inability to “know” everything. But I also wanted them to construct knowledge themselves, and do so collaboratively, using an inquiry-driven approach. I wanted them to *become* apprentice historians, if only for the fifteen weeks that they were enrolled in my course.<sup>22</sup>

Starting with these goals, I set about on my personal mission to redesign one section of post-bellum U.S. history. I jettisoned lectures completely, and relinquished the delivery of content to the textbook, Eric Foner’s *Give Me Liberty!* I chose this textbook because, unlike many others, it addresses explicitly the contingent nature of liberty in our nation’s history—one of the primary points I wanted my students to understand. Using this point as an organizing principle, I developed assignments, called Team Research Projects (TRPs), that students were to design, complete, and share with others. With the help of our Social Science Credential Program Director, I partnered with a local high school teacher; many of her students were identified as “at risk” of failure. The TRP assignments were used in her classroom, as a means of “curricular enhancement.” This arrangement met two goals for us. First, the products of my students’ learning had a

wider audience than the instructor; they were very excited to learn that their projects would be used in a local high school classroom. Many wanted to meet their secondary school counterparts. Secondly, for the high school teacher, it was an opportunity to share with her students what a college project was like, to demystify what goes on in college and thus encourage her students to complete high school and pursue post-secondary education. Further, five pre-service social science credential students helped to facilitate class sessions, as a way to introduce them to inquiry-driven pedagogies that they will need in Common Core classrooms.<sup>23</sup>

As I designed the template for the TRP assignment, I kept in mind both best practices in group assignment design and the learning objectives for my class. While these were group projects, each student would be held individually accountable for writing at least an 800-word essay for each of the three projects. Loosely adapting the concept of “keywords” outlined in Daniel Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics since Independence*,<sup>24</sup> each project had to be centered around a word (the “key concept”), must focus on a problem or issue, and must answer a historical question posed by each group collectively (The assignment details are in the **Appendix**).

Each detail of the TRPs linked back to the procedural knowledge I wanted students to develop, or, in the words of noted history educator Stéphane Lévesque, the “*self-appropriation* of the procedures and concepts that arise in the act of doing history.”<sup>25</sup> First, each group had to choose a keyword and an issue, event, or problem that in some way was associated with the keyword chosen. To do so, students had to have read the textbook and collectively have enough content knowledge to choose an appropriate topic for a project on which they must work for four to six weeks. Students quickly learned that content mattered, reinforcing the widely held conviction that a primary goal of an introductory course was to impart content knowledge. Groups sometimes struggled with this task; as the guide, I constantly questioned them: “How does this topic relate to your keyword?” “What connects these ideas?” “Why did this event happen then?” “Did people at the time see this [issue, event] as one that reflected larger concerns about [democracy, justice, equality]?” Pushing students to refine their projects was essential. I also kept note within our CMS of which students had not yet completed the



weekly reading quizzes; on rare occasions, I dismissed a student for a class period, warning him or her to return only when they had caught up with the required reading. Peer pressure worked well in accomplishing this, as groups tended to coalesce once individual group members began to trust each other—a relational skill—as knowledgeable, active participants.<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, students had to pose a historical question, an act that incorporates critical analysis and writing skills. By their very nature, answerable historical questions require students to discriminate between past and present (especially, to reject presentist moral judgments about the past), think ahead to imagine what kind of evidence they would need to answer the question, and to evaluate their own research skills. I recall many class meetings during which group members furiously wrote different versions of historical questions, argued with each other, and ultimately came to resolutions about what was an appropriate line of inquiry—about what questions *could* be answered in the short time they had to work on their projects. I found these sessions, as well as the project topic formulation sessions, to be the most intellectually stimulating of the semester. We had six groups of students enthusiastically collaborating on a class project, in an ebb and flow of challenging each other, cooperating to locate sources, revising questions, and posing arguments about the past. They were clearly engaged with the material and the process of “doing history.” It was, in fact, very much like a lively and frenzied “Think-Aloud” activity, in which students, not the instructor, directed their inquiry—under the time constraints of a seventy-five-minute class period. As with the project topics, students could proceed to the next step only after they had convinced me that their projects were viable.

