 USING WIKIS TO EXPERIENCE HISTORY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation is an action research study examining the use of technology to encourage critical thinking and digital literacy in a community college history class. The students are responsible for researching course material and teaching the class. They then use a wiki to contribute to and edit an interactive, online textbook that has been created by students over several semesters. The goal is to link more interactive technologies with what the author terms socially democratic education, by empowering students to create knowledge and encouraging them to consider biases in historical writing.

Two main research questions are considered, each with related sub-questions. First, what do students experience using an educational wiki and an open classroom? Are the students able to think critically about history? The work of Giroux (1978) is used to discuss the critical thinking that emerged in the class.

Second, what are the relationships between the wiki and open classroom, and democratic education? How is that observable? What role does the teacher play? Is this a critical pedagogy? Evidence of socially democratic learning is examined, and Freire (2009) is used to analyze the presence of a critical pedagogy.

Several issues are raised as the result of the study, and their implications are discussed. These include the loss of teacher control with this type of pedagogy, the need for a balance between allowing freedom for discovery and organizational structure, and issues related to trust and identity.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Recently, the Texas State Board of Education made headlines as it decided what content was appropriate in its state history textbooks. Fifteen politicians, only one with a history degree, decided who is worthy of historical note. Part of their decision: Thurgood Marshall, Cesar Chavez, and Karl Marx are excluded from history. Jerry Falwell is now included, and Joseph McCarthy is on the road to becoming a hero. This should raise a great debate over who indeed is history-worthy, and a greater debate about the political biases behind what passes for history. This has brought to light the arbitrary decisions used in selection of textbooks and curriculum. While the school board members may be unseated in upcoming elections, millions of Texas schoolchildren will be forced to use these books for at least ten years. Texas has the purchasing power to influence textbook companies, smaller states do not. Therefore, students in smaller states may also be shackled with these texts.

We are privy to the videos of the Board’s debate in Texas and can point to specific decision makers. Their commentary creates excellent sound bites. Their discussions can make people question their own beliefs about who is history-worthy and why. These are important discussions to have, and they illustrate the political biases in history. The nine to five, Republican to Democrat, vote in Texas indicates that political maneuvering is blatant. Republicans want a specific story told, their story.

However, this story may not be as recognizable to the panel in the end. Publishers will construct a text with the requisite material. However, in choosing only parts of history, other parts can become unclear at best. How can Joseph McCarthy, who raised fears of communism, become a hero if Karl Marx, who founded communism, is never mentioned? The final product
will be a tome which covers the “history,” but one devoid of interest and narrative. It will be unclear, replete with omissions, and in some cases will contain outright lies. A process, which began as a conservative measure in Texas to exclude the liberal side of the story, will become a confusing story without focus. The conservative pantheon will be upheld, but discerning who the heroes are, and why they are idolized, may be unclear.

For teachers in Texas and beyond who are forced to use these books, what should be done? Certainly if a school board adopts a text, parents are required to pay for it, and teachers are told to use it. However, that does not mean that teachers need simply accept what they are given. Certainly in some instances this is the path of least resistance. However, I would suggest that an answer to the political interference and inaccuracies in history could be found in emerging digital technologies. The potential of interactive web 2.0 technologies, such as wikis, allows individuals the opportunity to continually edit and add content online. A negotiation occurs between users over what is acceptable. Within the act of negotiation, understanding can occur. In a history class, the textbook can be used as a point of departure, and all the missing events, agents, and actors can be reintroduced online. The reasoning behind decisions and biases can be uncovered. There is the potential to foster historical and critical thinking, and also introduce digital literacy. In an effort to encourage critical thinking and digital literacy, this study will examine community college history students who teach the course and add to a wiki textbook.

**Background of the Study**

The conservative position, as exemplified by the Texas State Board of Education, tells a story of American success. Pilgrims fled from religious intolerance and found Native Americans willing to aid them. Honest founding fathers created an example of democracy for the world.
The United States has always fought oppression by winning wars against evil enemies. And all of this has led to the happy, prosperous modern day. However, we are enmeshed in a recession, with racial, religious, and gender problems. If the past was always happy, what happened?

Students sense this disconnect. They are told about the glory of the past, but see the news and hear about modern problems. There seems to be no correlation between the glory days and the modern world. By the time students come to the community college, they have experienced at least twelve years of being told what history is. If they are good listeners, or good readers, they can remember enough material to pass a test. They may also be required to write something about history. If they do what they’ve done in the past, they can succeed and “understand” history. They know what they are told by educators, but understand what they see in the world. In order to breach this disconnect, the students need to be empowered and engaged. If the students research the material and teach the class, they can learn about history. If they attempt to write for an audience of their peers, this can foster learning as well. In the process they can begin to learn about their biases and the biases of their classmates and textbook authors.

This can be facilitated with technology. This does not mean replicating the patterns of the past. Teaching students with a PowerPoint is in essence the same as using a chalkboard. Leveraging the world in which the students live, and the technology they are used to, however, can be a change. This can be done through interactive digital technologies, such as a wiki. Wikis as an interactive digital technology have been around since the mid 1990’s. The most famous wiki is probably Wikipedia, launched in 2001. A wiki is an easy to edit html platform, which allows unlimited users from around the world to co-author a site. An interactive site like Wikipedia is constantly being updated, with over two million separate and linked pages. These pages and constant interactions can lead to “wiki wars,” when people of one belief post their
position and opposing believers edit it out. An example of this is the Sri Lanka page on Wikipedia which underwent dispute resolution due to the Civil War, fought in Sri Lanka and online. From an educational standpoint, this type of engaged discussion is highly desirable.

Due to the recentness of wikis there has been little examination of their educational use. Amy Bruckman (2008) has looked at posting patterns of experts to Wikipedia. Reich and Daccord (2008) have written about potential ways to use wikis in educational settings. However, there has been little research into how wikis are used and accepted by students, and none when coupled with students teaching their classmates.

Research Questions

Adding to this literature will fill a need for educators. Oftentimes with technology it is easy to suggest how something may be used, but it is more difficult to actually implement it. From a practitioner’s standpoint, this study shows how a wiki can be used in a classroom. Other educators may find value in the study and implement it within their own practice. From a researcher’s standpoint, it helps show what students experience as they teach or use a wiki. This study may also help test ways to think about technology in general, so that others may feel easier about using other technologies within their own practice. This adds to the conversation on how educators should think about technology.

The study looked at students in a community college history class. The students were responsible for researching course material, and then teaching the class and adding to an interactive, online course textbook. The course textbook, in the form of a wiki, has been used in past classes, and will be added to by future classes. I considered two main research questions, each with related sub-questions.

1. What do students experience using an educational wiki and an open classroom? Are the students able to think critically about history?
2. What are the relationships between the wiki and open classroom, and democratic education? How is that observable? What role does the teacher play? Am I a critical pedagogue?

Overview of Methodology

This study is part of an action research study. Action research calls for planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (G. L. Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Caro-Bruce, Flessner, Klehr, & Zeichner, 2007). The initial study was planned four semesters ago, with pilot studies in the intervening semesters. The students in this study were students who took a western history course covering the years 200-1800 AD, and a U.S. history class covering 1492-1877 AD. They were students at a Midwestern community college and for the most part were traditional college-aged students, most of them white, and male. These students took the class over the Spring 2010 semester. The data for this study are observations of students’ teaching, artifacts from the class, course-related emails, the interactive textbook, and interviews. The data was examined over the late spring to early fall of 2010.

I have been using technology in my instruction for almost eight years. This has included things like PowerPoints, and music and movies through YouTube or as digital files. It has also stretched into video teaching, teaching online synchronously and asynchronously, use of videogames, and having students make machinima and movies. When I began, I relied simply on end of semester feedback and what I felt my views were of the success. I then attempted to help others integrate these technologies into their classes. This was done because it seemed more objective to study others’ use of technology. However, digital technology use in others’ classes never succeeded, or never did as well as it did in my classes. Fellow instructors either did not believe in the project, could not answer student questions, or were unwilling to actually use or
test the technology themselves. It is because of these past attempts, successes and failures, that for this study I used an action research model of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Overview

In chapter two, I look at the background for this study. This includes an examination of the literature relating to the conservative, social liberal, and social democrat traditions within education. Each of these positions is examined with a focus on their belief sets. I conclude that the best position for the goals of this study is social democrat. I then examine types of digital technologies, categorizing them as static, semi-static, and interactive, and analyzing how they may be used in an educational setting. The type of technology used for this study was, for the most part, interactive. Finally I examine applicable learning theories for technology use. The learning theories are constructivism, constructionism, connectionism, and literacies. Constructivism, based on the ideas of Vygotsky (1978), focuses on how a student constructs knowledge and can be pushed to a greater level of knowledge and understanding by someone else, whether in person, in text, or online. Constructionism, based on the ideas of Papert (Papert & Harel, 1991), discusses how students can play with knowledge as they build understanding, and study something in which they are interested. Connectionism, based on the ideas of Siemens (2004), looks at how students think about where knowledge is located, and the strong or weak ties they draw from specific sources. The final learning theory is the idea of multiple or digital literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2005, 2007; Leu, O'Byrne, Zawilinski, McVerry, & Everett-Cacopardo, 2009; Steinkuehler, 2008; A. Thomas, 2007). The idea of literacies is that knowledge of digital media and production is a type of literacy, and students need to become familiar with it in all of their classes. Each of these theories has something to add to an overall understanding of learning with digital technologies.
In chapter three, I outline the methodology which was used for this study, action research (G. L. Anderson et al., 2007; Caro-Bruce et al., 2007). This methodology was chosen because I was the instructor attempting to understand my own teaching, and to implement new types of teaching. I have planned the course, acted upon it, observed, and reflected on it for several semesters. Then I build on the literature review to discuss the theoretical basis for the study and ethical considerations. I then examine how the courses were set up, the assignments the students were given, and what data resulted. I provide biographies on some of the students discussed in chapters four and five. Finally, I discuss in greater detail the data and the methods used for data analysis.

In chapter four I focus on the first question: What do students experience using a wiki and teaching in an open classroom? The focus is somewhat chronological, looking at the experiences the students had, from their first introduction to the wiki to their reflections on the learning. A similar method is used as I discuss what the students experienced as they taught the class. Their experiences are used to discuss critical thinking at the end of chapter. In order to frame the ideas of critical thinking, I look at the work of Giroux (1978) and how he envisioned critical thinking within his own history class.

In chapter five, I look at socially democratic learning. Returning to the literature review, I consider what elements are important to the social democrats. By using these elements in conjunction with the students’ comments, I highlight important themes. The themes, which arise from the students and from the literature, are used to discuss the socially democratic learning which occurred. The chapter concludes by looking at the role of the instructor. This role is examined looking at the works of Freire (2009), and critical pedagogy.
In chapter six, I look at some overall themes. The findings from chapters four and five are examined from the standpoint of the learning theories to determine if one of them is most applicable to the students’ experiences. Potential avenues of research are also discussed, such as differences in learning theories or implicit learning theories the students may have had. The ideas of critical thinking and critical pedagogy are incorporated in a discussion for future avenues of research. Finally, since this is an action research study, I conclude with reflections on this study and plans for future work.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

As mentioned in chapter one, in discussing education in America it is important to think about the traditions of the past and how they manifest themselves in the present. Kliebard (1986) and Liston and Zeichner (1991) have done extensive work on categorizing the traditions and relating their beliefs. There has been less work done on placing social studies and history educators within the traditions. Below I discuss three categories of history and social studies education, building towards the category from which this study proceeds and which is most applicable for technology, social democrat. From there I similarly discuss three types of digital technology, looking towards that which is most useful for this study, interactive. I finally discuss different learning theories applicable to digital technologies. Unlike the educational traditions and technology types, several of these theories are applicable for this study and were considered during the collection and analysis stages.

Which Tradition for Digital Technology?

As one attempts to categorize social studies theorists or historians it becomes obvious that there are numerous categorizations based on many criteria, utilizing many different names. Many of these names are loaded terms that carry connotations. Kleibard (1986) used different terms from Liston and Zeichner. Zeichner even changed some of these labels in 2003. Based on this history I propose three somewhat neutral classifications. Based on Nelson (2001), who believes these classifications fall along the political beliefs of the individuals, I would propose borrowing names from Hans Slomp’s (2000) European political spectrum: conservative, social liberal, and social democrat. While these terms are not entirely neutral terms, they do align politically with Liston and Zeichner’s categories, and from an American standpoint are less
loaded terms than others that have been used elsewhere. In line with my nomenclature I do not see these groupings as permanent or static, but rather lying along a spectrum or continuum. While an extreme conservative and social democrat may not see eye to eye, a more extreme social liberal and less extreme social democrat might on a particular issue.

**Conservatives.** Due to the very nature of history and social studies there would be a large number who fall within the conservative group. Those individuals would value content knowledge: the dates, people, and places that have made the United States what it is today. That may include information which falls outside the geographical boundaries of the United States, but would privilege the cultural and scientific heritage of western culture. This might include Jewish history, but only as a precursor to Christianity, which was a precursor to the great migration of puritans and separatists who helped found the United States.

Different scholars have given the conservatives different labels. Lybarger (1991) has discussed conservatives as celebratory historians, who write about the great men of history and the great events, as these are the people to emulate and the events to celebrate. Similarly others label this as the citizenship transmission group (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1978). While it is unclear from the work, several others point to the overall goal of this group as transmitting the cultural norms of American society to make “good citizens” who will continue the nation in the same mold. The conservative agenda believes that understanding the social science knowledge in order to make decisions for society is beyond the masses, and only for the elite. So the best we can do is to educate the masses into how our democracy works, how it might be improved, and why it is the preferred system. This view certainly pushes the mainstream position, yet avoids teaching critical thinking.
Conservatives see history as the core of social studies, and emphasize content acquisition, chronology, and the textbook as the backbone of the course (Evans, 2010). Barton and Levstik describe past goals of history or social studies education. One was to create little historians who look at primary source documents and interpret history. However, the goals of social studies are not the same as academic history, nor should they be (Barton & Levstik, 2010). Social studies educators, according to Barton and Levstik, should not replicate the work of academic historians and simply continue to teach in a conservative manner. Dunn (2010) discusses conservative historians who only teach some world history as a comparison to accentuate western history, their main concern. He sees this camp arguing over issues and standards against social democrats. He also sees the conservatives winning, supported by conservative politicians. Historically speaking, this has been done for generations, as described by Fisher (1989), who traces the cultural folkways of English beliefs in America.

Citizenship education is very important to conservatives. They see the need to continue to tell the same stories, so we all know the same account of how this country and political system were born. Citizenship education should not include discussion of injustices or remedies for societal ills, but simply maintenance of the status quo. People will know that this is the best of all possible systems, as long as they continue to do their civic duty and vote. It is a way to inculcate foreigners who come to this country so they can more quickly assimilate.

Conservatives seem to be the biggest group in terms of social studies education and history. Traditional historians would fall into it, as they focus on content knowledge. Similarly many textbooks are written toward this angle, which has a significant influence on teachers in the classroom. Cultural literacy is fundamental to any successful education program under this
tradition. Students who read these works would be able to reason in a very western mindset. The overall outlook would be white, western, pre-colonial, pre-feminist, and pre-minority.

Because of the outlook of who is regarded as history-worthy, a specific set of sources would be acceptable. Primary source documents would be valued and would include diaries, journals, laws, and newspapers. There would be an objective angle to this history, as that has been a common thread since the work of von Ranke when history became professionalized in the 1800’s (Novick, 1988). Those deemed worthy of study would be the great men of history, whether famous or infamous, but there would be little social or gender history and little multidisciplinary work. The historian might be seen as an artist within the craft. And because of the perceived linear nature of history, the teleological standpoint would reign. Thus it is believed that everything that has occurred in history has led to the penultimate height of civilization, that which is the modern United States.

I believe that the conservative tradition will become a smaller part of the picture within the next few decades. This is not to say that the conservative, nationalistic position will not be advocated by politicians, pundits, and educators, but I think with the increased use of digital technologies that it will lose its strength. As Collins and Halverson (2009) have pointed out, we are at a point of change. No longer are we concerned with passing down information either through oral or written means. The future of education will be figuring out how to teach creation of knowledge, and most likely creation not simply in a written format, but a multi-literate format of sounds, writing, pictures, video, and simulations (Cope, Kalantzis, & Lankshear, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Steinkuehler, 2008). This will be done in online environments. Some would say that there will be conservative commercial interests controlling the major outputs of media (Hardt & Negri, 2001; Herman & McChesney, 1997; Schiller, 1999).
However, in peer to peer environments built on ideas of sharing, students will circumvent many of the traditional venues (Benkler, 2007; Lessig, 2004).

**Social liberals.** Social liberals may be the easiest to categorize as they fall between the two ends of the continuum, but tougher to explain as they include a diverse group. This group is compatible with Liston and Zeichner’s (1991) social efficiency tradition. Non-traditional historians would fit within this group. These non-traditional histories would include histories of society, culture, gender, emotion, historical consciousness, material culture, minorities, and the European Annales School. Many of these varying interests are vying for inclusion in the conversation and the understanding of what should be in history or social studies.

Some groups within social liberalism are revisionists who would attempt to get at greater meaning of the times and events (Lybarger, 1991). This includes people such as Charles Beard (1986), whose early twentieth century work contested the traditional understanding of the framers of the Constitution and reframed it as an economic document written in the best interests of the writers. Another group within the social liberal grouping are those who want to be considered social scientists. Social scientists call for a structure of the disciplines approach. This was popular in the 1960’s (Evans, 2010). They feel that the goal of social studies and history is to incorporate historical methods to create good citizens. These citizens can incorporate differing views to make the best judgment for the future (Barr et al., 1978; Barton & Levstik, 2010). This is similar to what Stanley (2010) calls Dewey’s critique of reconstructionism. Dewey wanted to make society better by educating students in a method of intelligence, which if applied would lead to a better society. This does call for change, but not an imposition of dogma of any kind. This system encourages critical thought extensively, yet tries its best to be objective and not push a specific position. Barton and Levstik (2010) have also
touched on Dewey, discussing how historians often study content knowledge. Yet simply studying content knowledge offers little insight into how teachers may link this to good citizenship.

Dunn discusses social liberals as world historians of the new breed who look at history, or big history, from the creation of the universe, thirteen billion years ago, until today (Christian, 2005; Dunn, 1999, 2010, n.d.). Towards that end he has been influential in creating a website for use in instruction, along with downloadable materials (Dunn, n.d.). Instructors often have problems integrating ideas into a classroom, without handouts and worksheets. He has quieted that debate, but is still fighting entrenched forces looking for teleological history which shows the greatness of the west, who want no other voices in their conversation. Big history incorporates geology, astronomy, chemistry, and biology, as these are more important when looking at a twenty billion year timeline, with mankind only present for a fraction of that time.

Citizenship education for social liberals may be deeper than under the conservative tradition, allowing for multiple perspectives. The end goal would be to uphold the status quo while choosing from different views, or making some sense of different views. Citizenship education within this group is important mainly as an academic exercise. This would allow for competent inquirers. While the conservatives want to perpetuate myths by retelling familiar tales of cherry trees, honest Abe, and slaves singing spirituals, social liberals want students to learn how to critically think. They want them to learn about the history of the country, good and bad. If that knowledge were to lead to societal change that would be acceptable, but really it is all about teaching the necessary skills, without necessarily employing them. These skills may be applicable in their future employment, and if so, even better. Social inequalities within society may be mentioned, but simply towards knowledge coverage or intellectual curiosity, infrequently
towards improvement of the inequality. There would be allowances for other histories, such as non-western history, feminist history, and minority histories.

These histories are important, and historical schools of thought are not often considered in the literature. Historians who fit within the social liberal tradition would consider themselves as social scientists, and be open to other social science disciplines. Their job is to educate the populace towards future job performance and some critical thinking. This would include the ideas of citizenship education. Within this tradition there would be more latitude for including non-traditional sources as primary source documents such as art, film, music, and literature.

Two newer areas of history based on source materials are oral history and material culture. Oral history has been gaining position since the beginning of transportable recording devices. It allows historians to include the stories of everyday people, and those whose voices would have been otherwise lost to history. Some of these scholars may fit into the social liberal persuasion, some into the social democrat persuasion, but their use of oral histories in general excludes them from the conservative tradition. Those whose stories are told through oral history and the method itself are suspect from a conservative standpoint.

Similarly material culture is based on reading objects as text to tell about history. This is a more socially liberal field now, but has the potential for inclusion in conservative circles once fully accepted. While material culture is not accepted by conservative historians at this point, in the future it could certainly become part of that tradition. An example is Richard Bushman (1992), who has done traditional, conservative style historical inquiry on the wealthy families of colonial Delaware, but supported it by material culture.

Two groups of historians that would fall under social liberalism are American Social Historians and European Annalistes. Both of these groups, coming from different backgrounds,
have called for inclusion of different types of sources and integration of social science disciplines other than history. *Annalistes* also call for a longer periodization, or the *longue duree*. It is through the larger picture that greater themes arise, and through integration of other schools of thought. Social historians of American history would similarly fit within this category, bringing more voices from feminist, African-American, and gay historians. This social history movement has allowed for cultural history, women’s history, post-colonial history, African-American history, history of sex, gender, gay history, history of emotions, and even ecological history. The social historians and *Annalistes*, for the most part, seek to bring in lost voices to the conversation to allow a greater view of the picture, but not specifically to change society. Granted, there are *Annalistes* and social historians who would advocate for social change, but they would fit within the social democrat tradition. One criticism is that with integration of certain voices, there is continued exclusion of other voices. Feminist historians have been credited for showing the women in history, but often white women’s history at the expense of minority women. So while a goal is inclusion, there is still an exclusionary tendency.

Some Marxist historians may also fit within the social liberal tradition. While Marx and some of his followers may have been social democrat historians, others simply use his theories as a lens for greater clarity but not necessarily as a tool for change. Those who do pursue change would be considered more radical. The overall framework of the social liberals is still teleological. There may be several threads of history being drawn, but because of its chronological nature it is difficult not to think of history leading to modern individuals.

Social liberals are more inclusive of groups, voices, and types of sources. They also promote critical thinking. For both of these reasons they are an improvement on the conservative tradition. Social liberals also have a lot to gain from the digital environment. Though the digital
environment may decrease the influence of the conservative tradition, it will aid the growth and importance of the social liberal tradition. The various voices calling for critical thinking, various types of histories, thinking of integration of histories, and incorporation of various media will fit well with digital literacies. However, this group will not focus on societal change, as it becomes multidisciplinary and multiliterate. As Kuhn (1970) has discussed concerning paradigm shifts, an iteration of this tradition will become the dominant tradition within history and social studies.

**Social democrats.** The final group of theorists is small. The social democrats have been called radical (Lybarger, 1991), reflective inquirers (Barr et al., 1978), reconstructionists (Evans, 2010), and critical thinkers (Nelson, 2001). They align well with Liston and Zeichner’s radical or social justice group. This group calls for different ways of thinking about history and the purposes of history. However, this group is important because history and social studies are perfect courses for studying and illustrating the social inequalities in society and attempting to educate students in how to right them (Adler & Goodman, 1986). The goal of the radical tradition is to intelligently redistribute wealth, and to hold the common good over that of individuals as Counts called for in the 1930’s (Stanley, 1981). Equally it should “expose antidemocratic limitations of individualism and free market economic theory, promote a strong form of participatory democracy, and create an economic system that reduces disparities of income, wealth, and power” (Stanley, 2010, p. 19). Another goal may be to aid the poor, right social inequalities, and help make everyone a free member of a just, democratic, caring society. This system knowingly takes a position and gives it to the students, in order to make a better society. Critical thought is encouraged in this tradition.

Stanley (1981) discusses the origins and beliefs of radical reconstructionists. He looks at the works of Counts, Bramfeld, and Dewey. Basically there is a tension over Marxism,
indoctrination, and public ownership. On indoctrination the idea is that society indoctrinates so much, it is up to the teachers to counter it. Of course, simply replacing one extreme belief system for another is no answer according to Dewey. So in later versions of Bramfeld’s beliefs he touches on “defensible partialities” (Stanley, 1981). These are group decisions which could always be reexamined in light of newer ideas. It might be suitable to accept Marxist ideas for a limited time, until a more practical idea arose to alter it. This of course could be done through discourse. Dunn (2010) feels that discourse among all three traditions is necessary to improve the discipline.

Citizenship education is very important to social democrats, but not in the same sense as the conservatives. Similar to the social liberals, ideas of critical thinking are important, and pointing out injustices in society. However, it goes deeper with the social democrats. Pointing out and studying injustices is a starting point towards encouraging change in society. While countering the conservative bent of society, it will not be possible to reach or convince all students. There will, however, be a greater number of students practicing their civic rights to protest and have a voice in the conversation for change. Whether that voice becomes a conservative, social liberal, or social democrat voice it will not matter, as the chorus of voices will bring about change.

Noffke (2000) touches on some of the early beliefs of the social education movement from Counts, DuBois, and Woodson. She says it is important to focus on issues of identity and community. Building on the history, she points out how to reform curriculum and society: by critiquing democracy while pursuing its intended goals of economic and political justice (Noffke, 2000). Giroux says that “issues of racism, class, gender, textuality, national identity, subjectivity, and media culture must remain central elements in defining a transformative
pedagogical practice, the issue of radical democracy must be located at the center of such a pedagogy” (Giroux, 2000, p. 94). This requires a restructuring of political and economic institutions to permit broad popular control over them.

Hursh and Ross (2000) discuss social studies education and the argument for indoctrination or critical thinking. This is important to keep in mind when discussing this idea and citizenship education. By attempting to remain neutral or objective one simply upholds the status quo. By doing as Counts had recommended and indoctrinating to the left, you may counter the conservative ethos brought through film, media, music, school, and other social venues (Hursh & Ross, 2000). Through attempting to indoctrinate and teach critical thinking, a more critical democratic polity will be created. They will not simply vote, or not vote every two years, but work for change.

Gordon (2009), discussing citizenship, touches on the necessity of dissent within a democracy. He looks back to the works of Thoreau, Socrates, Tocqueville, and Davis to discuss the bravery of dissenters, and their necessity. He discusses how there are dissenters like Hitler who also achieved notoriety. However, we need only study the good dissenters and it is the job of educators to instruct children in this, from social studies and history classes. We need to show that blindly accepting does not lead to a better life. It is selfish to conform, and it is brave and necessary to dissent for the betterment of society. This relates as well to Parker (2010a, 2010b) and Barton and Levstik’s (2010) ideas of moral good and citizenship. These philosophical views touch on the necessity for people to look out for the moral good of society by not being selfish, but instead working for a better future through democratic, open dissent, keeping the moral good as a guiding focus.
As mentioned above, Marx would certainly fit in as a social democrat. Also included in this group would be Howard Zinn, perhaps most famous for his editions of *A People’s History of the United States*. This work examines the other side of the myths told in school. It could be considered a precursor to James Loewen’s work, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. Also included in this group would be some of the *Annalistes* and social historians who attempt to create a multidisciplinary, multicultural, social history, bringing it all into the picture. Unlike those who would be social liberals, this would include bringing societal problems to the fore with the hopes of solving them, or helping others to think about solving them. Within this tradition it may not be necessary to think of history as teleological. History could be seen as tentative or concurrent. By this I mean that it is often taught as a story which is predetermined. However, history never occurs that way. The American Colonial Revolutionaries did not know what would happen by revolting or that they would create a new country. They did know they could be killed as traitors, though. Historians often act and teach the Revolution as if God had pre-ordained the success of the Revolution. The future is not predetermined, and history should not be taught that way. Instead, it should be taught showing tentative points in time. Similarly the concurrent-ness of history needs to be taught. This would include teaching the various Native American histories of the sixteenth century, as well as the African histories, as well as the European histories, and telling each of them as they interact and occur, from each point of view. This is something done by those advocating big history such as Dunn, but towards greater democracy and understanding. The historian may be seen as an artist, or a narrator, or perhaps as a respondent. This tradition might see students interpreting various materials, and discussing this as a class. The instructor would simply be a mediator offering only pointers, and in some cases simply learning as well.
While the social liberal tradition will find promise in technology, I believe social democrat has the most to gain from technology in social studies and history education. First, technology holds much potential for illustrating to students the need for activism and change. Technology can allow for students to discuss topical issues like tsunamis and see the local and global consequences of these disasters (Merryfield, 2008). It can incorporate source material from around the world to bring into the social studies classroom. This can include music, recordings, interviews, videos, simulations, artifacts of all parts of life, art, film, journals, diaries, newspapers, laws, reports, and various other written materials. Similarly these sources need to come from all the voices in the conversation. The course material could be taught chronologically, reverse chronologically, thematically, or using the interest of the students as jumping off points. There will be national and international crises that students will need to learn about as the world’s population tops seven, eight and nine billion. This will include shortages of food, water, healthcare, and wars. Learning about the history of these problems and how they affect the United States and the world will be important, as well as attempting to help create critical thinkers, and future activists. Critical thinking on the internet will also be important. How we assess who created the content, what the content means, and how it fits into our understanding, are important. This is not a question of “safe sites” (Berson, Cruz, Duplass, & Johnson, 2004), but rather teaching people how to interpret and understand what they read.

Second, the social democrat tradition is relevant to the use of technology in education because it provides an important framework for dealing with equity issues that arise surrounding digital technology. Society is becoming ever more dependent upon digital technology in every facet of life. As I have written elsewhere, the world can be divided into three categories of groups or individuals: the digital periphery, semi-periphery, and core (Martin, 2009). This
grouping is based on the potential digital knowledge that those within each set can provide to the overall digital knowledge economy. Those within the core produce the most and actively exclude the other two. Those within the semi-periphery produce and consume, attempting to make it into the core while excluding the periphery from joining. Those within the periphery simply consume, and are excluded from digital production by the two other groups. This introduces inequity into the system, as those in the periphery will be further disadvantaged economically and politically. The social democrat framework allows us to address inequity in this present and future system, attempting to help those from the periphery to the semi-periphery. It helps educators to see the need to instill in students the necessary technological skills to become digital knowledge producers. Thinking about technology from a social democrat perspective highlights the need to be aware of and work against digital inequities. This will help address many of the inequalities struggled with since the beginning of social reconstructionism, now present in the real world and digital world as well.

