

SABBATICAL REPORT:
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PROFESSOR OF HISTORY
MOORPARK COLLEGE
FALL SEMESTER, 2009

June, 2010

INTRODUCTION

This paper is written to report on the work I completed during my sabbatical leave from Moorpark College during the Fall semester of 2009.

My goal for this leave, as stated in my initial proposal, was “to update Moorpark College’s World History II course completely by revising its academic content and by offering it on line” (see appendix 1). The final product of my work is contained in appendixes 4 and 5, the syllabi and accompanying course material of the new World History II courses offered at Moorpark College. To prepare these syllabi my time was divided between three tasks: initial information gathering from local four-year schools, extensive academic research, and a complete rewrite of the course, including preparation to offer it on-line. The following are my results.

I INFORMATION GATHERING FROM LOCAL UNIVERSITIES

World history is a comparatively new area of study within the modern discipline of history, adopted gradually across the nation from the 1990s to reflect the U.S.A.’s new position as the sole global superpower. This introduced the desire for Americans to know more than just their own history, and indeed more than the history of Western Europe, that the U.S.A. had led throughout the Cold War (the reason for the traditional “Western Civ” course). Now Americans were to be introduced to world history to reflect their country’s new world status and involvement.

As a new area of study world history’s philosophy and methodology are still being debated, so I first wanted to find out the status of the field at the universities to which the majority of our students transfer. I focused on two goals: to find out the current position and future plans for the World History I and II courses (or their equivalents) at the different institutions, and to discover the actual make-up of the World History II courses offered, both in their content and in the skills trained. This was to ensure that Moorpark’s new World History II course would transfer seamlessly in every way for our students.

I visited each of our local universities at least once during the semester, nearly always seeing the department chair (or the person responsible for scheduling the lower division courses), and the lead instructor for the World History II course. I was able to interview some extra faculty from institutions further afield at the California World History Association Conference held at UC Riverside. A full list of the universities I visited and who I saw is contained in appendix 2. The following were my conclusions.

A: The current status of world history

All but one of the universities have either already replaced introductory western civilization courses with world history or have it as a future goal (USC being the one exception). Currently some of the schools have deleted western civilization entirely from their lower division offerings; others offer both as alternatives. This change, however, is occurring very slowly at some of the institutions, most notably UCLA and CSUN. The department chairs stressed it is dependent on the retirement of faculty who teach western civilization, and this has been further slowed by the absence of new hires in the current economic climate.

Conclusion:

Moorpark College should continue to offer its students both first-rate western civilization and world history courses as they will be able to transfer both to most of our local institutions for the foreseeable future.

Actions taken:

- (i) Based on this information the history department plans to continue to offer western civilization classes, thus offering our students more choice of courses in order to fulfill their transfer requirements.
- (ii) These findings were also used in the History Program Plan in its request for a new tenured faculty member to teach western civilization courses. As from this month we have filled this position and for the first time in nearly ten years Moorpark will have a full-time faculty member dedicated to teach these classes.

B: The Content of World History II Courses

In interviewing the lead faculty members for World History II classes I received invaluable help in knowing what is being offered throughout our area. Usually they were generous enough to offer time in which to discuss their overall philosophy of the class, their syllabi with many of their handouts, and the opportunity to attend at least one of their classes. My goal was to learn more about the content of their courses (what topics they covered), as well as the skills they aimed to teach. Although my focus was World History II I also received considerable material about their World History I courses too.

From this wealth of information two points emerged. First, there is as yet no one accepted content for world history courses. A few propose a one-field approach (environmental or social world history, for instance). More propose a thematic approach incorporating several fields – but there is great divergence on which themes should be included and emphasized most. (Should it be economic over political history? How important is it to include gender and minority issues?) In summary, the content of World History II courses in our area is very varied.

In contrast, the skills these instructors want to teach their freshman students are remarkably similar: using different words they all agreed on the prime importance of critical thinking (usually trained through reading and discussing primary sources), and critical writing.

Conclusion:

Moorpark history faculty are able to exercise leeway in the content they offer within world history classes, but must continue to focus on skills building through setting assignments such as seminars, document analyses and essays whenever possible.

Actions taken:

- (i) A file is now available for Moorpark history faculty containing all the syllabi and information from these visits for their use. This is especially valuable for those who teach world history classes but it has also been used by other history professors for its skills content.

- (ii) In reaction to these findings history faculty are reaffirmed in their goal of setting writing assignments, despite dramatically increased class sizes due to the budget cuts. Discussions on this issue have occurred both formally at department meetings as well as informally.
- (iii) This information has also helped support efforts by the faculty to notify the state that community college students are at risk of doing poorly or of failing their upper division courses upon transfer because of inadequate preparatory training in their skills at the introductory level due to increased class sizes and hence faculty loads.

