

Historical Thinking and Preservice Teacher Preparation

Tim Keirn and Daisy Martin

California State University, Long Beach and the

Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, George Mason University

“HISTORICAL THINKING” is a phrase that is becoming a standard in conversations about teaching history. Not necessarily a new idea—calls for teaching historical habits of mind go back at least a century¹—but there has been an explosion of resources in the past two decades that support making history classrooms sites of analysis, interpretation, and questioning, rather than of memorization. Research on historical cognition and the scholarship of teaching and learning are the backbone of this movement, and curricular and instructional resources its ribs.² The now defunct Teaching American History grant program helped spread the word about a teaching for historical thinking approach to inservice teachers: in this issue of *The History Teacher*, we invited history educators to consider this approach in the context of preservice teachers and teacher education programs.

In a very real sense, the candidates currently enrolled in teacher education programs across the country are the future of the history teaching profession and will oversee, at least in part, what our students do and learn in K-12 classrooms in the coming decades. What should we do to prepare teachers to teach for historical thinking *before* they enter the field as credentialed professionals? How can methods courses and programmatic requirements and structure support inducting candidates in the practice of teaching historical thinking as a discipline?

The authors in this issue all address these questions, albeit from different perches. Whether it is in a course housed by the history department or education department, or a program that trains hundreds of post-graduate students or a small number of undergraduates, all of the authors share a commitment to teaching history as a discipline with a unique and important way of making sense of the world.³ While history and social studies are conceptualized differently by various state standards, and teacher education programs can vary widely in their approaches and requirements (even within the same state), the authors in this issue slice through multiple—and sometimes competing—goals in teacher education to focus on teaching for historical thinking.⁴

Tim Keirn and Eileen Luhr start the edition off with an examination of how programmatic requirements and interventions, which ensure that secondary candidates have deep procedural knowledge of history, impact candidates' success. Bob Bain argues that candidates must be prepared to teach the literacies inherent in the historical discipline and reports that such a focus on disciplinary literacy catalyzed changes that have increased the coherence and integration of the entire teacher education program.

Laura Westhoff, Linda Sargent Wood, Michael Lovorn, and Daisy Martin explain core components of their methods courses—which for many programs is the locus of teaching candidates' pedagogical historical knowledge, a knowledge domain unique to teaching that requires integrating not only knowledge of content and pedagogy, but also knowledge of learners, learning, and instructional contexts.⁵ Westhoff explains that teachers' curricular and instructional choices create a broad historical narrative in their classroom, and describes how she helps secondary candidates recognize, adopt, and sharpen this disciplinary authority. Wood and Lovorn both describe using history labs in their secondary methods courses. These not only engage candidates in “doing history,” but also make visible and explicit what that entails. Interestingly, both of these authors include a public history lens through which candidates consider and evaluate monuments that memorialize the past. Wood posits that this opportunity may help make political and contemporary uses of history more visible for candidates. Shifting the lens to elementary teacher education, Martin reports on her initial experiences teaching K-5 history/social science methods and the core concepts she used to frame historical thinking and historical literacy to help multiple-subjects candidates both understand the discipline and teach it. The issue concludes with an examination of assessment in preservice history teacher preparation. Stephanie van Hover, David Hicks, and Stephen Cotton describe their ongoing work in creating an

observation tool for assessing historical thinking practices. Tim Keirn and Eileen Luhr present an assignment by Miguel Escobar and Manoj Choudhary, secondary teachers and recent graduates of the single subject teacher education program in social science at California State University, Long Beach, with examples of student lesson plans that demonstrate a candidate's ability to incorporate historiography and global perspective in their teaching.

For each of these scholars, their particular teaching contexts—including the governing state, scale, and structure of the program they teach in, the extent of their students' subject matter preparation, and the placement and duration of the course—shape their approaches. But they also share some common concerns, methods, and perspectives, and each author includes practical ideas and resources to help others focus on historical thinking with their preservice teachers. Learning to teach so students become more adept at making sense of the past and its traces is a career-long endeavor. In this issue, we present multiple models for propelling candidates in the right direction for meeting this challenge.

Notes

1. National Education Association of the United States, *Report of the Committee [of Ten] on Secondary School Studies Appointed at the Meeting of the National Educational Association July 9, 1892, with the Reports of the Conferences arranged by this Committee and held December 28-30, 1892* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893). The Committee asserted, "No part of historical education does so much to train the pupil as the search for material, the weighing of evidence, and the combining of the results thus obtained in a statement put into a form useful to other persons" (p. 197) and recommended "one year's study on the intensive method" (p. 200).

2. See, for example of research, Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001); for example of scholarship on teaching and learning, David Pace, "The Amateur in the Operating Room: History and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 4 (October 2004): 1171-1192; and for examples of resources, the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media's Historical Thinking Matters project at <<http://www.historicalthinkingmatters.org>> and San Diego State University's World History for Us All project at <<http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu>>.

3. Lee Shulman, "Foreword," in *Disciplinary Styles In The Scholarship Of Teaching And Learning: Exploring Common Ground*, ed. Mary Taylor Huber and Sherwyn P. Morreale (Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2002), v-ix.

4. This issue is an extension of a panel titled “Wise Use of the Methods Course: Teaching Historical Thinking while Preparing Future Teachers to do the Same,” delivered at the American Historical Association’s annual meeting, held in Boston in 2011. Thanks to Noralee Frankel for facilitating this conference presentation.

5. Lee Shulman, “Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching,” *Educational Researcher* 15, no. 2 (February 1986): 4-14.