

# Six Degrees of the Mongol Empire: Using Thought Experiments to Prepare World History Teachers

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WHAT IF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS could make connections between historical events and concepts with as much ease as some of us play the popular parlor game “Six degrees of Kevin Bacon?” Readers may be familiar with the Kevin Bacon game—a play on the six degrees of separation theory that everyone on earth is separated from everyone else by no more than six acquaintances. People who play the game use movies to make connections between any given actor and Kevin Bacon. The game has become part of the cultural lexicon since its development in 1994, with, for example, Google introducing a specific search engine for the game in 2012 that gives the “Bacon number” for any actor entered into the search.<sup>1</sup> Comedian Stephen Colbert joked about the game and its application to history on *The Colbert Report*. During a discussion about the *Big History* television series, Colbert quipped that the show “connects every event in the history of the world, I assume, to Kevin Bacon.”<sup>2</sup>

A study I conducted a few years ago<sup>3</sup> first prompted me to think about the possibilities of making connections in history in similar ways to the Kevin Bacon game. The study involved pre-service and practicing teachers engaging in card-sorting tasks, where they sorted

a stack of cards containing world historical events and concepts (e.g., Bantu Migrations, Industrial Revolution, Cold War). Participants then created concept maps with the cards by grouping and drawing connectors between the cards. Participants engaged in the task twice: once to represent their own understanding of world history and again to represent how they might plan for instruction in a world history course.<sup>4</sup> One of the participants in the study, an experienced world history teacher, drew a connection between the Mongol Empire and the Cold War. Rather than connecting the two events directly, she did so indirectly by referencing the Chinese rule of the Mongol people and later the Soviet support of Mongolian independence. The participant's cognitive moves in connecting two historical events in the card-sorting task struck me as similar to the moves one makes in playing the Kevin Bacon game.

I expected that the aforementioned study would allow me to examine the thought processes that teachers engage in while organizing historical topics for instructional topics, but an unexpected result of my study involved unsolicited feedback from participants during the course of the card-sorting task. Some of the teacher candidates mentioned that the task was helpful to them in conceptualizing how they would plan for future world history courses, and some of the practicing teachers mentioned that the card-sorting task helped them re-conceptualize how they had been teaching world history. Removed from linear textbooks and standards documents, it seemed that the task allowed participants to play around with history and decide which organizational scheme made the most sense for themselves and their students. One teacher, a department chair, stated that she was going to have the other world history teachers in her department use card-sorting to redesign their curriculum.

Thus, what began as a research methodology for understanding teachers' thinking ended up as a useful planning strategy for the teacher participants. Since completing the study, I have incorporated card-sorting tasks, "six degrees thought experiments," and related discussions of instructional issues related to the card-sort events into my secondary history teaching methods course for teacher candidates. I have found that using these methods instead of a more linear curriculum outline exercise has allowed teacher candidates to see more connections between historical events and consider how they would represent those connections for students. I also present

the strategies as ones that the candidates can eventually use with their own secondary history students. Additionally, I have used card-sorts in my university world history survey courses as a way for students to make connections between historical time periods, regions, and events in the course. Although these activities can be used with any historical foci (e.g., local, national, or world history), I have found them particularly useful in discussions of world history, as students typically face challenges in making connections across multiple time periods and regions, both for their own understandings and (in the case of teacher candidates) for instructional purposes.

In what follows, I begin with a brief discussion of the importance of connections to the study of world history and then detail a study I conducted with one group of teacher candidates that involved a card-sorting activity. Next, I discuss instructional issues related to teaching world history, and share six degrees thought experiments. I conclude with some lessons I learned from my first time using these strategies with the teacher candidates.

### **Background: Connections in World History**

In my previous career, I taught ninth grade world history. I remember preparing for my first year of teaching, and it dawning on me that I would be responsible for teaching over 1,000 years of history and all the regions in the world. I felt woefully underprepared for this task as I had been a U.S. history major and, like many of my generation, had not even taken a world history course in college. What I soon realized was that, since I could not possibly teach everything, the connections I was able to make across that amount of time—1,000 years—and that amount of space—the globe—were vital. These might be causal connections, comparative connections, or connections to larger global patterns such as industrialism in the nineteenth century.

It also became clear that the process of connecting events and concepts in history is a skill that is essential for all students, but is often not discussed. Long after students have forgotten the details of the battles of the American Revolution, for example, they can carry with them the ability to connect Enlightenment ideals to the American Revolution, the American Revolution to the French Revolution, the French Revolution to the Haitian Revolution and

so on. These connections are important for how our students make sense of the world in the past and make sense of the world today.

Historians and history teachers use the term *connections* in many ways. For example, even though Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Benjamin Sacks define connections as “transmutative contacts with other cultures,” they acknowledge that historians use connections to also mean “similarities or commonalities arising not from genuine connections but from parallel experiences or related environmental influences or supposed evolutionary effects” as well as links to larger global processes.<sup>5</sup> In this article, I use the term “connections” broadly to incorporate not only direct connection between cultures, but also comparison and links to larger patterns and processes. All of these types of connections are important in world history classrooms.