Extra benefits from gathering information from local universities:

Two unexpected benefits happened from this first part of my sabbatical project. Although my focus was on World History II, I also gained almost as much information about World History I. And I have made many contacts amongst my world history peers in southern California, which will be of considerable help both to me and to the history department of Moorpark College in the future.

II ACADEMIC RESEARCH

A Course Work

In my initial proposal for a sabbatical I had planned to undertake some research into the field of world history under Dr. Rainer Buschmann at CSUCI, but he transferred to Purdue University for the academic year. Yet having begun visiting our local universities and hearing how varied the philosophies and content was of their World History II courses, I realized I had to undertake some formal training before I could design my own course. As a graduate student who completed her degree before the emergence of world history I had no formal training in the field. There are two post-graduate classes on the historiography of world history in our geographic area but both are offered in the spring, so I could not take them. Yet one of the instructors, Dr. Paul Spickard at UCSB, agreed not only to give me the syllabus for his course, including the reading list, but also to meet with me periodically to discuss my

understanding and progress. His History 200WD course is based on the quarter calendar, so for ten weeks of my sabbatical I worked through the requirements of the class (see appendix 3.) Thus, although I did not take the course, I completed considerable research in the field of world history.

Conclusion:

This was the most formative part of my sabbatical leave, giving me an academic framework within which I could plan my course. By the end of my work I was aware of the many and competing visions of world history into which I could place my own. Indeed, the final assignment for the class was a proposed syllabus for an introductory world history course – particularly appropriate for me.

B Conferences and Meetings

Whilst undertaking this extensive reading course in the historiography of world history I also caught up with its current status and the debates within the field by attending the California World History Association Conference held by UC Riverside on October 16-17, 2009. Here I met many of the leading historians in the discipline, both from California and internationally, as well as a vibrant group of world history teachers at the high school level. Through Dr. Ross Dunn of San Diego State University I was introduced to the work of the National Center for History in the Schools, reading several of their publications and attending one of their meetings. This proved remarkably helpful in that I had no prior knowledge of what world history was taught at schools.

Conclusion:

When I first started teaching the course at Moorpark College my students had never taken world history before, having been taught western civilization at school. Now that world history is mandated by the state at both middle and high schools, my students have already been introduced to the subject. In building my own course I needed to be aware of both the content and skills that students should already be familiar with, and be sure of what I wanted to achieve building on this school base.

Extra benefits from researching world history:

My introduction to world history at the school level was a most unexpected benefit of this part of my sabbatical project. I had started my research focusing on the content and skills that our students needed to transfer to the next level of their education, the four-year universities. But I became aware that it is equally as important to know about where our students are coming from. Moorpark College must ensure that its World History II course dovetails both with world history as taught to our students at the Middle and High School level, as well as at the next level after community college.

It is also hard to exaggerate the extra confidence I have teaching world history now that I believe that I am fully qualified to do so. Initially trained in western civilization, I have gradually changed my emphasis at Moorpark to this new area of history. Now I have a thorough and up-to-date academic background in the field in which I principally teach, and I feel able to hold my own with my world history peers.

III COURSE REWRITE

A Content

Having gathered information from local universities and thoroughly researched the field of world history I was ready to start outlining the structure of my new World History II course.

I decided to focus on one theme only, because it is different from the high school approach, is more comprehensible to students and allows for more in-depth learning. I picked the theme of the trajectory of the West, starting with the reasons for its rise as Western Europe in the Early Modern Period. I continued with the consequences of this rise as seen across the world in the Era of Western Hegemony, and finished with the current threats to the West's dominance, now led by the U.S.A., in our Modern Era. I hoped that this theme would be instantly appealing because of its direct relevance to our community college students, both those who would never take another history course and those who might become future historians. To illustrate these three periods I decided to

focus on a handful of places in more detail rather than try to cover all areas of the world, to allow for closer examination of both the content itself and the skills it can help teach.

Having outlined the syllabus of the course I then prepared the materials needed for each of the resulting seven topics, writing all the lectures, assembling the handouts and planning the required assignments.

Conclusion:

I taught this new course in the Spring semester of 2010. Appendix 4 includes the syllabus for this class and the topic outlines that detail its content and assignments.

B On-line Training

In preparation for offering World History II on-line I also completed Moorpark's two training courses in Desire2Learn and on-line pedagogy. With considerable help from the On-Line Training Specialist I slowly transferred my new material to a distance education format, both the content and the skills-training components.

Conclusion:

I was also able to offer my new World History II course as a hybrid class during the Spring semester of 2010: see appendix 5 for this syllabus. The class is also available for reading in its entirety through D2L, including its quizzes, on-line discussions and document tests (CRN 31263).