The next step in project completion was for groups to answer the historical research question they posed. To do so, students had to be cognizant of what historians had written about the topic (library research skills) and incorporate primary sources (thus requiring research skills, which I guided with appropriate bibliographies of e-collections). Students learned to read carefully the documents they chose, evaluating them for relevance, as well as properly identifying authorship, audience, purpose, and perspective. The assignment mandated inclusion of images and visuals; the acts of writing captions for photos and maps, and creating graphs required students

to synthesize and explain evidence succinctly. To reinforce the skills of chronological thinking and defining historical significance, each project required student groups to construct a timeline that contextualized their issue or problem within U.S. history. As with research papers, each TRP must also include a bibliography of sources. The TRPs were very much like collaborative research papers, but presented in a much different format.

The TRPs could take any form that students chose, using the technological “toys” of the ALCs. All groups chose to create websites and blogs, using so-called WYSIWYG templates freely accessible on the web.<sup>27</sup> Finally, every student had to complete both self- and group-assessment essays for each of the required TRPs, as well as a reflective essay at the end of the term. These essays tended to keep students engaged with the group, as they understood that their peers had to comment on group dynamics. Universally, students who did not pull their weight as group members self-identified in their assessments—and their participation improved in each subsequent TRP. Most notable to me, however, was the energy of the class: when I entered the classroom moments before a class was to begin, most groups would already be hard at work on their projects!

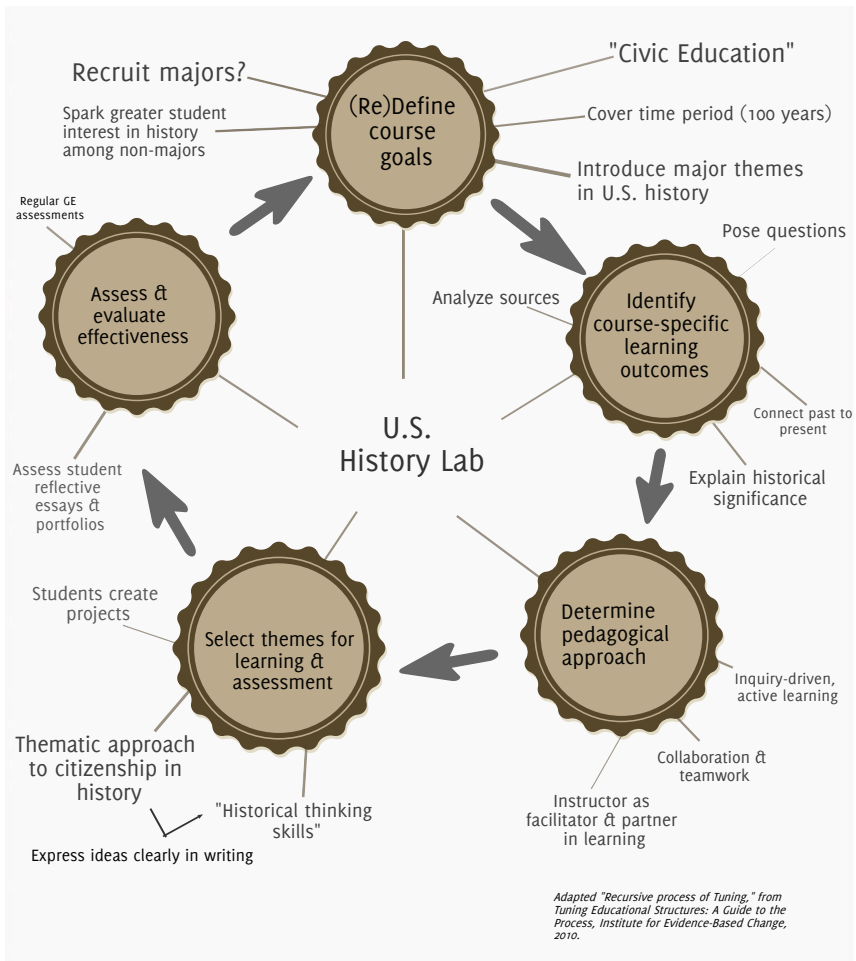
Although the TRPs were the major assignments for the course, students were also held to the content of the post-bellum U.S. history course. Each week, every student took a timed online reading quiz of thirty questions, drawn from the publisher’s test bank. Like many, Norton’s test bank distinguished between different levels of questions—easy, medium, difficult—so I deliberately chose a combination of questions from each category. Importantly, the class median score for the fifteen quizzes was 76.3%, slightly higher than the class median score for reading quizzes I used in a “traditional” survey course I taught in an intensive discussion format two years earlier in 2011. Students understood that content knowledge was important, as each TRP required group members to create a timeline and place in the historical context of the project topic. Additionally, students had to submit their research notebooks periodically, as a sort of “activity log” that encouraged learners to document their activity, time spent on projects, and collaborative efforts.<sup>28</sup>