**Digital Technology Breakdown**

Within any tradition, digital technology can be understood and used in different ways. Digital technology can include any text, pictures, videos, audio, or simulation which is usable and transmittable on a computer. That would include any media which was either created on a digital device, or converted to a digital format from analog. So daguerreotypes or a colonial map surveyed and signed by George Washington would be included if converted to a digital format through a scanner. At the opposite end of the spectrum would be videogames or programs completely created digitally, with no physical components or artifacts. I will group digital technology into three categories: static, semi-static, and interactive digital technologies.
**Static digital technology.** Static digital technology could include audio, video, or textual information either saved as a digital format, or available online. This would include DVDs, CDs, and mp3s. It may also include some games or simulations, which follow a predetermined program and never change. These technologies are available to view, watch, hear or play, but offer no interaction or change. There are myriad examples of this type of digital technology. Many websites are static, in that they are created once, and are always viewable. This may include sites from which one can listen to music or watch movies, but the site does not change based on one or a million visits. There is usually a site administrator who may add or change content, but the interactions with the viewers are one sided. Most websites on the internet would be considered static. Many serve as useful references, including excellent sites such as the National Archives, the Smithsonian, the Oxford English Dictionary Online, or the online Encyclopedia Britannica. However, these are just digital versions of material that was previously available offline. History or social studies teachers who use or create static web sites can access information on them, or use them to help instruct their students. They can also create static sites as a place to have permanent access to notes, pictures, videos, music or information. But static digital technology is very similar in use to books, magazines, or manipulatives used in classrooms in the past. The only added benefit is accessibility. An instructor’s materials are readily available, easy to locate, and do not require being carried to class, but do not necessarily capitalize on all the benefits available with digital technology.

Much of Michael Berson’s work centers on static digital technologies. Berson (2004), concerned with child safety on the internet, has written works on safe sites students can go to and find accurate historical information. However, instead of listing sites that are appropriate it might be better to educate instructors and students how to think critically about what they are
encountering. Students can encounter sites outside of a school context, and they need to make their own decisions about appropriate internet use as this becomes a bigger part of daily life.

**Semi-static digital technology.** Semi-static digital technology would allow for a little more interactivity than static sources. This would include videogames which someone plays against a computer, without a predetermined ending. It also includes websites that allow the user some control, such as taking control of live webcams in New York, New Orleans, Paris, or even some historical sites. This allows some interaction, but not two-way interaction. I would also include some uses of blogs in this category. Though the goal of a weblog is to give one’s opinion and allow others to join in the conversation, oftentimes it is used as an easily updated static website, or has no followers and becomes static by default.

**Interactive digital technology.** Technology which fits in the final category can be used to further improve interaction and learning. Researchers today are looking to parlay the social capabilities of interactive digital technology to enhance the educational experience, and allow a different kind of learning that does not simply replicate past types of learning with more bells and whistles. Thus instead of a static webpage with information that the user simply reads, an interactive digital technology allows a reader to actually edit and interact with the page and others. This is also known as a web 2.0 application. It allows for many options like editing the written information, adding pictures, adding videos or sounds, and allowing others to do the same simultaneously and around the world. It is these environments which students are growing up with today: blogs, wikis, fansites, YouTube, Twitter, Flikr, delicious, social forums like Myspace and Facebook, and videogames which allow the user to interact with other people around the world in real time. An example of such a videogame is World of Warcraft which has eleven million users.
Wikis as an interactive digital technology have been around since the mid 1990’s. The most famous wiki is probably Wikipedia, launched in 2001. A wiki is an easy to edit html platform, which allows unlimited users from around the world to co-author a site. An interactive site like Wikipedia is constantly being updated, with over two million separate and linked pages. People often criticize Wikipedia for inaccuracies, biased reporting, or students uncritically relying on the information for final papers. But scholars like Bruckman (2008) have pointed out that the reliability of Wikipedia articles is higher than traditional encyclopedias. Recently Daccord (2008) has discussed how history teachers could use wikis in their classroom. He gives projects teachers could implement, building on traditional classroom activities such as giving definitions, allowing classes and parents to post information, cover course content, or allowing districts to create curricula. These are some great ideas and his book may make it practicable for teachers to implement this. However, due to the recent appearance of the technology there has been limited research on how students have learned through them.

Learning Theories

Digital technology has enormous potential. Like many pedagogical materials, its application depends on the learning theory used as a teaching framework. Below I will discuss several of the theories which have the greatest use as applied to technology in education. These are constructivism, constructionism, connectionism, and literacy. In choosing these theories, it is important to briefly consider one theory which I do not feel is valuable, behaviorism. Behaviorism conditions behaviors in students. I do not believe that interactive digital technologies should condition students, rather allow them to explore and experience learning on their own terms. The theories below all allow for this to occur.
**Constructivism.** Constructivism in general is a learning theory which focuses on the knowledge and meaning constructed through experience. One brand of constructivism is that of Lev Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky’s constructivist theory is that a student has a level of understanding and a possible level of understanding. Through social interaction with an expert other, the student can be pushed into a zone of proximal development toward that next level of understanding. In the digital world this can occur in videogames and web 2.0 applications.

James Paul Gee (2003) based part of his work on Vygotsky. Gee also brings in the work of constructivist theorists such as Bahktin and Bordieu to explain how students are learning through games, building knowledge and creating identities. People who play a videogame begin with a set of skills or a level of understanding, and the game begins slowly and easily. Over time the game increases in difficulty, while giving expert support or guidance, pushing the player into the zone of proximal development. Presumably the player could start at one level of understanding and be pushed through several zones of proximal development and past several levels of understanding. So in the case of videogames, the computer can act as the expert other. Similarly, Thomas (2007) and Nakamura (2008) have pointed to online groups of teenagers who, outside of school and only for fun, teach each other how to write computer code and build digital avatars, each acting as experts helping each other into zones of proximal development, working towards greater levels of understanding.

However, a difference with the online environment is that the roles of expert and novice are constantly in flux. One teenager may be able to help others learn html code, while they know nothing of the science fiction genre or the history of medieval Europe. Through interaction one teenager is able to help others learn the code, while another helps them understand medieval life, while another helps them understand nuances of science fiction, all in an effort to create a
website or digital story site about a medieval town under attack by dragons. So there is constructivist learning going on, but perhaps there is more. This relates to the idea of a community of practice. Nakamura and Thomas’s students are exchanging ideas, learning from others, and while not in true “apprenticeship” situations are certainly learning as peripheral participants and experts (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Constructivist learning could occur within any of the three types of technology, though would tend towards semi-static and interactive.

**Constructionism.** Bruckman (2008; Zagal & Bruckman, 2008), in researching wikis, believes that the constructionist work of Seymour Papert (Papert & Harel, 1991) may add to the overall understanding. Papert is unclear about defining what, precisely, constructionism is, preferring examples. Bruckman takes these examples and expands upon them. There are several facets to this application. One is that those who put their work in the public arena care more about the production of it. This is important to consider when thinking about all the social media uploaded to YouTube or edits done to Wikipedia, and how teachers can take advantage of making material public. This also relates to allowing students to do projects which are meaningful to them. A second facet is that knowledge is acquired through give and take, through offering little pieces and adding more to it. This allows the learner to create, to think artistically even, and thereby build greater knowledge. Perhaps this fits in with the examples from Thomas and Nakamura on how students are learning in online environments. Students are certainly creating and putting information out on the internet and building off the work of others. While constructionism is not radically different from constructivism, it adds a few extra points to the conversation. As with constructivism, all three types of technology could be used for constructionist learning, though semi-static and interactive would be more popular. Static
technologies might be used simply as reference or to take text, videos, sounds, and images from in order to incorporate them into interactive sites.

**Connectionism.** Another theory which attempts to unlock what is going on in the online world is George Siemens’ (2004, 2006) idea of connectionism. This theory relates to network theory in that knowledge is contained in locations outside the individual, and it is the weak or strong networks we cultivate which allow us to gain necessary knowledge. These networks could be digital or incarnate. But, this calls for a new conceptualization of how learning occurs in that we gather the necessary information from those sources through our networks. These networks could be instructors, books, classmates, people or sites on the internet. It is more important to know what search terms to use in Google in order to find a pizza place or the 32\textsuperscript{nd} president, than it is to “know” the answers to these questions. Because the emphasis is on the network, it could include any of the three types of digital technology.

**Literacy.** Recent theorists such as Steinkuehler (2008; Jan/Feb/Mar 2005), Knoble and Lanskshear (2007), Cope and Kalantzis (Cope et al., 2005), and Leu (2009) have discussed the idea of learning as a literacy, or as part of multi literacies or digital literacies. This may also be a useful way to think about learning online. Vygotsky’s constructivism depends on the social interactions which occur. Constructionism thinks about the building of or playing with knowledge. Connectionism thinks about the networks we belong to. Literacies place the focus on the vehicle of transmission and the meaning taken from the transmission. This is important to consider because in the online environment information can be conveyed through text, pictures, video, sounds, or games and simulations. So there is meaning-making going on in a constructivist manner, but not necessarily in the traditional social interaction Vygotsky would have envisioned. Similarly there is creativity, and playing going on with the building of
knowledge, but the building can occur with or without verbal or written language vehicles.

Literacy is important, according to Leu (2009), because it makes learning technology part of the discipline of history, math, or English. Thus instead of technology taught in a computer or technology class, and everything else taught within its own discipline, digital literacy is taught in all the disciplines. Like language literacy, it transcends history, English, and science classes. This could be important for teacher education, as pointed out by Brush and Saye (2009), so that education students integrate the technology skills into their pedagogy. Literacy could use all three types of digital technologies, though the major output would most likely be within an interactive digital technology.

**Conclusion**

To integrate technology into history education, we as educators must first determine which learning theory is most appropriate to our goals. Thinking about Vygotsky’s constructivism is useful if we want students to gain in their overall learning through encouragement from an expert other, and to make their own meaning. If we want students to interact and create more knowledge both within themselves and for others, constructionism is a worthwhile lens. Connectionism is appropriate if we want to focus on the networks in which we are located and how we or our students fit into them and access information. If we are attempting to think of how students make, create, share and understand myriad inputs and outputs, then perhaps literacy is a good vehicle.

We may also need to think about how we teach and what types of digital technology we are comfortable with. If showing videos or audio files over the internet is all that is desired, then knowing how to find or create static sites is important. If greater interactivity is important, but not necessarily two way interaction with other humans, then semi-static technologies are worth
considering. This could still entail familiarity with some of the interactive technologies and videogames, but without relying on the interactions of others. If the goal is to create communities of practice, and democratic educational areas which can act as external areas of learning, then interactive technologies are worth considering. This study will focus on interactive technologies. Though the categorization is not specifically hierarchical, there is a hierarchy based on skill. It is possible that someone may be introduced to technology through the static forms, and slowly becomes more familiar and comfortable using the semi-static and interactive forms.

This chapter has given the breakdown of traditions within history and social studies education, highlighting the reasons why the social democrat tradition is most useful overall and for this study. In the future there will be growing global problems which the social democrat position is most able to relate to and discuss. As digital technology becomes more important, inequities will grow between digital knowledge producers and consumers. The social democrat position will equally allow educators to understand and deal with these inequities. In thinking about these issues it is necessary to think about the types of digital technology we use, and the learning theories that are most applicable. Interactive technology has the most to offer as students learn from each other. I believe that constructivism, constructionism, connectionism, and literacy each offer something about different aspects of educational experience. I draw on all of them as I try to understand what is happening in my classroom.

In chapter three I examine the rationale for using a qualitative study. I examine specifically the use of action research, including ethical considerations, the study design, and biographies of some of the students. The chapter concludes looking at the data sources and data analysis.
Chapter 3

Methods

Based on the traditions discussed in chapter two, this study proceeds from a social democrat stance. This was done based on personal belief and is the most useful to help students think critically and work towards a more equitable future. This study utilized interactive digital technologies to help the students learn. The learning theories outlined in chapter two were all considered in the design. This background allows for a study which looked at the students’ experiences during a class that used a wiki and had the students present material.

Below I discuss the reasons for using qualitative methods, specifically action research. I then discuss the theoretical basis for the study and ethical issues to consider. I outline the design of the study, discussing the two main questions and sub-questions which are the focus. The study location and participants are described, including biographies of some of the students encountered in chapters four and five. I conclude by looking at data sources and data analysis.

Research Method

As discussed in chapter two, wikis are a newer type of technology and little research has been done on their use in educational settings. The pilots for this study have shown how to use wikis, but have not yet looked at the experience the students have. Understanding what students learned could be gained from a quantitative study, using a questionnaire. However, delving deeper into the experiences the students have, and attempting to see if students were able to think critically, requires more interaction, background, and thicker descriptions to convey to the reader. This is possible with qualitative methods.

The main purpose of this study is to add to the literature, illustrating the experiences of students as they learn history through teaching and using a wiki. I also had two goals for the
project. The first was for the students to become more proficient in digital production, while incorporating many voices and sources into the wiki textbook. The second was to improve the critical thinking skills of those involved. A product of the study is the textbook itself, which will be usable by future students as a starting place for their instruction, and as a comparison to the mainly conservative texts available.

The research method used for this project was action research (Caro-Bruce et al., 2007). Action research can be used for various purposes and from various perspectives. Within action research there is a cycle: plan, act, observe, and evaluate (G. L. Anderson et al., 2007). This cycle repeats, perhaps during one course, perhaps over several semesters. This project began four semesters ago, with the last two semesters acting as the pilot for the present study. For this study action research was used by an instructor, attempting to plan something for his class (Weinbaum, Allen, Simon, Seidel, & Rubin, 2004). I acted on my plan, and observed what happened. I have kept notes daily of what occurred, and what I thought about what has occurred.

Action research was the most appropriate method for this study since there were many variables which I did not have control over. Perhaps students who take a specific class, in a specific time, have less digital knowledge than expected. From a teaching, hypothetical standpoint there are many possible problems which could arise. By being the researcher and the instructor, I can evaluate and re-plan for these problems, still operating within the intentions of the study. Some may question the reliability of having the researcher as the instructor. This is not uncommon in action research, and is done on purpose. In the past I attempted to incorporate these technologies in others’ classes, and they were unsuccessful and inauthentic. If the instructor does not believe in the technology or is not able to answer questions, students will quickly lose interest and become apathetic. It is the enthusiasm of an instructor and his or her
knowledge which allows the project to succeed. Since I am able to solve the problems and explain why we are doing the project, students are more willing to do it. However, since I researched my own classroom, I did need to be more diligent in analyzing the data, looking at my observations, and making observations of students. I checked on reliability in the interviews.

I have reflected on my classes since I began teaching. Initially it was simply looking back at the end of the semester, to consider what worked and what did not. As I became more comfortable with my instruction, I began to test new types of assignments, either based on research, or more commonly, based on personal ideas. These assignments attempted to get the students to experience history. More recently, over the last four semesters, I have begun active observation of my classes, taking notes as soon as a class was over. These notes always relate to what was covered in class, usually including questions or events that occurred. Sometimes they also include immediate reflections of what could have been done, or what should be done next. These notes also contain reflections based on research I am reading or thoughts which occur while grading. These notes have been very useful for changing how I teach a class.

**Theoretical Basis**

The design of this study is grounded in the literature discussed in chapter two. Most history is taught to reify the status quo, to idolize the great men of history. In order to counter this, I exposed the students to many different types of history and attempted to guide them to question the material. I feel that the multiple sources of material and different media were a good beginning to helping the students learn in a socially democratic way. Much of the technological literature was useful for supporting these ideas. Within open source movements and within communication and technological circles, there is a move to have peer to peer sharing of knowledge. With peer to peer sharing, knowledge is created by those on the internet or those
in the classroom. This bottom-up or outside-in model is counter to the traditional conservative
tradition within history, or education in general. The use of action research fits with this, since it
does have roots in political organizing from the bottom-up. This methodology fits with the
social democratic tradition and within the open source movement.

Finally, the various learning theories have also been useful as a basis for this study.
Constructivism allows for thinking about the learning which occurs as students interact with each
other. Constructionism helps thinking about how students build knowledge with pieces of
information. Connectionism focuses on how the knowledge is built and from where it is found.
The idea of literacies looks at how multiple sources can have an impact on the learning process.
So the social democratic literature links well with the technological literature and action research
methodology as the learning theories help us think about the learning which occurs for the
students.

Ethics

It is difficult being researcher and instructor. There was certainly a power differential in
place, since I was grading the students while attempting to research what they were learning or
experiencing. One could simply say that since the Institutional Review Board allowed this study,
that conflict was resolved. However, as some (Bosk & DeVries, September 2004; Gunsalus et
al., 2007) have pointed out, though ethical concerns are initially considered by an Institutional
Review Board, they are most often a safeguard. They may not be as relevant to qualitative
research, nor are they always considered during implementation. So I had to think about how to
ethically research my class.

Schwandt (2007) has called for qualitative researchers to think beyond the study
planning, to the conduct of the study. His beliefs relate to the moral ideas of Aristotle and
Flyvbjerg (2001). In order to do important, good research one must think about *phronesis*, or the moral good. However, while Flyvbjerg and Schwandt revisit 2500 year old ideas and concerns, there is a simpler idea to consider, and one which is important to action research: trust. It is dependent upon me as the instructor and researcher to truly gain the trust of my students. This means that by the end of the semester they understand what the goals of my teaching and research are. They must also believe they have been treated fairly throughout the course and that this will continue as I study the data, their work. This was my operating procedure on the reflective final. I kept notes as a road map. The data and assignments were graded appropriately, and notes were taken on them as I graded them. However, the interviews and main analysis of data occurred after I was no longer able to assign grades. The interviews also occurred after I assigned grades. From past experience, and this semester, I have found that most students feel they have put a lot of effort into the wiki, and they want others to see what they learned from the project, and so most students consent to the study.

**Study Design**

This study was conducted in my own history courses at Parkland College, which is a community college with about ten thousand students. It is located in Champaign, Illinois, in the same town as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Students in my class came from east-central Illinois, as that is the district served by Parkland. There were also many students from the Chicago-land area. Only one of the students was from the University of Illinois. The courses I used were introductory history classes. History 101 is an introductory course on the history of the western world from 200 AD to 1800 AD. History 104 is an introductory class on the history of the United States from 1492 to 1877 AD. Both courses started with twenty-four students, though the capacity for the class was thirty-two. History 101
met 12:00-12:50pm, while History 104 met 1:00-1:50pm. Both classes met every day, except for Thursdays. History 101 ended with eleven students, History 104 with ten students. History 101 had two African-American students, eight white students, and one Latino student. Eight of the students were male, three were female. History 104 had three African-American students and seven white students. Six of the students were male, four were female. I chose these classes because I teach them, and can use research at Parkland because I am faculty. I received permission from both Parkland and UIUC’s Institutional Review Boards to conduct the study.

In order to understand the data, and the analysis, it is important to understand the setup of the class and the assignments. In my classes, twenty percent of a student’s grade was determined by participation and tests. The other eighty percent was determined by the presentation, the wiki, a group assignment, and the related midterm and final project. The wiki was used for the group assignment, as well. This wiki is freely available on the internet, and has been used in previous semesters and will be used in subsequent semesters as well, so that the material is updated by students on a semester by semester basis. Using Bruckman’s (2008) work, related to Papert’s constructionism, students should put more effort into the wiki if their work is posted publically. Similarly, based on Nakamura (2008) and Thomas’s (2007) findings, peer learning should occur in the classroom, as it did in their less school-centered studies. The syllabus for these classes is in the appendix.

The first individual assignment required the students to research historical time periods, present to the class, and post to the course wiki. Students were required to choose one of fifteen chapters covered in the class. Two students could sign up for each chapter and divide the material. It was then up to each student to post to the wiki material they felt was relevant to their chapter, and teach the other students in class during the appropriate week. I assisted as a backup.
to fill in some blanks, point out instances which might require more investigation, or to account for student absences. Students were also responsible for editing the other fourteen chapters in the wiki. Editing could entail fixing typos, adding citations, questioning the biases of material, asking for citations, or adding their own information if they felt inclined or had some specific knowledge pertinent to the chapter. Each student was required to make two edits per week. This helped them become familiar with the material from the other chapters. The two parts of this assignment forced students to think like historians as they decided what should be included, how to write about it, and what they were basing it upon. While history educators often feel that requiring papers on gladiators or Jamestown introduces students to being a historian, it does not require students to think about the bigger picture, the conversations that occur among historians, or the implicit and explicit beliefs of the authors as they encounter materials.

The group assignment also used the wiki. The students in the first week of class thought about topics or problems in the world which concerned them. At the end of the first week, we listed these topics and discussed them to get a feel for what would be covered in each group. Students chose to be in one of two or three groups, based on the overlap of topics and interests. The overall goal was to find enough students interested in a topic of their own choosing to research the material over the semester. It was also necessary to have enough students in each group to account for students who may drop the course. As a group, students researched the topic and placed that information in the wiki. This was integrated throughout the chapters. This gave the students a peer group to confer with, get to know, work with, and have as a security net if they missed class or needed help. It also forced them to continue going to the wiki to enter group information. This project required in-depth work on their individual chapter and time period, wider content knowledge editing the time period work of others, and in-depth work on a
topic over time. Based on the work of Misco and Patterson (2009), I suggested that the students work chronologically backwards on the group project. This would allow them to begin with a time period they were familiar with and a topic they were concerned about, to try to find the roots of the issue. Instead of beginning with the time period in which the course began, 200 or 1492, in which they had little familiarity, they could begin with the modern era and modern sources. Students could research how modern sources describe the history of the problem and then consult these as they worked backwards, attempting to uncover how the modern problem looked or began in the past.

The second individual assignment began with the midterm paper and was built upon for the final paper. There were four options for this assignment, three of which became part of the wiki. The first option allowed students, for the midterm, to research how something in the time period of the class was made. For the final paper, they had to actually make it and document its production. Both of these papers would be posted in the wiki. The second option allowed students to make a machinima project, which uses computer and videogame engines to record action, and edit it into a movie. The final product, the video, was to be posted in the wiki. The third option allowed students to play the historical simulation videogame Civilization: Colonization or Civilization IV, keeping a journal and submitting a reflective final paper. The final option allowed the students to research an author and use one of the author’s works as a primary source document. The research on the author was posted in the wiki.

**Biographies**

The names for the students have been changed. To create pseudonyms, I made a list of all the students who finished the class. I then had a list of names from the Wikipedia site for the X-Men comic book characters. I crossed out any actual names of students from the list, and then
chose from the remaining names based on personal preference. Here I provide descriptions of the students who are quoted or discussed most in this study.

**Emma.** Emma was a student who I had in three classes. She took my 104 class the first time I used a wiki. She also took an online western humanities class from me last semester, and this semester took the History 101 class. She was a returning student in her forties, and was from the local community. She was married with two children in elementary school. She is white, tall, and thin with graying hair. She told me that if she had gone to college at the traditional age, it would not have worked for her. With job and family experience, she was an exceptional student. She dove into the work, and in her own words was an ‘overachiever.’ She was the de facto leader of her group. She always sat in the front of the room, just to the right of center. She also liked to bring food to class for all the students, whether M&Ms, cookies, muffins, or pizza. For her final project she researched and made papyrus.

**James.** James is a white, traditional college-aged student who was in the 101 class. This was his last semester at Parkland, and he, too, was from the local community. He worked at a local grocery store, and enjoyed playing guitar and reading. On the first day of class, he said he dreamed of making guitars someday. This led to him making a lyre for his final project. He always sat in the back row of class, in the center. He is average height, thin, with shaggy brown hair, and often wore a Castro style hat.

**Christopher.** Christopher is a traditional college-aged student who was in the 101 class. He was a chemistry major and has taken courses at other institutions, which he mentioned several times in class. He often discussed the fact that he was Mormon, and his previous mission work. He is white and thin, with blond hair and glasses. He was from a nearby, affluent outlying town. He always sat in the back row between James and Cain. He also always carried a
MacBook with him which he often used to add information to class or look up information. For his final project he made a wooden shelf.

Cain. Cain was a bit older than the traditional age, nearer to the average Parkland age of 27. He was in the 101 class. He is a larger, African-American student, built like a line backer. He coached youth basketball and worked at a local pizza establishment. He was originally from the Chicagoland area. In class he was always full of questions about all manner of topics, often excited when we spent time answering his questions. His questions led to some odd topics at times, and these tangents evoked colorful terms of expression. These divergences were often aided by James, Emma, and Logan. As will be discussed, these discussions made Christopher very uncomfortable. Cain was very concerned about the origins and beliefs of religions, as his grandmother was a minister. He told me that he realized the importance of classes, even though he did not always make it to all his classes. However, after the first two weeks, he always made it to history. He did not finish his final project.

Henry. Henry is a tall, white, traditional aged student who was on the basketball team. He was from the southern part of Illinois. A student in my 101 class, he always wore a white and green training outfit with a cross around his neck. He was also always five minutes late for class. For the most part he was quiet, but when he taught his section, he appeared to surprise everyone with how much he talked. He was very excited about the late middle ages. From his final answers, it seems that he went to a parochial school and had never heard about some church history. This seemed to spur his interest in history and the class. For his final project he played Civilization IV.

Logan. Logan is a white, traditional aged student, with brown hair who was in the 10 class. She was always on her cell phone before class. She dressed nicely and often had
discussions with another student about fashion, clothing, and shoe stores. She was also very concerned about her grades in the class and how it might affect her future. She was raised in England, and then moved to the United States for junior high and high school, to a rural town north of Champaign. Once she overcame her fear of a bad grade, she frequently participated in class and often questioned me or others about their information. She always sat in the front right of class. For her final project she played *Civilization IV*.

**Moira.** Moira is a traditional aged, white college student who was in the 104 class. She was a member of the newspaper staff, and she wore retro cloths and t-shirts with alternative phrases. Sometimes her hair had non-natural tinges to it. She was a big fan of science fiction movies and television shows. She wanted to be a high school history teacher and was transferring to a four year institution for that goal. She was also a manger at a local restaurant. She was friends already with Roberto, as they both went to the same local high school. She read *The Last of the Mohicans* for her final assignment.

**Roberto.** Roberto, like Moira, wants to be a history teacher. He is African-American, and of average build. He was in the 104 class. He was raised in southern Missouri, but moved to the Champaign area for junior high and high school. He did not have a job, and appeared to know many of the students around the school. He often had questions about the topics we discussed in class, and certainly was not against arguing with classmates about certain topics. He read *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* for his final assignment.

**Madeline and Jean.** Madeline and Jean were two African-American students in the 104 class. They were friends before the class began, and both came from the Chicagoland area. They both wanted to be elementary teachers and were planning on transferring back to Chicago
in the fall. They often talked to each other, and with Roberto and Moira. They also argued frequently with the students in the back.

**Students in the back.** In the 104 class there were five students who sat in the back row: Scott, Kurt, Cameron, Warren, and Nathan. Kurt was very quiet the whole semester. Scott was mostly quiet, but when the other students got loud he would join in. Cameron, too, joined in from time to time with these students. The ring leaders appeared to be Nathan and Warren. Warren was very talkative, but did not listen much. Nathan had been in the Air Force, and served a tour in Iraq. He seemed to be set in his ways. Nathan and Warren liked to uphold the conservative tradition in class, and often brought Scott and Cameron into the discussion against Madeline, Jean, Moira, and Roberto.

**Data Sources**

There are many sources of data for this study: my notes, the wiki, midterm papers, final papers, final exams, group assessments, and interviews. Over the last two semesters I kept a reflective journal on my classes, written each day after the end of class. In this journal, I listed what happened in class on a daily basis and my immediate thoughts, as well as what I thought needed to be done. I also incorporated thoughts based on grading assignments, wiki edits done, current readings, and related thoughts based on conversations or other interactions. Every few weeks I reread what I had written to see if there was a pattern, or if problems had been solved, or if new themes had arisen. This data was constantly added to, periodically reflected upon, and at the end of the semester helped to serve as a roadmap for what happened in the class, to put other data into context. As part of my journal I also had a fellow graduate student sit in on both of my classes and discussed the class with her afterwards. Her comments are written in the journal, but were useful for an outsider point of view. In chapters four and five, when I refer to specific dates
for something which occurred in class, I am using the journal as my data. The date will stand as the citation.

The wiki software used was pbworks.com. With pbworks, each time a change is made and saved, a mass email is sent out to everyone who has editing privileges, students and instructor, showing the changes made. This creates hundreds of emails which could be examined at the end of the semester. It is also possible to look at the history of each page in the wiki showing every change made by page. Changes can be tracked chronologically as they occurred overall, or within each chapter. It was not possible to use the wiki as extensively as planned for this study, because the Institutional Review Board only allowed me to examine those sections where all the individuals consented. It was possible to isolate several sections only edited by those who consented, and to find new sections added by consentees based on conversations in class. I was also able to examine the wiki for interactions to develop follow-up questions for the interviews. When I refer to a change made on the wiki, I will be using the page history as the reference. When I reference it in the findings, it will be noted by the date of the edits.

The midterm and final papers were individual assignments, but many of them were added to the wiki as well. This includes biographies on authors, and history of processes and how to make something. These were posted near the middle of the term and the end of semester, and were examined to see if what was said in class about the assignment is reflected in the write-ups. When these papers are referenced, they will be cited. An example would be LFP p1. This refers to Logan Final Paper, page one.