Extra benefits from rewriting the course:

There were two unexpected benefits from this part of my sabbatical project. In writing the course it became apparent that no current text book would provide the necessary support for my chosen material. Thus I had to consider putting together a custom text that would really be of benefit to the students. In cooperation with Pearson I assembled a selection of readings which the publisher allowed me to photocopy and test run in my hybrid class during the Spring semester. I am now in the process of finalizing this collection and it should be ready for students in

all of my World History II classes in the Fall semester of 2010 – and hopefully it will be of use to students for several years thereafter.

Secondly, the necessity of having to offer this course as a hybrid class also had unexpected benefits. I now see on-line classes not as more or less effective than on-ground ones, but as alternatives in providing student learning. They each have their own strengths and weaknesses, in the material one can set and the assignments one can use. I have already started using components of my hybrid class in my on-ground ones, and I am sure for the next couple of years at least I will continue to enrich both types of classes with components from each other.

CONCLUSION

Teaching this new syllabus for two classes during the Spring semester I was absolutely delighted with how it worked out, although of course being an instructor I have a few alterations I am making for next semester! Most importantly, as seen in their evaluation forms and in the many other ways I requested feedback during the course, the students loved it. I am so thrilled!

I cannot thank all those concerned with this sabbatical project enough for their help. I am indebted to the copious and generous advice of so many fellow instructors and teachers in southern California. They gave their valuable time and professional wisdom unstintingly. I am also most grateful for all the encouragement of my peers at Moorpark College, and of the history department in particular who had to shoulder the increased responsibilities created by my absence.

I would also most sincerely like to thank the administration and the trustees of Ventura County Community College District. It may not seem the ideal time for faculty members to take sabbatical leave, but I can assure you that in this case the results have been even more favorable than planned. I detailed the benefits I hoped to achieve in my sabbatical proposal: to me as an educator, of course, but through me to my fellow history faculty and to Moorpark College, to the District in general, and most particularly to the students we all share. Through this sabbatical you have provided them with a faculty member who is still equipped,

“to provide exceptional service to the students and the District in an era of constant change”. (Article 8, Section 8.6.A.)

Appendix 1:
Sabbatical Proposal
Fall semester, 2008

Appendix 2:

Faculty Interviewed and Universities Visited

CSU Northridge

Dr. Tom Maddux (department chair)
Dr. Richard Horowitz
Dr. Rachel Howes

CSU Channel Islands

Dr. Marie Francois (department chair)
Dr. Rainer Buschmann
Prof. Amy Caldwell
Prof. Michael Blodgett

CSU Long Beach

Dr. Sharlene Sayegh (at UC Riverside)

Cal Poly Pomona

Dr. Hend Gilli-Elewy (at UC Riverside)

San Diego State University

Dr. Ross Dunn (at UC Riverside)

UC Santa Barbara

Dr. Harold Marcuse (lead world historian)
Dr. Paul Spickard

UC Los Angeles

Dr. Ned Alpers (department chair)
Dr. Amir Alexander

UC Irvine

Dr. Bob Moeller (department chair)
Dr. Laura Mitchell
Dr. Touraj Daryaei

UC Riverside

Dr. Hollie Schillig
Dr. Fariba Zarinebaf

California Lutheran University

Dr. Paul Hanson

National University

Dr. Alex Zukas (at UC Riverside)

University of Southern California

Dr. Steve Ross (department chair)

Appendix 3:

Course Syllabus

History 200WD: Graduate Seminar in World Historical Literature

Dr. Paul Spickard, UCSB

"The goal of this course is to help the student begin to think systematically about the history of the world as a whole. It is intended to give an orientation to the field of world history, both as a teaching subject and as a field for research and writing. . . . The topics and readings chosen here are intended to introduce the student to some important ways, among many, of thinking about world history."

Week 1: The History of World History

Ross E Dunn, *The New World History* (course text book)

William McNeill, *The Rise of the West*

Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*

Paul Spickard, James V. Spickard and Kevin Cragg, *World History by the World's Historians*

Week 2: World History versus Western Civ

John Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*

David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*

Week 3: Economic Ways of Conceiving World History

Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*

Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World*

Week 4: The Problem of Geography and the Idea of Civilizations

Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*

J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*

Week 5: Interregional and Superregional History

Michael Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora*

Jerry H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters*

Week 6: Cross-Regional Trade

Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, eds., *The World That Trade Created: Culture, Society, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present*
Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*

Week 7: Human Migrations

Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium*
Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*

Week 8: Biological Encounters

William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*
Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*

Week 9: Racial and Ethnic Systems

Paul Spickard, *Race and Nation*

Week 10: Teaching World History

Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *The World: A History*
Jerry Bentley and Herbert Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters*

Week 11: Final Cautions

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*
Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*

Term Paper:

"Construct a syllabus for an undergraduate survey course in World History, including the course objectives, a schedule of topics to be covered, assigned readings, and written requirements."

Appendix 4:

World History II

Syllabus and Topic Outlines

Nenagh Brown,

Moorpark College

Appendix 5:
World History II
Hybrid Syllabus
Nenagh Brown,
Moorpark College