Practicing the Tuning process leads to other questions. One might ask, for instance, how this active learning experience *enabled* students to *become responsible citizens*, as state law expects.

Although the greater stress on historical mindedness, rather than rote memorization of content, implies that these skills would provide students with a deeper “civic education,” there is, in fact, virtually no empirical research that shows definitively that this is the case. Some opponents politicize the issue, arguing that training in historical reasoning leads students to question the master narrative of national histories, as Bob Bain observes. Further, there is evidence that character education—that is, practices that inculcate and reinforce honesty, integrity, courage, and a sense of fairness—is the most effective way to teach students to become responsible citizens.<sup>29</sup> If limited to increased voting participation as a measurement of “responsible citizenship”—the prevailing method political scientists use to assess citizenship—military service, not a college education, may be the best predictor of “responsible citizenship.”<sup>30</sup>

To answer this question, I challenged students to explain to me explicitly what they had learned about “American history, citizenship, liberty, equality, and justice,” in the required five-page end-of-term “Reflective Essay.” *All* students were able to answer this question, most pointing to their TRP topics as evidence. Wrote one student after listening to recordings of the WPA’s slave narratives for a project on how Jim Crow laws affected the lives of African Americans after Reconstruction, “You can feel oppression in their words.” Many students noted that, although amendments and laws were passed to give rights to others, those rights could easily be taken away, as in the case of the internment of Japanese American citizens during World War II. Moreover, many noted the relevance of history to their own lives, as did one young man who hoped to become a physician, in a discussion of how AIDS activists in the 1980s brought to the public knowledge of the epidemic, despite Reagan’s refusal to recognize the health crisis. As he noted, during the AIDS crisis, gay rights activists “showed how people could make a difference by speaking up.” Most significantly, all but two students praised the ability to engage in “self-directed learning as college students”—to identify and research issues of greatest concern to them. While not all projects were entirely successful, students expressed both an understanding of U.S. history and pride in their demonstration of knowledge and skills.<sup>31</sup>

My experience teaching this inquiry-driven post-bellum survey course led us to develop a new course, History 170: The U.S.



**Figure 4:** Using the Tuning Process to reimagine the introductory U.S. history survey.

History Lab, which like the existing U.S. history surveys, satisfies the AI requirement. Significantly, this new course was designed to be taught in our ALCs only and does not replace the standard U.S. survey course (**Figure 4** visualizes how the Tuning Process helped us reimagine the U.S. survey course). Further, the GE requirements for the AI history courses at Long Beach State mandate that a time span of 100 years must be covered; as a Tuner, I saw this requirement as an opportunity, not a limitation. The U.S. History Lab course would

be taught only in ALCs, could take the form of a survey or a thematic investigation of a topic covering at least a 100-year time span, and was linked to the goals of promoting “responsible citizenship” and historical knowledge.