No matter the type of connection, historians are clear that they are vital to historical work and understanding. In particular, historians who write about world history stress that connections are central to the field. For example, John McNeill and William McNeill describe the “human web” that shapes world history as a “set of connections that link people to one another.”<sup>6</sup> Patrick Manning defines world history as “to put it simply...the story of connections within the global human community.”<sup>7</sup> David Northrup concurs, stating:

[W]orld historians confront two huge conceptual tasks. One is horizontal integration: how to interconnect in each era the broad range of human experiences around the world. The other is vertical integration: how to identify patterns in the long sweep of past time.<sup>8</sup>

Teachers face similar challenges. Discussing teaching generally, M. Suzanne Donovan and John D. Bransford indicate that there is a need for teachers to “emphasize connected knowledge that is organized around the foundational ideas of a discipline.”<sup>9</sup> In referencing frameworks for teaching world history, Ross E. Dunn writes:

In short, the Patterns of Change Model offers in my estimation the best hope for enhancing students’ ability to connect detailed knowledge of particular topics, events, and “facts” to larger frameworks of development and causation, a cognitive feat they must perform if the texts they read and materials they learn are to have any enduring intellectual or experiential significance.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, historians and history educators are not always explicit about the connections we make as teachers, nor about the

ones we want our students to make. Referring to historians, Eric R. Wolf asks, “If there are connections everywhere, why do we persist in turning dynamic interconnected phenomena into static, disconnected things?”<sup>11</sup> If historians themselves do not always make connections clear, then K-12 teachers may face a more complex challenge in teaching history. K-12 history teachers need to be able to make connections for themselves, navigate history curriculum and standards, and help their students make connections. Standards documents can provide a sense of the skills and content that teachers should teach in classrooms, but they do not always highlight connections between time periods and cultures. Indeed, the bulleted structure of standards may lead to disconnected or static lists of events void of connections to each other and larger patterns.<sup>12</sup> Teachers need to reintroduce the connections between historical periods and regions so that the lists make sense to themselves and to their students.

In what follows, I detail three related activities that I have used to engage my teacher candidates in making connections for themselves, as well as considering how to help their future students make connections in world history. As mentioned above, although these activities can be used with any local, national, or regional history, including U.S. history or Western Civilization, I have focused on world history in my courses because of comments from teacher candidates over the years about their fears in organizing world history for instruction. They are often overwhelmed with the amount of space and time that world history encompasses, along with their lack of preparation in some time periods and regions of the course content. These challenges are often highlighted in scholarship on world history teaching.<sup>13</sup> For example, high school teacher Stephen T. Staggs wrote about his experiences:

Initially, I was a bit apprehensive about teaching a world history course as my undergraduate work at Calvin College and early graduate work at [Western Michigan University] had primarily been in United States and European history. The chronological framework for the yearlong A.P. World History course thus seemed overwhelming, since it explores world history from prehistory to the present. Moreover, the course objectives appeared daunting.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, first-year teacher Christopher Orlando noted, “teaching world history for the first time was like going to my first piano recital. But, instead of just playing the piano, the audience and the owners

of the concert hall that booked me expected me to have mastered and played every instrument in the orchestra.”<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, as Adam McKeown has argued, world history textbooks, unlike U.S. history textbooks, do not provide a coherent historical narrative; instead chapters are “loosely grouped into chronological order, but rarely organized into a compelling narrative of how the world came to be as it is.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, the activities I describe below are an attempt to have teacher candidates explore organizational plans for world history that include connections across time and space. To allow for a more in-depth examination of the activities, I draw upon data collected during one semester of a methods of teaching history course.

### Activity 1: Card-Sorting

#### *Method*

The card-sorting activity represents the launching pad for discussions about connections between history events and about planning for world history courses in general. I conducted the card-sorting activity on the last day of the semester in a course entitled *Methods of Teaching History: Community Resources*—the second of two history methods courses that secondary teacher candidates take at Arizona State University.<sup>17</sup> I assigned the candidates into pairs and then handed out the assignment and a stack of twenty cards (see **Appendix** for the assignment and card-sort topics). All of the topics are represented in the Arizona standards for high school world history.<sup>18</sup> I purposely chose events<sup>19</sup> from different time periods and geographic regions. These included events that happened in one year (e.g., Johannes Gutenberg Develops the Printing Press) and some that spanned many years (e.g., Neolithic Agricultural Revolution). I also chose events that occurred mainly in one geographic region as well as interregional and global events. I wanted to see how teacher candidates would work with events of different temporal and spatial scales. I prompted candidates to “take the stack of cards and organize them on the big paper in a way that makes sense to you for teaching a world history course.”

Teacher candidates were then asked to draw and label connections between the cards. I showed candidates a model for how to do this

before they started and also suggested sample connection language such as “influenced by,” “compares to,” or “is an example of.” Next, I asked candidates to indicate on the paper which events or groupings of events they would teach, first, second, and so forth, although, as I will explain below, few candidates completed this step. After all of the candidates had finished, I had them hang their maps on the wall. Candidates walked around the room and examined similarities and differences between the maps. We engaged in a group discussion of the process of creating the maps and the results.