The group assessments were periodic glimpses into the groups. They were meant to see what the individuals within groups did throughout the semester, and see if they had any questions. The assessments were used to help students during the class if they had questions, and
as an aid to assign points based on what group members felt their peers did. As data, the responses were analyzed after the end of the semester, in conjunction with emails and the final, to create follow-up interview questions.

There were many emails from the students over the semester. However, only those which related to the material or learning were examined, not those which discussed personal events or questions about grades. Emails received from students during the semester were used to write follow up interview questions. In addition, they were used to fact check for content from the interviews. When they are referenced, they will be referred to as an email with the date.

At the end of the semester, a reflective final was given. This final asked the students to reflect on the semester, on each type of assignment, what they learned, and what they liked or would improve. After a semester together, most students are willing to give honest and critical feedback. The questions from the final are in the appendix, and will be referenced as FA with the line numbers.

There were also the school assessments which were given during the course. While anonymous, I have used these in conjunction with the reflective final and found that many of the comments overlap. Given the anonymity, I believe that adds to the reliability. I also have the quantitative data recorded from the assessment.

I also have data from an outside observer. This was the semester I was reviewed by the department, so one of the full time history faculty members sat in on a course, reviewed the wiki, and sat down with me before and after the class he reviewed. I have his written review, which I have also consulted.

Part of my data comes from the interviews of four students. Of the twenty-one students who actively finished the course, nineteen consented to be in the study. After grades were
entered I received the consent forms. I was then able to look at the data, described above, from those students. This included my journal, the wiki, emails, final exams, group assessments, final papers, school assessments, and outside observations. This data was used to develop interview questions. These questions were created while consulting the work of Kvale (2009) on doing interviews. After these were developed and an IRB amendment was submitted, I was able to recruit for interviews. Initially, I attempted to interview students from both classes, trying to get different perspectives based on race, gender, and age. I had intended to interview five students, so I sent out five emails. Three of these first emails were answered, so after two weeks I sent out another round of emails. One of these emails was answered. After two more weeks, I sent out another round of emails. I never heard back from the final round, which exhausted the student pool. I was able to set up four interviews, which were conducted over the summer in the Champaign-Urbana area, then transcribed. Each interview lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. I promptly transcribed each interview, and comments from each were considered in subsequent interviews. All of the interview questions are in the appendix. When the interviews are referenced, I use the first initial of the interviewee’s name and T with a line number, for instance RT1 for Roberto Transcript, line 1.

**Data Analysis**

Once I transcribed the interviews, I began the data analysis. I analyzed the data in two ways, for each of the two main research questions. I went through the final exam answers, the interviews, and the final papers for anything which I felt related to the question. I copied this information to a Word document, citing where I got it from. Once I had gone through each set of data, I then looked at this information, reading through it many times looking for themes. Once I identified common themes, I used them to code the data. Once that was done, I went back and
grouped the comments by theme. The themes were commonalities in comments, or comments that related to literature. Thus some I looked for, while others emerged. Then I wove the different data sources together, verifying details and checking for consistency as a sign of validity. As I analyzed the data, I also kept in mind the literature from social democratic education and technology. I considered several learning theories, to attempt to determine whether these theories are useful for thinking about social democratic learning, learning with technology, or the learning I saw during the class.

Conclusion

This project builds on and adds to the research in history education, and the use of technology and wikis in education. However, this work, in the spirit of Gee (2003), moves beyond the questions of safety or danger in online or digital environments. With the penetration of digital technologies, this is almost an untenable concern. More appropriate is the acceptance of the inundation of this technology, and attempts to determine how to teach using it. Students have grown up using these technologies, as “digital natives.” However, for the future knowledge economy, and for the future of education, these students need to be taught how to use the technology effectively within a discipline. They need to know which questions to ask to find a restaurant or the name of the prime minister of Canada. They also need to be taught how to critically examine the information to determine if it is correct. As Collins and Halverson (2009) have said, the future will be built not on transferring the information of the past, but on figuring out how to use this information to make the knowledge of the future.

I present the results of this study in two chapters. In chapter four, I address the first question: What do students experience using an educational wiki and an open classroom? In
chapter five I address the second question: What are the relationships between the wiki and open classroom and democratic education?
Chapter 4

Experience and Critical Thinking

This chapter focuses on the first set of thesis questions related to student experience. This examination draws from my own observations, interviews with several students, artifacts from the class, and the wiki. The main question and sub questions operate as a framework for this chapter with the data creating a narrative around it. The stories and quotes should help us gain a better understanding of the students’ experiences during the course.

The first question is, “What do students experience using an educational wiki and an open classroom?” While I believe in the end the reader will see a link between these two areas, I think it is most beneficial at this point to separate the experiences to those online and those in the classroom, looking first at the students’ experience with the wiki and content creation, then their experience in the classroom and participation therein. The final part of this chapter looks at the ability of the students to think critically about history. This is subdivided into their definitions of critical thinking and their thoughts on how the class achieved or enabled this. The chapter ends with a wrap up on the experiences and critical thinking, and looks toward democratic education in chapter five. The chapter attempts to follow a chronological path which the students may have followed. Students had to first gain access to the wiki, before they could think about what information to add, how to format it, and where to place it.

Wiki Experience

Before seeing what the students had to say about their technological experiences, it may help the reader to know what operational procedures they had to go through to login to the wiki. On the syllabus there is a URL for the frontpage of the wiki. They can initially go to that address and see what students in past classes have added to the wiki. However, they cannot edit the site
until they are given editorial permission. To get this permission they need to click on a button on the front page which reads, “request access.” This takes the user to a screen which asks for a username and email address. Once they request access they wait until I check my email. I receive an automated email stating that a student has requested access. I can then login to the wiki and grant them that access. Once I grant them access they receive an automated email. They then create a password and use the username they created in the request. Once this is done, they are free to edit the wiki. The time between requesting access and being able to edit the wiki was less than 24 hours for each student. Most students gained access within the first week. There were several students who did not have access until the second week, and one or two who did not gain access until the third week. These problems were related to the internet browsers and software the students used, which had not been updated recently. Since it had not been updated they were unable to see or use links within the automated emails.

Once students have the ability to edit the wiki there are many choices. Students need to think about what is already in the wiki, what they can add, and what they are interested in. They also need to test the waters to see how the process of adding information goes. It may be easy, or difficult, or even overwhelming. First I examine how the students experienced creating content. Then I examine how the students felt about their experiences creating content.

**Content creation.** Content creation takes on several aspects. At first, some students felt overwhelmed with the wiki itself, or adding content. They also had to think about what content to add. Or perhaps they had to decide what format the content should take, whether textual, audio, or visual (both picture and video). They also had to think about the validity of the information in the wiki, or that of which they added or edited. As they edited the wiki they had to think about simply fixing grammatical errors or doing more research. They also had to
balance their own contributions to the wiki with their own teaching in the class, thinking about the audience and how a presentation differs from writing. I was also interested to see if Bruckman’s (2008) findings, that posters to a public wiki were more concerned about the perceptions of their posts, was evident in this study.

**Overwhelmed.** Many students felt they learned a lot from the wiki edits, but they still remembered feeling confused at the beginning of the class. A first example is Remy, who said he learned the most in the course from having to do the wiki edits. In fact the class was “not like any other [he had] taken before” (FA46). However, he initially felt “from the beginning … it was going to be overwhelming” (FA46-47). But, by “sticking it out” he “learn[ed] very valuable information, that [he] probably wouldn’t have … if [he were] in another class” (FA47-9). Cain echoed these comments feeling “lost at first,” however eventually he “got the hang of it” and “had no problems” (FA860-1). I believe a key moment for both of them was in mid-February when Cain asked about the reliability of Wikipedia or the wiki we were writing. I discussed how everyone in the class was an expert in something. I pointed out that Cain, as a youth basketball coach, knew more about the sport than I did. I asked him how many people played on a basketball team. Once he figured out that I really had little knowledge of the sport, he appeared as if he understood that he knew more about something than the instructor, and that it was possible to add to my knowledge and overall knowledge for all.

Moira also felt lost at first, attributing this to computer illiteracy (FA264). She did feel that directions on how a wiki worked would have benefitted her. She mentioned this several times in the interview as well. However, while she herself felt lost, she did sign up for the wiki with no problems on the second day of class, and was doing edits within the second week. She added:
It was a little overwhelming at first because I didn’t know exactly what was expected of me, or what I was supposed to do, or what was adequate, what was not. So I felt overwhelmed for the majority of the semester. And right at the end of the semester when it clicked together I was like, aha, this is what I’m supposed to do, this is how it works, and I liked it better. For the most part I felt a little overwhelmed. (MT378-81)

She went on to explain when it was that the wiki clicked for her.

The click point was around the time I was finishing my big paper, and around the time I did my presentation for the class…. I guess doing well with the teaching of the class made it, made me want to work a little harder when I looked at it. I don’t know, seeing how my lesson plan fitted into the textbook made it more useful to me, made it more important. So I wanted to do a little better with it, and put more effort into it. And it seemed like the information finally made more sense. What information I should have been putting in all along because I felt like I was too spaced out before and when I had taught most of the things it worked out better. (MT383-9)

It is interesting to note that seeing how her teaching, her final paper, and her wiki edits were related, part of a bigger picture increased her desire to do a little better. While this is something Bruckman talks about related to wikis in general, Moira is stating that it occurred with the connections between all of her work, not limited to the wiki. She even felt that she “had a fun time at the end of it” (MT64). I believe she was beginning to see a relationship between all the facts and values and how they are selected, arranged, sequenced and related to values and world views, ideas which I will relate to critical thinking below.

Scott felt the wiki was “a little weird…because it was not what [he] was used to,” but enjoyed it as the semester progressed, as well (FA298-9). Nathan’s problems weren’t specifically with the wiki, but with keeping up with the assignments. He admitted he had trouble “staying on top of the weekly edits, but overall [he] really like[d] the wiki” (FA414). He found it was hard to remember “what chapter we were on” and “to do them” (FA1024). This was a comment also made by Moira and Logan. Logan, who was the second highest poster on the wiki in the 101 class, explained her feelings for wiki edits:
As much as I loved the “go with the flow” mentality that the classroom had, I think I got sucked into it too much. I obtained the “ah, it's not that big of a deal. I'll just do it tomorrow” mindset, and never ended up doing it. (LFP p2)

Emma had been in previous classes, so some of her comments are based on her exposure over time to the wiki. As a comparison she said, “The wiki is better now than it used to be, and it's a fun way to add information. I like it” (FA100). While she did the most posting overall, and I felt did a very good job in both classes, she recounted her experience:

The experience of learning how to use the technology alone was a bit overwhelming, disconcerting at times because I was terrified that I wasn’t going to do it right. Even though I kinda knew what I wanted to put in there and I knew I wanted to have pictures and I knew what direction I wanted to go with the information, I was terrified at trying to use the technology. There were a couple of times when I added to the wiki directly by typing and it disappeared, the wiki went down, or it crashed, or it ate it, or whatever it does, and when that happened I was really angry. I knew better than to do that but I was at the Parkland library and had my computer and I had all these books. I sat there for I don’t know how many hours. I sat there adding stuff. I’d just go get a book and add something and put it back on the shelf, get another book, come back, read from it, add to it. All of it was gone and I could not believe it, so the technology tripped me up more than actually adding information and contributing to the data itself. Once I got okay with it, once I was a little better versed, once I quit adding directly to the wiki, made it in a Word document then plunked it in, much better, much better, but yes it was overwhelming for someone in advanced years. (ET 75-87)

Once I got that accomplished I was fine, I was good. The technology part of it really shook me up a lot, it makes it a little hard to concentrate what I’m supposed to learn when I’m so freaked out over the technology. I stuck with it enough that I kinda figured it out, I just remember the first day you said you were going to be doing wikis I had no idea what a wiki was. I had no idea, I’d never heard that before I went home and told [her husband] it sounds like what happens when your underwear gets caught in your buttcrack cause I have to present it, and I’m thinking that’s what it was. (ET107-13)

At the end of the course Roberto said:

The wiki to be honest kinda was upsetting. I never really did them and my grade is sort of reflective of that. I found no benefit in reading someone (who isn't a History professor) writing about history and to be more frank it came off blog-ish sometimes. (FA221-4)
He also postulated on other’s feelings: “I didn’t get much out of them and I don’t think anyone else did either, besides the points allotted for doing them” (FA892-3). In the interview he elaborated that:

Personally it was upsetting because I usually don’t have to work that hard for a history grade. Like ever. Like usually that’s the grade that I know that I’ll get an A in. That you have to put thought and effort into thinking about history, analyzing history, writing it out, putting it into a personal perspective, frustrated me to no end. And that’s probably why I didn’t put too much effort into it. (RT34-7)

However, he did concede, “I’m not necessarily sure I’m down with that [the wiki] quite yet, but I’m warmed up to it at least” (RT54). I think that some of Roberto’s concerns are related to problems of putting himself in the role of author. These are concerns an author of a history text could have, and as Giroux (1978) discusses, writing such as this is a pedagogical tool which allow students to think more critically.

Henry commented on the class as a whole:

I think at the beginning of the year, all the assignments are very intimidating. I wanted this class to be like a regular class where they lecture and I sit there and listen, take the test and get an easy A. However, this class forced me to get out of my comfort zone and do things I normally would not. I think I learned not just history but also some important lessons like listening skills, class skills, and even some social skills. Therefore, I would say I got MUCH more that what I expected out of this class. Even though I hated all the work that I had to put in, I deep down loved it because I actually do like learning, it's crazy. (FA186-92)

**Content choice.** When editing the wiki it can be difficult to decide what to add, or where to add it. The parameters given in class are open to allow freedom for students, and to not influence their choices. They can add information discussed in class that is not covered in the wiki, elaborate on content they feel is not in the wiki, or even challenge some content. Emma discusses how she decided to add content:

It was whatever struck me as I studied. If there was an assignment I had to work on, then I knew sort of the direction I wanted to go, but information as it comes to me changes my direction a lot, not always in a good way. We talked about this, but I will start off with
an idea and go, and then that idea will change and morph as I learn more. It’d probably be easier if I just went in with an idea and said I will only include the things that are relative to this, and I will not read anything else, but I don’t know how to do that. (ET435-40)

Emma also discussed how she is concerned with how the information she creates is received.

This could be in the wiki, status updates on Facebook, or in her teaching.

I know what I want to say. I want something to come to me, and yeah I’m thinking how is this going to be received. How can I say this so the person reading it knows where I’m coming from, reads it the way I want? I want to say it and it makes sense and they can identify. So yeah there’s a lot that goes into putting together information for someone else to take a look at. It’s not just a paper that I’m going to hand in to somebody and it’s just me and you, it’s for a whole class of people. You have to run it through twenty-three [the number of students] filters, it’s all about knowing your audience. (ET237-45)

As above with Moira, this touches on the ideas of Bruckman’s (2008) constructionism. It also relates to the work of Bruckman and Forte (2006). They say that audience plays a critical role in creating meaningful and effective writing to learn experiences. This sense of audience is vital to written communication. I believe this relates to other modes of transmission. This would be apparent for the student presentations, which were oral. However it would also relate to the use of multi-media sources within the wiki or the presentations. Emma cares about how she is perceived, or how her information is received, and so puts extra effort into it. It also relates to the critical thinking ideas of Giroux as discussed with Roberto above.

James adds:

With a lot of it since the wiki was already established and a lot of chapters had already been outlined and written into. I would skim over everything that had already been put in and find something I thought should be talked about more in depth or something I thought was important and wasn’t really discussed like in the wiki. And that would be something we talked about in class that stuck with me and I wanted to write about it or something that like if there were something in there and there were only a couple of lines on the topic, I would look that up and see if there was something more I could add to it. (JT197-203)

Moira explained what she put in:
Mostly all the topics that I discussed in class and every other edit that I did was basically just fixing grammatical [sic] errors. So a lot about the Oregon trail and westward expansion and other stuff. And occasionally something I didn’t trust exactly I would look up more and add a little more to it. But mostly just the information I talked about in class so that type of information was just major events that happened at the time. (MT300-4)

As to how she decided where to fill in holes in the wiki:

Well what I read through, basically I just wanted to see if there was anything that wasn’t really mentioned and I thought was an important thing that other people should keep in mind that it happened at that time too. Basically I wanted to see if there was any major events that happened that people didn’t want to mention or didn’t mention, and then I went and researched it. Basically I just based it off what other people wrote. (MT313-7)

**Content format.** However, once someone decides what topic to add, how do they decide the proper format? Emma felt:

It depended on what was already there. It’s easier to do a wiki edit when there’s nothing there and I can put in whatever I want, and then I can go in whatever direction makes sense at the time. It is much harder to edit a wiki when there’s something already there. I found it a bit unnerving to add paragraphs full of information to somebody’s paragraphs of information because it didn’t feel like it flowed. And we read books that are like that all the time, that have many different authors, you can tell when it jumped from one author to the next because the style changes, but it didn’t feel good to do that. What I really liked was coming across information that somebody had already put in and then finding a video, or finding a picture, or a map, or a chart, or evidence, yeah visual evidence, and bringing that in, and plunking that in next to what they had already written. (ET431-452)

It is interesting to note that, at least for Emma, she is not thinking specifically in terms of textual additions. She is thinking in a multi-format, multi-literate sense. It is the conveyance of information in various formats which is important.

**Validity.** A theme that arose from the final exam responses was that some students felt as if what their classmates covered in class or the wiki was not valid. At least six students either mentioned the validity of their classmates’ edits or presentations, and two more mentioned that their classmates did not cover some material they should have. Francis and Christopher felt that this was a point of departure where they could actually then look for the information to decide if
it was valid. I asked Emma if she had ever done this. She responded, “I didn’t ever want to go
and disprove somebody or think that what they were saying wasn’t right but I did pull out little
hints or clues that they gave and I would go look for that (ET50-51). She continued:

   Basically, I don’t know where they got their information and they weren’t citing it so
they were throwing it into the wiki and they weren’t citing it. Some were, but most
weren’t. It wasn’t really possible to tell where’d they get that from, did they really
research that or are they just throwing it up there, so I felt a little bamboozled at times,
potentially bamboozled. (ET174-178)

Roberto was also concerned with the information his classmates added. His concern was
with their authority. He likened it to his mother and a doctor telling him to bandage a cut. He
would be more willing to listen to the doctor than his mother. He felt a doctor would have
authority and his mother was “harping” on him (RT67). More specifically he felt, “You get
something from someone who, I don’t know, has a PhD in history rather than someone who’s
struggling through the class and doesn’t really make sense all the time” (RT71-3).

James commented:

   I don’t there was anything that I felt students were outright lying about, but I definitely
got the feeling at points that they hadn’t studied as much. Like if someone was talking
about a war and how they worded it was these guys went to wherever and they won and
they didn’t throw in much detail. It wasn’t like what they were saying wasn’t true, but I
didn’t get the feeling I was going to learn much from what they were covering so I might
just sorta zone out. (JT99-103)

Moira also found this: “Looking over the wiki there were times when I felt that
information, that I didn’t put on there, other students that I wanted to question because it was
either too vague or it just didn’t seem right at all” (MT172-4). Because of this she says, “Of
course I kinda questioned the things they put on there because there was a clear bias” (MT180-
1).

James went on to say, concerning the validity or biases in the wiki:
I think the wiki, with having everyone look at it, and everyone agree or want to change it, or since other people were able to change what people wrote, I think over time that will definitely clear out most or any bias that could have happened. (JT311-314)

James also commented on some of his sources:

I looked at Wikipedia a lot and there’s always a question of what you’re reading is completely accurate or not, but I wasn’t really worried about that too much. Some of the books that I read, I could see two or three different opinions of the authors who wrote them, there was a difference in how they interpret. I started to see this with my Rome presentation, how differently people could skew what happened in history or that there’s a lot more opinion than there is facts with history. So that’s something I started to pick up on when I was reading a lot of the different books with the different authors. So that makes you think how much we can really say for sure about different things for the most part? I didn’t think that I wasn’t being taught what didn’t actually happen or there wasn’t much concern of this. (JT116-123)

Sometimes it was not that the information was invalid, rather it was messy. Emma noticed:

Having other people come in and add to the wiki it was very hard to stay coherent. People would, instead of coming into the middle of what was being talked about, they would go to the very end and throw stuff on. (ET721-724)

It is interesting to note that many of the students touched on this idea of validity. I feel it is important as students come to understand the ideas of history and how to evaluate sources. It is also important for ideas of informational literacy. As Forte and Bruckman (2007) touch on, “Citation plays a critical role in the social construction of knowledge” (p. 35). Knowing where their classmates found information and how they put that information together helped students create their own knowledge.

These ideas of validity also relate to Giroux (1978). He discusses teaching students about frames of reference in order to treat knowledge as problematic. This can allow students to see relationships between facts and values, and students can then move outside their frame of reference to questions facts, concepts, and issues. The students seemed to be doing this, and as I discuss below, this leads to Giroux’s version of critical thinking.
Related to the ideas of Giroux are those of Bruckman and Forte (2007). They discuss in their use of wikis how citation plays a critical role in the social construction of knowledge. The students are attempting to come up with their view of history. This view is built upon their classmates’ work in the wiki and presentations. The concern of validity also brings into question the ideas of citation. Without knowing where the information came from, the students question the knowledge which they are attempting to construct.

**Editing skills.** Some students felt that the wiki afforded them the chance to improve on their own editing or English skills. Cameron found fine-tuning his editing skills was a side benefit of this project (FA274-5). This led him to recommend in future classes that the two required weekly edits should be broken down into one grammatical and one historical (FA934). Echoing comments of Cameron, Kurt said, “It also made me look more deeply into spelling and grammar then [sic] I ever have before” (FA381-82). Moira commented on this with a look towards professionalism:

> I did a lot of editing because a lot of students didn’t want to present it in a way like a textbook, and I felt that they should probably not use personal things in there, a lot of people said my people were persecuted or my experience at this place, it just didn’t seem like it belonged there. (MT177-79)

Giroux (1978) discusses how writing is more than a subject. It is a process which can teach students a subject by allowing them to assume the same role as a textbook author or classroom instructor. The writing itself is a tool which allows the students to think more critically. This process of editing, then, is part of the writing and thus part of the critical thinking process. More focus could be placed on the editorial process in future iterations of this project.

**Research skills.** Many students found the wiki required them to focus on their research skills. Francis found the wiki “extremely helpful” as it “forced [him] to do extensive research and learn the material on [his] own” (FA119-20). As an engineering student at the local
university, it reminded him of his coursework there. In engineering the professor “teaches the
general theory” and the students have to “figure out all the applications” (FA121-2). With the
wiki, we “get a general overview of the topic” in class and are then “forced to go in depth and
find out all the details” to determine “why history happened the way it did” (FA122-3). It was
“useful” and “familiar” for him (FA124). Francis felt that research guidelines would be helpful
for the wiki, to introduce beginners to the idea of research (FA819).

Moira “understood why it was a cool educational tool.” It allows one to “learn how to
properly document things” and the process of researching (FA607-8). She added:

The fact I had to take my education more into my own hands rather than having someone
instruct it to me, I thought that was a good thing, it makes you appreciate what you
learned a little more and plus it makes you, for future classes, makes you question more
things so you want to learn more about the subject at hand you want to look at the little
details that make up the big picture, so yeah. (MT373-6)

Cameron liked that he could “read what others wrote” and then had to “find something
else out in history that the others did not add” (FA272-3). By doing the weekly edits his
“understanding of history was greatly increased” (FA932). Katherine had similar comments,
since “not all of the history was included … it was like … a forceful manner of teaching us every
week” (FA234-5). Scott thought it was a “good tool for this class” and it “helped [him] with
[his] research skills” (FA687). Madeline liked “the whole idea of the wiki” (FA317-8) and it
“helped [her] learn history” (FA315). She was able to “add things [students] thought were
interesting,” and it “made [them] do [their] own research” (FA318-9).

Warren also valued the wiki more than the textbooks: “We were creating our own
[textbook] as students on the wiki” (FA370-71). Doing his chapter allowed him to “research and
develop [his] own look and perspective on a certain time period” (FA992-3). Kurt found the
wiki to be a “good learning tool to help [him] look into each chapter more” (FA378). “Trying to
add more information to a chapter forced [him] to look into that time period more” (FA378-9). As he did this, he “would read about new material” (FA379-80). The wiki edits “helped [him] to read into history more because it forced [him] to find new information” (FA380-1).

Henry felt: “The wiki was a pain, like it was for most people, I had to do extra work that I did not want to do at all, but I learned much from it” (FA178-9). “Just physically having to look things up and read through things helped” (FA179-80). In fact, “I would go as far as saying that I have learned the most in this class than any other class, in general, that I have taken” (FA176-7).

James commented on the research he had to do for the wiki edits:

I’ve always hated doing research but I think I’ve never really had to read, like read, for research as much. Like the age I’ve grown up in … reading through several different books and then picking out information. It’s not something new to me, but I think it’s something that students from our time period aren’t forced to do very often and that’s a good thing to do. So it’s not that I enjoyed when I was doing it, but I think it sticks with me more after the fact. (JT69-74)

Logan also touched on the research skills she learned from the wiki and classroom presentation:

I learned how to do research. As weird as it sounds, I kind of always used to just BS my way through research papers, but this time I actually took my time and got some books from the library and did the research. This is obviously an important skill for classes and all kinds of other things in the future. (FA483-6)

As above with the editing skills, the other part of the writing is the research skills. Giroux (1978) touches on how important it is to see the relationship between facts and values, how they are selected, arranged, sequenced, and related to values. The students, through their own research, through their writing and editing, are experiencing this and in the process becoming more critical thinkers.
Openness effect. Bruckman (2008) discusses how the public availability of the wiki makes people care more about their work. Her study specifically looks at those people who edited Wikipedia sites. Unlike what she found, the openness or ability of the public to view the wiki had little effect on people’s work in this case. Emma said. “No, I don’t care” (ET433). However, that doesn’t mean that the students didn’t care about their overall work. James echoed these comments:

That didn’t really affect my postings because I was trying to only put very factual kinda textbook ideas into the wiki so I wasn’t putting anything controversial or I wasn’t trying to put anything like belief or opinion as much, so I didn’t really worry about other people reading what I put because there was just information that I was trying to record. (JT188-93)

When asked why he didn’t include his opinion:

I guess I didn’t feel that was the purpose of it for us it seemed like one of the things we were supposed to do was look for opinion and bias and call people out on it if it was untrue and so I tried to stay away from that in my postings it seemed like I should put more factual stuff. (JT 193-6)

Moira, leaning more towards Bruckman’s findings, added:

For me it astounded me that other people didn’t care to use correct grammar or phrase it in a way that seemed more professional. So I tried to think about it, this is technically a textbook I want to present my information how it should be presented in a textbook. That way people in general can understand it better, it’ll settle with them better. Whereas the not so formal posts sometimes confused me, or I got so wrapped up in the fact that it was three paragraphs long and one big run on sentence. It really took it away from me, so I imagine anyone reading it on the internet would have been like, this is not credible, I’m not going to want to read this. So if you’re not going to take the time to put it in a more structured format people are just not going to trust it at all. (MT 291-8)

So the students did not, for the most part, care that the wiki was public. Forte and Bruckman (2006, 2007) have had similar findings in secondary and post-secondary settings, as students believe that their content is not necessarily worthwhile to the wider public. Yet they also note that the students do learn from the interaction they have with their peers. So while secondary or post-secondary students may not feel their contributions are as valuable for the
overall public, as do those who publically edit Wikipedia, there is still personal learning occurring. I would add, looking towards the classroom presentations, that the students had the learning experiences from creating their content on the wiki, and cared about the perceptions of their peers as they presented the material.

**Difference in preparing for the wiki versus the presentation.** Several interviewees commented that they had to think about creating content for the wiki differently than they did for the presentation. Emma said:

I’m pretty sure that the way I presented it in class was different than how I put it in the wiki, I think I put together two different, if I remember right, two different ways of presenting the information…. It was two different presentations I put together cause you can’t do the presentation in a wiki format and you can’t do the wiki in a presentation format. (ET642-9)

Emma put a lot of thought into what she added to the wiki. As quoted above, she thought about how her writing would be received, and how her presentations would be received. It was important to know her audience (ET241-5). Roberto also thought about his audience while doing his edits. He tried to think about stereotypes people might have and how to correct them. “I made sure that I knew the things I think people would think they have ideas about” (RT535).

Moira and Roberto presented together, twice. Moira felt:

A lot of the information that Roberto posted about the Spanish succession, it was really confusing to talk about in class, but when you put it down in actual writing, it’s easier to follow and I thought that was interesting. I didn’t really know very much about Spanish succession at all so I thought it was interesting. (MT307-11)

It is important to consider how the students thought about audience. As mentioned above, Giroux touches on the importance of the student being in the role of author and the link towards critical thinking. I would add that requiring the student to teach the material equally requires them to think critically. They are thinking about the relationships of the material, the audience, and how best to convey the information. Giroux was working with students and
discussing the critical thinking of students who wrote. The students in this case are writing, but they are also thinking about video, pictures, and primary sources. They are then doing this in a semi-textual wiki format, and also in an oral format supported by a separate multi-literate presentation.

**Experience history.** Many students commented on how using the wiki was different from normal history classes and their past experiences. Jean enjoyed the wiki “because it was a different [from] the traditional learning style” (FA407-8). Christopher also compared learning history with the wiki to his past history experiences. Past history classes required him to “memorize a list of dates, spit them out on a test, and they were forgotten as soon as he walked out the door” (FA16-8). But he enjoyed the wiki (FA16). “It was easy to get on … [and] it wasn’t hard to navigate or use” (FA12). He felt that it allowed him to learn a lot more than using a textbook. He was able “to learn a lot about things in history without forcing [him] into a specific, main stream, presentation of history” (FA14-5). He said, “On the wiki I had a different attitude to studying history. I would find things that I WANTED [emphasis his] to learn more about and then read a ton about it” (FA19-20). “[The wiki] would cause me to keep reading. I would read several pages on a subject in order to get a full perspective of a topic before I posted a short paragraph in the wiki” (FA21-22). He discussed an example which gave him a greater, permanent understanding of the Spanish Armada. His reading led from a Spanish galleon, to Spanish history, to Franco-Spanish alliances, to war with England. While all of this information did not always make it into the wiki, it personally gave him a greater understanding of history (FA23-25).

