Course Background

As a result of the New Faculty Seminar I concluded that this course could be improved. Specifically, I realized that my assignments do not cover all facets of learning, and particularly the “synthetic” aspects that bring the information I share together into a coherent whole. In addition, like many other faculty I became intrigued by the idea of “flipping” the classroom.

From this came my “course development project.” I decided to apply my insights to HIST 376: US History since WWII. I also worked with Taylor Halverson from the Teaching and Learning Center in revising my syllabus.

History 376 is a history elective that can be taken as a political science/international relations credit. It covers a short period of U.S. history, from 1945 to the present. Because so many international relations students enroll, it often takes on an international focus. The students who take this course are usually in the final year of study.

My new syllabus had three innovations:

a. Rather than proceeding in a single chronological order, we moved through three particular themes commonly used to distinguish historical approaches: politics, intellectual currents, and culture. Within the theme we moved chronologically for five weeks, then started over in 1945 with the next theme.

b. Rather than discuss basic events and background, I assigned a video (usually an edited documentary) that students watched over the weekend followed by a quiz (both the video and quiz were available online to accommodate student schedules). In this sense I “flipped” the classroom.

c. As the course progressed, assignments became increasingly synthetic, asking the students to connect events and readings from different themes.

Learning Outcomes

In taking this course students should be able to:

- explain the major changes in American (1) politics and foreign policy (2) social and cultural movements and (3) intellectual currents
- analyze, interpret, and debate the meanings and historical significance of primary source documents
- produce an analytical, source-based historical essay examining a key issue, theme, or individual from U.S. history since 1945
- synthesize and evaluate the major developments in recent American history so as to better understand and evaluate contemporary issues in American life.
These outcomes fit the overall values of the history department in what our students should be learning.

Course Activities

By having students watch videos that provided basic historical background, both the readings and classroom were devoted almost entirely to analytic work. I divided the readings into two-thirds primary source documents and one-third historical treatments. In the classroom we mostly discussed the readings. On a few occasions when I had a very narrow focus I used PowerPoint.

This approach largely facilitated my goal of making the bulk of my time devoted to analytic work, modeling in the classroom what I hoped the students were doing on their own. That is, I used Socratic questioning to illicit new ways of looking at the readings and, by extension, American history.

Assessments of Student Learning

The students had weekly quizzes which focused on the videos. These were generally pretty easy and designed to reward students for watching the video.

Three midterms assessed how well the students synthesized and analyzed the readings and class discussion.

The final project worked as a capstone. Here, I asked the students to view, listen to, or read a file in a LearningSuite folder. For example, they could view the pilot episode of the *Cosby Show*, listen to Merle Haggard’s “Okie from Muskogie,” or read John F. Kennedy’s “We will go to the moon,” speech. I called each file an “artifact.”

Students then had to write a 10 page paper based on the artifact and answer the following questions:

a. What is the context that the show, song, speech, etc., emerged within? What was happening at that time?

b. What readings from our course are relevant to the artifact (consider the themes of the course, the questions the artifact raises, whether it responds to or furthers something we have read, etc.)?

c. Does the artifact signal the end of a particular trend or the beginning of a new trend? Why?

d. In what ways is the artifact still relevant? In what ways does it only make sense within its moment?
They could do extra research (such as check Wikipedia or track down lyrics or double check dates) but that was largely unnecessary. Rather, the key to succeeding on this assignment was:

- relating the artifact back to course documents, themes and concerns.
- providing an insightful analysis that goes beyond the obvious answers
- avoiding clichés and generalities in your analysis
- writing clearly.

Overall, I thought the assignments fairly assessed the factual, analytic, and synthetic learning. In addition, the capstone assignment allowed the students to involve their own personalities and bring the material into a present-day context.

### Student Achievement of Learning Outcomes

Here, I wish LearningSuite were much less clunky because I would love to see data on specific test questions. In general, I can say that in their written work the students did a great job of synthesizing the themes of the course. Thus, they showed acumen in: explaining the major changes in American (1) politics and foreign policy (2) social and cultural movements and (3) intellectual currents; analyzing, interpreting and debating the meanings and historical significance of primary source documents; and synthesizing and evaluating the major developments in recent American history so as to better understand and evaluate contemporary issues in American life.