We specifically titled these courses “Labs,” as educational research has shown that at all educational levels in science classrooms, instructors who utilized active labs as the primary method of content delivery, in the words of one research group:

used less independent [i.e., individual] work and fewer worksheets, and more collaborative and lab-based activities, with active-learning labs compared to traditional instruction. In-class test data show that students gained significantly more content knowledge and knowledge of process skills using the labs compared to traditional instruction.<sup>32</sup>

Volumes of research studies demonstrate that active learning strategies benefit student learning.

How content is delivered matters immensely. Students can help us understand this, if we develop meaningful, authentic assessments to understand what students are actually learning. Best practices in assessment require student involvement in determining what they already know, what they learn in a classroom, and how they would improve their learning experiences—if we listen. In another context, Lendol Calder has done just this, with his “Story of American History” assignment and the frequent use of “Think-Alouds” using discussion-oriented pedagogies.<sup>33</sup>

As I conferred with colleagues, some of us began to think more deeply about a thematic introductory course, perhaps one that focused on struggles for civil rights from the 1860s to the 1960s. Instructors could teach to their strengths while keenly attuned to the differences between a lower-division GE history course and an upper-division course designed for history majors. This term, I will teach a course on civil rights, equality, and medicine, using some of the following cases to examine interlinked issues: compulsory sterilization (immigrants, mentally disabled, criminals, and welfare recipients), medical experimentation (Tuskegee syphilis study, Henrietta Lacks, Willowbrook State School study), as well as deliberate exposure to radiation, drugs, and other toxins. Since disaffected science students are a significant source of new history majors, such a course could serve as a potential recruiting tool. Many possibilities exist for a thematic introductory U.S. history course, one offered only in the

ALCs, by instructors eager and able to innovate. Our U.S. History Lab course reimagines the introductory course, freeing students to investigate issues and events important to them.

### **Conclusion: Evaluating and Refining Change and Addressing Critics**

I have not yet taught the U.S. History Lab course as we designed it. In Fall 2015, several sections of this new class were offered for the first time, although it is not clear that faculty teaching it were trained in either effective use of the ALCs or advised about the expectations of the new course and how it differed from the “traditional” survey. No sections were scheduled for Spring 2016. To my knowledge, measures of instructional effectiveness have not yet been planned, thus eliminating thoughtful and careful evaluation of student learning in the new course, at least for this academic year.<sup>34</sup>

As I reimagined our U.S. survey course, I encountered resistance from some faculty members. Some opposition to the new History 170 course was realistic. Contingent faculty members expressed the quite reasonable concern that students taking the survey only for GE credit wanted to know “just the facts,” and thus might evaluate more harshly an instructor whose course emphasized inquiry-driven learning. This, of course, is one of the reasons for a separate course designation. Others wondered if the plan was to jettison the traditional surveys sometime in the future, but, no, that was never our intention. Students who need the full content, such as pre-service teachers, should take the two-semester survey, rather than the “U.S. Lab” course.

But other criticisms seemed to me to illustrate a paradoxical observation about historians: although we study change, we ourselves are often resistant to change—that is, in fact, human nature. Some faculty argued that students “hated” group assignments, though educational research demonstrates consistently that well-designed cooperative assignments mitigate student discontent. Assignments that create interdependence among group members, require individual accountability, and incorporate specific training in teamwork and collaborative skills are best practices in collaborative assignment design. Many readers will also know that George Kuh has identified collaborative inquiry as one of the Association of American

Colleges and Universities’ “High Impact Practices,” pedagogies proven to enhance student learning. Most of my students in the prototype course praised the collaborative, team-based environment. Engineering students remind us that they regularly work in groups in their classes, while others expressed appreciation for the opportunity to practice the skills of “learning to get along with others” and to “communicate well.” Most heartening was a comment from a very shy pre-nursing student who wrote, “Working with others helped me overcome my fear of talking to others,” a proficiency that she recognized she would need in the future as a health professional.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, employers rank very highly the ability to collaborate effectively with others as a fundamental skill for new employees—a point about which my students were acutely aware.

