Teaching Philosophy
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One goal unifies my efforts as an instructor— to engage students with the processes and activities required to produce and interpret history. When successful, this transformation from consumer to creator produces several significant benefits. It fosters in students an understanding of how and why people study the past, and pushes them to regard the writing of history as a creative endeavor that should be rooted in evidence. Firsthand experience crafting and presenting historical arguments also helps students determine when history is being used as political propaganda, and builds skills that are valuable both inside and outside academia.

The strategy that I employ is straightforward. In every class that I teach, I require students to do four things in at least two formats: formulate questions, conduct research, revise their questions and interventions, and then communicate their findings. The capstones of my courses are research papers. While the requirements and expectations are adjusted according to course level, every paper must demonstrate that the student has investigated primary sources and scholarly debates to make a well-reasoned argument. In addition to listening in class and reading assigned materials, I also ask students to participate in debates or to give formal presentations, just as a historian might do at a conference or during a graduate seminar.

I tested the efficacy of my philosophy while teaching "The Era of the American Revolution" at Duke this past summer. The course rested on two equally-weighted requirements, the first being a research paper, and the second being active in-class engagement. I designed the research paper as a multistep process of research and revision by requiring students to hand in rough drafts of their historical question, bibliography, and paper. I also asked students to contribute to in class presentations and discussions. During one meeting they proposed improvements to the Constitution. They then examined scenarios from science fiction, including asteroid strikes and a zombie apocalypse, and conducted a lively debate about the possible repercussions of their alterations. In another meeting, students read runaway slave advertisements and compiled a list of things these ads tell us about the experiences of slaves and the institution of slavery.

Research papers produced during this course clearly demonstrated the benefits of my approach. One deftly compared the treatment of African American and Hessian soldiers in the British army during the American Revolution; another investigated a curious disparity between the pernicious racial stereotyping of Indians by Quaker missionaries and the Quakers' relatively benign actions towards native peoples. Students responded likewise during in-class presentations and debates. Whether evaluating the fallout of their changes to the Constitution for a dystopic future America, or debating the structural advantages and disadvantages of the British or Patriot militaries, they produced nuanced arguments grounded in evidence.

I have seized on every opportunity to hone my skills by working as an instructor, teaching assistant, and tutor, and also by enrolling in Duke's Certificate in College Teaching program. I also actively investigate the latest discussions on pedagogy in journals like *The History Teacher*. Experience and research provide me with the tools to improve my performance as a teacher. For example, while students of my recent class gave glowing reviews of my abilities as a lecturer, these comments made me realize that I did not dedicate enough time to in-class discussion and debate. In short, I embrace teaching as a learnable skill, and seek to improve myself through experimentation, research, and revision.

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