Christopher is discussing ideas which relate to critical thinking and lean towards social democratic education. The move is away from the conservative ideas of memorizing events and
people. The information focused on what interested him, and in his search he jumped from one topic to the next, gaining a greater sense of what happened and of the bigger picture. Logan also commented:

Coming into this class, I think each person had a different outlook on what and how we were going to be learning. I personally was expecting an environment like my old history classes; you read the chapter, the instructor goes over the details he/she finds important in class, then you have a few quizzes, then a test. Was I ever wrong. Sure, we have tests, but that's about the only similarity. From the wikipedia and the students teaching to the video game project, this class was unlike any I've had before. (LFP p1)

Roberto also felt that the wiki was a change from previous history coursework:

That just verbalizing it and putting it into words, writing it down was something I never had to do. But I could talk all day about it, but talking’s one thing, I enjoy doing that. But I have to write something out, and verbally form it into ideas that make sense, and are prepared and get a grade for it. (RT49-51)

Emma commented on how the class as a whole was new for her:

I’ve been a legal secretary all my working life. I’m used to having the boss tell me, here’s what I need, here’s how it needs to look, do it, and I’m good with that. Set me loose on a 50 page brief, I’m good, I’ll put that thing together, it’ll be beautiful, I didn’t write any of it, but I can assemble it so that its gorgeous, so this is a whole new way of thinking.... I have to retrain my way of thinking, it’s not just about getting the information and making it pretty. It’s actually conjuring up the information as well AND also making it pretty two basically different things I had to do with the same information. (ET664-72)

As mentioned above with researching and editing, they are having to think about how the material goes together, how it makes sense, getting the material and making it look good. In the merging of these two things, they are being forced to become critical thinkers.

Multiple views and freedom. Students liked the idea that their point of view and reading of history could make it into the wiki. Logan believed the wiki was a valuable “combination of the things that everyone in the class thought was important” (FA59-60). These varied positions gave a “rounded view of the time period” (FA61). And while it was a “pain in the butt” and she “hate[d] to admit it,” it “forced you to pay attention to what was going on in class,” which made
it a “good teaching tool” (FA61-2). She did feel that some pages were “jumbled up information without any sense of order,” which could cause confusion (FA800).

“The wiki gave [Jean] the opportunity to add information in the book that [she] thought was important” (FA 408-9, FA1018-9). And compared to the other ways of learning this semester, she “liked the wiki the most even though [she’s] not that good with technology” (FA1017-8). James felt the wiki was valuable:

Adding to the wiki I experienced more freedom I guess with what I wanted, what I thought would be interesting or important to learn. I think that with that part of the class I was able to explore more of what I thought would be important. (JT246-9)

He also thought:

[It] was a great idea, both for you and for us as the students. I liked breaking up history into certain time periods, rather than how our text presented the information. I also loved how the wiki is edited by us and that it will evolve throughout your future classes, hopefully into a fairly comprehensive source of information. Also, it will be based around what students find important and interesting, not the drooling guy across town. I think it helped me a lot to do a presentation. I really learned what was going on in that time period. (FA144-9)

However, freedom has a down side. Moira noted, “Since I procrastinated until the last couple weeks I was more concerned with putting my own information on there rather than going back and fixing” (MT176-7). “I should have, if I had more time and understood the wiki a little bit better earlier on and if I kept up with it earlier on I would have probably gone back and corrected it” (MT181-3). As mentioned above with Logan, the freedom in the class could also lead to students forgetting or procrastinating on some of their work.

Wiki within a continuum. James’ comment about evolution was also echoed by several students. Scott found the wiki was a “great opportunity … to put [his] own information into something that other students have been editing for years” (FA297-8). Madeline echoed Scott’s comments, liking “how everything in the wiki was accumulative, so [the students] were able to
see things that other students prior to our class added into the online text book” (FA319-20). It also allowed Warren to learn “what other people decided to research and discuss” (FA993). “It did a lot to further me as a student” (FA993-4). Nathan did like it more than a normal textbook because it was, “convenient, no matter where you are you can log on and it is there” (FA413). He thought it was a great idea, “being responsible for our own chapter” (FA1021-2). Moira added to these comments, echoing some of Logan’s above:

I thought that using the wiki, you had to be very prepared for the things that happened in class. I thought that in the right circumstances it could be used very efficiently, it could be something that could really enhance one’s learning experience. And I thought it was a very innovative way to try teaching a class especially because you were building your own textbook. This is something that every kid wishes for, because as they read their dry dusty books, like it happens in your mind, I could explain this in a much better way so doing that, that was fun I really enjoyed that. (MT46-51)

It is interesting to consider what value students found adding to the work of past students. The students were forming part of a community, part of an interactive community familiar to their generation and the online social movements of the last decade. However, it will be interesting to consider for the future whether this continuum helps the students move closer to ideas of critical thinking earlier. By beginning where past classes left off, they may be more open to ideas of socially democratic education, open source ideas and critical thinking.

**Embodiment of learning.** A topic brought up by Christopher was that he learned a lot about history but didn’t share what he learned on the wiki or in teaching (FA461-2). In the interviews I asked if this happened to the other students. Emma replied:

No I threw in everything I had, I really did because if something is going to stick in my mind that much I’m going to put it out there. As a matter of fact I would change the direction I’m going because I find something so fascinating that it warrants changing the direction sort of like writing a paper. My thesis statement is never solid until that paper’s over cause I’ll find something along the way. Ohhhhh I didn’t know that, really, that just disproves my entire thesis, let’s see do I stay the course or do I find a way to work this. So I would say that no I’m the opposite of the statement you just read I put in everything that I learned. (ET 140- 152)
Moira agreed with Emma, as did Roberto, saying that the wiki, papers, and teaching were a good embodiment of everything he learned:

For the most part, yeah.... I chose to do the two things I learned: which were necessarily relevant and there were things … that weren’t necessarily relevant, but interesting and I put ‘em in too. That kind of made a difference sometimes so as far as putting stuff, as far as leaving stuff out I didn’t do that cause I feel like it’s not really fair cause it’s not showing everything I learned frankly. (RT518-25)

James, too, shared this sentiment:

I don’t feel like I had that experience, I think I tried to fit in everything I had and learned into my teaching at least. I might have learned like stuff that I learned from other people teaching or from you talking about stuff, wasn’t necessarily put into the work I did with the wiki edits. Whether it was just I was too lazy to put it in or it just wasn’t something that I decided to put in. I guess just overall there were things I learned that people wouldn’t be able to see that I learned but I don’t think I experienced that as much as whoever said that. (JT255-262)

Wiki and class interaction. Several students noted in the interviews that they did not feel that there was interaction on the wiki. Emma bluntly stated, ‘I didn’t feel like people were really interacting with the wiki at all” (KT735). James said:

[I] pretty much … [did my] work on the wiki and that was really it. I read what other people had to say but I don’t think I really interacted with anyone else on the wiki like I didn’t feel like I was communicating with anybody else through the wiki. (JT319-322)

Roberto and I had discussed this problem after class on February 24, but he elaborated more in the interview, offering an explanation for this lack of interaction:

You’re always going to find that people want to talk to people, and see their emotions, and the way they feel about it firsthand, not necessarily over a computer. You would be surprised by how people dislike Facebook cause they don’t like Facebook disagreements. It’s a very looked down upon thing in the Y generation. It happens a lot but it’s a very tacky thing and you’d be surprised, some of the most tacky people will tell you that’s a tacky thing. (RT664-668)

This is a recurring theme related to the initial intents of the study. Bruckman’s work with editors of Wikipedia showed that they greatly cared about the content they posted and the interactions.
This did not occur in the classroom setting. As will be seen below, the students cared about their interactions and work in the classroom, but less so on the wiki.

However, there were times when content discussed in class made it into the wiki. Emma gave an example of being intrigued by something discussed in class. We discussed how African slaves in Europe in the 1400’s were initially a prized possession and symbol of status, sometimes even making it into now-famous artwork. She recounted, “Like the artwork you talked about, people would put the bling in their artwork so everyone knew they were wealthy” (ET52-3). We discussed that topic in class on March 30. Emma then apparently looked for artwork: “I found that fascinating and yet I couldn’t find the artwork and I searched a lot and got disgusted” (ET55). On April 2, she saw me in the hall and we discussed how she was having troubles finding a piece of art. I then emailed her a link on April 4, telling her about the Medici chapel fresco.

You helped me out and all that, I still wish I had gone in and covered more, I didn’t. I put a little bit in the mouseover what the picture was but I was fascinated with that concept of putting bling in the picture. (ET56-7)

The artwork made it into the wiki on April 11.

This happened several times, as one student discussed the inquisition on April 5, and Emma added content to the wiki on April 11 about the inquisition. Similarly, Christopher was discussing the French Revolution and the creation of the Guillotine on April 27. Remy asked how to spell Dr. Guillotine, and was frantically scribbling away. His edit on Dr. Guillotine and his device was in the wiki the next day. Moira finally wrapped up the interrelation between classroom interaction and the wiki: “I thought that using the wiki, you had to be very prepared for the things that happened in class” (MT46-7).
Classroom Experience

As mentioned above, there is a correlation between the experience on the wiki and the experience in the classroom. This is due to the relation between the students having to teach a chapter in the class and add that information to the wiki. This section focuses on the experiences the students had while presenting in the classroom. The wikis are related to the presentations. Both of these are related to ideas of critical thinking and social inequities. The theme of critical thinking is discussed here, and social inequities are discussed further in chapter five.

On the first day of class as we all sat, I had the students introduce themselves, telling everyone their name, their major, and something interesting about themselves. I then went over the syllabus. I explained they should be thinking about concerns they have in the world, for their group projects. They also needed to sign up for their wiki chapter and gain access to the wiki. They needed to begin thinking about what they wanted to do for their final project and sign up for it. On the second day of class I showed a video from Dunn (n.d.) looking at global, big history, as a segue into talking about biases and how we look at history. This discussion focused on how history, or what we think history is, can differ when looking at a big picture of thirteen billion years. When geological, chemical, and biological processes account for more time than human activities, historical periods can appear unimportant. I also discussed a drawing about how the students would learn chronological, in-depth, and thematic history. The chronological history was a vertical line, the in-depth knowledge was a horizontal line, and the thematic history was a diagonal line.

During the next few days, I covered the background history for the years before the course content. For the 101 class that included Egypt and Babylon, and for the 104 class that included African, Native American, and European history until about 1350 AD. The Friday of
the first week was devoted to listing the concerns people had and coming up with group topics. In 101, the students came up with groups looking at the spread of disease, religion, and starvation. Later, due to student drops, the starvation group merged with the other two. In 104, the students decided upon education and war. After the groups were setup I allowed them to discuss their topics and how they would proceed, telling them to have an overall question they wanted to answer by the end of the next week. In the second week in 104, I continued covering background history, and in 101 students began teaching. In 104 it was several weeks before students began to teach, since no one had signed up for the earlier chapters.

**Presentation preparation.** Most people felt that preparing for the presentation was very worthwhile. Christopher wrote, “As I prepared for my presentation and for putting things into the wiki, I learned a lot about the parts of history that I didn’t understand” (FA460-1). He went on to say:

> I didn’t necessarily share the things that I learned in class or on the wiki but I was prepared to answer almost any question that was likely to be asked by the class. There is still more to learn and dive deeper into, but as for the basics of the French Revolution, I have them down enough to teach others about it. (FA 461-4)

Christopher was the only one to say something about learning and not sharing the information. Because of his response, this was used as an interview prompt. However, none of those interviewed had an experience like that, and they seemed to feel it would not have been fair to their classmates.

Cameron stated, “The Presentation worked the best for me in terms of learning. It forced me to specialize in a certain time frame so that I could understand fully what was going on at that time” (FA936-7). This relates to my original intent of the in depth period knowledge. James echoed these comments: “I think it helped me a lot to do a presentation. I really learned what was going on in that time period” (FA148-9). He went on:
I think that doing a presentation was a very effective way to learn. This is because I was accountable for teaching a whole time period to the class. Other than it being a large portion of my grade, it affected how the rest of the class learned. This accountability made me really focus and get my work done. (FA837-40)

Other than the accountability, James felt the preparation was educational:

I definitely learned preparing just from reading, reading multiple sources you get a lot of repetition so that gets ingrained in what you’re thinking about the time period you hear it multiple times and for me that shows, I start to remember stuff, it’s easier, so that helped me learn just reading different sources about it and typing things out into a PowerPoint. Again repeating the information that I thought was important and picking out, cause I’m sure that you could teach a whole semester on really any one period to get in depth so having to pick and choose what I thought would be important for the class and trying to think what would be most important to teach definitely helped me learn about what I thought about the time period as I was teaching. (FA35-43)

James also felt invested in the material he was preparing:

It wasn’t simply for a grade, I think especially with the teaching, I think that was the one thing I put the most effort into learning. Like once I started learning about it I wanted to know what was going on or what had gone on in the past. And I wanted to know why certain things happened so it was more of a desire to figure things out or to learn certain things rather than to try to get a good grade on it. Because like when I had to teach I had to be able to explain it to other people I felt obligated to explain it to myself first and I wanted to be able to explain what went on before I got up in front of other people and tried to say it. (JT 205-11)

This learning was centered on the chapter preparation, as James explained:

With teaching I experienced more understanding of the time period than with any other of the time periods we learned about in the sections. With teaching it I gained the best sense of what’s going on than when I’d listen to other people teach. (FA249-51)

Originally, I envisioned that the ideas of constructionist learning would apply to the wiki use. However, I believe comments like James’ illustrate how there was concern and care for the presentations. Learning occurred as the students were preparing for and presenting their material in person, to the class.

Moira and Roberto both presented twice, so they had a sense for how they prepared the first time versus the second time. Moira said:
The first time I did it I didn’t know what to do. I just looked up a bunch of information regarding that time frame that I had and it wasn’t nearly as structured as the second time that I did it….When I looked through it I was looking through the information and I thought well this is interesting, but just reading it is different than presenting it because when you present it you have to present it in a way that other people can take the information and absorb it better, but this was, I thought that it really wasn’t important just like a lot of the minute details that were supporting a bigger event and it was just like one of those smaller things so I just felt that I should have just stuck with bigger event details other than just the small. (MT 12-25)

When she taught the second time, however, she had a different experience:

And the second time when I actually found specific things and I focused on a few select things it worked out better, but of a lot of the people didn’t do that so on the whole I thought having the students lecture was a good idea but it could give them specific information a specific topic then they probably would have done better. (MT 14-7)

Roberto also commented on his work with Moira on the presentation:

Well on the first time I was a little nervous about it, like it wasn’t so much the learning as how to present the material to become comfortable with the material and actually understand it. It was more of a get it done and out of the way but not necessarily, learn from it. The second go round I felt that I actually learned, learned from it and got a better understanding and could probably spit most of it back to you right now if I had to, if I had to. (RT136-40)

When asked how she and Roberto divided the work, Moira replied:

We were like okay you take this and I’ll take this and that way everything will be okay. Then it WASN’T [emphasis hers] okay. And then the second time we did it we actually discussed more about what we were going to cover. And then we gave each other feedback and we actually worked a lot better the second time around. So whereas before it was just like okay were going to do this, so yeah. (MT39-42)

Moira put more work into the teaching, as she wrote:

Teaching the chapter was also a really cool learning experience for me because I had to put information together in a way that everyone can understand. The reason why they were most effective for me was that they required the most work. (FA905-7)

She elaborated on this in the interview:

The fact I had to take my education more into my own hands rather than having someone instruct it to me I thought that was a good thing. It makes you appreciate what you learned a little more and plus it makes you, for future classes, makes you question more

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things so you want to learn more about the subject at hand. You want to look at the little
details that make up the big picture, so yeah. (MT373-6)

Roberto also commented on this aspect of the work required:

When things come easy to you sometimes you have to struggle to appreciate how easy it
was. History was always a breeze but until this course I have never had to ask for so
much help and feedback from a teacher.... I won’t take that for granted again. I also felt
that the teaching aspects were also a wonderful learning experience because I have never
had to put that much effort and care into a mock teaching assignment in front of my peers
and honestly situations like that make me leery cause I’m never sure how I will be
received. Now I know and am pleasantly reassured. (FA591-6)

Roberto discussed how much work he put into the research:

It was a lot more research [the second time] probably, like I spent, instead of spending
like a couple days I spent like a good week or two. I even got books and like read
through the books to make sure I had a good understanding beyond. I actually picked up
a book for the second go round I didn’t for the first, I’ll be honest. (RT143-6)

Related to some of Roberto’s comments on the wiki edits, he tried to think about what
preconceived notions the class might have, find information to counter them, and attempt to
change their views. Some of his wiki edits and most of his presentations did this (RT537-9).

As several of the students commented, as they prepared for the presentations they
actually researched the material. They checked out books, and they tried to understand what was
going on. This process led them to greater inquiry and discovery. They used different sources
and began to gain a greater sense for what actually happened. These are all leading towards a
more critical understanding of history.

Presenting. Finding the information was only part of the overall process. It needed to be
in a prepared format for presentation to the class, in a format that could be added to the wiki, and
also actually presented. Even those who were prepared felt nervous or concerned. Kurt
recounted, “The chapter worked well for me. I started off not realizing how much information it
took to cover a 50 min lesson, but I think it made me more comfortable with the class. It worked
well for me” (FA1006-7). He was referring to the fact that when he presented in late February he felt prepared with a comprehensive PowerPoint. When he actually presented he came up short that day, but was prepared the next days. Emma felt nervous:

I was a little nervous basically, because just getting up in front of people is hard if you’re not used to doing that and I’m not really necessarily used to doing that. But I’m old enough and I don’t care, they’re not my peers, they’re whipper snappers. For me it felt a bit natural, which is kinda scary cause I don’t really want to be a teacher, but it felt a bit natural to stand up there and kinda talk about what I want to say. Feel, yeah, that’s what, a little nervous over just the prospect of standing up, but then I felt semi-confident in the information I was presenting. I really enjoyed talking about diseases and bringing the M&Ms and tying all that in and how disease spreads, and look at how the M&Ms have spread through the room. (ET247-54)

Her reference to M&Ms was in her presentation on the spread of disease. She first handed around M&Ms, and then discussed how the germs were like the M&Ms and everyone now had them. James discussed his feelings standing in front of the class, and his feelings of obligation towards the class:

Standing up in front of the class in general, most people don’t enjoy public speaking but, just having to teach the class and not look like an idiot in front of everybody is one motivation. Also since we were taking the quizzes based on stuff we learned in class which was what we were teaching knowing that people had to take tests or quizzes off information that I told them, I didn’t want to screw everyone else over with having a bad presentation because I was responsible for a certain period of time. So if I messed up they really wouldn’t have gotten anything from that period of time. So for their benefit for my benefit, cause it’s easier to get through taking a test with not knowing so much about it and just kinda filling in the blanks was easy enough, but having to standup and teach about a certain time period takes a lot more detail. (JT 19-27)

Several students commented on spontaneous things that occurred to them while teaching, and the whole process of teaching. As Emma discussed:

I was forced to present the information, so there again running it through twenty-three filters or however many people are sitting in the room. How is Cain going to take this information as opposed to how would I take this information. I remember making a reference, I don’t even remember what the hell I was talking about. And I threw it in, it wasn’t something I was necessarily planning on saying but something about, it must have been during the dark period in Greece where everybody dispersed. And everybody thought it was horrible and it was this terrible thing and then they went to new areas and
settled and it was great cause they got thrown into different ways of living that they weren’t used to. And they had to use their own discernment to do that and it ended up being perfect. And I said something about it’s like having a girlfriend that you think is sweet and she’s perfect and great, and she dumps your ass, and you’re like oh my god my life is over, and then you go on and you meet this other girl who’s awesome, and you’re like, oh wow I totally needed this to happen so I could meet her. And Cain was like yeah yeah that’s great, totally, yeah. See he got that, everybody else was probably going jeez dude could you just move on to the next topic. (ET315-27)

James added that some of this spontaneity was due to the class itself:

I think either the guys in the back had computers and they would be able to look up stuff or I would look up stuff on the computer and then information that I wasn’t planning on teaching, but we were able to talk about or you had insight on something so I was able to learn more about what I was even saying while we presented in class and talked about it and discussed it. (JT 43-47)

James discussed that he felt more or less confident certain days:

Different times depending upon how prepared I was depending upon which topic or which day I either felt confident about what I was teaching or nervous cause I wasn’t really sure what I was teaching. I felt more comfortable than I do with most public speaking cause it was more of a laid back and with it being a smaller class I didn’t feel as awkward as like downtime if I was looking something up or knowing that you were there to fill in the blanks was definitely a relief it didn’t seem as formal so it wasn’t as daunting as it could have been with a lot of class presentations the teacher will sit in the audience like they’re a student and it’s just all on you, but I think I liked how you did it more. (JT 57-63)

He also touched on my additions to the teaching: “I am also glad that you weren't opposed to putting your word in and filling in information that we didn't cover. I wouldn't have liked the presentations otherwise” (FA840-1).

Moira discussed several things she learned through the actual presentation process:

In the preparation I learned a lot about the Oregon Trail, the people involved with all the things I discussed, but while teaching it I learned a lot more about people’s reactions as a teacher you should handle certain situations in certain ways otherwise you’re going to let the class escape from you and I learned from what Roberto said as we were teaching because we really didn’t talk about the smaller things that go into it like when he talked about Mormonism, I just thought it was funny and I learned a lot about that, too. I thought that it was an excellent way to learn how to be in front of a crowd. I thought it was better than my speech class which I thought was a stupid class. I didn’t learn anything about public speaking, but this because you’re more interactive with the
students that you’re teaching, you’re having discussions, you’re asking questions, they’re responding, you learn way more about being in front of a crowd and presenting. And it was a lot of fun because I got to experience that and learn how to handle people in general, that was a hard class, a hard class to be in front of sometimes. (MT93-104)

Moira compared her two times teaching:

The first time I felt like crap, it wasn’t nearly as good as the second time, the second time I really enjoyed it. I thought it was really fun, mostly because I want to be a history teacher. It’s just another thing to support that I want to be a history teacher. It shows me that I might actually be pretty good at it, maybe someday in the future, after a little bit of training. And again being in front of people and interacting is something that you can all kind of experience together as a group when you discuss information that you like to learn about. It makes it more entertaining I suppose, but yeah I enjoyed it very much I thought it was a good experience the best project out of all the things that we’ve done in that class and I thought it was the most useful as long as you’re prepared. (MT120-7)

Roberto added his views on these two times teaching, “The first time you saw me spewing the facts, the second time you saw me teaching what I understood, it was the [extra research] and the extra effort behind the research. It made it more of a learning experience than the first one” (RT155-8).

Roberto also touched on his experience learning while teaching:

Because I am like a firm believer that teachers often learn best when teaching, not necessarily learning a lot. So like if you look at a book until you verbalize it and think about it, you don’t really learn anything about it. But when you’re teaching someone else, I mean and explain it to them in a way they understand, makes you understand sometimes too. Like I’ve been told stuff about Mormons, and lived among Mormons for like three or four years of my life and never learned a thing. And they used to come up and talk to us all the time about it, but until I had to talk about it, and delve into it, and the things behind it did I learn something about it. (RT125-31)

Roberto felt invested in his presentations:

I wouldn’t have put time and effort into something that I didn’t want to get invested into. So I don’t really do something just cause it’s been told to me, so if I don’t want to do it, I’m not going to do it unless I’m going to put some effort behind it. So that’s the way I feel at least, but yeah I was invested in the information because once I understood it, I cared and I saw parallels between history now and history then…. I was invested into it, I cared about what I had to say and I cared about what I was doing. And I cared (about?) the information that I learned from it, so yeah I was invested emotionally, cause I was
upset about it, I was invested intellectually cause I learned more and I was invested physically because I taught it, so yeah. (RT403-15)

Through their teaching, the students were beginning to see how the information they covered was related to values and world views, and in the process they were also becoming more critical thinkers.

**Content format.** The presentations themselves took on various forms. In the 101 class, Emma was the first person to present. She began the presentations with a prepared PowerPoint. This included text and pictures. The next 101 presenter was Logan, who had a PowerPoint. However, she added videos from YouTube to her presentation. When Logan was done, Emma added a bit on the Seven Wonders, and illustrated it with an online computer simulation of what the actual wonders may have looked like. James then presented using a mixture of PowerPoint with pictures and video, and Wikipedia articles linking to some of the topics he was discussing on the Roman Empire. The next student built on these first presentations, basing his presentations off of Wikipedia pages. He used them as an outline and included videos. The remaining presentations throughout the semester were a mixture of these first few.

Emma loved that some of the students added videos of Monty Python or Eddie Izzard to their presentations for levity and as a point of discussion (ET289-99). James felt, “We had an array of different multimedia and just readings like books or online sites and video related or not to learn about the different countries” (JT 151-3). Adding the final assignments to that, “We had the videogames and making stuff, I think there was a wide array of different ways for people to learn the way they feel most comfortable learning” (JT 153-4).

The 104 class began more traditionally. The first student who presented used the book only. The next two students were Moira and Roberto, who used hand-written notes. The next student was Kurt, who used a PowerPoint with only text. The next few presentations used a
mixture of notes and projected pictures, but then Moira and Roberto presented again using a PowerPoint. From that point, the remaining presentations were solely PowerPoint, with increasing numbers of pictures, and eventually in the last week Scott included a video. So in both classes, the presentations built off each other, but as students noted what worked and what they liked, they based their presentations on the pattern.

Validity. As with the wiki, students had concerns about validity as they watched presentations. Christopher wrote:

> These presentations often led me to have questions about things in history that either were only briefly covered or not explained very well. I would then get on Wikipedia and be reading about the lecture topics while the student was talking. My curiosity to figure things out helped me to fill in the gaps from the presentation. (FA27-30)

Francis had an experience like that of Christopher:

> Since I know this is just a student and not a well tuned professor, I have to be skeptical of some of the information I was being taught. If something did not sound correct I would either question or look it up myself to confirm the answer. The lectures were pretty standard but much more interesting than the professors here at the U of I. They were colorful and interesting compared to the usual monotone drone I hear from 60 year old men. (FA127-131)

Kurt felt that the video in the first week and the discussion on bias were important to how he now understood history:

> I expected to get a more in depth summary of American history. I did get what I expected but I think I got more then I really expected. I wasn’t expecting to question history like you talked about on one of the first days. It was eye opening when I realized that. (FA402-4)

> When no one signed up for a chapter, I would fill in the material chronologically. If people were sick, I would talk about something related to the time period which I did not think the students would discuss. Based on my teaching, Katherine said, “I really liked when you lectured because, I guess, it’s because I trust what you are saying, and that what you are lecturing
to us is useful and will be on the quiz's” (FA350-2). Emma echoed these comments of Katherine:

It was all of us that was standing up there teaching. You did, too, but it was very different because not only was I having to readjust and listen to another person and learn their style, but I didn’t know if they knew what they were doing or not. Cause they’re not a teacher and basically I don’t know where they got their information. (ET172-5)

Moira gave a specific example of her concern relating to Jean’s presentation on April 5 about the Alamo. Jean had printed about fifty pages of notes about her time period, and used these to present the information. When she discussed the Alamo, she gave a very one-sided version of the story. Moira focused on this coverage:

Specifically, Jean, when she was reading about the Alamo she got it from a Texas website. So of course it’s going to be, its going to be presented in a way that’s kind of romanticized and not really 100% historically accurate, and pretty much this is how I would go about with anything unless I could see their resources. I’m not going to really trust them exactly, what they say, because I need to know they got it at a website that had some sort of substance, rather than like an .edu site or an .org site, not a commercial site. I’m sure a lot of them got their information from, like, from vacation sites or something. So from the sound of it, it sounded accurate but I wouldn’t 100% trust what they said, so if they had shown a works cited with pages I probably would have. (MT 153-61)

This question of validity is very important for the wiki and presentations. The students had moved outside their frame of reference and began to question the legitimacy or validity of material which was presented. It is in this questioning that they were becoming critical thinkers, and their view on history was changing.