### *Teacher Candidate Responses*

Creating organizing schemes. Teacher candidates began the task with a mixture of enthusiasm and trepidation. Many mentioned their lack of world historical knowledge as they started working, and there were more than a few nervous giggles. The candidates spent more time than I had expected looking up each event and trying to nail down specific years of the events (which was harder to do for some events than others). It seemed as though candidates first needed to orient the events in time before they could move on to other steps. As you can see in **Figure 1**, some candidates added information to the cards themselves, including time period and a short summary of the event. Since many of the pairs of candidates initially tried to arrange the events chronologically, they discussed difficulties with the events that spanned multiple years (e.g., Silk Road, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict). Although most of the candidates ended up with some sort of chronological scheme, a few of the groups organized their maps by themes (e.g., wars, religion). One group used the Nationalism card as an organizer for at least part of the map (see **Figure 1** where the candidates placed the card in the center of the map for emphasis). Another group put the Silk Road card in the center, labeling it “informational highway” and drew arrows out from it to other sets of cards labeled: “new ways of thinking,” “mistreatment,” “advancements,” “ideas/beliefs,” and “nationalism.”

Other teacher candidates organized the cards by regions. For example, one group drew a map of the world on the piece of paper and then placed the cards on top of it by region. The lack of candidates’ consensus on the organizing schemes mirrors the lack of consensus in the field and in schools about how best to represent