Criticism came from other quarters, as well. One faculty member dismissed as “insufficient” the relative brevity of individual writing assignments for each project, arguing that history students need to be able to write lengthier research-based term papers. Such criticism might be valid in a different kind of educational institution—a Carnegie-ranked Research Intensive University or an elite Liberal Arts College—but it ignored our institutional setting and the fact that not a single instructor in any introductory course required students to complete a research-based term paper! And as we proposed it, each student had to complete at least 5,000 words of writing to satisfy the course requirements, which would qualify the course for “Writing Intensive” GE designation, were it not a lower-division introductory course. Importantly, not a single student in the prototype course complained about the heavy writing requirements. Another faculty member was distressed about “having to learn about new teaching technologies”—though again, such concern is unwarranted if this instructor never requests to teach the course.

Overall, the methods of Tuning proved beneficial as we designed this new course. Tuning an introductory course allowed us to identify issues and opportunities as well as constraints. The Tuning process helped us define what students should know, understand, *and be able to do* upon completion of the course. Tuning also led us to consider *all* of the “stakeholders” and to develop a course that satisfied multiple needs. In other words, Tuning fostered intentionality in course design—and in doing so, provides us with more powerful ways to respond to claims that history isn’t relevant.

## Notes

1. The History Disciplinary Core Statement is available on the AHA's website at <<http://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/current-projects/tuning/history-discipline-core>>.

2. Anne Hyde examines some of the challenges to articulating appropriate student learning outcomes and historians' difficulties in assessing them in "Five Reasons why History Professors Suck at Assessment," *Journal of American History* 102, no. 4 (March 2016): 1104-1107. Among those practices she identifies as being critical to helping historians become better at assessment is for us to regard "teaching as a cooperative and public activity" where "more conversations will make for better teaching."

3. Anne Hyde, "History Discipline Core: A Statement from the AHA's Tuning Project," *Perspectives on History* 50, no. 7 (October 2012), <<https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-2012/history-discipline-core>>.

4. See, for instance, the CSULB History Department's "Red Pin Campaign" map of alumni at <<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zQD-90unpCFE.kFhRO5uh6Ar4>>.

5. About a quarter of all California community colleges offer introductory courses *not in history* that have been approved by the Intergovernmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) system as satisfying the U.S. history requirement. Explore the IGETC listings at <<http://www.assist.org/web-assist/welcome.html>>.

6. Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1358-1370; Joel Sipress and David Voelker, "The End of the History Survey Course: The Rise and Fall of the Coverage Model," *Journal of American History* 97, no. 4 (March 2011): 1050-1066; David Voelker and Anthony Armstrong, "Designing a Question-Driven U.S. History Course," *OAH Magazine of History* 27, no. 3 (July 2013): 19-24; David Voelker, "Assessing Student Understanding in Introductory Courses: A Sample Strategies," *The History Teacher* 41, no. 4 (August 2008): 505-518; Keith Erikson, "The History Survey Project: Improving Introductory History Courses," *OAH Magazine of History* 27, no. 3 (July 2013): 41-43. Anne-Lise Halvorsen has written that dismal learning in the "traditional" history survey is not a new phenomenon in the United States, in her "'Don't Know Much About History': The New York Times 1943 Survey of U.S. History and the Controversy It Generated," *Teacher's College Record* 114, no. 1 (January 2012): 1-32.

7. So common is this question that a variation of it serves as the title of a noted book in history education, Bruce A. Lesh, "*Why Won't You Just Tell Us the Answer?": Teaching Historical Thinking in Grades 7-12* (Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2011).

8. Instructors would benefit by attending to student views beyond what they state on our official course evaluations (or those RateMyProfessors comments). Reddit, Facebook's campus-specific pages (especially the campus "Confessions" pages), Twitter, College Confidential, and other social media sites that archive



posts are most revealing. Some archived sites can be found on The Wayback Machine at [archive.org](http://archive.org). This quote came from a Reddit discussion in January 2015, “Reddit, what do you like or hate about your country’s educational system?” <[https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/2t5vaq/reddit\\_what\\_do\\_you\\_like\\_or\\_hate\\_about\\_your/](https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/2t5vaq/reddit_what_do_you_like_or_hate_about_your/)>.