**Experience history.** As with the wiki, many students commented on how the assignments, presentations, and classroom experience were different from previous classes and life experiences. Christopher talked about what he learned and how it differed from his past experiences:

History can be interesting to learn about. - Well I love to learn about things but I have never had an interest in history because the subject matter never seemed to apply or be interesting to me. Because of this I never exerted myself in class but only did what I
needed to in order to pass. Since we were left on our own to decide what we wanted to learn about, I had a great time learning about the different things that were going on throughout history. How we have been influenced today by the history in the past - I learned this from a few of our topics. Many times it was just little things that showed how things could have been today if things had turned out differently in history. The civ presentations showed this a little bit. Also I saw this with my two main projects. (FA 432-440)

Logan also felt this class was a change, and one which she experienced as the class progressed:

At first, I lived and breathed the textbook. It was hard to get away from, since all of my other classes follow the textbook closely. However, as I got more comfortable in the class and with doing research outside of the textbook, I hardly used it at all. (FA73-5)

She continued touching on her expectations versus what occurred for her:

I expected to have to learn dates, and names, and battles, and to be tested on them every few weeks or so. This class was not at all like that, (not that I'm complaining). It was a lot more of a relaxed atmosphere, which allowed us to delve into the things that interested us most, although we did learn a lot of the traditionally important things as well. (FA91-4)

Logan was one of the only students who touched on the idea of my diagram from the first week, and how this was a different way of learning:

Like I mentioned before, it was very different to any class I'd taken before. Vance had explained to us at one point that, "we were going to become experts in certain areas, and learn a little about others too". This is definitely true because of the student teaching aspect. We became experts in the chapter that we had to teach, and perhaps the chapters around us, then we learned a little about the other chapters through listening to the other students teach and through wiki-edits. I liked this main concept, and I loved the environment. Vance was very easy going and he made it a laid back environment that made everyone feel comfortable, (maybe a little too much so, judging from some of the topics that have been brought up randomly). (LFP p2)

When I asked Moira about the diagram she somewhat remembered it, but then gave her views on it after the class:

I guess no other history class has ever broken it down that way before. It’s just like we’re going to learn, let’s sit down, take some notes. And putting it in that kind of sense is the topics. This is what we’re going to learn and going through the information you learn as you go along. They don’t explain it normally in that sense so I guess at the beginning of the class is was like, okay finally something a little bit new and different. Because I remember I think you were talking about, you were probably talking about how it wasn’t going to be your traditional class, that we were going to go into more of the overall
picture rather than certain people’s views. And I was like okay, cool, finally something new. That was my take on the beginning of the class and its definitely been a very different class than any other American history class I’ve taken in my whole entire life, so there’s that. (MT 257-65)

Cain compared this class to his past classes as well:

I wouldn't have wanted to learn history any other way honestly for the simple fact I prefer your method on how you presented history this semester than my past history teacher last year for this same class. The last teacher taught the "traditional" method of using the book and going chapter and chapter but I wasn't learning anything new. I felt it was rushed as he went through 20 chapters in the semester. Granted yes we did probably go through 20 chapters this year, I felt the way the information was presented to us this semester was a better way of us understanding past history. (FA206-11)

Katherine had low expectations of the class, based on her past:

I expected this class to be super boring. I hated history in elementary and high school, I always struggled with the classes. I never really had a teacher who knew as much as you either, or showed enthusiasm towards the subject. I definitely did not get boredom out of this class but I actually came out with information that I never thought I would be able to obtain. In all honesty I did not even want to take this class because I thought it was going to be so much of remembering dates and things that I never thought would be useful again in my life, but in the long run I got a sense of so much of American History. I got more out of this class then I ever expected, so all in all there was nothing more that I would like to have gotten out of this class & I thank you for that, because you changed my perception on history so much. (FA359-67)

Moira discussed how she had never liked American history since it was often romanticized.

However, the class changed her perspective, as well as covered a majority of new material she’d never know. When asked what percentage was new to her, she answered:

Maybe sixty-five percent, sixty maybe. There might have been stuff that I vaguely knew about, but the fine details that went into it I really didn’t have very much of a clue. Again American history was kinda like out of my head because I never really found interest in it. It was always the romanticized version and this time around there was lot of new people in it, a lot of new instances. What was his name, Nat Turner, I didn’t know about him and a bunch of new historical figures that I just didn’t know about at all because we focus more on Jefferson and Addams and other things the “more important” figures in history. Where, so yeah, I would guess maybe about sixty percent. (MT450-7)

Kurt also touched on new information that he’d never heard about before:
I learned that if the French hadn’t been fighting the British in Europe and in the Indies, that the colonies probably wouldn’t have had a chance at beating the British. This is important to me because it’s not information you ever hear about in the American history books. And it makes sense that we learn about WW2 so much. It was the first time we beat Europeans by ourselves. It’s interesting and important. (FA750-3)

Some of what Kurt is touching on is the discussion over the American Revolution and later wars in the United States. We discussed how the French were very important to an American win.

We also discussed how it wasn’t until the late nineteenth century that Americans were able to beat a European power, the Spanish, and the twentieth century before it was decisive. Moira also commented on her expectations:

I had expected this class to be like much of my other history classes that I have taken at Parkland--lots of lecture, hardly any discussion. Though I do like a good lecture (again, being totally genuine here, I LOVE taking notes), I was pleasantly surprised at how much discussion we actually did. I feel that when you get the chance to actively learn and participate in the lesson, you gain a lot more from the class. I loved teaching about the Oregon Trail; it was a fun experience for me, probably the best part about the semester. (FA249-54)

Roberto also commented on how this class was different:

A lot of it, like in past history classes, past classes in general, except for maybe English, most classes are dictation. Teacher dictates information to the students, students are supposed to take notes on it and process it on their own, without any more input past the dictation of the information. So there’s no talking about it or analyzing it or even joking about it even. Sometimes and its kind of necessary to keep things flowing and going that you need a little bit of, you need the serious and the jokes sometimes. That’s what a good teacher does try to incorporate both, so you know it’s different to be in a class where you know right off the jump you had the opportunity to be open and honest and talk about things without it getting overly heated. There were some points where it got to be a little too much or things were taken way out of proportion and there were also times when we just sat down and we got serious and could talk about things, kinda like a group. As close as possible with the group of people we were with, including myself, to be honest. (RT206-16)

Many of these comments are similar to reactions of people who read some of Howard Zinn’s work or James Loewen’s work. As students are exposed to different material than they’ve heard in the past, material that does not support the conservative tradition and is not
presented in a conservative manner, they begin to become excited about the material, and they like classes that never held interest before.

**Classroom interaction.** Classroom interaction was a key part to the students learning. It impacted how they presented, how they understood the presentation, how they viewed the validity of the presentations, and how they worked with their groups. Overall it was a very open class that allowed for discussion of almost every topic in history. Some of these topical discussions are elaborated on in chapter five.

The overall experiences of the students touched on how they encountered new opinions and ways of thinking about things. Often some of the most memorable discussion arose from tangents and student questions. While most people valued this, some did not. Christopher felt the atmosphere was actually uncomfortable:

> The language and atmosphere of the actual class time always seemed to be so course [sic] and crude. It was honestly one of my greatest fears for each day. I don’t have an innocent mind but there are some areas where certain topics should never be discussed. Classrooms and teaching situations should not involve detailed discussions of sexual intercourse or vulgar language. I hated how our tangents would take us into areas far from what was appropriate. (FA786-90)

James touched on this area, with a different focus from Christopher:

> I also learned from the tangents that we would go on during class. Usually it was Cain asking random stuff. But whether it was something ridiculous and sexual or not, it was interesting and something that we really would like to know. The stuff that pops into our heads, like that is the stuff that will stick with us easily. I think we pretty much covered all the ways of learning that I would enjoy or expect from a class. (FA165-9)

He reiterated this in the interview:

> There were a lot of laughs that I remember related and not related to history, I guess everything is related to history. I think we had a good atmosphere and a friendly atmosphere, whether it was Cain saying something incredibly off the wall or a lot of the funny moments stick out. (JT76-8)
When asked if there was a lot of interaction in the classroom, James responded, “Definitely, like we were a pretty open class, people felt comfortable asking questions and looking at different topics which interested us particularly I think we did pretty well with that” (JT322-4). He discussed what he experienced:

Participating in class I experienced different opinions and different viewpoints of what other people thought was important, or how they looked on certain things in history, or things they had questions about. I experienced more diverse mindset or like opinions about history. (JT251-4)

In Cain’s comments, he touched on how he acted: “Sometimes I went totally outside the box with some information that was given to us during class, is that not what philosophers do” (FA202-6)? In my notes I do have several examples of these Cain-related tangents. On March 29, while discussing the Hundred Year’s War and the fall of Constantinople, Cain asked a question about the origin of religion, specifically monotheistic religions. We took the opportunity to discuss the origins of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as break-off groups within each religion. I also talked about the uses of power and control within religion, and problems of acceptance of religion. The conversation may have been too cynical for some that were members of faith groups. On April 6, Cain also asked about gender stereotypes and perceptions of homosexuality. This tangent took us back to the ancient Greeks, and up past our course to the Civil Rights movements and Stonewall. On April 13, we talked about the Protestant Reformation and fringe groups such as the Anabaptists, who practiced “communal sharing.” We also discussed some other fringe religions during the English Civil War on April 19, when groups such as the Quakers, Diggers, Ranters, and Levellers were founded, some of whose beliefs were considered libertine or immoral at the time.

Emma felt that there was not as much interaction in this class as there was in a previous class she took with me, in which I only lectured. However, she felt that had more to do with that
class being two hours, twice a week, versus one hour, four times a week (ET736-9). Moira felt
the interaction in groups was valuable for her:

Everyone's opinions, whether stereotypical or not, were interesting because I'm pretty
liberal, and for the most part all the people I know are liberal, but being in a class where
there weren't such liberal people was refreshing. It reminded me on why I believe the
things I believe. (FA643-5)

In the interview she elaborated a bit more on her experience:

[In] class when we would break up and discuss in groups and or discuss as a whole group
we were able … by listening to what other people had to say, because a lot of people in
that class did not have the same political views or personal beliefs as I did. Hearing their
take on something and then kind of, and then politely inserting my belief on something,
kind of talking about why I believe my beliefs are not superior, but more in the right than
the other persons, and coming to a polite understanding. I guess it was never really
strained or I don’t know, I felt like it was a pretty good environment to express your
beliefs in by being able to discuss with everyone. On the whole we got to understand the
main subject because of knowing everyone else’s opinions and seeing how, cause when
you’re thinking about it in your own personal perspective it’s a lot harder to see it in
other people’s eyes. But in discussing you kind of get a better understanding of why I
guess people in past history did the things that they did to the people that they persecuted
or anything because of certain mentality it becomes a lot more understandable. (MT 187-
99)

Roberto described why he felt the classroom interaction was more valuable than the wiki:

People like the interaction, frankly. They like, I don’t care what anyone says that they
don’t like, interaction or lots of people and you like getting around them whether
negative or positive. You want someone to praise you and sometimes to not like what
you say otherwise we wouldn’t have so many varied opinions. Why everyone keeps their
opinions to themselves frankly, cause you’re never sure how someone will react to it. I
think that’s why it took me a long time to. It’ never going to happen, you’re always
going to find that people want to talk to people and see their emotions and the way they
feel about it firsthand, not necessarily over a computer. Which you would be surprised
by how people dislike Facebook cause they don’t like Facebook disagreements. It’s a
very looked down upon thing in the Y generation, it happens a lot but it’s a very tacky
thing and you’d be surprised some of the most tacky people will tell you that’s a tacky
thing…. People do prefer if you’re going to say something, say it to my face its kinda
how the class played out. It wasn’t necessarily on the wiki, but if you’re going to say
something say it to each other’s faces that’s what we chose to do. (RT659-74)

Roberto also discussed the difficulty of the class:
The class was hard, it was great, I enjoyed it, to be fair I appreciate it, and it … made me feel like it is possible to be open in a history class without compromising the validity of what I’m saying. So I appreciate that, so as much as I bitched and moaned and groaned about how to do work and the wiki. (RT 645-8)

He elaborated on how he talked about the class with his friends:

It’s the only class I’ve talked to other people about, usually because I was complaining about it, but every once and a while something interesting would happen I would say oh this and this and they’d say oh that’s interesting they might ask why but hey. (RT 688-90)

Roberto was particularly impressed with the openness of the classroom:

This particular class, it was more like you have an idea, you have an opinion express it and we’ll talk about it … expressing it for most classes is weird, only state your opinion or ideas but for this particular class, it was like that’s what I want you to do, say what you have to say, say what you feel, mean it, and understand it and I like that I want that for my class. (RT223-7)

This openness and freedom was something he envisioned using for his own future pedagogy:

I also learned that a little freedom in the class room isn't bad, I have always dreamed of having an open classroom where students can think and express how they feel without reprimand, now I know it got a little crazy, but I really appreciated that model as a future teacher. (FA596-9)

He felt that these ideas of openness would stick with him for quite some time:

All the ideas and expressing and openness and you know and the fun and the seriousness and the stories and the pictures and all those things the entire class pretty much sticks with me … all things together make it a memorable experience. (RT 239-42)

Roberto also touches on how my teaching or mentoring worked in this open environment:

You taught us lessons in a way, but we were kind of meant to find the forest in our own way…. It wasn’t like you were there hands on all the time like if we had a question and we needed the answer you were there and it was appreciated, but sometimes you were kinda like let us do it on our own like the whole teaching aspect … Both of which I appreciated for the most part. (RT456-65)

Roberto was in the 104 class, and he and Moira commented on the dynamic of the seating in the class:
The seating was set up like that, the guys were in the back, the girls were in front, I was somewhere in the middle because sometimes I thought what the guys said was funny and sometimes I agreed with the girls so that’s kinda how that was. Who usually sat on one side or who usually sat on that side it wasn’t necessarily something that you consciously did, it’s just the old term birds of a feather flock together, that’s the literal translation of it because we all shared the same skin color and we flocked in groups which is just how it always been. (RT544-9)

He also touched on the other students in the class:

[The] majority of the class fit into the stereotype of the oppressor, just being honest, but it was kinda difficult sometimes because you were never sure, well I was never sure, whether it would be perceived as me being the angry black guy or me being you know bitter, or me trying to make them understand. I guess you really can’t make someone understand. (RT180-3)

He continued discussing this idea of how he was perceived and the students in the back:

I was never quite sure how I was going to be perceived to be perfectly honest, and I still can’t say for sure how in the future I will know. But I can say that I tried my best to make them see like where someone was coming from. But whether it will be from the black perspective, or a religion they may not be familiar with or concrete enough usually. That was kinda always the issue right there, keep talking to that particular group. I don’t hang out with white guys like that on a regular basis to be perfectly honest, and to have to sit there and spend an hour or two, three or four hours a week just to talk to them kind of make it relatable, is difficult without compromising my own. (RT185-91)

**Classes views of presentations.** Above I’ve discussed how the students prepared for the presentation, what they experienced as they presented, and how they felt about the interaction and about validity. I would also like to give a feel for what the students experienced as the presentations occurred. As an overview, I did have to teach chapters that were not selected by students, and I also filled in when students were sick. At these times I attempted to talk about ideas I felt, from experience, students probably wouldn’t discuss. As students were presenting, though, I would use body language or comments to approve or add to some of what the students were saying. Sometimes I may have added another point of view, and sometimes I may have questioned them on their source, or why they thought something. I was attempting to show the
students my thought process. As the semester progressed, some of the students would also
question the presenters. I would continue to add some extra stories or elaborations.

Several of the students commented on finding the student presentations the least useful
part of the class. These students compared the student presentations to my discussions. Others
were critical, but less so, noting some presentations were worthwhile while others were not.
Some of these also compared the student presentations to my instruction. Still other students
spoke glowingly of the presentations overall, and found both them and my teaching valuable.

Christopher did not feel the student presentations were useful for him, but did offer some
tips for improvement:

The least effective part was probably the in class presentations by other students. The
thing that would help with this is just to require the students to submit outlines or power
points a week before they teach. I sometimes felt that the students were learning about
their chapter teaching section right as they were presenting. (FA781-4)

However, Christopher felt my elaborations were helpful and gave him a sense of security:

You would often fill in gaps in history that the student presenting left out. That was
always nice because I felt that even if the student presenting wasn’t doing a great job, that
you would fill in with some very interesting insights. You didn’t cause us to work
around your goals for teaching. Instead you would add in the important facts into the
tangents we were already talking about. It showed your good ability to teach to our
interests and not from a book. It also gave us confidence in what you were saying
because it showed your vast knowledge. In order to be able to teach like that you must
have a huge pool of information on the topic to pull from. (FA31-39)

Kurt commented on his mindset as students taught, compared to when I taught:

The student presentations I didn’t think helped me to learn all that much. I caught myself
daydreaming a lot. I don’t think I found the students as interesting when they talked about
history. I did learn a lot from your lectures though. I did find what you had to say about
history interesting. Maybe it’s because you are the teacher but I felt that you knew way
more about the subjects and were more credible. I also think you went into more detail
when you talked. I learned the most from your lectures I would say. (FA383-8)

However, Kurt felt the discussions sparked from student instruction was valuable:
[He learned] from other students questions and sometimes tangents. I liked hearing questions that I hadn’t thought of, being asked and answered. I think it was very easy for people to ask questions in this class and that encouraged them. I would say I found questions more interesting then my own research on my wiki chapter. (FA395-8)

Logan felt that some of the presentations were useful, but on the whole liked my lectures more:

I have mixed feelings about other student's presentations. I guess it has to do with the fact that some students put more work into it than others, and basically that some are more interesting to listen to. It was good that each of us had to research and do a chapter, but I liked it when you taught more. It was more interesting and I had more confidence in what you were saying. (FA64-7)

Logan also touched on the value she found when I taught the class:

Although few and far between, I really enjoyed the lectures. I love hearing about all of the little details that make people do the things they do, and you gave the people and countries personality so that I could understand better why they did the things they did. (FA69-71)

She lamented, “I would have liked to learn through you lecturing a bit more. It was just a lot more interesting when you taught than when others did” (FA88-9). Emma also was mixed on the presentations:

Those who knew what they were talking about and didn't just stand up there and read verbatim were ok, but several were just downright painful. And at times I was confused on the info they were presenting whether it was factual or not. I don't want to waste precious class time listening to someone who may or may not know what the hell they're talking about. I still like it best when you lecture. Period. (FA100-5)

Emma felt my additions were essential:

It was crucial that you interject, absolutely, and that was when I would start taking notes when you would start talking, and not just because I knew that what was what you wanted us to know, but because of your style and the way you communicate and the way that you lecture. I know that I can take notes in a way that I can reread them and it will all make sense, and as I said, I can visualize where you were in the room when you said that what you were talking about and put it into context, whereas with us students while we were up there doing it, you have one person standing at a computer the whole time kinda clicking around showing things on the screen. They weren’t doing a lot of interaction. There wasn’t a lot of eye contact. They weren’t asking questions of us in the crowd like you do. They weren’t making scenarios. You’ll take something in history and you’ll make it a current scenario out of it … there was not a lot of that with the students. They were up there just trying to get it done. That was a big difference it felt
like it was lecturers who didn’t know how to lecture, painful at times I will say. Though that I am so glad that no one just got up there with a sheet of paper and stood there and read out loud…. I was glad that no one stood up there and read off a sheet of paper. I don’t like being held hostage like that. (ET184-203)

Moira also had some concerns with certain presentations:

I just feel for the most part it seemed like other students weren’t quite as prepared as they should have been, more or less. I would have gotten more of an experience if there was more structure. There was kind of, it seemed as if they printed off information from the website, didn’t even look it over, and just kind of read it through. That was my complaint, I would have liked something a little bit more structured probably cause I learn a little bit better that way. (MT6-11)

Like Logan and Emma, Cameron saw the value in the students’ presentations, but felt he learned more when I taught:

Other students’ presentations were definitely fun because it allowed for several different styles of teaching to be utilized. I would say that I learned more information when you were teaching or when you threw in interesting facts along the way of the presentation … Lectures were one of my favorites because you were able to really throw interesting facts out with almost every point on the outline. It helped me remember things in history a lot better when there was something crazy that went along with the point. (FA275-281)

Other students, however, felt the presentations were very beneficial. Henry felt his classmates’ presentation were useful: “I think other students’ presentations and lectures helped me learn the most. I enjoyed listening to Vance teach and the rest of my classmates. For me, I have always learned the most by just listening in class” (FA180-2). Equally, Cain enjoyed the student presentations:

With the fellow student presenting information to the class, I know I learned information in the class that I never knew before. How class was set up this year I felt was beneficial because instead of just reading a book and going word from word, each student brought up a certain part of history that was important to them and went into great lengths about that subject. I felt the lectures were awesome this semester because you were able to talk about things that I had or even the class had no clue about regarding history. (FA197-202)

Cain also discussed my additions to the class:
You were able to easily draw a picture of the Continent of Europe during the Holy Roman Empire in 20 seconds. The information you gave us throughout this whole semester and they way you related to it, as if it were happening in society today was excellent. (FA202-4)

Francis felt that the presentations were unique and contributed to his participation:

The student presentations helped me because it was a new and interesting way to learn. For once someone that was actually taking the class was teaching it. This gave the student perspective on history which was in depth but not to the extent of a professor. It also got me more engaged into the class. (FA124-7)

Madeline focused on the fun and the learning:

The student lectures was a lot of fun, I really enjoyed having our classmates teach us about the different chapters rather than just having the teacher always teach us the history. I also like the student lectures because it gave the students an opportunity to research and present their information in front of everyone, this was also valuable to me because I'm planning on being a teacher so this gave me some practice with public speaking a teaching. I enjoyed the lecture days when we all just sat around in a circle and discussed what was going on in the world. I really liked this because it wasn't the traditional way of lecturing, it was more of a group discussion where we were all at eye level talking about history and asking questions. (FA321-8)

Scott found the presentations to be the best part of the class:

These presentations were probably the best part of the class. The lectures were interesting. Coming into a history class, I wasn't expecting the lectures to be very fun or even interesting. However they were interesting to me because most of the time they were related to something in the context of my life today. I think that is why everyone paid attention (most of the time) during the lectures. (FA 302-6)

Jean liked that the presentations were different than how she previously learned history:

I enjoyed the wiki and student presentations because it was a different way off the traditional learning style. The wiki gave me the opportunity to add information in the book that you thought was important and the student presentations was good instead of hearing the teacher lecture all the time. (FA407-10)

Warren felt the variety of the presentations was important: “The lectures and student presentations allowed me to learn in different ways, it's different from doing the same exact thing everyday” (FA369-70). Roberto also commented: “[The] lectures were excellent and if you
weren’t a good teacher, despite the dallyings from the subject at hand, I probably would have dropped it ages ago” (FA227-8).

Two students who liked the presentations did think there were some shortcomings when not everything was covered. Katherine felt that on the whole the presentations were valuable:

I believe that most of the student’s presentations were quite interesting and showed that they were taking the time to learn about their chapter and so forth, and then was able to teach to the class. At times I did not think that the student presentations were useful because they did not always include information that I think we should have covered…. I think that even though there were alot of times that our class went off of discussion, it would always lead to the discovery of us learning something new about history. So I think that with an open discussion there was a lot of opportunities to learn outside of the lecture. (FA346-58)

Nathan did like the presentation, but raised a concern he found with his own work:

The student presentations were good and they helped. My only complaint is that each person only covered what they thought was important myself included. I thought that a lot was skipped over. The lectures were very enlightening. They were very comprehensive I thought I learned a lot from them. I liked how you helped us take a different view of history. (FA414-8)

His final thoughts on the class were: “I expected to get a better understanding of history from this course. I believe that I found it. This class exceeded all of my expectations” (FA425-6).

James also enjoyed the presentations:

Watching other presentations was surprisingly informative. Usually I wouldn't expect to learn much from a student presentation, but I feel all around we did really well with getting the gist of the time period and you were able to fill in the blanks…. However, I must say I always preferred it when you lectured. I liked the humor, facts combo. Also, I really thought it was helpful how you always related the history to the present day. Like, if this was happening today, etc.... That really helped me understand what was going on and how people thought and acted back then, rather than just a bunch of dates. You also talked a lot about the common people a lot, which was nice. (FA149-56)

When asked why it was nice that I touched on the common people, James replied:

There’s such a small percentage of people that are royalty or that are usually recorded in history and there’s a lot that’s going on that we don’t learn about. And when I think about times in history that I don’t really know anything about it seems like a really distant thing, but learning about people that I could have possibly known or been, that it makes it
more real and it’s easier to understand, when I could understand what people were thinking or how normal people acted during that day, cause it seems like technology changes but people don’t change all that much, and that was something that I learned through learning about the common people. (JT9-15)

In 101, especially, there were several points at which one person would be ending their chapter, another student would be beginning their chapter, and there might be two people in the groups who had relevant information to convey. This could cause lots of switching at the podium. Emma enjoyed these changes:

Loved it ’cause its visual, shakes up the scene, gets your attention. I like that and also I think its safer cause then if you have one person covering an entire chapter, what if that person tanks or what if they just kinda half ass it, they’re just only going to cover a few things. (ET34-6)

She elaborated more on these changes:

We would switch from one speaker to the next, one student from the next giving the presentation but it always felt like we had a heavy sigh between the two, a catch your breath opportunity. And I’m sure this day and age, technology the way it is, and kids they way they are, they can bang from one thing to the next (snap snap snap) and they don’t think anything about it. Maybe for me its just an age and an experience issue…. But it was coherent, it made sense, and it didn’t feel like we were moving from one genre to another, it felt seamless and that makes a good presenter. And I’m not very good at that. You can tell when I’m going from one to the next. Sean was really good at assembling all that in a fashion and it was still palatable and I think that’s an art. Maybe it was because the guy before him was not so great that it made Sean even better, but I think Sean’s just kinda good at that at taking you there like you do when you lecture it was good just transporting you into that mode. (ET373-8)

While she was critical of some of the presentations, she also felt that the student presenters put their maximum effort into the project:

What stuck with me the most was seeing how much effort everybody else was putting into what they were doing. I’d like to be able to tell you what stuck with me the most was Napoleon or Germany the Hansa league, but I really got to tell you what stuck with me the most, which was these high school kids getting up there and giving it their all and caring and wanting to put together information in a way that people would want to understand. I was so impressed with that, whether they knew what they were talking about or not. Hahaha. Just the fact that they weren’t just being compliant because you were asking them to do it. They really wanted to make a good impression, they really wanted to, they wanted to teach and they wanted to do it right…. Maybe I was just
impressed with the humanity of it, just the way that the kids acting when they got up there, I mean nobody bullshitted. They got up there and did what they wanted to do, they didn’t screw around. (ET269-81)

Overall, I believe Emma’s assessment is correct. There were students throughout the semester who were more or less prepared. There were students who were more comfortable presenting in front of others. History classes at Parkland do not have an English composition prerequisite, so they are often taken earlier in a student’s program. So history is often taken before speech class or a writing course on academic writing. None of the presenters have as much background experience in history, or teaching experience, as I have. I think weaker public speaking skills, inexperience presenting a topic, and in some cases inexperience with the material were seen as “bad presentations.” It is unfair, I think, to compare the presentations to my teaching. But Emma’s assessment about effort is correct. Each student who presented was prepared at some point. Some students were prepared for everything that came at them. Some students underestimated how much material could be covered in a class. Some students thought they knew the material the first day, and were unsure. But everyone who took the class was equal. They all presented. And by day two, they all had a sense for what it took to tell their classmates about the time period. While it may have come across at varying levels or “preparedness,” each student gave their maximum effort as they were presenting.

Logan had mentioned that when she presented about the Reformation she learned a lot, discovering information she felt she should have known from being Lutheran and growing up in Europe. Emma commented on this in Logan’s presentation:

I think it’s spectacular to see somebody get it, see the lights come on, to have them actually stand up there in front of people. It’s almost like they’re giving a testimony, this is what happened and I can’t wait to tell you. You know what I learned, or what happened, what I felt, what I experienced, or whatever. And I think to have something come from the core like that is a huge teaching tool. (ET520-4)
I noted this several times as the students presented. Specifically, when Roberto and Moira taught the second time, you could see that they knew what they were talking about and were excited to convey it. They were not entirely prepared the first time, but they used that experience to improve the second time.

**Final projects.** There were three options for the final project: playing a videogame, creating something, or using a novel as a primary source document. The students were required to present their experience to the class, which gave the class a sense for the other assignments.

Christopher made a small wall mounted bookshelf. He reflected on his experience:

> It was good. Again it didn’t turn out how I wished it would but I did get some wonderful tools out of it. It also was a good way to appreciate the history we were learning about. Now any time I think about or read about something in history, I will also be thinking about how hard it was for them to build what they did. Working with my hands is a huge interest to me. I had never thought about how it could have been in the past. Now that I have done this project, it has given me another more permanent connection that I won’t forget once this class is over. (FA40-5)

Remy had researched how to make clothing out of papyrus, but was unable to get any papyrus in time to complete the project, so he used celery. He recounted his experience:

> Doing the research and making the final project was another important thing I did this semester, it allowed me to expand my mind, and understand how people made clothes, eating utensils, baskets, paper, and so many other things without half the accessories that we have today, was sort of an appreciation for me. (FA474-77)

James, who said the first day that he wanted to make guitars for a living, attempted to make a lyre. His offered his thoughts on the projects:

> The final assignment was very cool. I think the online game or making something options offered a well-rounded assignment. I personally don't have a computer, I am at the library currently. So, playing a game online was not a very convenient choice for me. And I love working with my hands, so that really appealed to me. I think it's important to understand that history isn't just people and wars and dates. It's everything, it's how we came to be who we are and do things the way we do. I really enjoyed learning about woodworking and I have a great amount of respect for anyone who worked with wood before power tools. With interactive assignments like this, I can learn a lot about history and about myself in the process. This was a great way to truly learn. (FA 158-165)
Moira did her project on *The Last of the Mohicans*. In her experience she said:

I felt the book presentation made me think a little more about what I’d said before how it was. Even though just reading it without doing any research made me feel, okay this isn’t really helping native Americans at all, and then you look back, and you look at other different sources of information, and you really have to think about it, and talking about it in class. You understand that this is a huge breakthrough, it was a very politically stirring book, made people think at the time. So it made me understand a little bit more the research that I’d done to put that paper together. (MT405-11)

Scott had done his project on *Huck Finn*. He felt the final assignment “was a good assignment though because it got everyone reading their own books and doing their own research outside of the classroom or the textbook” (FA307-9). Francis played the videogame *Civilization IV* for his final project. He said:

>[It] had a dramatic impact on how I view history. It has made me think and understand the difficulty of building a civilization from nothing and making it into something legendary. It has also helped me understand the way, we today, view and understand the people before us. (FFP p1)

He went on to say:

Playing this game as a learning supplement for this class was a great idea. I had learned and realized things that a book could never teach me. Professors and scholars can describe in details about how civilizations rose and fell, but it would never truly click. A student can read as many primary resources as they could get but they are still missing out on the real experience. Playing this game has provided that first hand knowledge. (FFP p6)

In the last week the students presented their final projects. James felt these presentations were valuable:

I think the projects at the end stick out to me maybe more than the presentations, teaching presentations people did, because it’s something concrete that we were able to bring in and show or it’s just something unique. I enjoyed learning about people’s experience, too, ‘cause it wasn’t like learning about something way in the past, it was like learning about ourselves, it was more about experience than like remembering the past so I think that stuck with me more. (JT78-83)

He continued:
Yeah, I guess it was like a good summary and like, yeah I guess kind of wrapped everything up in a nice, just kind of brought everything to a close and made it easier to wrap my mind around everything that I had learned. Yeah, it was kind of a good summary of everything that I learned. (JT267-70)

The goal of the project was to appeal to the interests of the students by giving them options. Each project forced students to think about history in a way different from the traditional, conservative tradition. The students then shared their experiences with their classmates so that each student experienced history through their own project, and through the lens of their classmates. In the end the students gained a greater understanding of history, and appreciation for the past.