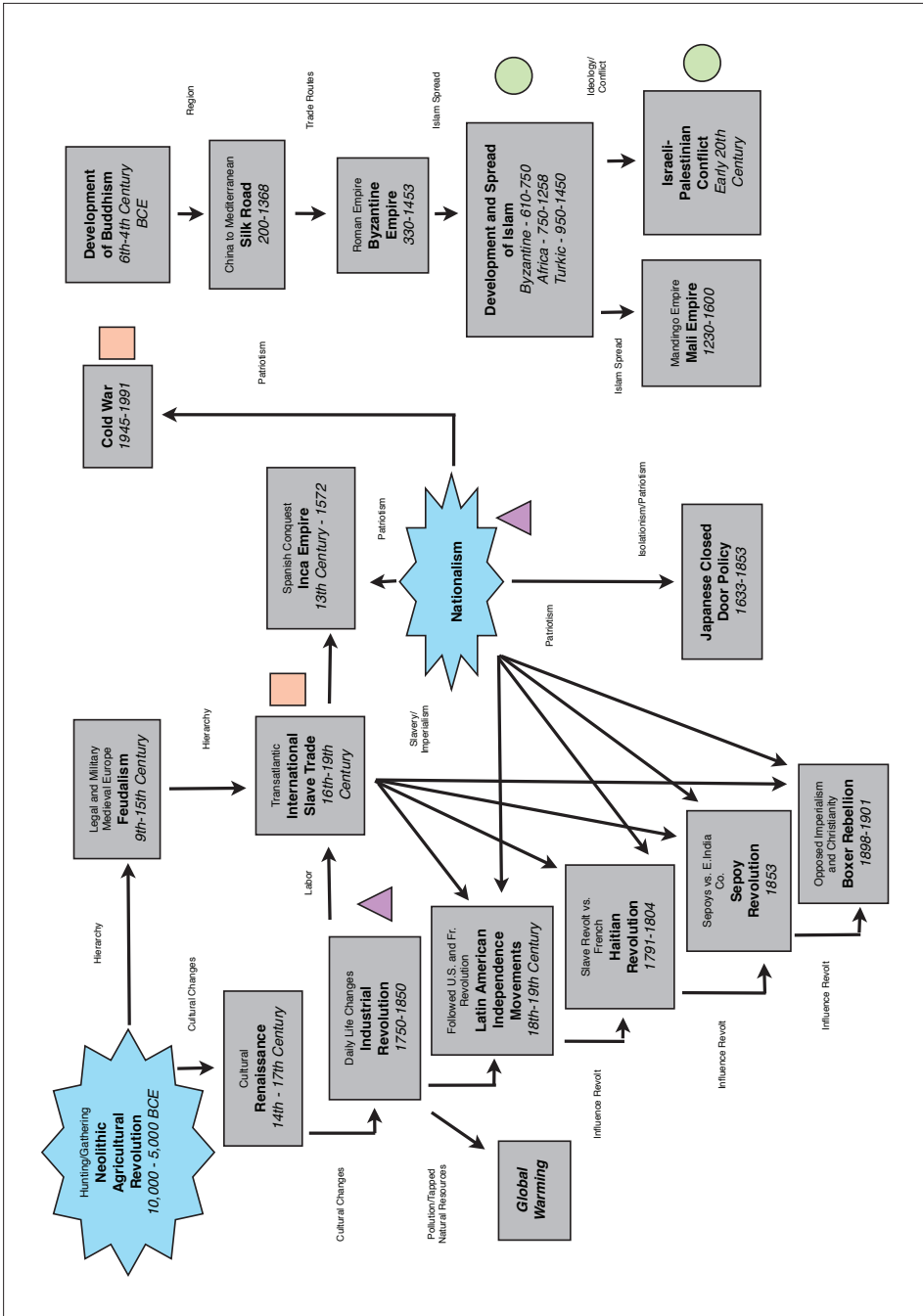


Figure 1: Group 4 Card-Sort Map



world history. For example, Robert B. Bain and Tamara L. Shreiner, Ross E. Dunn, and Michael Marino and Jane Bolgatz have all detailed the various ways that U.S. state standards represent world history.<sup>20</sup> These authors have found that although state standards most often focus on a Eurocentric version of world history, there are also standards that focus on what Bain and Shreiner term Social Studies World History, Geographic/Regional World History, and Global World History.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the assignment directions, only one group added an organizational scheme that indicated instructional preferences (see **Figure 2**). This group organized the cards by numbered units. However, they did not label any of the connectors they drew between the cards. It seemed as though most of the candidates needed to first organize the cards for their own understandings before they could think about instructional planning. The group that focused on instructional planning did so at the expense of making connections between the events.

Connecting historical events. Once teacher candidates had decided on their general organizing schemes, they started drawing and labeling connectors. This step required a lot of prompting on my part as I moved from group to group. Some of the candidates drew connectors, but did not label them (see **Figure 2**), whereas others eventually drew and labeled multiple connections on their maps (see **Figure 3**). The connections were often causal (e.g., “creation of empires led to fall of empires”) and sometimes contained little detail (e.g., an arrow between Silk Road and Byzantine Empire labeled: “trade routes”). However, the labels that the candidates created, even if sparse, can tell us something about what they know about the events and how they connect. For example, one group wrote “hierarchy” on an arrow connecting the Neolithic Agricultural Revolution to Feudalism (see **Figure 1**). This label shows the candidates knew something about the hierarchical system that developed during the Agricultural Revolution, as well as about the one that was in place during the Feudal age (in this case, in Europe, as the candidates marked on the card). Although these candidates did not connect the two events directly, they connected them to larger patterns of social and political organization.

In another example, teacher candidates connected the Industrial Revolution with the Cold War by writing “mass manufacturing of