### Steps Planned or Taken to Improve Teaching and Student Learning

As for “steps taken...” I don’t have much to add to the above. As for the future, I like the new framework I have adopted. I plan to make several “tweaks”—some of the videos were long, one of the readings needs to be dropped. But on the whole, I want to see if the next time through will be as good or better than the last.
Grant Madsen
Scholarship Strategies Project

My long-term interests do not fit comfortably within a well-defined historical sub-field. Depending on the audience I might explain that my research focusses on “America in the World” with a special attention to economics, or sometimes American Intellectual, Political and Economic History, or sometimes American Political Development with an interest in international economic institutions. Each characterization is accurate, yet each is in its way incomplete.

In general I want to understand why liberal democracy works (when it works) and why it always seems to go hand-in-hand with capitalism. What combination of institutional commitments (largely political and economic) fit with which moral and ethical commitments (often described as “political culture”) to “lock in” liberal democracy as a nation’s governing practice? There are, of course, many answers to this question. My work looks particularly at transition moments (such as military occupations, the birth of the Cold War, etc.) as particularly revelatory in answering this question.

While interdisciplinarity has proven a challenge thus far, it has long-term potential. That is, it seems to me that at a certain point in a scholar’s career there are significant competitive advantages that come from drawing on a wider set of research questions and literatures. In short, my approach is a bit of a wager that the short-term liabilities will fade once I can establish myself within my niche and then branch out into broader questions.

Success: So far I feel that my scholarship is about where it should be. I have published a number of articles in the places I want to publish. I have interesting projects to go. But the critical piece will be my book project, and I have set aside the summer semester to track down a few details in archives, submit a proposal to publishers, and hopefully have the manuscript with readers by the end of 2015.

The chart below really captures where I am right now:

Applying Strategy: For the most part, my strategy has been to carve out small blocks of time to work on my scholarly projects. In honesty, this is largely how I have generally approached scholarship and so I do not know if this is much of a departure. But while I continue to succeed I am hardpressed to want to change.

Learned from the Process: The main thing I have learned from this process is focus. It is easy to let writing/research projects sit and sit and sit. It is important to keep my focus on scholarship.

In general, the elaboration of my scholarship project is perfectly captured in the chart below. It has the details of where my scholarship currently sits, but also shows the method I have for keeping my focus.
Project 2014 Goal       Current Status

2015 Goal

Lessons of Victory     Obtain book contract  •       Much of the manuscript is complete, but
there are some loose ends to track down.
•       Initial contact with preferred publisher (Harvard U Press) that needs follow up. The main project for 2015.
Research trip April-May 2015
Written proposal complete by July
Manuscript submission by October

The Importance of History: Africa and Research In the Informal Economy       Write article
Published as:


Policy History and Diplomatic History       Write article as conference paper then submit after getting feedback
Published as:


The Financial Crisis of 2008: Verging on a NarrativeDraft written with coauthor by end of summer (2014)  On hold. Coauthor no longer interested in project. Consider folding into next book project (see below)
Finance and the Silent Majority      Data mining and gathering of secondary research (accomplished)  On temporary hold until book project complete. However, initial data suggests there is merit to the project
This may need to be a 2016 project.
History of Economic Policy       new project      This book project comes from the course I developed on the same subject. Each semester when I teach it I write something to include for the syllabus which will eventually be folded into the book. Write one “chapter” for HIST 398 course
Citizenship breaks down neatly into two categories: citizenship at BYU and citizenship in my broader profession.

Citizenship at BYU:
1. I currently serve as co-advisor to Phi Alpha Theta (the History Honors Society).

2. For the last year I have appeared weekly on The Morning Show and Thinking Out Loud, both byuradio production. Recently, the topic has become a regular show entitled “Our American Heritage” which consists of me discussing my weekly lectures but in an interview format.

Citizenship in my Broader Profession:
1. Organize panels at relevant academic conferences. Each year for the last three years I have put together a panel on a topic relevant to my research with an academic association also relevant to my research.

2. Refeering journals: I have recently become a referee for a journal in a field I want to be more involved in (Business Management).

Of the citizenship projects the most interesting is my work with byuradio. Last year the collaboration had just begun and I was unsure whether it would last. It has turned out to flourish. I have really enjoyed working with the host, Marcus Smith and his producer, Julie Rose. Each has helped me understand an industry I had little knowledge of. Each has also helped me understand how my expertise and talents can help the broader university community. I’m looking forward to another year with them.