**Group project.** As mentioned above, the group project was a semester long project in which students researched something they were concerned about in the world. In the 101 class the two topics were disease and religion; in 104 it was education and war. Students seemed to individually learn from the project, but felt there was not a lot of cohesion. Most comments related to individual learning. For instance, Logan in the religion group discussed her experience:

> The other ways I learned history this semester was through our group project. I learned a lot about the protestant reformation that I didn't know before, which is odd because I was raised in Europe and as a Lutheran. Again, it was a lot of work because I basically had to do a whole different chapter in the wiki and present it as well, but that dang sure made me know all of the information! (FA83-6)

Katherine, who was in the education group, liked the discussions about the group projects we had in class the last days:

> I liked the final assignment because I felt like as a class we were able to debate about it and not so much just have one person at the front of the class saying something. I think that debates are helpful, even though we weren't really debating about history, but the fact that we were commenting and using our own knowledge as indicators to ask questions. (FA352-5)
Madeline, in the education group, was one of the few who commented on liking the group aspect of the project:

The final group assignment I really enjoyed because it gave us an opportunity to meet with our classmates outside of school and make some lasting friendships. I also liked this because it also gave us a chance to work together as a group and present together as a group. (FA328-31)

Kurt, in the education group, again touches on the individual aspect:

The final assignment helped me to realize why some problems started with the education gap. I think since I felt rushed during my final assignment (my own fault) I didn’t learn as much as I could have. I ended up looking everything up the night before we had to post it in the wiki so I didn’t look into the education gap in America very deeply. I did find some interesting things about it though. (FA390-3)

Moira commented on the lack of work done within the groups and what she learned from the presentations.

We didn’t really work together. Once we actually presented it a lot of the information I saw how it fit together as a whole and how certain factors influenced others. For me specifically the economics effect, that a lot of minority groups seeing as they’re poor can’t get a better education, they can’t put themselves in a situation where it would get them a better education. And for other people economics influenced their position and their race influenced their position and other things just kind of all fit together. (MT400-5)

Each student was able to learn from their own research on the topic, and their presentation of the information. Some of the students were able to learn from the discussions of their groups outside or inside of class.

**Critical Thinking**

A goal of this project was to help the students think critically about history. Above I have examined the experiences the students had as they added to the wiki and taught the class. In this section I try to determine if the students were able to think critically about history. At first glance this seems to be an easy question with a straightforward answer. However, depending upon one’s political belief set, critical thinking itself can have different meanings.
How one applies them to history can be even more complicated. For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to narrow down what I mean when I talk about critical thinking.

First, it is important to consider the three traditions: conservative, social liberal, and social democrat. As outlined in chapter two, the conservative tradition is not concerned with critical thinking at all. Social studies or history is based on content knowledge, dates, names, places, and focuses on western thought. Critical thinking may be important for the elite, but as applied to the masses it is not. It privileges replication of the status quo and encourages cultural literacy of the dominant group. So it is possible to exclude the conservative tradition from a discussion of critical thinking.

The social liberal tradition does encourage critical thinking. While encouraging social history, gender history, race history, and other types of history, it attempts to be objective and create social scientists. The outlook is for the most part teleological, with an emphasis on educating the populace for job performance. Critical thinking is a skill to be learned but not necessarily employed. Societal change could be an outcome of application, and while that is allowable it is not necessarily encouraged. The status quo for the most part is still upheld.

The social democratic tradition can perfectly use history to illustrate and study social inequalities and to employ critical thinking. History can be used as a starting point to critique society and promote a participatory democracy. Critical thinking is a key tool for attempting to take a position and educate within this tradition. However, it is still difficult within this tradition to come up with a definitive definition of what critical thinking is. For the purposes of this paper I use the work of Giroux (1978) on critical thinking. In fact, this work was used in his own history classes.
In Giroux’s discussion, he describes how critical thinking can be achieved and what it looks like. Some of his key ideas are how it can be achieved. The typical facts of history should be presented problematically. The classroom relationship cannot be hierarchical. Students cannot be docile or silent. They cannot glorify the teacher as expert or dispenser of knowledge. If they do, they will not question their lives. The instructor should spend time teaching about the frame of reference and how to use it as a tool. The students can become critical thinkers through writing by assuming the role of author. The writing is a pedagogical tool which allows students to think more critically. The instructor, however, must make sure that the pedagogical structures promote communication and dialogue.

If this is done, the students can then begin to treat knowledge as problematic, as an object of inquiry. They can then begin to see the relationship between facts and values, and how these are selected, arranged, sequenced, and related to values and world views. The students will then move outside their frame of reference to question the legitimacy of a fact, concept, or issue. If the student can do this, he or she will see a network of relationships and be able to make connections and draw conclusions on a political level.

I believe that through their experiences with the wiki and with the presentations, at least some of the students experienced critical thinking, from the standpoint of Giroux and the social democrats. From this study, I do not believe it is possible to parse out whether it was the wiki, specifically, or the student teaching which facilitated the thinking. It was a conjunction of both activities. I believe there are two important additions to Giroux’s work which are evident in this study. The process of teaching can lead to critical thinking. And writing need not be entirely textual, but may include videos, pictures, and other types of web 2.0 links.
Students' thoughts. To add to the discussion, it may be useful to take some brief data from the course evaluation sheets. In both classes the question was asked, “Did this class improve your problem solving and critical thinking skills?” The average for both classes was 4.5 out of 5 (CE 101, 104, q 2.4). The number of respondents was 11 in the 101 class, and 8 in the 104 class. If a weighted average is applied, the overall average is 4.5. It is always difficult to know how the students understood that question, what they were specifically thinking about when they answered it, and how much effort they put into standardized classroom assessments. However, looking at some of the interview responses we can get a better sense for how they understand critical thinking and how the class helped with this.

Emma felt that critical thinking was conveying information to the largest audience and making it relevant. She felt that “because [she] was forced to present the information, … running it through twenty-three filters,” (ET315-17) that led to critical thinking. She also felt that the way I lecture helped with critical thinking skills.

You have a way of transporting us into the scene as if we were the ones living it. Which you have to use critical thinking just to get through life, so if we’re being forced to kinda go, what if you were there let’s say for instance you’re standing on a battle field and Indians on one side and uh. You have the ability to force us into critical thinking where we wouldn’t necessarily go there. We would sit there and text on our phone … so it was two different approaches, one we’re forced to do it because we have to present it, and the other we’re brought into it because you bring us there. (ET333-9)

Roberto felt that critical thinking was analyzing information, forming an opinion, thinking how it makes you feel, ripping it apart, and putting yourself in the situation. The class helped him:

I’m the kinda person that pretty much if I look at something I can pretty much form an immediate opinion, like if I get enough information about it I can pretty much tell you how I feel about it, but some of the ideas, hearing other people’s ideas somehow challenges my own. And somehow in other ways it reaffirms my own. So I kinda had to learn how to critically think unbiasedly like do it for my own opinions, but be able to be receptive to other opinions of other people. The class did help in that way cause there
were ALOT of opinions, there’s a lot of different ways of thinking that I didn’t necessarily agree with and a lot I did agree with. Some were ridiculous, but you know that’s kinda what I got from the class I had to learn how to take other people’s opinions unbiasedly and find value in them. And I haven’t always, I’ll be honest. (RT274-82)

He expanded on how some of the assignments helped his critical thinking skills:

Well yeah, almost all the assignments, it was a critical thinking class. Yeah, so all the assignments made you think or made you delve deeper into how you felt about it. So it’s kind of a given almost. You should expect that, I didn’t at first expect it, but once it became a pattern, I didn’t look at an assignment and say I could just wing it, I’m probably going to have to think about this like the last three or four. (RT284-8)

Moira defined critical thinking as taking the subject, the sub-subject, analyzing it, and taking it apart, all in order to understand the intricacies of the whole. The class helped her do this:

We would break up and discuss in groups and or discuss as a whole group … it helped my critical thinking skills … by listening to what other people had to say, because a lot of people in that class did not have the same political views or personal beliefs as I did. So hearing their take on something… politely inserting my belief … talking about why I believe my beliefs are … more in the right than the other persons and coming to a polite understanding…. I felt like it was a pretty good environment to express your beliefs in by being able to discuss with everyone. On the whole we got to understand the main subject because of knowing everyone else’s opinions … when you’re thinking about it in your own personal perspective it’s a lot harder to see it in other people’s eyes but in discussing you kind of get a better understanding of why I guess people in past history did the things that they did to the people that they persecuted or anything because of certain mentality it becomes a lot more understandable. (MT188-99)

James defined critical thinking as figuring something out, forming an opinion, and general problem solving in different areas. He felt the class helped him with this.

The way you taught, it was more like with the presentations and the group work and the finals we had, it was a lot more than just reading about something and trying to remember what you read. And so I think it definitely helped with the critical thinking because when we had to teach, we had to decide what we thought was important. I think that takes some critical thinking, like no matter what subject you happen to teach. And when I had to make something I had to figure out what I wanted to make and how I wanted to go about it, and it was something I hadn’t done before. And so that took some problem solving to be able to try and make what I decided on, and that’s another area I think that helps with critical thinking. (JT 133-141)
From these examples the students do feel that their critical thinking skills improved. This was partly done through the assignments, and partly through the interactions. So from the overall course assessment forms and the interviews, they seem to understand critical thinking in a way similar to Giroux.

**Final Thought**

The main question for this chapter was, “What do students experience using an educational wiki and an open classroom?” A sub question was, “Does this promote critical thinking skills?” I believe that the students had, overall, a positive experience with the wiki and the open classroom. From the class artifacts and the interviews, the two main things that came up were the wiki and the presentations. These two assignments were certainly related, as per the design of the class and the syllabus. The students had to add to a chapter, which in most cases was established, and then present that material to their classmates. However, as several students indicated, you had to think differently about the way material was presented in class versus the wiki.

It is interesting to note that a common theme which arises from the wiki and the presentations is validity. Some students were not sure that what their classmates presented or added to the wiki was reliable. They wanted to see sources, and they wanted to make sure they could trust the information. In some cases it wasn’t specifically the information, but the interpretation. As Moira pointed out, she didn’t disbelieve the facts concerning the Alamo, but the interpretation of the facts.

The setup for this class was certainly themed on history, and the information covered in the class was historical. However, the students did not learn history in a traditional sense. I believe that the students certainly learned the material in their own chapter, that which they were
forced to research. Through the research, the presentation, and the writing, they began to see that there were different points of view. These ideas were built on in the first weeks as videos and discussions revolved around the idea of biases. Most students talked about what they learned from their presentation or wiki. About half talked about how they weren’t sure about the validity of their classmates’ content. This could easily be attributed to “bad” presentations, but I believe something else is occurring. The students are beginning to think more critically, more politically, and to think about biases. From the standpoint of the teacher, all of the information was biased. It was either biased by the authors of the textbook, the authors of the websites, sources, or the students. The information the students presented was factually correct. We could certainly, in a philosophical paper, discuss truth or fact in history. Most of the information posted to the wiki was factually correct. However, in the presentation, preparation, or reception of the material, students began to see that there are biases. These biases that they found in their own work began to become apparent in their classmates’ presentations.

The students also began to think critically. The students who were interviewed understood this idea in a socially liberal way, understanding information and the nuances of it, but for the most part objectively. In chapter five I look at democratic education and its relation to the wiki and classroom, as well as my role in educating the students. As I begin to look at this and highlight social inequalities discussed in class, and how the students understood them, it may be possible to say that they were leaning more towards the social democratic position.
Chapter 5

Democratic Education and
the Role of the Instructor

In the last chapter, I looked at how the students experienced the wiki and the open classroom, and how these experiences fostered critical thinking. In this chapter, I look at how democratic education is related to the wiki and classroom. As mentioned in chapter two, democratic education is a key part of the social democrat position. As a starting point, this position advocates pointing out and studying injustices in society to encourage change. It is necessary to point out social inequalities in income, religion, gender, race, education, politics and overall power. By knowingly taking a position against the status quo, an instructor can help make a better society. These are seemingly easier things to discuss within a United States history class, showing how our modern world is affected by decisions in the past, but they are also raised in Western History classes as well. Below I look at what types of inequalities were examined and how the students felt about them, as well as what they learned. From there I examine the role the instructor played in the students’ experiences and learning.

There were many themes covered in the class which I felt were important, and there were themes which the students felt were important. To a certain extent some of these themes were course-dependent, such as religion and money in the 101 class, and race and politics in 104. When asked about which social inequalities were discussed in the class, Emma and Moira both said that everything we discussed related to social inequalities (ET406), or at least too much to count (MT271). Below I discuss the themes as they arose within the 101 class, the 104 class, and then themes which appeared in both courses. After that I discuss my role in the course, leading to a discussion about critical pedagogy.
As I discuss the themes, it is important to have a sense for the later discussion of critical pedagogy. Freire (2009) discusses the idea that “every thematic investigation which deepens historical awareness is thus really educational, while all authentic education investigates thinking” (p. 109). As we examine themes raised by the students, their deepened historical awareness is apparent. Between the critical thinking which was discussed in the last chapter and the critical pedagogy discussed below, I investigate whether their learning was authentic.

Religion 101

A theme which arose within the 101 course was religion. Certainly within the time period of the course we discussed religions such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Greco-Roman Gods, Christianity, and Islam. With Judaism, Christianity and Islam, we discussed topics such as inter and intra-religious conflict. We also covered treatment of heretics and minority religions. Problems with language were also raised from the choice of Greek or Latin in the early Christian Church to later issues translating texts into the vernacular. We also discussed the birth and growth of Islam, as well as the crusades, Reformation, and birth of modern religions. This was a large theme for Christopher as he was the de facto leader of the religion group in the 101 class. He discussed how he learned a lot about the growth and changes in Christianity. Some of these were subtle changes while others were larger. He personally felt that all of these changes differed from God’s will (FA 440-57).

Several students felt they learned a lot about Islam. This was a new topic for most, and for the rest certainly a different coverage from a modern, American perspective. Three students covered Islam from its birth and early years, to the Crusades and the eventual fall of Constantinople. Equal coverage was given to a Christian and Muslim perspective, which opened many students’ eyes. The overall contributions of these three students will not be discussed as
they did not consent to participate in the study. Some of the knowledge of Islam may have also come from my own discussion in class. Logan wrote what she learned about Islam:

I learned more about the Islamic faith. Before, I was completely in the dark about when/where they originated, what they believe in, and why. Before, I had such a stereotypical view of Muslims, (that's not to say I thought they were all terrorists or something, not at all) and I'm glad that now I can understand some of what they are going through and the causes for some of the fights that they get into. (FA499-502)

Emma also felt that she learned a lot about religion overall:

Abrahamic religions. I learned the difference and the origins and how they're connected at a source. I honestly never knew all of that, probably b/c I had never taken a look at Islam before. Yes I was raised half Jewish, and yes I'm a born again Christian, but I really hadn't looked at religion from an historical perspective before. (FA509-12)

Emma also commented on social inequalities she saw in our discussion of the Catholic Church and how they related to money:

I remember us talking about the Catholic Church and how the Catholic Church owned all this land, and how when you were a member of the church all of your land went to the Church and how upset the Catholic Church was when people started to convert, i.e. get their land back, 'cause they were no longer Catholic, and the injustices coming out of that. People making the choice to live differently and different religious beliefs and yet having to struggle to get their life back. I had never looked at socially how in this particular interest the Catholic Church treated the people that were under its umbrella versus how it treated those who wanted to leave. Totally different, the way they viewed those different groups of people. I consider that to be a social issue, just because they grouped everyone together in areas of “you believe” or “you’re a defector,” and if you’re a defector you may as well be a non-believer, and that they had across the board ways they would treat people. I had never looked at it like that before. (ET408-19)

She related this to our discussions of the growth of the Hanseatic League and how this economic union was similar to Calvinism and Calvinist beliefs on money, and finally relates it back to the Catholic Church:

When you talked about the Hansa league beginning of trade guilds, unions sort of, if you will. I had never looked at it like that like, people get exclusive and they trade only with certain people. Sorta like the Calvinists, we will only do business with people who believe like they believe, yet there was also this other way of trading with people who were of the same area. Not because they were the same religiously but because they were concerned about quality, concerned about keeping their money in a place where they
could get to it, and I looked at that as being a social issue sort of on the flip side. Yes it is
good to maintain the social structure in this particular business or way of venturing out
into business, whereas it’s not so popular or so caring about people socially. To do that
in a religious setting like the Catholic Church for instance when they had everybody’s
property, so yeah I think it did sort of open my eyes to how socially groups get treated
and socially how groups try to conform or protect themselves or better themselves using
their surroundings or in spite of their surroundings so yeah. (ET421-30)

She also brought up the idea of motives as applied to religion, and how it was necessary
to understand the history to understand one’s own religion today. This was based on a
conversation in class on April 14 about the Hampton Court Conference and the authorized
translation of the King James Bible:

Shakespeare was paid off to help write the Bible or whatever, so yeah, I think that would
create questions in people’s minds like really, I did not know that. And I think anyone
paying attention would question that. As a matter of fact I went home and told my
husband, did you know that Shakespeare helped write the Bible, or at least the Bible as
King James wanted it written? And he may have said, hmmm, yes I knew that, or I
didn’t know that, or whatever but he didn’t really seem very concerned. I on the other
hand was shocked. I don’t know if I was shocked in a good way or a bad way, but I had
just never heard that before. So yeah, and also because I love reading the Bible and I
love studying it, and it was a little disconcerting to know that a playwright, albeit an
excellent playwright who added to the English language immensely, was involved in the
rewriting or writing of it. Crazy that we accept the palatability of it, yeah so did you ask
me if I agree with that? Yes, I agree with that, yeah I agree, definitely. (ET474-81)

Henry also felt this course opened him up to some new information. He stated, “The most
important thing I learned this semester in this course, in terms of history, was the Avignon
Papacy. I went through twelve years of religion classes at my school and not once did I learn
anything about that” (FA570-2). This is interesting to note since he covered this material on
February 16. It is an event which doesn’t get covered in most classes, but he did a very good job
at the time covering the intricacies of the period, presumably since he discovered something
which had never come up in his own parochial education.

Henry also touched on learning the “history of the Jews and how much more than just
the Holocaust they were persecuted” (FA573-5). This began with some coverage of the first
Jewish kingdoms, but certainly continued with the aftermath of Alexander, the conquering by the Romans, the revolts, and persecutions in the Middle Ages.

At the outset of this study, I had intended to open students to occasions and instances of social inequalities. I had initially thought it was something which would be more present in the U.S. History course. However, after analyzing the data, I was pleasantly surprised that social inequalities did come up in the 101 course as well, with religion being only the first instance.

**Economics 101**

Another topic the students raised was the role of money in people’s lives. Specific things touched on were ideas such as Julius Caesar’s need to work with Crassus because of the mutually beneficial relationship. Caesar gained money from the rich Crassus, while Crassus gained political clout from his relationship with Caesar. Other ideas were the roots of the Protestant work ethic, present in discussions of Calvinists and Methodists. This idea was raised when discussing other closed communities. We also examined some of the myths behind why people came to the Americas. Specifically, when discussing the reasons the English came to the Americas, Emma said, “I think that it was because of the kind of people who were coming over, because of their political ambitions or their monetary ambitions that drove them to occupy the territory” (ET348-9). This runs counter to years of traditional history discussing purely religious freedom.

James also touched on the many times the ideas of power and money were raised and what he learned from them:

I learned how much wealth and power truly does influence the decisions of pretty much everyone that has been an important leader. I now have a somewhat cynical outlook on people throughout history, but that's not necessarily bad. I think that it's important not to sugar coat anything. People are selfish and do selfish things. It's just life. (FA549-52)
James expanded on these ideas in the interview, pretty much linking most of the topics in the class to ideas of power and money:

We talked about the distribution of wealth. We talked about slavery and how it became a racial issue and how it wasn’t for most of history. But slavery in general is kind of an equality issue in itself. We talked about religion and the crusades and how there were prejudices and how they came about and why they came about and that was kind of like an underlying theme of equality. And with all, I guess, kind of war in general we discussed, like with the crusades for example. They said they wanted them to help, like the Byzantine Empire out, and get them back, like under their wing or whatever, and they wanted to reclaim the holy lands. But there’s other things going on like money, like power, there’s always something less noble going on and I think that usually has to do with social inequality. (JT168-75)

**Colonization 101**

On March 30, I was filling in for a student who was supposed to present but showed up late. I began discussing the role of the Portuguese in the Atlantic Slave trade. I also touched on how the Dutch and English took the trade to a whole new level. I then began to talk about the repercussions for the continent of Africa, which was depopulated. This depopulation led to a loss of future generations within Africa, and of the loss of history and knowledge through the death and enslavement of millions. We also touched on the growing trade between Europe and Africa, for good and bad. This trade would lead to later colonization by the European powers until the late twentieth century. Logan felt this was an interesting and important discussion for her:

It was that day when we were discussing what was going on in Africa, and why most of it is less advanced than the rest of the world. As bad as it sounds I really just thought they were uneducated and poor. I never thought about the reasons behind it. It is important to think about these things, and try to understand why people and countries are the way they are so that you don't just write them off as “uneducated” and “poor” and leave it at that. It is also important so that we can think of solutions to help them medically, with food, etc. (FA 503-508)

This impromptu discussion led to an important learning event. Had the student who was supposed to present shown up on time, this learning moment may not have
occurred. This is a topic which students may not bring up. It is important to think about how to bring these topics up, without taking the class over from the students who are teaching.

**Teleology 101/104**

A trap that historians can fall into is that of teleology. Certainly it is easy to look back at history, pick out key events, and tell the story of history as if the modern moment were inevitable. It is more difficult to teach to the tentativeness of history, to remind students that the founding fathers were rebels. They knew they could be killed in horrible ways for what they did, and their success was not a surety. This idea of not relying simply on a constantly progressing timeline was touched on in chapter two, in reference to the suggestion that group projects be done in reverse chronological order. But it also suggests that nations sometimes provide a narrative that seems to be preordained, whether by a supreme entity or otherwise. Emma touched on how she didn’t feel that there was a pull towards teaching towards an outcome:

> Maybe you’re just really good at what you do, but I just never felt like we were being led in any specific direction. Maybe that just has to do with the way we did our own research. We were free to go find out what we wanted, to go and find out and bring it back. [It] didn’t feel like there was any slant or any, you need to learn this stuff because we want to come to this particular conclusion. I didn’t feel like there was any sort of taint. (ET568-73)

Moira agreed with the sentiments of Emma, feeling that the students did their own research and that there was not this predetermined path:

> I felt that it was more or less we wanted to discuss as much information as possible and information that we really hadn’t learned before which was different. I mean there might have been some sort of goal to hit because we had specific chapters assigned to us and we wanted to get it there but we didn’t have specific information. I mean there was information that you wanted us to take from the chapters and you would discuss it if someone didn’t talk about it or hinted them like maybe you should talk about this if you’re going to talk about something at all so there was a little bit but more or less we had no idea what sort of things to expect from every chapter because everyone’s a little
different and everyone has interest in different things so it wasn’t predetermined at all in my opinion. (MT421-8)

While thinking about the idea appealed to him, James did not feel that this occurred in this class:

I think that its kind of an idea that sort of appeals to me, philosophic [sic]. That everything happens a certain way to end up. Not that it couldn’t have happened differently. Things happened a certain way to make things how it is. That’s something I think about, but I don’t think I felt that being taught, or I felt that in other people’s teachings, or the students how they taught it during the class. (JT282-5)

So perhaps it is easier for an instructor to know what happened, know where they are leading, and to teach history as a predetermined course. Certainly textbooks are written this way and reliance on them can lead to this. But the students did not get this sense from the class. And while not part of the design of the project, the wiki and chapter assignments break the history into smaller sections. The students, then, are reporting what happened within a specific era. While it would be beneficial for them to see the links to what happened before and after, by not seeing the links they are avoiding teleological history, or preordained history. So while the historical information is covered, some of the teleological biases are reduced. Though as the students pointed out, I did at points add material I felt was left out, and it is difficult to remove the biases of the instructor.

Biases of Teachers and Authors 101/104

A major theme brought up in both classes is the idea of bias in written works or in other classes, and learning how to understand it. Kurt, in looking back at the class, wrote, “I wasn’t expecting to question history like you talked about on one of the first days. It was eye opening when I realized that” (FA403-4). Logan had a similar recollection as she wrote:

I learned not to just take what other sources say at face value as true and unbiased. The first week when we were talking about what “western civilization” is, it really got me thinking about how history and what is considered important is very biased by who is teaching it and who benefits from it. It is important that I learned this because it makes
me think more critically about my other classes and why particular things are being taught. (FA487-91)

Francis also learned some of this as he wrote:

When you are learning history you should not take it at face value. You must understand the author and the context of what he is talking about. Since ideas are passed down from generation to generation, people add their own interpretation of what happened in history. I found this to be the most important thing because it put many things into perspective that I had previously just accepted as fact. As students, we must get the entire picture from as many sources as possible then make the decision for ourselves on what really happened in history. (FA537-43)

James, in discussing what he learned, touched on the need to understand biases in history:

I learned that there are always slants and prejudices in how people present history. I would say I am an overly trusting and maybe gullible person. I would like to believe everything that everyone tells me. But there is no absolute truth, things change. And the way people tell history changes, too. In order to gain a sense of history, you have to read a lot of books by a lot of people and then decide for yourself what you believe. (FA550-63)

Nathan felt the “most important thing [he] learned this semester is that history books only teach you one view of history and that it is up to you to find the truth. This is important because [he] learned to questions certain things” (FA763-5). Similarly, Jean “learned that everything in the books are not always true” (FA761-2). Kurt, adding to this, touched on his new skill of questioning:

The first thing that I learned that was important was history that I have been taught was written by an extreme minority of the population. I really never had thought about how different history could be from different perspectives. This was important to me because now I question if some history is true or if there is another side to things I have already heard. It was just an eye opener. (FA735-8)

Scott also learned this skill of questioning, something he will take to his future class:

The first and most important thing I learned this semester, in my opinion, is to ask the question "Why?" This was important to me because it never dawned on me throughout grade school and high school that my teachers could have wrong or biased information. By asking "Why?" you could also be questioning someone's sources. This whole questioning of information is going to be valuable to me for the rest of my academic career. Second, and relating to asking "Why?, I learned to always back up my
information. By saying this, I mean I learned that I should always be ready to explain "Why" I said something or "From where" I received my information. Almost every day in class, and especially during student presentations, everyone was questioning each other. That's why I did extra research on the topics I was talking about because I knew someone would question my validity. (FA669-77)

Emma cynically touched on how history can be biased “depending on who’s writing the book [and] where they got their grant money” (ET631-2). Building on this, she said, “Yeah, who’s got the contract with what school district” (ET634). Moira also felt the writer’s bias was important: “Oh yes, it depends on who’s writing it because isn’t history the study of oral and or written documents over a period of time? Whoever is writing it has a bias and it’s inescapable” (MT 472-3). As an example, she discussed her past history courses and how she felt one should learn more about history:

As someone who tries to not take things at face value, this class was good. In all of my other U.S. history classes the teachers always seemed to romanticize events that in reality aren't that glamorous, and I knew that they weren't so I always dismissed American History. This class has renewed my interest in the subject because it's clear to me that just because some rich white guy says that something is the way it is doesn't mean I should trust it, it means that I should do the research to learn more about it. (FA613-7)

These ideas relate well to Freire’s (2009) ideas of didactic learning. By reading different points of view and discussing why there are different points of view, students gain a sense of criticism. I would add that the written word can be expanded within this study. It can include pictures, videos, and other online sources, as well as hearing what others have to say. By doing this, the students gained a sense for the biases and different points of view.