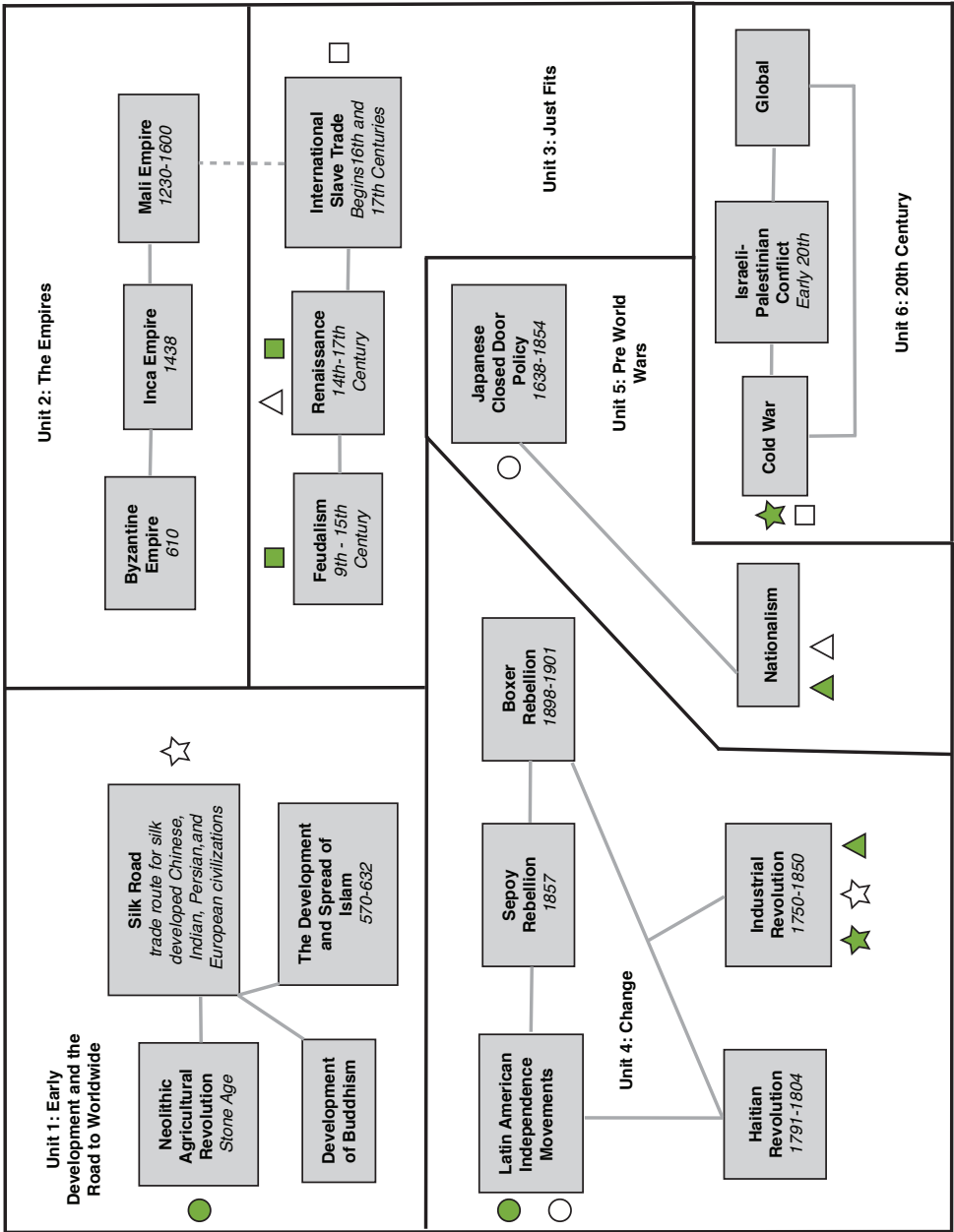


Figure 2: Group 6 Card-Sort Map

steel, iron, weapons.” This connection shows that the candidates were thinking about the long-term effects of the growth of industrialism globally. Still, another pair considered causal connections by connecting the international slave trade with Latin American independence movements by writing “slavery & suppression lead to independence” (see **Figure 3**).

One of the benefits to teacher candidates working in class on this activity was the opportunity I had to rotate among the groups and ask candidates questions about the connections that they made. These small-group discussions allowed me to ask candidates to talk aloud about the decisions that they were making about organizational schemes and connections. Additionally, working in pairs allowed the candidates to question each other when I could not be with the group. I also did a fair amount of “eavesdropping” on discussions in the pairs that informed the later whole-class discussion. The discussion that followed the card-sorting task allowed teacher candidates to explain the rationales behind their organizational schemes and the connections that they made. Candidates were interested in the differences in conceptual schemes between groups and we discussed why they would have such differences.

## **Activity 2: Using Card-Sort Events to Discuss Instructional Issues in World History**

### *Method*

Next, I used the card-sorting activity as a springboard for discussing additional instructional issues in world history, such as determining historical significance and perceived student understanding of world history. To prompt this discussion, I had candidates mark the following on their card-sort maps:

1. Put a star next to the two most important cards in world history.
2. Put a triangle next to the two most important cards for students to learn.
3. Put a square next to two cards you think students will be most interested in learning.
4. Put a circle next to the two most challenging cards to teach.

