

Course Development Project—Final Report
NAME
History Department

Course Background

My course development project was focused on HIST 340: Traditional China. This is a course that covers Chinese history from the beginning of civilization (roughly 2000 BCE) to the Mongol conquest (13th century CE). I inherited this course from an earlier professor, but I had been teaching a similar course at my previous institution. This course fulfills credit for the East Asian Studies major and History Major, so most students come from one of these two fields. There is also, often, a group of students from outside these majors who are simply interested in the subject, usually because they served Chinese speaking missions. I am the only one who teaches this course. Generally, the course has ten to twenty students in it.

Learning Outcomes

Geographical Thinking: Students will understand the differences between the topographical, environmental, and cultural regions within China, and be able to analyze how these regional differences affected Chinese history.

Historical Thinking: Students will be able to understand primary sources from the perspective of their historical authors, to differentiate the kind of information that can be gained from different kinds of primary evidence, and to be able to synthesize primary sources into historical interpretation in writing assignments and class discussions.

Critical Analysis: Students will be able to engage in historical debates, that is, to identify arguments (assertions, claims, theses) in secondary scholarship, and evaluate them according to their supporting evidence.

Importance of Course Learning Outcomes: Historical thinking through the use of primary sources is the highest goal of all history courses. This goal is especially difficult (and therefore especially important) when students are expected to understand the world from the perspective of an ancient Chinese period—separated from them by thousands of years and on the opposite side of the world. With this foundation of historical thinking, students are able to critically evaluate others' historical interpretations—i.e. to engage in historical debate. Many of the classic blunders in the historical analysis of China are based in limited geographical thinking. Underestimating the size and complexity of China (environmentally, socially, culturally, ethnically) has led to many reductionist interpretations about Chinese history. Adept geographical thinking helps students to think critically of such reductionist interpretations. Furthermore, the long timespan of this course (about two thousand years) lends itself well to a *longue durée* analysis of Chinese history.

Course Activities

Geographical Thinking

Map activity. Students are given an unlabeled map of a physical map of China, along with a list of key geographical IDs that they are to master. These IDs are a combination of mountain ranges, rivers, capital cities, regions, deserts, and steppe.

Historical Thinking

Primary Source Analyses. Students were assigned six one-page papers on assigned primary sources readings. Each came with a written prompt from me (posted on Learning Suite) that posed questions to help students think about the primary source more analytically. These papers were generously graded, so as to provide a low-risk setting in which to experiment with historical interpretation. In class on the day these assignments were due, class discussions allowed students to share with each other their thoughts and for me to answer questions and correct any misconceptions.

Period Piece Film Analyses. Three times in the semester, students were assigned to watch a period piece film set in ancient or medieval China, and to read the primary source upon which the story originated. The assignment was to contrast how the same story is told in different ways according to the unique cultural values of each period, including our own. Instructions for this assignment were clearly written out and provided on Learning Suite. In class on the day these assignments were due, class discussions allowed students to share with each other their thoughts and for me to answer questions and correct any misconceptions.

Critical Analysis

Book Reviews. Throughout the course, students read three scholarly monographs that were connected to the larger theme of the course. For each of these books, they wrote a scholarly review of the book. They were provided a detailed description of what should be included in a scholarly review from an article in *Perspectives on History*. In class on the day these assignments were due, class discussions allowed students to share with each other their thoughts and for me to answer questions and correct any misconceptions.

Term Paper. The term paper assignment was to critique the traditional narrative of Chinese history by focusing on one of the ignored groups of people or institutions: religion, women, non-Chinese, merchants, and the military. Student selected one of these topics, synthesized primary and secondary information from throughout the class, and presented a five- to six-page paper at the end of the semester. Instructions for this assignment were clearly written out and provided on Learning Suite.

In-class Presentation. At the end of the semester, groups worked together to select a topic that we had not had enough time to address already in class, research both primary and secondary literature on it, synthesize their research, and present their research orally before the class. Instructions for this assignment were clearly written out and provided on Learning Suite.