Quite a few students commented on learning about biases in sources, and how they now perceive history. In some cases they even commented on how they now view other materials as well. While simply knowing about these biases is admirable, is there any way that they can be overcome? I will take a brief look at prejudices and then look at how the students viewed the place the wiki and teaching held in teaching about or overcoming biases.
Prejudice 104. When discussing the idea of biases with Moira, she raised a topic which she felt was a bias, and I feel touches more on the prejudices of the students. She felt that a lot of students had biases and probably kept them even after the class ended:

I’m not really sure, I felt that a lot of people who had extreme biases probably kept those biases … they felt a certain way about like whether they were republican or democrat. I’m sure they stayed the same even though there had been specific incidences mentioned where one party was in the wrong and the other in the right I don’t know. (MT484-7)

Though she did later say that perhaps through the class, these biases or prejudices could have been overcome:

We were bringing up subjects that probably a lot of people didn’t know. And if they had biases before about something, and they learned a little more about the subject at hand, they might have changed their views, and or kind of accepted that what they had known before was kind of incomplete. Now it’s more complete and then that you can kind of become less biased. (MT493-6)

Remediation of biases through teaching/wikis 101/104. While it is admirable that the students noticed biases, were they overcome in this class? The students seemed to feel they were. As Emma said, “if there ever was a slant in one way or the other, I felt like you or whoever was covering it was able to bring in their own insight” (ET341-2). She went on:

[The] history in this class was not biased ‘cause we had so many different people pulling out so many different things. And if they researched like I researched the things that strike them get put into their presentations, then it’s not going to be biased. (ET623-625)

James felt there certainly was the potential for bias in this class:

I think at some points there were some things that could have been biased. Or anytime you go beyond dates of things that were written and recorded, and even those could have been biased about how people decided to write. ‘Cause we were talking about written history. We have to assume people wrote it down right, but it all has the potential to be biased at some point. It’s hard to say with certainty like why things happen so I’m sure there was some bias that occurred in the class. (JT306-10)

However, the class’s own views overcame some of these biases, as he said, “I think we had a lot of different views and perspectives I didn’t feel like it was too one sided at any point
during the class I don’t think” (JT287-8). James also felt that student teaching and overall interaction also helped to overcome some of the bias:

I think that definitely contributed to that, everyone was expected to teach and talk at a certain point so different views came out through their teaching or through their comments or questions in class I think that was a major contribution to why I didn’t feel that way. (JT290-2)

And with having multiple people teaching and multiple or guess asking lots of questions, I think a lot of times people were pretty good about asking questions about stuff that they didn’t understand. How when teaching other students would ask questions to try and understand what they were saying I think that helps with trying to understand without bias what really happened with history. (JT314-8)

I think since we had everyone teaching with so many different teachers it’s not like I feel like I was being swayed toward one certain political view throughout the semester, because there were so many different people talking about so many different things. That wasn’t really a possibility. I think that politics wasn’t brought up as much as just humanity in general. (JT146-9)

Moira, like James, felt that the exposure to different student’s opinions helped the class overcome some of the biases in the material:

We were definitely exposed to ‘em and I’m sure people took them for what they were and kind of understood the world better and understood the history behind things a little bit better so yeah we probably overcame a lot of biases. (MT489-91)

Roberto felt that the classroom interaction was the most valuable in overcoming biases, or at least exposing them:

I mean all history is biased in a way, kinda. I think it just made the biases more, you talked about the biases and made them more open. Yeah history is always going to be biased in a way no matter how you flip it, dip it, shake it, it’s going to be biased in the class. Yeah it was biased, but at least we talked about it and we realized the biases. (RT620-3)

James concluded his thoughts, touching on how if there were any biases in this course, in future courses the continuation of the wiki would help reduce those even more:

I think the wiki, with having everyone look at it and everyone agree or want to change it or since other people were able to change what people wrote, I think overtime that will definitely clear out most or any bias that could have happened. (JT 312-4)
Scott gave a line of logic for why the research was valuable, and how doing the research and incorporating more sources reduced the biases:

I learned how to use information outside of the classroom better. Since the textbook for this class was not too important, it caused us to find out information by ourselves from many different sources. This was beneficial because by using more sources, we were limiting the chances of our information being biased. My research skills are better now because of the loose importance of the textbook. (FA683-6)

Moira also touched on something which is interesting to the social democrat position, as discussed by Stanley (1981). Students are exposed or inundated with a capitalist position education, and should be exposed to an activist or opposing position. If students feel strong enough on a position, they can push against the traditional view. Of course, some students can also reify the view:

In class of course there were biases. For example people who taught things, if they really actually put effort into what they wanted to teach, they taught about things that interested them. And they spun it how they kind of wanted to, not a lot obviously but like a little bit. Like lets say we’re talking about a homosexual’s rights at the time, and if they were homosexual themselves they would feel kind of like maybe, obligated, obligated isn’t the right word but obligated to kind of push for homosexual’s rights by explaining what happened to them. How, same with race, same with anything, so a lot of the time people did have biases but it’s really hard to escape that. (MT 472-80)

This is an important aspect of the teaching and wiki, that student interest can increase the effort they put into their work. Their effort and interest can lead to activism, which may help counter the conservative ethos.

**Social History 101/104**

Social history is a recent type of history, popularized after the 1960’s. Some history books only go for a social history stance, or poorly attempt to integrate it into a traditional style text. James commented that the social history aspect was something he valued in the class. His first comment relates to the idea that I express several times throughout the semester. In the
Roman and Medieval period, 1%-2% of the people are members of the nobility or are in control, and 3%-7% are in the clergy or middle class. The remaining 90% of the population are serfs, or lower class individuals. I discuss how these numbers remain rather static from the Roman era to the modern world, with less than 90% of the US population earning less than $100,000 a year.

Well like you said there’s such a small percentage of people that are royalty or that are usually recorded in history and there’s a lot that’s going on that we don’t learn about. And when I think about times in history that I don’t really know anything about it seems like a really distant thing but learning about people that I could have possibly known or been, that it makes it more real. And it’s easier to understand when I could understand what people were thinking or how normal people acted during that day. ‘Cause it seems like technology changes but people don’t change all that much and that was something that I learned through learning about the common people. (JT9-15)

He also commented on his views of history before, and how the ideas of social history have changed these:

I think I viewed history as understanding countries or royalty or wars and there were certain things we always talked about in history class. Well I think I got more a sense of people in general in this class and that helped. That changed the way I think about history and how it happens. It’s not just about countries fighting wars with each other. Like there’s a reason that we eat and drink certain things, like the way we live, all comes from history too. And how we speak and some of the bullshit in general. (JT297-302)

Moira also commented on how this class was different from her past classes, since it did not solely focus on nationalist history:

I’ve always hated American history. It’s been something that has bothered me my whole life because a lot of the teachers I’ve had before they liked to romanticize it. They liked to feel that something that always bothered me was that they would talk about WWII and when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor they awoke a sleeping giant and that always bothered me because argh ya I don’t know its hard to describe. But when you look at the darker side, the not so black and white side, the fact that it’s a lot more intricate and a lot more interesting because the small details, that a lot of other history teachers like to skate over in American history. It becomes a lot more interesting to me when I find that things aren’t the way that its taught, that the smaller people who didn’t get a voice through the majority of history and you hear what they have to say. It’s so much more interesting, it’s so much more, it makes a lot more sense to me. So I’ve come to actually like American history as opposed to disliking it before just because I held no interest in white male views, I guess because they don’t get it from other people’s perspectives. So this
course kinda helped me with that I s’pose that’s what I have to say about that. (MT80-91)

A theme which can fit under social history is that of crime. On March 12th we talked about medieval views on crime and punishment. We also talked about how people like to talk about how the world is getting worse, or that it used to be better in the olden days. However, criminologists have found that historically, as a percentage of the population, crime rates have decreased. Some who would follow Foucault may attribute this to discipline and power of the state. Some have attributed this to the growth of industrialization, and the need to follow the clock. But based on this discussion, James felt this was a valuable for his perception of history:

I learned that there have been horrific killings and murders and crimes all throughout time. I remember one day in specific you were talking about how crime has actually been steadily decreasing over time. People always like to say that our times are just the worst and everything is terrible and the world’s going to end. That's just not true. It's been way worse routinely throughout history. (FA557-60)

In chapter two, I discussed how social history would fit within the social liberal tradition. These comments could come out of a social liberal classroom, but they are certainly challenging the conservative view, and I would argue in conjunction with other comments, leads towards a social democratic stance.

Sugar Coat 101/104

Several students commented on the fact that they did not learn “sugar coated” or romanticized history, or that they were now more cynical when it came to history. These views would somewhat relate to the critical thinking discussed in chapter four. They would also relate to social democratic views of questioning the status quo, and using this questioning as a point of divergence, possibly towards a more activist stance.

In the final answers Moira said:
I definitely learned a lot this year, and I'm really glad that it wasn't your traditional nationalist American class. I'm tired of all the sugar coated information from all of my previous classes, and I look forward to more classes like this one. (FA267-9)

She went on to write:

A lot of it was different from your traditional American History class, and that allowed me to really listen to the information rather than throw it off as stuff I've already heard before. Also, everyone's opinions, whether stereotypical or not, were interesting because I'm pretty liberal, and for the most part all the people I know are liberal, but being in a class where there weren't such liberal people was refreshing. It reminded me on why I believe the things I believe. (FA641-5)

In the interview she elaborated:

I’m not a cynical person but I always had a cynical sort of view of how things were cause my parents taught me at a young age that I should never look at things in a black and white sort of way. So I don’t really think this class taught me that things are always a lot more cynical, ‘cause I always had the, ‘cause I always kind of knew that, but I definitely appreciated the fact that it was not a sugarcoated thing to make it easier to swallow. You need to know that humans are capable of putting other human beings and or animals or environment through horrible things. It doesn’t make me feel humanity on the whole is horrible, it just has the potential to be horrible so that’s how I’m able to sleep at night, but I’m sure a lot of the people learning the information we did in class kinda felt awful about how things really are. It’s better, they need to know. (MT349-57)

James also wrote that after the class he now had “a somewhat cynical outlook on people throughout history, but that’s not necessarily bad” (FA550-1). In the interview he elaborated:

I think it would apply to me and I think the way you talk about history and the way you understand history and all that you know about it is a lot more in depth than just the main events or time, like the dates and the things that are happening. There’s a lot of important stuff that made history what it is, that’s just not happy or good. Like good things happen, you definitely weren’t afraid to talk about that type of stuff and you realized it’s important. And like I said earlier it’s not like for me, I kind of already thought that way about a lot of history. So it didn’t change my view on life but I think I definitely agreed with the cynical ideas that were brought up in class. (JT226-32)

He did not feel that the class was too cynical, and it didn’t change his views too much. Instead, it served as reinforcement for many of his views:

The class was like overly cynical, but I feel like I sort of [have] a cynical outlook on people and people’s motivations in general. So it didn’t change how I drastically, but like it kind of reinforced how I thought about some things. (JT185-7)
Roberto did not feel that he was more cynical because of this class because, as he said, “I’ve never been a sugar coater of history” (RT434). He went on to explain how he felt history should be covered, and why he’d never experienced sugar coating of events:

You might as well just say it exactly how it is and say it how you feel, and that’s the best way of approaching it. So no I wouldn’t say the sugar coating, the lack of sugar coating has benefited me also, cause I have a black mother and she doesn’t sugar coat anything. It’s true, it’s very true, it’s been a very long time since she sugar coated anything for me I miss it, I miss the diabetes that could have happened, I’m healthy morally because I didn’t get sugar coated. (RT442-47)

Based on James’ and Moira’s comments in the final, I asked in the interviews for the students to comment on sugar coating of history, or cynical views because of the class. Emma’s first response to this was, “Your job is done” (ET464), accompanied by a lot of laughter. She went on to say, “You like it when we question what it is we’re looking at, right” (ET466)? After these shorter comments she went on to say:

Don’t take things at face value, so that’s good then, I’d say they backed you up on that. More cynical, is that what they said, more cynical? Yeah, because there was a lot of this is what historian A had to say and historian A has this background or that background or this slant or that religious view or this political aspiration or they’re paid off by that or that. (ET462-74)

A bit later in the interview she went on to say how a cynical view has been important for her personally:

I would say that the way you make us cynical is helpful for me now in a way that I had never needed it before. I never cared about history, really didn’t pay any attention, didn’t care. And once I started taking classes at Parkland, and of course that’s part of the curriculum. And it wasn’t until I started studying with you in particular, just in general realizing there was so much more happening than what we really know as a people, or as a society, or as a nation, or whatever. But it’s okay to explore all that, not only okay, but probably ought to do it. And now it’s, I question almost everything that comes across. And I want to know where the information came from, and why does this person feel the way they do, and this particular politician, and what’s their background. (ET588-595)
She went on to discuss a friend of hers with a French last name. Before, she had never cared nor noticed his last name. Now she is fascinated and wants to know about his lineage, whether his ancestors came pre or post revolution, why they came, why they settled, where they did, what choices and events impacted their settlement and success. These are questions she’d never previously thought of nor cared about. (ET588-604)

**Experience from Projects**

As mentioned in chapter 3, there were various final paper options for the class: using a novel as a primary source document, playing a videogame, or making something as people did in the past. A theme which was raised in final answers and one of the interviews was making something for the final project. Nathan, who forged his own knife wrote, “The second most important thing I learned is a greater appreciation for the past which I got through my tech project. This is important, because now I have a better understanding of what earlier generations went through” (FA766-8). Remy researched how to make papyrus, and made it out of celery due to lack of the plant in early spring. He felt that the project helped him to “understand” and “appreciate” the past (FA476-7). Christopher, who made a small bookshelf, also gained an appreciation for history from his project (FA30-41). Emma also felt that making papyrus, which she found in Texas, along with the research, gave her a “bigger picture of the people, their land, their culture, and their progress” (FA518). James, who made a wooden lyre, felt that it helped him to understand that history “isn't just people and wars and dates. It's everything, it's how we came to be who we are and do things the way we do. I really enjoyed learning about woodworking and I have a great amount of respect for anyone who worked with wood before power tools” (FA162-4). Those who did make something commented a lot on the experience they had, or the links between their experience and those of past peoples. Whether this was
described as understanding or appreciation, there seemed to be a different view on history, which also came across in their presentations.

Those who played the videogames also felt a link to the experience of history. Logan felt that the videogame helped her visualize “how hard it was for the Romans to keep their empire and understand why it eventually fell” (FA80-1). Francis also “learned and realized things that a book could never teach [him]…a student can read as many primary sources as they could but they are still missing out on the real experiences” (FFP p6). Several other students participated in the project but did not consent to the study, and their experiences were similar to Francis and Logan. Again, their understanding of history was different from a normal classroom encounter.

The final book project did not get as many comments. Cameron (FA284) and Scott (FA307) felt that the book projects tied in well with the class. Moira did comment on the fact that once she really got into the project, she gained an appreciation for her book (MT 133-140). She felt that the project stuck with her because of all the research she did for it, which led to a greater understanding.

The students who did the technology projects seemed to have real empathy for those in the past who had made similar objects. Those who did the videogame seemed to experience history in a different way, visualizing and realizing things that can’t be conveyed in books. The students who did the book project were less exuberant about their project, feeling that it fit in well with the class and gave them an appreciation for the past. However, each of these projects did allow the students to experience history differently than traditional classes, which did contribute to thinking about history in a different way as well. Concerning the presentations of the projects, James said:
I enjoyed learning about people’s experience, too, ‘cause it wasn’t like learning about something way in the past, it was like learning about ourselves, it was more about experience than like remembering the past, so I think that stuck with me more. (JT81-3)

The presentations then were a nice wrap up of the projects illustrating the past in the modern world.

**Race 104**

Within the 104 class, race was a topic which kept coming up. Certainly with the content it is important, from the European colonization and views on Native Americans, to the introduction of race-based slavery. We also touched on how the Europeans, Spanish and English specifically, tried out some of their race-based politics and tactics on areas closer to home, such as the Canary Islands and Ireland. As we focused on the nineteenth century, we also focused on American views of the Irish, Mexicans, and Chinese. Ties were made to the modern world, and a few side conversations brought the topic up to the modern day. However, the course only went to 1877, which made focusing on struggles after that point less feasible. As will be discussed below, there were two groups of students in this class, and topics such as race divided along racial lines at times.

In their finals, several students commented on what they did learn about history and its interrelations with race. Katherine, who wants to be a special education teacher, touched on important ideas she gained, such as, “how rude America really was to everyone” (FA711-2)! She also discussed “Slavery, well more than just the whole idea of how ‘blacks were always beaten’” (FA712-3). And, “last but not least, about immigration, and how race has always been a factor” (FA713-14). She felt that these were ideas which she would remember “years down the road” (FA715-20).
Madeline, who wants to be an elementary teacher, also learned several things which she related to race. One of these touched on class, power, and race:

[I think] how ironic it was that people call this the land of opportunity and in history we Americans were known for killing people off or shipping them elsewhere. This was important because I never realized how mean white Americans were back then and I didn't know that we killed so many people. (FA694-7)

She also touched on the idea that the government dealt unfairly with people:

I learned how the government and army men would promise people things and when the time came they would go back on their word. This was generally dealing with the slaves and Indians. This was important because we can see just how evil the government was back then, not saying its much better now. (FA702-5)

Cameron, who also wants to be a teacher, was amazed at how modern racial problems were created in the past. He thought this understanding would be valuable to him as a future teacher. He specifically mentioned some work he did for his group project on education. He discussed the relation between family life and learning, and learning the origins of the problem. “I learned that there are real roots to the problem not just the arrogant thought ‘Blacks aren’t as smart as whites.’ Not at all” (FA652-4)!

Moira also felt that race was a key topic in the class, and some of the material she had never encountered before:

There’s too many instances where we talked about racial discrimination with different groups. It was all sorts of groups, and not just race. It was other things as well, like religious things, but primarily the two most groups that were talked about were the Native Americans and the African-Americans. Those two things were brought up more than anything else for the most part. I knew a general overview of the hardships that were placed on them, but not to the extent that the Native Americans, I never knew about the assimilation processes that they had to go through. I don’t know why I don’t think it was ever mentioned in any of my classes, and I have a pretty good memory for things, especially for history cause it’s interesting to me. I don’t remember ever them talking about, any other teachers, talking about how they assimilated, how they adapted so well to white life, and then when the Trail of Tears happened that a lot of them didn’t ever experience what it was to be outside like that and have to put themselves that way. And before I had this sort of vision of a whole bunch of Indians dressed in tribal dress walking this long trail and I learned a lot about that, and in general I learned a lot about all sorts of
things. Again it’s too much to count but that specific instance the assimilation stuck out in my mind in particular cause I had just never heard that which is surprising. (MT271-84)

In fact, she was rather upset that some of her previous classes had never covered some of the material. “You would assume after all these years of learning American history they would have at least talked about it once, but they never did. So again, this was a refreshing look at it, renewed my interest in American history” (MT287-9).

On the final, Roberto commented, “I especially appreciated the fact that you addressed race and inequality although I must say I would have liked to have seen it delved more into when it came to the other racial inequalities” (FA231-3).

In the interview I followed up by asking why he appreciated the fact that race was addressed. He answered:

Because we don’t usually, like in most history classes, you don’t really touch on this. You touch on race and people really don’t talk about it literally, most people in. Like if you’re talking about US history in particular, you can almost spend a whole semester talking on just, like not even the history, the racial you know, the inequality you know, within the group and between the groups, and the relations between the groups. You could spend a good two or three months on just that inequality, and the fact is at least you touched on it and we delved into it a little bit. Where most history teachers don’t, they teach by the book and they don’t deviate too much from it. (RT90-7)

He then gave a specific example which relates to racial strife within the local public school district, with which he felt students in the district were unfamiliar. He’s only had one teacher address that issue, and he felt students “don’t know the basics of our local history cause we choose to be hush hush about racial issues” (RT100-101). He went on to explain, “Because they’re not [a] particularly good look on American society and we’re still dealing with things like that even 40 or 50 years after things ‘have been corrected’ you can say I put that in quotes” (RT103-4). He did not feel that race was a big part of the class, but part of the tapestry of the class:
I don’t think it was a big part I mean it wasn’t like we spent the entire time talking about it, it was more or less that you spent the time to address it. And you kinda weave it into the history also, so in general it wasn’t a necessarily a balance because it wasn’t necessarily equal. But it was more of a tapestry, different types of threads of history and issues within history woven together to make the class whole. (RT116-9)

Roberto did feel that a lot of time was spent on Native Americans and African Americans, but he would have liked greater coverage of other groups as well:

I think [the] only history we didn’t touch on was other groups of people like I felt like Native Americans [and] black inequalities dominated for the most part. I think we should touch more on Asian and Latino and a combination of those groups, ‘cause they all share racial aspects of domination and being dominated. And I think we kind of touched on the two groups we always touch on sort of, I think we touched on them, but I wish we would have touched on them more. I would sacrifice knowing a little bit more of the other two, the two bigger groups to know about the groups we don’t really talk about like Asians. Even though Asian Latinos tend to be more accepted by white people they still had to fight really, really hard for that acceptance. And I don’t think we really talk about that in history at all. Like most people don’t know that Asian American history has a month and so does Latino American history, but they can’t tell you what month and its funny cause they all fall back to back every single one February, March, April, May all those months are for some different minority group and no one knows past February. (RT342-53)

Roberto did feel that the class discussed diversity, and that the class had some racial and economic variety, but the conversation within the class reinforced the idea why diversity should be part of the curriculum:

It may not have been different people or diversity in the groups but yeah there were times where it was diverse, and there were times when the diversity caused issues and we went right back to the reason why there needs to be diversity and different points of view. (RT604-7)

The class had a variety of students, however it could be split into two halves based on outlooks on life.

Seating chart 104. Within the 104 class, a topic that was raised by Moira and Roberto was that of seating. From the standpoint of a student sitting in class, most of the male students sat on the back wall. All of these students were white. On the right side of the class, by the door, there was another grouping of students, who were all African-American. To the left of
them were Roberto and Moira. The one outlier was Katherine, who sat in the front left, alone. There was no seating chart in the class. This was how the students sat on the first day, and how they sat until the end.

Roberto felt this seating was significant to an understanding of how the students reacted and might understand issues of race. As he said, “I would say … that the group was pretty much divided into two racial groups” (RT541-2).

Even the class in general, like even the seating was setup like that, the guys were in the back, the girls were in front. I was somewhere in the middle because sometimes I thought what the guys said was funny and sometimes I agreed with the girls so that’s kinda how that was. Who usually sat on one side or who usually sat on that side, it wasn’t necessarily something that you consciously did it, just the old term birds of a feather flock together, that’s the literal translation of it because we all shared the same skin color and we flocked in groups which is just how it always been. (RT544-9)

Yeah, um on the other side over there, but she [Katherine] was sitting next to Moira who was the only other white girl. It makes sense, I wouldn’t necessarily say there were differing points of view, but the views did differ. Kind of like the people did differ but the points of view sometimes did. But I wish there had maybe been some Asians maybe some Latinos thrown in somewhere there was no other black guy. (RT551-4)

Moira also commented on the grouping of students within the class. A term that was thrown around a lot by the students in the back was “badass”. This term was used when referring to how certain people acted, such as Zachary Taylor, Andrew Jackson, or certain military acts or acts of bravery. For Moira, Roberto, and potentially other students, it became code. For those in the back of the classroom it was a traditional, nationalistic topic that the people liked. For those on the side of the classroom it came to represent a point of dissention, and a reason to question what was being said. As Moira pointed out:

A lot of people in the back left hand corner liked to look at the “badass” elements of history, again skating over those minute details that suggest that those people in question were not the greatest, but because they got shot and lived it was cool. It was alright he [Jackson] survived as a prisoner of war, had all sorts of assassinations and survived and more. Towards the right end of the class there were people who were more focused with minority groups. They wanted to, they discussed that the problems that led to that. We
had two homosexuals in the class and they kind of liked the idea of promoting more rights geared towards that, too, and they talked about, Katherine in specific talked about more about women’s rights. Everybody had their own personal things that they were interested in and I felt that there was a large spectrum of political views and or political beliefs that were represented in that class, so made overall learning interesting. (MT430-9)

Another instance which Roberto commented on, specifically, happened on January 26. I attempted to discuss how the cultures of early Native Americans differed. I then began to talk about cultural norms. I tried to switch angles and discuss cultural stereotypes and generalizations, such as that all Americans like baseball, apple pie, or mayonnaise. Katherine then mentioned something about Americans being cleaner than the French or English. People seemed to like that, but then none of the students had been to England or France, or knew anyone from there. I then used an example that has been successful in past classes. I asked the students to be quiet and think about whether they would eat spaghetti at another person’s house. All of the African-American students said no, and all of the white students said yes. I attempted to use that as a point of departure to explain a cultural difference within the same society. Jean volunteered to explain why she would not eat spaghetti at someone’s house. She explained it as an opportunity for the female cook to woo other men by spiking the sauce with menses. At that point the African-American students nodded their heads in affirmation, and the white students attempted to dispute the logic of such a belief or act. Something which had worked in previous classes had failed to illustrate the idea of cultural beliefs, and acted as a wedge for at least a week within the class. I discussed the topic with Jean after class once, and after class with Roberto once. He again commented on it during the interview. He didn’t want to go into it too much, because he felt the students in the back took it the wrong way. However, he did mention he encountered the idea in two other places outside of school that semester (RT571-80). Madeline
also mentioned that learning the background of the idea was one of the important things she learned this semester (FA700-2).

**Politics 104**

Politics and the biases related to them was another topic brought up in the 104 class. This makes sense, since some of the struggles which brought colonists to the Americas were due to political and religious troubles. This continued through the revolution, early republic and ante-bellum period. Roberto discussed this:

> Considering U.S. history is a political thing, politics kind of dominate U.S. history. Not dominate but, own it almost. So of course there were links here and there, I mean when we talked about the founding fathers there was a link there, we talked about slavery there was a link there … there’s political links all throughout history, before America, during America, and I can’t say after because I probably won’t be alive when that happens. (RT206-301)

When asked if the political link related to biases in history, Roberto emphatically replied, “Hell yeah, it really did” (RT305). He went on to elaborate how everything from the constitution to slavery had political links and their own biases:

> You can’t look at politics in America and not see biases around like, from the formation, to the way it ran, to the way its deviated from [the] original viewpoint. We got biases from the constitution that created the country, to the way we process and create laws, they all have biases. There’s no law in the U.S. Constitution which hasn’t affected one group in one way and benefitted another group in another way. Like if you look at something as simple as Prohibition, not even from a get drunk have fun, but from a financial standpoint. That wrecks them for a good ten, fifteen years of a legal way of life, for them buying no alcohol. That’s a bias right there, just look at it from an unbias standpoint, abolishing slavery, hey that was pretty biased toward southerners, that was their foundation of life, and money, it was slavery. So I’m not saying that slavery was a great thing, but for them it was a way of life and by abolishing it, it ended that for them and for others. The Jim Crow laws may not be in the Constitution, but in local laws and politics, it was biased toward African-Americans. So no matter what law you toss up in the air it’s going to affect a person in a negative way and others in a positive way. (RT304-18)
Slavery 101/104

A topic which was raised in both classes was the idea of slavery. This is an idea which
students often feel they know a lot about, but they often have only one view of what slavery is.

Within the 101 class, James said:

[It] surprised me, like with the slavery. I didn’t really know how the African slave trade
started and how that wasn’t the norm for most of history. That stuff was new to me, there
were some things I learned the first time in this class. (JT180-2)

Kurt commented on a similar idea in the 104 of class. We discussed how the modern,
U.S. idea of slavery really became codified with the 1690 Virginia Slave Law. He felt this law
had repercussions until the modern day:

Another important thing is that I learned that slavery became what it was from an act that
was passed in the 1600's. I had always thought that slaves were slaves for life and I
didn’t know that before 1690, slaves would be freed after a period of time. I think this is
important because it shows how fast an idea can change. It only took that one act to
change the way people think and it is still causing problems today. (FA735-43)

I think that is it important that these students began to understand the origins of the American
slave system, and how it changed our views of this institution until the modern day.

New Learning

As mentioned in chapter four, Moira felt that somewhere between 60% and 65% of the
material covered in the U.S. history class was new (MT 450-1). Several students commented
specifically on material they learned which was new, which may give an idea of what types of
topics and learning occurred in the class. Kurt discussed something he learned about the
American Revolution:

That if the French hadn’t been fighting the British in Europe and in the Indies, that the
colonies probably wouldn’t have had a chance at beating the British. This is important to
me because it’s not information you ever hear about in the American history books. And
it makes sense that we learn about WW2 so much. It was the first time we beat
Europeans by ourselves. It’s interesting and important. (FA750-3)
Part of this relates to a discussion in class, about how the French helped with the American Revolution and the British ended the War of 1812 to focus on France. There were several Native American incursions, such as the Seminole Wars and the Blackhawk War. We also fought a war against Mexico, and a war against ourselves. However, the first time we beat a European force by ourselves was the Spanish American War, and then the World Wars of the twentieth century. The discussion focused on how Americans may have felt in the early nineteenth century, and modern American perceptions of nationalism. Warren also learned something about wars:

How the US happened to get involved in the wars it did, and they were important because you really found out and understood how the rich made the problems and the poor became the mediators and resolved the conflicts that were created. (FA722-3)

This relates to a discussion which began with the American Revolution and followed through to several wars. The main argument was that throughout history, those in power begin wars, and those without power are the ones on the front lines.

**Links to the Modern World 101/104**

The students also mentioned the idea of seeing links through time. This can be broken down into two sub-areas. The first is that the students are able to see the humanness of people in the past and the modern world, and perhaps anachronistically using their modern sensibilities to see the people of the past. The second is that the students touched on how I would use modern examples to get across ideas of the past, or relate how something in the past was similar to something in the modern world.

Roberto felt that it was interesting to hear about the presidents, and that they were just human. He now looks at them in a different way:

I look at presidents a whole new way, like some of the presidents were actually really interesting. You always get the same ones every single time and we actually heard about
different ones than we’re used to hearing. So like you always hear about Washington and 
FDR, and you know JFK and you know the ones people should know ‘cause they had 
such a huge influence on the way America was run. But it was nice to hear other stories, 
like it made them more real than just what’s on the paper money. You know, beyond 
what we think we know, it made them more realistic and more human, which is 
essentially what they were, than their elevated status in society. I appreciated that I look 
at presidents differently as far as my views on history no not really it just reaffirmed it 
pretty much. (RT610-7)

Warren, too, touched on this idea that presidents and founding fathers were just human. He also 
commented on the types of people who emigrated to the U.S., and they may not have been as 
illustrious as some may think:

Another important thing that I learned was that our founding fathers really weren't the 
perfect people we thought they were. Most of them were alcoholics, and had their own 
distilleries. They also slept around a lot, and most of the time it was with their slaves. 
And oh ya they were slave owners. It just allows a person to realize how normal and 
down to earth those men were. I also thought another important thing was the fact that 
the U.S. was made up of a lot of different people from the start, not just when people 
started immigrating. It's important in that it shows us that even if your family came over 
to the new world right at the beginning, you might not be what you thought. It makes a 
person realize that there was more of a diversification in the beginning. (FA725-34)

James also learned that people are just human:

People really haven't changed. Even while technology changes and evolves, the people 
still act in the same ways.... It's more important for me to understand the people and their 
motives rather than the important dates of events in history. (FA553-6)

James also liked the fact that much of the history was related to the modern world:

I liked the humor, facts combo. Also, I really thought it was helpful how you always 
related the history to the present day. Like, if this was happening today, etc.... That really 
helped me understand what was going on and how people thought and acted back then, 
rather than just a bunch of dates. You also talked a lot about the common people a lot, 
which was nice. (FA152-6)

Emma felt that the links between the past and the present had to be made to make it 
relevant:

There again, I think you have to put things into context of your own life to be able to give 
a perspective, unless you say, I think that guy was full of shit and he did such and such. 
(ET575-8)
So when the students applied a modern understanding to people of the past, it became more relevant. Equally when I gave modern examples of past events it also became more relevant for them.