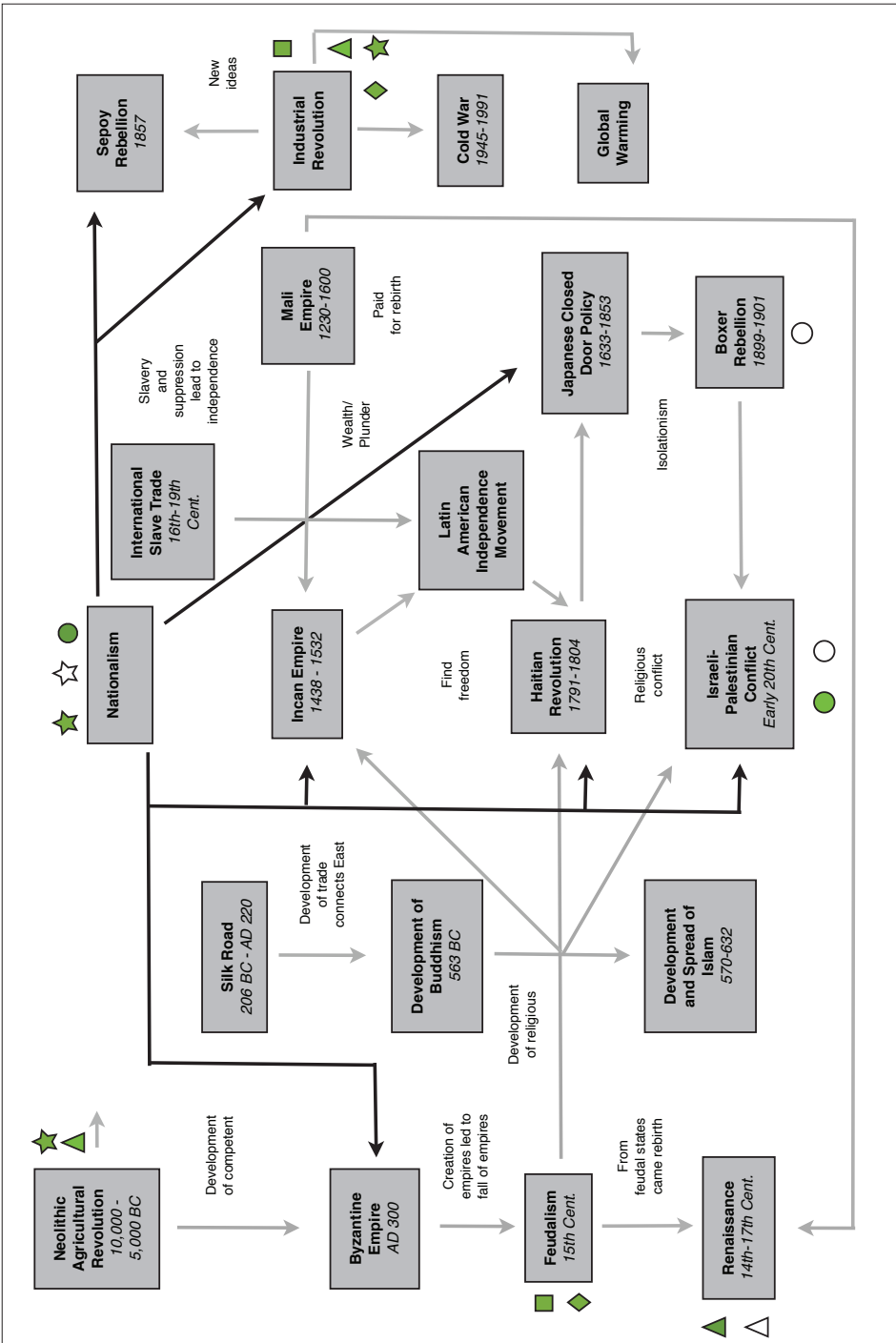


Figure 3: Group 3 Card-Sort Map

These questions allowed candidates to think a little bit more about each of the events and how they would teach them. Because I had two people work on the same map, candidates could indicate any differences in opinions by using different colored symbols on the map (see **Figure 3** for example).

Two of the questions focused on issues of significance: for history in general and for teaching history. Considering the significance of historical events is, as Christine Counsell wrote, “a process of reasoning, something that is up for grabs, not a given condition.”<sup>22</sup> The questions that asked candidates what events are most important in world history and then which are most important for students to learn allowed them to consider not only criteria for historical significance (e.g., the effect of an event on a large number of people), but also criteria such as their future students’ backgrounds and interests. The combination of these criteria reflects what I refer to as *instructional significance for teaching history*.<sup>23</sup> The significance questions prompted candidates to think about connections in different ways by judging the relative significance of events compared to other events (which involves thinking about how an event was connected to others), and by thinking about how they can connect events to their students’ interests and experiences.

### *Teacher Candidate Responses*

As I had found in a previous study of pre-service and practicing teachers,<sup>24</sup> a number of candidates changed their answers from the first question to the second (see **Table 1**). For example, seven of the sixteen candidates indicated that the Agricultural Revolution was one of the most important events in world history; however, five candidates changed to more recent events when asked what is most important for students to learn (see **Table 1** for the candidates’ choices for Questions 1 and 2). When asked why they changed their answers, candidates mentioned wanting to focus on events like the Renaissance that had more of a “human element.” Candidates also argued that things such as a focus on the people and innovations of the Renaissance made it important for students to learn. Nine candidates chose the Renaissance as most important to learn in a world history class.

Some candidates added that they thought that events closer to present would be more relevant to candidates. Additionally, a

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**Question 1: Most Important in History**

Event	Total Responses
Nationalism	9
Neolithic Agricultural Revolution	7
Industrial Revolution	5
Silk Road	4
Renaissance	3
Feudalism	2
Development and Spread of Islam	1
Cold War	1

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**Question 2: Most Important for Students to Learn**

Event	Total Responses
Industrial Revolution	10
Renaissance	9
Nationalism	7
International Slave Trade	2
Neolithic Agricultural Revolution	2
Development and Spread of Islam	1
Feudalism	1

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**Table 1:** *Candidate Choices for Question 1 and Question 2.* Note:  $n=32$  events chosen by candidates (two per candidate). Events that were not selected by any candidate are not included here.

few candidates mentioned the lack of primary sources to teach the Agricultural Revolution as a reason for not choosing it—only two candidates chose the Agricultural Revolution for the second question (see **Table 1**). Other factors that were mentioned were their own personal interests in particular events when they were students, and

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**Question 3: Most Interesting to Students**

Event	Total Responses
Cold War	10
International Slave Trade	5
Global Warming	4
Industrial Revolution	4
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	2
Renaissance	2
Byzantine Empire	1
Boxer Rebellion	1

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**Table 2:** *Candidate Choices for Question 3.* Note:  $n=32$  events chosen by candidates (two per candidate). Events that were not selected by any candidate are not included here.

events they considered to be more connected to students today, such as the International Slave Trade and the Industrial Revolution.

During the discussion, teacher candidates mentioned that what they believed to be more recent events like the Cold War, Global Warming, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict would be more interesting to students (see **Table 2** for the candidates' choices for Question 3). Again, the candidates described the human element in discussing the Slave Trade as more interesting to students. They also discussed the violence of the Cold War as being of particular interest to students. One candidate defended his choice of the Byzantine Empire as most interesting by saying it was far back in time and "almost mythological." This discussion allowed me to push back on some of their thoughts about student interest. For example, when I asked what they thought makes the Renaissance more interesting than other events, they mentioned the art, new innovations, and scientific ideas. We then talked about how the candidates could make other historical eras or events potentially interesting by incorporating art, science, and innovations. Additionally, we discussed how they could make the Agricultural Revolution engaging to students by drawing on adolescents' knowledge of and interest in food and food

<b>Question 4: Most Challenging to Teach</b>	
Event	Total Responses
Development and Spread of Islam	8
Israeli Palestinian Conflict	8
Nationalism	3
Global Warming	2
Development of Buddhism	2
Neolithic Agricultural Revolution	2
Latin American Independence Movements	2
Cold War	1
Byzantine Empire	1
Japanese Closed Door Policy	1

**Table 3:** *Candidate Choices for Question 4.* Note:  $n=32$  events chosen by candidates (two per candidate). Events that were not selected by any candidate are not included here.

production, family structures, and political and social hierarchies, as well as how they can connect the Agricultural Revolution to later historical events.