Assessments of Student Learning

Geographical Thinking

A geography quiz assessed basic geographical knowledge rather than geographical thinking, but knowledge is foundational to further geographical thinking. Other quizzes assessed geographical concepts, especially regional diversity within China, and the environmentally determined “perilous frontier.” The book review of *Genesis of East Asia* especially required geographical awareness of regional diversity within China and across East Asia.

Historical Thinking

All the writing assignments and in-class presentations described for this learning outcome in the previous section were evaluated by me. Papers and presentations were each assessed according to different rubrics, which had been provided to the students via Learning Suite ahead of the assignment. Historical thinking was one of the explicit categories with which the papers and presentations were going to be evaluated.

Critical Analysis

All the writing assignments described for this learning outcome in the previous section were evaluated by me. Papers were assessed according to a rubric, which had been provided to the students via Learning Suite ahead of the assignment. Analytical thinking was one of the explicit categories with which the papers were going to be evaluated.

Student Achievement of Learning Outcomes

Geographical Thinking

The class average for the geographical quiz was 89.33%. But as stated above, this is a measurement of geographical knowledge, not geographical thinking. Geographical thinking might be better assessed by students’ book review of *Genesis of East Asia*, for the reasons stated above. The average score on this assignment was 85.34%. One student reported on his/her student evaluations: “I will, for the rest of my life, remember that Sichuan was a great defensive stronghold, that the nomadic north was always a problem, and that ‘the reports of [Chinese unity] have been greatly exaggerated.’”

Historical Thinking

Grades on the assessments described above for this learning objective indicate competency in historical thinking. The average grade for all primary source analysis papers (which I explained above were intended to be low-risk opportunities for the students) was 91.4%, and the average grade for period piece film analyses was 88%. A student reported in his/her student evaluations: “The class is very work-heavy, but every assignment and reading added greatly to my understanding of the content and helped me develop historical-thinking skills.”

Critical Analysis

Grades on the assessments described above for this learning objective indicate competency in

critical analysis. These assignments (book reviews, term paper, and in-class presentation) make up the bulk of the students' grade. Book review grades were, on average, 88%, and the average score improved with each of the three book reviews. The term paper average grade was 88.11%, and the average for the in-class presentation was 91.67%. This is reflected also in a student comment: "I will greatly benefit in my life for now being able to analyze primary sources, contemporary films, and academic publications and how they fit in the historical context. I was academically enriched every time I went to class and I loved the focus on broad patterns and the 'why' behind history in addition to the facts we learned."

General

In general, student outcomes surpassed my expectations in every category. The average final grade for this course was 90.44%. This is a high average. The last time I taught this course in Fall 2016, the class average was 82.11%. While I knew I might get pushback from administration on this high class average, I was confident that these students deserved these high grades. They performed better on all of my metrics than any other class I have ever had—teaching Traditional China or any other. I will admit, that I think I had an unusually bright and hardworking class this semester, but I think the improvements I made in the pedagogy of the class also made a significant difference.

Steps Planned or Taken to Improve Teaching and Student Learning

This course this semester went exceptionally well. The task moving forward is differentiating between the outcomes that were the product of my pedagogy and those that were the product of an unusually talented class, and then to make the pedagogy accessible still to less high achieving students. In order to achieve this, I will need data from another semester. The class went well enough that I think it appropriate to maintain the class mostly how it is for another semester. I will be teaching it again Fall 2018. With a new class of students, I'll be able to isolate variables, determining which outcomes were the product of exceptional students and which from exceptional teaching, and then from that data construct a plan for further improving the course.

Scholarly Strategies Project—Final Report
NAME
History Department

Scholarly Goals

My book manuscript continues to be the priority of my scholarly output. While I have not met my (ambitious) goal of submitting my manuscript to Harvard University Press by December of 2017, I have made significant progress in that direction. Since I am only in my second year on the CFS track, making the manuscript better is a higher priority than getting it out fast. I ended up revising Chapter Two much more than I thought would be necessary. The chapter is, now, much tighter, making a more focused argument that fits better into the overarching thesis of the book. Similarly, I practically rewrote the entire introduction. After reworking each of the chapters, I had finally gained the vision of the larger historiographic intervention that my book will be making; I had gotten my head out of the minutia and complexities of the primary sources enough to allow me to see the larger synthetic argument that my research was capable of making. This new thesis demanded an entirely new introduction and conclusion. Making these changes added several months to the project, but the insights I gained and the improvements on the thesis that resulted were well worth added time.