9. Tim Keirn and Brett Mizelle, “The QUE Project and History Learning and Teaching: The Case of Long Beach State,” in *Faculty Development for Student Achievement: The QUE Project*, ed. Ronald Henry (Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing, 2006), 121-144.

10. The LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes are available at <<https://aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes>>.

11. Colleen Flaherty, “The End of History?” *Inside Higher Ed*, May 7, 2015, <<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/05/07/history-and-anthropology-departments-sacramento-state-u-square-over-new-gen-ed>>.

12. National Assessment of Educational Progress, “2014 Civic Assessment,” <[http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/hgc\\_2014/#civics](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/hgc_2014/#civics)>.

13. Wendy Laura Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 89. In their passionate plea for faculty to reexamine the traditional research paper, rhetoricians Robert Davis and Mark Shadle argue that Posusta’s “Instant Thesis Maker” is less about helping students write well than it is an efficiency tool to help students produce “as effortlessly as possible, a drab discourse, vacant of originality or commitment.” Davis and Shadle, “‘Building a Mystery’: Alternative Research Writing and the Art of Seeking,” *College Composition and Communication* 51, no. 3 (February 2000): 417-446, quote on 419.

14. Learning more about our students—who they are, what they know, what they “bring to the table” as learners—is a critical part of any meaningful cycle of assessment, curriculum design, and instructional practice. See, for instance, Susan Ambrose, Michael Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marsha Lovett, and Marie Norman, *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (Hoboken, NJ: Josey Bass, 2010), esp. pp. 10-39, 124-138, 217-224; Roman Taraban and Thomas Brothen, “Technology that Moves Learners in the Right Direction,” *Journal of Developmental Education* 22, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 34. This, of course, is the approach that Sam Wineburg chronicles in his discussion of the instructional practices of history teacher Richard Stinson in “Lost in Words: Moral Ambiguity in the History Classroom,” chapter 9 in his acclaimed book, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001).

15. We also asked students to indicate their majors and career goals. Simple regression analysis revealed interesting patterns, such as how STEM students nearly overwhelmingly asked for more reading, not less, and how criminal justice majors had the highest rates among all majors of providing relevant answers about citizenship and history. Although some instructors chose not to participate in this initiative, most did. All instructors and students were assured that this assessment initiative had no bearing on their teaching evaluations or grades, respectively. Responses were not only anonymous, but also combined before analysis, thus

preventing any identification by instructor (unless students identified them by name, which occurred in only a handful of the 697 responses).

16. A greater number of students did not provide second and third responses to the “history and citizenship” inquiry. Numbers of total respondents are as follows: 656 (first response), 595 (second), 501 (third).

17. Alan S. Taylor, “Active Citizenship, Grounded in Historical Knowledge,” *The Source: A Quarterly Publication of the California History-Social Science Project*, Summer 2013, 11. This issue of *The Source* is devoted to the topic of “Civic Learning.”

18. Some of the answers that were not included were simply too generic to qualify as a positive response in this analysis—such as “war” or “culture”—while others were not relevant to the topic of “American history and citizenship”—“disney,”[sic] “music,” “Pilgrims,” “cultivation,” “Woodstock,” and my favorite, “I cant think of anything els” [sic] which was preceded by the answer “white peep r the worst.”

19. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, second ed. (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2005).

20. Christina Petersen and Kristen Gorman, “Strategies to Address Common Challenges When Teaching in an Active Learning Classroom,” *New Directions in Teaching and Learning* 137 (Spring 2014): 63-70.

21. There is a growing literature within the field of educational technology which explains how classroom design promotes learning; for a useful introduction, see D. Christopher Brooks, “Space Matters: The Impact of Formal Learning Environments on Student Learning,” *British Journal of Educational Technology* 42, no. 5 (September 2011), 719-726.