Some of the events that candidates thought would be most interesting were also ones that they thought would be most challenging to teach (see **Table 3** for the candidates' choices for Question 4). For example, candidates cited the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict as most challenging due to its complexity and longevity, as well as the fact that it is a contemporary event and students (and their families) might have strong feelings about it. Other events that involved religions such as Islam and Buddhism were mentioned as challenging due to the candidates' unfamiliarity with the topics and the potential of having students in their classes that practice those religions. This discussion highlighted student perceptions of the challenges of teaching and learning world history and allowed us to talk about pedagogical issues specific to world history.



### **Activity 3: Six Degrees Thought Experiments**

Last, I had the teacher candidates engage in “six degrees thought experiments” to see if they could connect unlikely pairs of events using other events and concepts. I first tried this during a keynote speech that I gave at a conference in October 2012. At the conference, I challenged the attendees (primarily K-12 teachers) to connect the Cold War to their state in less than six “moves.” Teachers were enthusiastic in their responses, with some commenting that they were eager to try it with their own students.

For my teacher candidates, I used event pairs from the card-sort cards, such as Japanese Closed Door Policy/Cold War and Neolithic Agricultural Revolution/Global Warming, to see how many “degrees” it would take candidates to connect the two events. I also asked them to choose an event from the card-sort task that they could connect to a contemporary situation in their home state or even to themselves. Again, these connections could represent different types (e.g., causal, comparative, contacts, links to larger patterns). I stressed that this activity is one that they can do with their own future students. I then had students brainstorm other event pairs that they could use throughout a world history course for their future students. This concluding activity allowed students to explore connections with world historical events that were not represented on the original stack of card-sort cards.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the candidates enjoyed the card-sorting task, the subsequent discussion of issues in world history instruction, and the thought experiments. They commented that they not only learned a lot by participating in the task, but it also alerted them to areas in world history that they needed to study more before they started teaching. Since the events are all ones that candidates could potentially teach in a world history course, they came to realize that they need to know not only about the events themselves, but also about how they connect across time and space. When asked about the card-sorting task overall, candidates mentioned how daunting, but worthwhile, they found it to be. One candidate talked about how the

task made her realize how many connections she will need to make for students not only within a particular era, but also across eras. We discussed how there are particular times when you must “lay seeds” for later events, and times when you must review past events to make sense of what the students are currently learning. I told the candidates that some of this work is similar to what TV dramas do when they have a “previously on” segment at the beginning of the episode.<sup>25</sup> These “previously on” segments for TV shows can go back a few episodes or even a few years in the case of some shows; for world history, “previously on” can reach back thousands of years.

I have made some changes since the first time I taught this activity. I now have the candidates complete the card-sort twice: once for their own understanding (toward the beginning of the semester) and once for planning (toward the end of the semester). I have found that the candidates focus much more on the pedagogical aspects of the task the second time they do it and it allows them to engage in a modified curriculum planning activity. Additionally, completing the card-sort activity at the beginning of the semester alerts candidates to possible gaps in their world historical knowledge that they can focus on throughout the semester. If I have any time constraints, I add more dates (approximate in some cases) to the cards to save candidates time in looking them up. We now talk more about how the candidates could use these activities with their own students, such as by using the card-sort as a pre-test to capture prior knowledge at the beginning of the semester, and then as a post-test to see what students have learned across the school year. Overall, I have found incorporating the card-sort activity into a history methods course emphasizes the importance of connections, not only to candidates’ own understandings, but also for students’ learning.

## Notes

I would like to thank Robert Vagi for his assistance with this article and Brian Girard and Tammy Shreiner for providing feedback on a previous draft.

1. See David Greene, "Google Integrates Kevin Bacon In Its Search Function," National Public Radio, 26 December 2012, <<https://www.npr.org/2012/12/26/168055977/google-integrates-kevin-bacon-in-its-search-function>>.

2. *The Colbert Report*, Episode #10022, 12 November 2013, <<https://www.cc.com/episodes/gk4073/the-colbert-report-november-12--2013---david-christian-season-10-ep-10022>>.

3. Lauren McArthur Harris, "Making Connections for Themselves and Their Students: Examining Teachers' Organization of World History," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 42, no. 3 (2014): 336-374.

4. See Harris, "Making Connections for Themselves and Their Students" for a full discussion of methods and results.

5. Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Benjamin Sacks, "Networks, Interactions, and Connective History," in *A Companion to World History*, ed. Douglas Northrop (West Sussex, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), 303.

6. John Robert McNeill and William Hardy McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of World History* (W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003), 3-4.

7. Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3.

8. David Northrup, "Globalization and the Great Convergence: Rethinking World History in the Long Term," *Journal of World History* 16, no. 3 (September 2005): 249.