As planned, I did present Chapter One material at the Spatial Imagination conference at the Univ. of Pittsburgh in May 2017. Not according to the plan, I spend the summer and early autumn of 2017 revising Chapter Two (which, as I stated above required considerably more work than I had realized), and presented on this chapter at the Western Branch of the American Oriental Society regional conference in October 2017. I spend late autumn revising my introduction, and the winter proofing over all of my chapters to prepare them to be sent out to colleagues for comments and suggestions. In December, an article based upon my research from Chapter Three came out in *T'oung Pao*, the oldest and one of the most prestigious Sinological journals in the West. I am now rewriting my conclusion to reflect the changes that I have made in the overall thesis of the book and of the individual chapters. Moving forward, my revised plan is as follows:

Feb 2018	Give my draft manuscript to colleagues in the field and in the department to receive their analytical feedback.
Spring 2018	Implement feedback from colleagues in final revisions of the manuscript.
Summer 2018	Submit my manuscript to the BYU Faculty Editing Services to receive their professional copy editing services. Continue to proofread the manuscript myself.
Aug 2018	Submit my manuscript to Harvard University Press. They will take several months for reviews.
Winter 2018-19	Revise according to reviewers' and editor's suggestions. This timeline is early enough so that if reviews are not positive, I still have plenty of time to revise or find a new publisher before my tenure case.
Spring 2018 2019	Submit a final manuscript to Harvard University Press. My book will finally be published.

My long-term scholarship pursuits continue to be the same. While I am waiting for feedback from colleagues and publisher's reviewers, I will revise my dissertation work on the depiction of Southeast Asia in the *Shuijing zhu*, and submit it for publication, probably to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. My second book project continues to be a biography of the sixth-century official Yan Zhitui.

Scholarly Plan

My scholarly plan for scheduling daily chunks of time within which to make regular progress in writing were overall effectively implemented. Reserving mornings during the summer months and a MWF afternoon and TTh morning schedule during Fall semester worked well for me. I have made significant progress in my scholarship because of this scheduling. The delays in my set deadlines were the product not in lack of implementation of my writing regiment but in the underestimating of the amount of work still to be done on my book manuscript. I plan to continue the MWF afternoon and TTh morning writing routine throughout Winter semester.

Citizenship Project Proposal—final Report
NAME
Department of History

My citizenship has taken a different direction than I had planned last June. I was invited by my department chair to serve as the co-chair of BYU's Phi Alpha Theta chapter. Phi Alpha Theta is the national historical honors society. As co-chair, I have advised the student organizers in their planning and implementation of Phi Alpha Theta activities: Phi Alpha Theta opening social, Dead Reformers Debate, national Phi Alpha Theta student conference in New Orleans, winter social, and Phi Alpha Theta regional conference at Utah Valley University. Phi Alpha Theta, it has turned out, has been the major citizenship contribution I have made this year. While not planned for, it has been inspiring to be working with these student organizers.

This Phi Alpha Theta co-chairship is a two-year assignment. I will continue with this assignment throughout the end of this academic year, and then continue with it the 2018-19 academic year. This year I have been the junior co-chair with Ed Stratford, and will be taking on the position of senior co-chair next year.

My plan to meet fellow Asianists from different departments for lunch did not happen. Quite frankly, I forgot about this goal, and prioritized my time toward research on my book manuscript. I have, however, found opportunities to strengthen relationships with fellow Asianists in the history department and importantly with Eric Hyer, who is the director of the Asian Studies program. But this goal has, as of yet, been limited to these people. This is still a goal of mine, and I plan to continue working to build these interdisciplinary relationships.

I have found opportunities to have lunches and dinners with colleagues in the history department who I don't usually spend as much time with. Through this I have been able to connect with department colleagues in both professional and personal ways, thereby improving department solidarity and facilitating transregional historical dialogue and research.