22. For a brief yet inspiring essay on what a fellow Tuner would like his students to know, understand, and be able to do at the community college level, see Josh Ashenmiller, “SLO Curve Ball: What I Really Want for My Students,” *Perspectives on History* 53, no. 1 (January 2015), <<https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2015/slo-curve-ball>>.

23. Nancy McTygue, Executive Director of the UC-funded statewide California History-Social Science Project Office, recently made the point that in California, the greatest challenge for social science and history educators is that too few teachers are trained in inquiry-driven, active pedagogies. Remarks at the CSU East Bay “Tuning the History Discipline” professional workshop, October 10, 2015, Hayward, California.

24. Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics Since Independence* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

25. Stéphane Lévesque, *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 27.

26. Trust cannot be underestimated, as anyone familiar with organizational theory will know. Group dynamics worked not only to shame those students who fell behind to catch up (with readings, input, project components), but also tended to prevent overly confident students from monopolizing a group’s focus and efforts. For an introduction to the importance of trust as idea, behavioral practice, and

attitude, see Linda Weber and Allison I. Carter, *The Social Construction of Trust* (New York: Kluwer Academic Press, 2002).

27. WYSIWYG stands for “What you see is what you get,” or web and blog templates that allow quick creation of e-projects by those who lack coding skills in HTML, JavaScript, or other languages. They are quite literally like drag-and-drop Word document templates, not easily customizable, but with modification options. WordPress, Weebly, and Tumblr are just three of the many WYSIWYG packages.

28. Noted cognitive scientist Roman Taraban and his team suggest that activity logs are one of the best ways for instructors to determine the time students *actually* spend in reading, studying, researching, and other learning activities for a course, a notoriously difficult thing for instructors to gauge. Roman Taraban, Matthew W. Hayes, Edward E. Anderson, and M. P. Sharma, “Giving Students Time for the Academic Resources that Work,” *Journal of Engineering Education* 93, no. 3 (July 2004): 205-210.

29. See, for instance, Robert Bain, “Into the Swampy Lowlands of Important Problems,” in *New Directions in Assessing Historical Thinking*, ed. Kadriye Ercikan and Peter Seixas (New York: Routledge, 2015), 64-72; in an assessment of historical thinking and its relationship to values education in Swedish schools, Niklas Ammert and Birgitta Gustafsson reveal that students at the elementary and secondary school levels have great trouble relating their understanding of history to ethical behavior, in *History as Knowledge: Ethical Values and Meaning in Encounters with History* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2015), esp. pp. 121-129; Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (January 1995): 65-78; Walter C. Parker, “Citizenship Education: Regime Type, Foundational Questions, and Classroom Education,” provides a brief history of civic education in the U.S., focusing on the importance of teaching critical thinking, in *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, ed. Larry Nucci, Darcia Navarez, and Tobias Krettenauer, second ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 347-367, esp. pp. 356-361; George K. Simon, *Character Disturbance: The Phenomenon of Our Age* (Little Rock, AR: Parkhurst Brothers, Inc., 2011).

30. Even when controlling for age, wherein 18-24-year-olds have dismal rates of political participation (35% in 2012), active duty military personnel are significantly more likely to register to vote and to vote. Thom File, “Young-Adult Voting: An Analysis of Presidential Elections, 1964-2012: Population Characteristics.” publication of the U.S. Census Bureau, April 2014, <<https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p20-573.pdf>>; “Registration and Voting Participation Differences Between the Active Duty Military and Civilian Voting Age Population,” *FVAP Research Note*, April 11, 2014, publication of the Federal Voting Assistance Program, <[http://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2014\\_FVAP\\_Research\\_Note\\_1\\_Final\\_April\\_11\\_2014.pdf](http://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2014_FVAP_Research_Note_1_Final_April_11_2014.pdf)>.

31. Some representative examples of the TRPs may be found at the CSULB Department of History website, “U.S. History Lab,” <<http://www.cla.csulb.edu/departments/history/u-s-history-lab/>>.

