**Teaching the Survey Course**

Wednesday 6:30-9:20pm

University Hall 319

*We need to focus on the unique opportunity that the college years provide to inspire young individuals to try to understand and reflect on the world in which they live and their relationship to it.* L.B.

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This course is designed to raise fundamental questions about how and why we teach survey courses at the college level. These questions may successfully be answered in a variety of ways depending on the subject and the personality of the teacher – but the questions remain constant and central. We will talk about core concepts, teaching materials, classroom strategies and tactics, grading and evaluation. This course in intended to help orient a graduate student on the road toward teaching well.

**Readings**: James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*

Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*

Richard Arum/Jospia Roksa, *Academically Adrift*

John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*

One survey textbook with on-line support (your choice)

Additional readings on Blackboard

**Assignments**: The central assignment in this course is the preparation of a detailed syllabus for a one-semester survey (151, 152, 103, 104, 105) and a 30-page justification for the shape, contents, and structure of that syllabus. You also must read and discuss the four books listed above. You will write a brief **position paper** (1 paragaph) on what “drives” historical change. A sequence of assignments using a collection of textbooks (in the conference room, and in my office) will challenge students to assess the content and differences in ordinary commercial teaching materials. For **Exercise One** you compare 3 different texts for coverage of some major issue in history. For **Exercise Two** evaluate the coherence of those 3 texts’ treatment of another major issue. For **Exercise Three** look at the impact of diversity concerns on the content of 3 different texts. For **Exercise Four** you will write a review of 2 survey lectures given by Purdue history faculty, comparing and evaluating the approach and effect of each.

**Grading**: 50% on the syllabus and final essay, 25% on the intermediate assignments; 25% class participation and engagement.

**Disclaimer:** In the event of a major campus emergency, the above requirements, deadlines and grading policies are subject to changes that may be required by a revised semester calendar.  Any such changes in this course will be posted on Blackboard once the course resumes or can be obtained by contacting the professor via email ([rkleinpe@purdue.edu](mailto:rkleinpe@purdue.edu)).

COURSE SCHEDULE

You will learn of any expected changes to the schedule well in advance.

**Jan 13: Introduction and objectives.** Discuss Botstein, *Jefferson’s Children: Education and the Promise of American Culture*, ch. 5, “The American College” (on blackboard). How does Botstein seek to address current challenges in higher education?

**Jan. 20: Why do teachers tell lies?** Discuss Loewen. What are we trying to accomplish in the survey? How do our objectives encourage us to tell one sort of lies or another? Discuss possibilities for telling the truth.

**Jan. 27: What is history teaching?** History learning? Discuss Weinberg. What is teaching in general? What is teaching in particular? Consider historical thinking, how we do it, how it is not the natural way of thinking, and how we might initiate students into thinking historically.

**Feb. 3: Who are we teaching?** Discuss Arum/Roksa. Taking stock of your audience is crucial to being effective in the classroom. This means asking who they are and what makes them tick. (Wanting them to be different is not a choice.)

**Feb. 10: What causes change?** “…and then the war came…” What are the engines of historical change? How can we explore big causal forces, watershed events, and the nature of historical explanations within the context of an introductory survey for undergrads who may never darken our doors again? **Position papers due.**

**Feb. 17: Coverage**: the great conundrum of any survey is what to include? Cana survey be comprehensive any longer? If not, by what criteria do we include or exclude aspects of the story? Because we have expanded our notions of what are important historical questions (and who are important historical actors), we now face a genuine problem of naming the terms by which this or that detail belongs in the survey. **Exercise One due.**

**Feb. 24: Coherence**. A second conundrum – often closely related to that of coverage- is the issue of coherence. The imposition of a narrative trajectory and the effort to achieve coherence both seem necessary to making a survey comprehensible to students. Yet these interpretive interventions may distort the resulting story just as much as rank prejudice or ideological pre-conditions. Life lived is NOT coherent, yet we crave histories that are. Every teacher of the survey must balance the virtues of coherence against the inevitable distortions that coherence introduces to the subject. **Exercise two due.**

**Mar. 2: Diversity** – its merits and challenges. Our textbooks all pay lip service to diversity, but teachers of the survey must embrace some genuine notion of the merits of multiple perspectives and inclusive strategies before their lectures will ring true. What are the inherent virtues of diversity and how do we get students to appreciate them? **Exercise three due.**

**Mar. 9: Who is the historian?** Discuss excerpts from Raab (on blackboard).

**Mar. 16: No Class – Spring Break**

**Mar. 23:** **Lecture**: everybody condemns it, but we all commit the sin of lecturing, usually three times per week. What is the lecture good for? What is it NOT good for? How do we plan and execute a course of lectures that have the desired effect? Can we tell provocation from preaching? **Exercise four due.**

**Mar. 30: Discussion:** “Lecture = bad, discussion = good.” Right? Wrong (probably)! When are discussions useful? What are their virtues? What conditions make them possible? Impossible? (Class size, for example, and even room configuration matter.) Certain questions lend themselves to discussion under the worst of conditions; others cannot be discussed no matter what. What are some guidelines for using discussion effectively in the survey class? Discuss Bean. **Find an article about discussion.**

**Apr. 6:**  **ONLINE Tools and Teaching**: Save us from our sins! (JL)

**Apr. 13:** **Motivate, Stimulate, Evaluate, and Punish:** Quizzes, exams, writing assignments, attendance, on-line cats, worksheets? What tools work? What is the purpose of grading? Check against your objectives. Discuss Bean. **Find an article about innovative tricks.**

**Apr. 20: Syllabus exchange:** One half of the class will circulate their syllabus and justification essay, present a brief oral synopsis of their plan, and field questions from the rest of their classmates.

**Apr. 27:** **Syllabus exchange:** The other half of the class will circulate their syllabus and justification essay, present a brief oral synopsis of their plan, and field questions from the rest of their classmates. Final wrap-up and evaluations follow that last session.