9. M. Suzanne Donovan and John D. Bransford, eds., *How Students Learn History in the Classroom* (Washington DC: National Academies Press, 2005), 15.

10. Ross E. Dunn, "Constructing World History in the Classroom," in *Knowing, Learning, and Teaching History: National and International Perspectives*, ed. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 129-130.

11. Eric R. Wolf, "Connections in History," in *The New World History: A Teacher's Companion*, ed. Ross E. Dunn (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1982/2000), 133.

12. Robert B. Bain, "Challenges of Teaching and Learning World History," in *A Companion to World History*, ed. Douglas Northrop (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), 112.

13. See Dunn, "Constructing World History in the Classroom"; James R. Palmitessa and Stephen T. Staggs, "The Successes and Challenges of Teaching World History in the Twenty-First Century: Two Case Studies from Western Michigan," in *World History Connected* 3, no. 1 (October 2005), <<http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/3.1/staggs.html>>; Heidi Roupp, ed., *Teaching World History in the Twenty-First Century: A Resource Book* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2010).

14. Palmitessa and Staggs, “The Successes and Challenges of Teaching World History,” para. 22.

15. Thomas W. Barker, Christopher Orlando, Jason Torres, Sarah Fairburn, Leah Levy, and Jessica Gowen, “Teaching World History for the First Time,” *The Middle Ground*, no. 7 (2013): 4, <<http://www2.css.edu/app/depts/historyjournal/index.cfm?name=Teaching-World-History-for-the-First-Time&cat=6&art=217>>.

16. Adam McKeown, “What Are the Units of World History?” in *A Companion to World History*, ed. Douglas Northrop (West Sussex, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), 81.

17. This article focuses on my Fall 2012 Methods of Teaching History course.

18. Arizona Department of Education, *Arizona Academic Content Standards: Social Studies* (2006), <<https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=550c589faadebe15d072aa26>>.

19. The cards contained both historical events and what are sometimes called *colligatory concepts*—labels historians use to make meaning of a series of events, such as Renaissance or Industrial Revolution. See Ola Halldén, “Conceptual Change and the Learning of History,” *International Journal of Educational Research* 27, no. 3 (1997): 201-210; Jannet van Drie, and Carla van Boxtel, “Historical Reasoning: Towards a Framework for Analyzing Students’ Reasoning About the Past,” *Educational Psychology Review* 20, no. 2 (June 2008): 87-110; W. H. Walsh, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (London, United Kingdom: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1951). For clarity, I will use the term *events* throughout the article.

20. See Robert B. Bain and Tamara L. Shreiner, “Issues and Options in Creating a National Assessment in World History,” *The History Teacher* 38, no. 2 (February 2005): 241-272; Ross E. Dunn, “The Two World Histories,” *Social Education* 72, no. 5 (September 2008): 257-263; Michael Marino and Jane Bolgatz, “Weaving a Fabric of World History? An Analysis of U.S. State High School World History Standards,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 366-394.

21. Bain and Shreiner, “Issues and Options in Creating a National Assessment in World History,” 245.

22. Christine Counsell, “Looking through a Josephine-Butler-Shaped Window: Focusing Pupils’ Thinking on Historical Significance,” *Teaching History* 114 (2004): 30.

23. Lauren McArthur Harris and Brian Girard, “Instructional Significance for Teaching History: A Preliminary Framework,” *The Journal of Social Studies Research* 38, no. 4 (October 2014): 215-225.

24. Harris, “Making Connections for Themselves and Their Students.”

25. I am grateful to Bob Bain from the University of Michigan for introducing me to this analogy.

## Appendix

### **Card-Sorting and Concept Mapping Task: World History**

**Directions:** Using a stack of historical cards and concepts, you will create a concept map that represents how you might organize a World History course.

The cards represent typical topics in a secondary World History course and can all be found in common textbooks and state standards documents. You are welcome to use resources (books, Internet) to look up information on the card topics.

#### **Procedures:**

1. Take the stack of cards and organize them on the big paper in a way that makes sense to you for teaching a World History course.
2. Draw and label connections between the cards.
3. Indicate on the big paper with markers which concepts/events you would teach first, second, and so forth.
4. Indicate any particular groupings or units of study that you might create.
5. When you are satisfied with your concept map, tape the cards to the big paper.

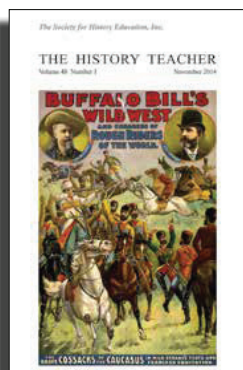
#### **Card-Sort Terms:**

- Neolithic Agricultural Revolution
- Development of Buddhism
- Development and Spread of Islam
- Mali Empire
- Byzantine Empire
- Feudalism
- Inca Empire
- Silk Road
- Renaissance
- International Slave Trade
- Haitian Revolution
- Boxer Rebellion
- Cold War
- Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- Latin American Independence Movements
- Nationalism
- Japanese Closed Door Policy
- Sepoy Rebellion
- Industrial Revolution
- Global Warming



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