32. Roman Taraban, Cathy Box, Russell Myers, Robin Pollard, and Craig W. Bowen, “Effects of Active-Learning Experiences on Achievement, Attitudes,

and Behaviors in High School Biology,” *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 44, no. 7 (September 2007): 960-979; increasingly, educators in engineering, science, medicine, and health fields advocate using active-learning strategies, especially in collaborative and team-based modes, as the most effective way to teach disciplinary skills and content. See, for instance, David Stewart, Stacy Brown, Cheri Clavier, and Jarrett Wyatt, “Active-Learning Processes Used in U.S. Pharmacy Education,” *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 75, no. 4 (April 2011): 1-6; Ben Graffam, “Active Learning in Medical Education: Strategies for Beginning Implementation,” *Medical Teacher* 29, no. 1 (February 2007): 38-42. Anne Bahde also examines the use of active learning “labs” in collegiate history education in “The History Labs: Integrating Primary Source Literacy Skills into a History Survey Course,” *Journal of Archival Organization* 11, no. 3-4 (July-December 2013): 175-204.

33. Calder, “Uncoverage: Towards a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey,” and more directly, “The Stories We Tell,” *OAH Magazine of History* 27, no. 3 (July 2013): 5-8.

34. It is critical to understand the difference between student evaluation of instruction (i.e., ratings of individual faculty members) and instructional effectiveness. The latter includes but is not limited to matters of course design, instructional pedagogies, assignment design, statements of learning objectives, readings, and methods of student evaluation and assessment of learning.

35. Recent research in assessment of student attitudes toward collaborative and active learning pedagogies demonstrate that my students were hardly alone in their enthusiasm for these methods; see Angela L. Lumpkin, Rebecca M. Achen, and Regan K. Dodd, “Student Perceptions of Active Learning,” *College Student Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 121-133; Kate Walters, “Sharing Classroom Research and the Scholarship of Teaching: Student Resistance to Active Learning May Not be as Pervasive as is Commonly Believed,” *Nursing Education Perspectives* 35, no. 5 (September-October 2014): 342-343.

## Appendix: Team Research Project Assignments (TRPs)

History 173

Dr. Quam-Wickham

Spring 2013

### Team Research Project Assignments

The goal of these assignments is for students to develop an understanding of United States History since 1865 by completing three group collaborative research projects. As part of Long Beach's *Seamless Education* project, students in this section will be linked with students in several high school history classes, as well as with students in our Social Science Credential program here on campus who are in training to be secondary school teachers.

Working in groups, you will create research projects that will be shared with students in the linked high school classes. Thus, you will be *producing* historical knowledge.

#### Project Particulars:

The textbook for this course – Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* – is organized around the concept of “liberty” in American history – how this idea has been defined, contested, and operationalized (i.e., incorporated into laws or public policy). This course is similarly organized around other important concepts in our nation’s past. Each team research project (TRP) will address one of the following words/ideas in U.S. history:

<b>Equality</b>	<b>Sovereignty</b>
<b>Justice</b>	<b>The People</b>
<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Security</b>
<b>Right(s)</b>	<b>Freedom</b>

Each collaborative group will choose one of the above ideas for each TRP. Using the idea/words as a basis, each group will produce a project of 3000 words. All projects must incorporate visuals and must incorporate an original timeline that anchors your Team analysis within a larger historical context. Projects may take a variety of forms, but there must be a written component of at least 3000 words. They must be fact-based. Some ideas for acceptable projects? Blog entries, (i.e., blogspot, tumblr, or others), articles (as for an online magazine or newspaper), mini-chapter for a text, biography, tour booklet, detailed analysis of images or historical sites (with maps), pinterest, webpages, graphic novelette – the possibilities are wide open. The only prohibition: Videos and other kinds of projects in which there is no written component are not acceptable.

Teams will formulate a “historical question” about their chosen idea/word(s) for the TRPs.

#### Research:

Each TRP will require group members to engage in research online and/or in the University Library. The class facilitators will assist in this endeavor. There is no minimum or maximum number of “sources” that must be consulted. However, your project must have an argument (thesis) and your thesis must be supported by evidence.

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