**Trustworthiness**

A topic related to the additions and the background knowledge was that of trustworthiness. Because I was the instructor, and because I had the knowledge or the credentials, they felt what I said was more trustworthy. While I did on several occasions specifically discuss that I had biases, and that I did not know everything and they should question me, this was still something which the students felt was important for them. As James said:

> I think you played more of a role in understanding what was really going on then than any of the books or websites. I think talking to a professor that I come to respect, or like, I agree with a lot of things they say, I’m able to trust them more and what they say, rather than something that I would read from any other type of source. So you had a major role in the, in my opinions, of history morseo than books or online sources that I read. I just, like, the general feeling of whatever time period I have now more came from you than anything else. (JT234-41)

He continued, when asked what had the biggest impact on his learning:

> Yeah, I think that would probably be you as the professor, rather than the books or the textbook would be not a close second. But the sources I read had a majority of the information, you were a majority of the information and the opinions about what was going on. (JT243-5)

Katherine, too, felt that as the instructor I was trustworthy, and that potentially things I mentioned would be on the quizzes: “I really liked when you lectured because, I guess, it’s because I trust what you are saying, and that what you are lecturing to us is useful and will be on the quiz’s” (FA350-2).

Moira said that my background and credentials were important for her learning:
I would say actually a huge amount most of the information I took from the class was you mostly, because the other students weren’t really prepared. Also because you have a lot of credentials to back you up, I mean not very many people know six languages or put the time and effort, and you have a wealth of information up in that little head. (MT359-62)

Kurt, too, felt that I was a creditable source and this also made the lectures more interesting:

I did learn a lot from your lectures though. I did find what you had to say about history interesting. Maybe it’s because you are the teacher but I felt that you knew way more about the subjects and were more creditable. I also think you went into more detail when you talked. I learned the most from your lectures I would say. (FA385-8)

Kurt, Katherine, and Moira were all in 104. I specifically had a discussion with the students in that class, on February 8, about the need to question everything. Moira, at the time, said, “You know everything, don’t you want us to believe you?” My answer was no, I wanted them to question me, their classmates, and their texts. Certainly there is an air of believability to an instructor, hired by an institution to teach a class. There must be some certification involved. And it does feel good to be believed. However, with the first two weeks of class focusing on perspectives in history and biases, I would have hoped for less trust. Perhaps there was questioning which went on, or critical evaluation of the instructor, which was not revealed by the data.

A specific event which Emma mentioned when I was talking about biases occurred in the 101 class. Cain asked about what they should question. I told them they should question everything, including their text. I made the motion of throwing a book across the room, and James volunteered his book. So I threw his book across the room. Emma commented on this in the interview and the final answers (ET17-28, FA105-9). She felt that this was a powerful visual which made the point at the time. However, the tests did have about 30% of the questions from the textbook as multiple choice, and she felt that I was sending mixed messages with the act.
She is correct. I wrote short answer questions from the wiki, but in retrospect needed to exclude anything from the text.

I believe the students are touching on an idea raised by Freire (2009), that the oppressed don’t “know” things, they feel that the educator who knows things should talk. Students are taught from an early age that they must sit, be quiet, and listen, as the educator fills their minds with everything they know. When there is an attempt to go against the years of learned behavior, it can be difficult. However, I believe that the students began to see that they, too, had knowledge. In chapter four and above, the students relate what they learned as they taught, and what they questioned as they listened or read. Twelve years of schooling cannot be overcome in one class. The perceptions of students that the instructor is credible, trustworthy, or “knows,” cannot be quickly overcome. However, I believe in this class steps were made toward the goal of student-centered learning and breaking the image of instructor as sole center of knowledge.

As mentioned in chapter four, Cain asked about the reliability of Wikipedia and their posts to the wiki. I then discussed how he knew more about basketball than I did. After that point, he seemed to understand. In fact, it was after that point that his attendance improved. As he said, he made it to all the classes after the first few weeks. It was also after that point that he began to ask more questions and become more involved in the discussions and questioning. While this was much to the chagrin of Christopher, I believe that he began to see that he, too, “knew” and could participate equally in the class.

**Instructor Biases**

In chapter four, I discussed the idea of validity in the presentations and the wiki. Above I have covered the idea of biases in history, or presentation of information. However, there are also the biases of the instructor. Nathan commented, “I liked how you helped us take a different
view of history” (FA417-8). So I was able to give them a different view, but did they see the biases in my own instruction?

Moira was able to parse out what she felt my role was:

The topics which were discussed by YOU [emphasis hers] in particular, your political agenda I feel is to have, you wanted people to understand that a lot of the history that we’ve come to learn was written by people who had specific agendas to promote. …For you in specific, you were just trying to make sure we were not looking at it with the same mentality we had been taught for our whole life. (MT204-13)

As mentioned above, the students were able to see problems with validity of their classmates and biases with the material. They also felt I was credible. However, they did not seem to feel that I was biased.

**Insight and additions.** One of the themes which emerged from the data was the value the students felt came from my own insight and additions to class. Some of this could be referring to when I taught a chapter because the presenter was absent, or a chapter which no one signed up for. It also applies to comments I made while students were presenting, to give either topical insight or to give a different view on the topic. As Christopher wrote:

You would often fill in gaps in history that the student presenting left out. That was always nice because I felt that even if the student presenting wasn’t doing a great job, that you would fill in with some very interesting insights. (FA31-4)

This was a difficult role for me to play. Certainly I could teach all the subject matter, but that was not the goal. Whenever someone was sick, I attempted to cover material which I thought was tangential, but that probably did not relate to what they might cover. When someone presented, I gave some leeway. However, if there was a misrepresentation I tried to correct it, or if something was lacking I tried to add to it. An example of this was in the 104 class on February 5. The first student who presented talked about the colonial era, and one of the topics she talked about was Bacon’s Rebellion of 1676. This was a failed attempt at
overthrowing the English governor in Virginia, which modern historians look to as a basis for the American Revolution down the road. The rebellion failed because Nathaniel Bacon died of dysentery, and shortly after his death English ships arrived with troops who supported the governor. The student, while covering the topic, said that Bacon was successful and died in old age. Since this was not an interpretation, but incorrect facts, I corrected the student. I told the class that he did die, the rebellion failed, and this was a key event leading toward the Virginia Slave Law of 1690. So Christopher is correct, that I was a mediator, and had to balance allowing students to teach and question, while watching out for outright falsehoods. This is a difficult role to play, since I tried to get students to question their classmates, without acting as an expert. It is a gradual process, and more difficult in the first few weeks.

Emma was initially disappointed with the change in my instruction from the previous classes she had with me. However, she felt my additions were important:

No, of course YOU [emphasis hers] added because you can’t help but add, ‘cause it’s just how you teach. I learned from you and I was disappointed at the beginning of the semester when I found out that you weren’t going to be teaching the way you had taught 104. I thought, “What the hell am I here for?” (ET490-3)

Emma said that my additions were crucial to her understanding:

It was crucial that you interject, absolutely. And that was when I would start taking notes, when you would start talking and not just because I knew that what was what you wanted us to know, but because of your style and the way you communicate and the way that you lecture, I know that I can take notes in a way that I can reread them and it will all make sense. (ET181-7)

Cameron wrote that the extra facts helped him remember the history better:

Lectures were one of my favorites because you were able to really throw interesting facts out with almost every point on the outline. It helped me remember things in history a lot better when there was something crazy that went along with the point. (FA279-81)
James also valued my additions. As he said, “I am also glad that you weren't opposed to putting your word in and filling in information that we didn't cover. I wouldn't have liked the presentations otherwise” (FA840-1).

Each of these statements relates to the difference between a student teaching the class, and a teacher with more background knowledge teaching the class. It is also something perhaps relatable to some K-8 history instruction. Oftentimes people find simply learning the facts of history rather boring. Those with more experience in history classes often have heard stories or tidbits which help students or instructors remember the history better, and make it more interesting. They could be referred to as the “hat hooks of history.” For instance, on February 10, Moira and Roberto were covering the War of Spanish Succession. This is a very messy war to understand. One nation sided with another for reasons which at first glance do not seem logical. And as they were covering the facts of the story, Moira and Roberto either got lost or lost the class at times. However, I added stories about the Duke of Marlborough and his rise to power. I also discussed the genealogy of the Hapsburg family, or more specifically, in the case of Charles II of Spain, the in-breeding. With these additions, the students seemed to gain interest, or remember the story a bit better.

**Background knowledge.** A topic raised by several students was my own disciplinary background, or trivial knowledge. They felt this was important for their understanding of history. As Christopher said, “It also gave us confidence in what you were saying because it showed your vast knowledge. In order to be able to teach like that you must have a huge pool of information on the topic to pull from” (FA35-8). Roberto had similar comments as he wrote:

Last but not least you dropped some mad knowledge about little idiosyncrasies of our founding fathers and mothers. Stuff I would have never known probably without taking this course. So in essence I'm thanking your brain for its extra retention in trivial knowledge. (FA599-602)
Moira also felt the background knowledge was helpful to her. As she said, “You seem like you have a wealth of information up in that little head. So for the most part you played a huge role in my actual learning in that class” (MT361-63).

This does somewhat relate to the additions above. There are stories one hears over many years of taking classes which stick, and in some cases help to make sense out of facts. So I certainly used these. I also tend not to teach from an outline. I do have some outlines which I project so the students can see where I am going, but I do not use them as a reference. Students are very impressed with that, but after enough semesters of teaching, some of the material becomes embedded. When the students are teaching it is even easier, because I do not need to remember all of the events, just some highlights.

**Interest and modern links.** Another topic raised by several students was simply that of interest. As the instructor, when I talked they simply found it more interesting. For instance, Logan would have liked me to lecture more. As she wrote, “I would have liked to learn through you lecturing a bit more. It was just a lot more interesting when you taught than when others did” (FA88-9). Christopher also liked my “good ability to teach to our interests and not from a book” (FA35).

Scott did give some explanation for why the lectures were interesting, and a reason which feeds into the next theme:

I wasn't expecting the lectures to be very fun or even interesting. However they were interesting to me because most of the time they were related to something in the context of my life today. I think that is why everyone paid attention (most of the time) during the lectures. (FA303-6)
As Scott said, making the history relevant to the students’ lives was important. Emma touched on this when she discussed critical thinking in chapter four, and transporting someone to a time or making the information relevant to their own lives. James also mentioned this idea:

You were able to fill in the blanks. However, I must say I always preferred it when you lectured. I liked the humor, facts combo. Also, I really thought it was helpful how you always related the history to the present day. Like, if this was happening today, etc.... (FA151-4)

It is difficult to understand the past, and modern examples can help students gain a context for the past. One of the first times I note using modern examples was on January 20. I was talking about what we know about the middle ages, and how we know a lot from the church laws. However, I also pointed out that since they were laws it meant that was what was desired, not necessarily what occurred. An example I gave was underage drinking or use of illicit drugs. Though there are laws against it, students still use them. In the same class I also talked about the people who came to the new world for the Spanish and for the Virginia Company, and these were not the upper classes which came. There were classes, and class decisions made. Since I had quite a few students from the Chicago-land area, I related this to the groups of people who worked three shifts on the Dan Ryan expressway which goes through the downtown. There is a distinct difference between who works morning, evening and night shifts, and these delineations, mainly based on race, show who fits in certain segments of society.

I believe this was popular, as it related to some ideas of Freire’s critical pedagogy. I was posing problems of humans in their relation to the world (Freire, 2009). We weren’t talking simply about medieval church laws or seventeenth century class rivalry. We were talking about activities which students were familiar with, or situations they had observed. These problems in the past were still around, and they related to the lives of these students. In this it was making
the history more real and authentic for their lives. There is something which they can learn which relates to how they live, and that made it powerful for them.

**Freedom**

Roberto also commented on the freedom allowed within the classroom. He felt that it was valuable, as he would be able to apply it to his future teaching:

> I also learned that a little freedom in the class room isn't bad, I have always dreamed of having an open classroom where students can think and express how they feel without reprimand, now I know it got a little crazy but I really appreciated that model as a future teacher. (FA596-9)

Part of this freedom, however, did include tangents and side topics which he also mentioned. As he wrote, “Lectures were excellent and if you were[n’t] a good teacher, despite the dallyings from the subject at hand, I probably would have dropped it ages ago” (FA227-8).

With this freedom, Roberto also had a problem with not having guidelines:

> I would say that’s one thing that I don’t, that kinda frustrated me a little bit ‘cause like, sometimes it was just like too laissez faire, too much like hands off for me sometimes, like we never not even having a guideline or a rubric or anything we were just like, dang how are you supposed to really figure this out, but you know when we came to you with questions you still gave us the answers, without the rubric and the guidelines we kinda figured our way through it, most of us came out on top so we were really worried for a while, you need to understand we were, yeah, uprising rebellion. (RT473-80)

This is true, that this was one of the purposeful parts of the course. I attempted to have the students do their own research, add it to the wiki or teach it in class. Therefore there was a lot of room. I did add to the class as discussed above. Sometimes it seemed necessary, sometimes tangential. However, I attempted to not influence the students towards their research, or in how to present the material, unless they asked. If I had, I would have taken away the class from them.
I think Roberto may have summed this up best in his interview, when he commented on how he envisioned my role. As he put it, “I thought you were more or less, like you were kinda like, the Yoda of history in a way” (RT454). As he went on to explain:

You were never like, you never really I guess, you taught us lessons in a way, but we were kind of meant to find the forest in our own way. Like, however we chose, so I guess if we chose to pick up the saber of light or saber of dark, and some people chose to be cynical about history and some chose to embrace it. But it wasn’t like you were there hands on all the time. Like if we had a question and we needed the answer, you were there and it was appreciated, but sometimes you were kinda like, let us do it on our own like the whole teaching aspect. I’ve only had one teacher do that, an English teacher and that kinda made sense ‘cause in English, you kinda have to talk about it. So, um, that’s kinda how it was sometimes, you were there hovering over us with the saber helping us practice and other times you were saying, the force will be with you and get your ass out of here and go find some stuff. Both of which I appreciated for the most part. (RT456-65)

This hands off approach which Roberto touches on is my attempt to get the students to do their own research, and understand that they do have the experience and ability to learn and teach the content.

**Circle.** Part of this idea of freedom, and perhaps equality, was having the students sit in a circle. This was a part of the class which Madeline felt was enjoyable

I enjoyed the lecture days when we all just sat around in a circle and discussed what was going on in the world. I really liked this because it wasn't the traditional way of lecturing, it was more of a group discussion where we were all at eye level talking about history and asking questions. (FA325-8)

Madeline was in the 104 class, and from my notes I can see that we sat in the circle for a much longer time in that class. The first student taught in early February, and I taught everything before that. As I taught we sat in a circle. In the 101 class it did not last as long. As students taught, there was a progression of how they presented and where I sat. In 101, Emma began teaching in the second week and I sat at different points around the room. However, people did not get in a circle because they couldn’t see her or the board. This same thing
happened in 104 as the first students taught, and later as Roberto and Moira taught. The class was forward focused, but on the students. As this occurred, I would sit off to the front right, opposite the front left where the students stood teaching. This same progression occurred in both classes.

The ideas of freedom and the circle also resonate with Freirian ideals. The teacher and students are students, and the teacher is jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (Freire, 2009). In both classes I sat with the class, and discussed with the class. If I was teaching I sometimes sat or stood at the side front to draw something on the board. For the remainder of the semester I listened with the class, and was part of the class. When it was necessary I filled in, but tried to make the class a learning environment for everyone. I believe that all of the students grew as people. They became more critical, better educated citizens. They were responsible for teaching in written and oral venues to their classmates. They had a safety net in the instructor, but they were able to learn from each other. Certainly some students liked the wiki, some did not. Some liked the students presentations, some did not. But as they were forced to navigate different types of writing, instruction, learning, and creation, they grew together.

Unbiased. Students commented on understanding biases in websites, or textbooks, or at least having issues with validity with their classmates’ presentations. However, there was an unexpected topic which arose. Several students felt that I did not have an agenda or a bias. Christopher wrote, “You didn’t cause us to work around your goals for teaching. Instead you would add in the important facts into the tangents we were already talking about” (FA34-5). Emma elaborated a bit more:

Maybe you’re just really good at what you do but I just never felt like we were being led in any specific direction. Maybe that just has to do with the way we did our own
research, we were free to go find out what we wanted to go and find out and bring it back. Didn’t feel like there was any slant or any, you need to learn this stuff because we want to come to this particular conclusion. I didn’t feel like there was any sort of taint. (ET568-73)

Certainly I have an agenda in my teaching. However, even though they were able to see biases or political links in what others said, they were not able to see it in mine. It is possible that by showing them potential biases or how to look at information, it may have seemed like I did not have a bias. It is also possible as I got to know the students within the class, and as they got to know me through exchanges of personal information, they came to see some of my biases. However, it was interesting that they did not feel I was biased.

**Aspiration.** When I asked Moira about what role I played, she spoke about the credentials and background information cited above. However, she went on to ask if I wanted to play a role. I told her I wanted to play a role, but a small one. However, she brought up the idea of giving the students something to aspire to. She felt that my background gave the other students in the class something to aspire towards (MT366-71).

This is not something which I had considered going into the project. I still want my role to be as an organizer of work, and perhaps mediator. However, if my role is perceived as more, then it is valuable to have the students aspire to something. Hopefully what they are aspiring to is a critical understanding of history. Perhaps this idea of aspiration relates to the idea of growth from above. Perhaps my role is that of giving them something to aspire to, or perhaps it is to be the person responsible for helping them grow.

**Critical Pedagogy**

In chapter four, I looked at the experiences of the students, their learning, and how it related to critical thinking. This chapter has examined various themes and topics which were discussed in my classes, based on what the students felt were important. I feel they relate to
ideas of the social democrat position. They highlight issues of social inequity from race to religion to power differentials. They also relate to ideas of socially democratic citizenship education. For social democrats this means encouraging critical thinking ala-Giroux, as discussed in chapter four. It also means pointing out social injustices in society as a starting point. Above I have examined what social injustices the students felt we covered. I would also like to look at the role of the instructor to determine whether I was a critical pedagogue.

I am using Freire’s (2009) work to define critical pedagogy. There are some key points I would like to focus on from this, some of which are noted above. One of these points is that the oppressed do not “know” things. They feel it is the educators who should speak. In order to be a critical pedagogue, the teacher and students must be students, and the teacher is jointly responsible for a process in which everyone grows. One must also pose problems of humans in their relation to the world. Critical pedagogy relates to acts of cognition, not transference of knowledge. Every thematic investigation which deepens historical awareness is thus really educational, while all authentic education investigates thinking. A critical pedagogue is didactic, having everyone read different points of view and discuss why there are different points of view on the same event. Finally, the critical pedagogue does not encourage or replicate cultural invasion of the colonizers over the colonized.

I believe many of these points have been touched on in the students’ discussions. There are two which are more difficult to illustrate. The first focuses on acts of cognition, not transference of knowledge. For the purposes of this chapter I believe this was achieved. When students touch on ideas of bias, validity, credibility, and changing perceptions of the world, I can only surmise that these are acts of cognition, not simply knowledge transfer. In chapter six I
discuss this topic more as it relates to Halverson and Collins (2009) and ideas of creation of knowledge in the modern, digital world.

The second idea, which is not readily expressive, is that of cultural invasion. I would suggest that to replicate an invasive culture, or aid a culture in invading people’s minds within a western or U.S. context, would be to uphold the status quo. With many of the topics discussed above, I do not believe that is the case. Western culture was discussed and critiqued from its religious Judeo-Christian roots, to its homophobic, racist permutations in the modern world. I would suggest that some of the comments made by Logan on changing her perception of Islamic culture or Africa’s place in the world suggests a chink in the western armor. I would also offer that evidence for the validity of this is in the level of discomfort felt by Christopher in the class. Noffke has been working on using ideas of discomfort as a test of validity, and I would suggest that Christopher is an affirmation of the validity in this case.

On the whole, I think the ideas of Freire were seen in the classroom. Some of the key events were allowing the students to teach and to write the text. As part of the teaching the students led the discussion, and went on tangents they felt were relevant. In so doing, they were exposed to ideas unlike their own, and at those points they grew. I feel that pointing out the injustices as we discussed the basis for western society pushed the students. Many of them may not have overcome years of traditional, conservative beliefs in one semester. However, they were introduced to ideas which may help them overcome them in the future.

Conclusion

In chapter four, I discussed how the students experienced the wiki and the teaching. I also touched on the idea of critical thinking. Above I examined many inequalities and ideas related to the social democrat position, my role in promoting this position, and its relation to
critical pedagogy. In chapter six I analyze the experiences from chapter four, the social
democrat themes raised in chapter five, and ideas on critical thinking and critical pedagogy. It is
then possible to see how the wiki and teaching relate to the social democrat position. The
discussion then looks towards possible recommendations and research based on an examination
of this course.
Politically within the last decade, the social democrat position has become ever more important in the United States. Race has always been an underlying issue, but has moved into a very different position with the election of the first African-American president. Religion, too, has held a mythological role in the United States as part of the foundational story. However, this too has changed with the growth of religions other than Protestant, and some people drawing links between specific religions and terrorism. With the growth of media and technology, the seeming cohesiveness of the nation seems more fractured.

Within this chaos instructors are supposed to teach history. In the K-12 setting this history is often taught from the textbooks and peripherals. As James Loewen (2007) has pointed out, many of these textbooks are factually incorrect or biased. This does not raise the same level of public outcry as if math books reported $2 + 2 = 5$. How are students supposed to become effective citizens if the history part of their background is at best bland, and at worst incorrect? For many this has not been a concern. However, with the growth of media and technology there is the potential for changing this history. There are also growing, citizen-oriented ways for the views on the past to be changed. Citizens with an interest can edit Wikipedia and argue over the intent of the minutest of details for an overall greater picture. Many of these people are simply doing this as a hobby, for fun, or perhaps even ideological reasons. Perhaps this is not, in essence, different from arm chair historians and anthropologists of the past. However, many of those people came from the upper and middle classes. These wikipedians and digital technologists can come from any class, race, or religion.
This is a call and an opportunity for educators and historians to integrate these technologies, these people, and their effort into a greater understanding of history. It is also an opportunity to tell the stories of the past that people want to hear. Some may say people want to hear about the first, happy Thanksgiving, the great founding fathers, and the glorious Civil War. However, that story has been told and is found wanting. It is a teleological story which leads us to the penultimate state of civilization, the modern United States. However, in this version we go from happy pilgrims, with great founders and war heroes, to a nation besieged by recession, war, and political strife. The progressive history becomes dark and ominous. A clearer history, however, includes these problems throughout the nation’s history. And while it may not be as happy, it does show some progress, and some setbacks, and the need for change.

In chapter two, I began by looking at the three historical traditions and their belief sets. I then looked at types of technologies and learning theories. In chapter four I examined the experiences the students had as they used the wiki and taught the class. The link was drawn to their experiences and an increase in their critical thinking skills. In chapter five I examined the key themes discussed during the semester, and how they related to the social democrat position and critical pedagogy. Below I recap the different positions and learning theories, and connect these to the student learning I have described. Then I discuss the implications of this, limitations of the study, and directions for future research. I consider how this type of instruction and use of technology can be used in the future. This use can fill a need within the nation to help educate citizens, allowing them to figure out what happened in the past and how to proceed.

**Traditions**

The conservative tradition within history education focuses on content knowledge, dates, people, and places. It is not concerned with critical thinking, and replicates the status quo.
Chronology is the framework for transmission and textbooks are the tools, while exemplary primary source documents may also be used. The elites within society may get to know social scientific ideas, perhaps in order to continue control within society. Critical thinking may be encouraged in those small groups as well. However, control is maintained through promoting the cultural literacy of the dominant group, and through this the status quo is maintained. This is the role of citizenship education within the conservative tradition.

While it might be possible to use a project like this within the conservative tradition, it is unlikely. Not using the textbook could go beyond the content knowledge, or comfort level of an instructor. Allowing students to find their own information, teach their classmates, and write a collaborative work for teaching other students would not fall within the belief set. This project has circumvented the traditional venues of the conservative position. Critical thinking was encouraged, the textbook was barely used, knowledge was taught by students to students, and the focus was not on rote memorization of dates and people.

The social liberal tradition has a larger area of topical coverage. It would include social, gender, race, religious, and big picture history. One goal is to help students become more like social scientists, or versed in ideas of social science. The framework for this tradition is often teleological, pointing towards the modern day. While the textbook and primary sources would be used, other things such as music, movies or oral histories might also be included. Citizenship education within this tradition includes multiple perspectives, but in the end still maintains the status quo. These students should remain objective, but use critical thinking. Critical thinking should allow students to learn the skills, though they needn’t employ them for societal change. If they did it would be allowable but not encouraged. The goal of this tradition is to have employable, educated citizens.
This project would be perfect for innovative teachers and those leaning towards the social liberal position. Students could include multiple perspectives, different types of information and media. A teleological framework could still be employed. Students could learn critical thinking, learn job skills, and think about the bigger picture. In the end they could learn digital skills, public speaking, and have a good sense for history. However, training a social scientist entails conforming to the rules of the discipline, not calling for societal change. For example, questions may be asked about sources, citations, and interpretation. However, it would probably not be asked how these affect the way we think about past acts, events, and interpretations as they support modern societal problems. The emphasis is on the academic skills, not on action.

The social democrat position incorporates much of the social liberal tradition. However, there is a political element to the social democrat position not present in the social liberal. There are goals of studying social inequalities, intelligently redistributing wealth, exposing anti-democratic limitations of individualism and free markets, and promoting participatory democracy. The instructor knowingly takes a position to counter the conservative bent of society. This conservative bent is present in everything students and instructors encounter in daily life concerning beliefs on race, gender, class, national identity, and subjectivity. These beliefs are present in the media ecology we encounter from texts, television, and digital media. It is this inundation which the social democratic tradition attempts to expose, critique, and change. In the process students will become critical thinkers, and hopefully create a better future society. While it is a political issue, the overriding moral good needs to be the guide for educators. History in this tradition needs to think about the concurrentness, the tentativeness of history versus the teleological. The teacher needs to be at once teacher and student acting as mediator.
This project attempted to incorporate social democratic ideals. The hyper-textuality of digital media can help break down the teleological nature of history instruction. Equally, as the students teach and focus on the period or topics they cover, the teleological nature becomes less pronounced. Bringing the views of the students in and pointing out disparities can create moments in which the student can begin to question the status quo. It is not my belief that simply by doing this in one class students will immediately change their own views, and work for an improved future. However, I do believe that some students will be led towards this, and the seeds may be planted in others. Our students do need to be able to intelligently navigate the digital landscape, understanding hyper-textuality. However, instead of simply being prepared for a digital economy, they need to be prepared towards the next step of intelligently redistributing the digital world.

A Vision of Students Today

In order to illustrate some of the ideas below, I believe it is useful to give an overview of what happened on one specific day, later in the semester. This day is chosen for several reasons. One is that it was a typical day and gives a sense for how the classes were conducted. The second is that another graduate student visited the class that day and her view on the class changed my perception, showing how far the class had indeed progressed. By describing this day, it will be possible to point out some important ideas.

April 26 was, by all intents and purposes, a normal class. In 101, I had previously gotten the class to 1754 so Francis could begin to teach. I had forgotten to cover Bacon’s Rebellion of 1676 in the previous class, so I attempted to cover the event so Francis could then teach. As I was talking about the rebellion, Francis was at the computer. As I mentioned Nathaniel Bacon, Francis found a picture of him on Google, and it quickly popped up on the projector screen. As I
mentioned Governor Berkeley, a picture of him popped up on the screen. This followed as I
mentioned Green Hill Plantation and Berkeley Plantation. Logan, James, and Cain asked a few
questions which I answered, and then Francis began teaching. He had a PowerPoint
presentation, and he discussed the Seven Year’s War and the causes leading up to the American
Revolution. He said something about the Boston Massacre, and while there was a side
discussion of the event, he brought up another picture of Paul Revere’s depiction of the
massacre. This led to a discussion of propaganda in the Revolutionary era and today. Francis
also discussed the Boston Tea Party. This first led to a discussion of the revolutionaries dressing
as Native Americans. Logan then asked why it was chosen as an event to name a political
movement after. This led to another discussion about the original event, and the implied ties to
the modern political party. Francis ended his discussion for the day mentioning Benjamin
Franklin, and how he would discuss inventions the next day. Somehow, at the mention of
Franklin, another student quickly was prompted to bring up an off-color YouTube sensation
starring Jack Black, called Drunk History. It is a short video with someone, presumably drunk,
telling a story about Benjamin Franklin. As the story is told, Jack Black reenacts the story. I
was familiar with the series and before I could say a word, it was projected on the screen and the
students watched it as class ended.

In the 104 class, Warren discussed the Civil War from a military standpoint. He began
with Fort Sumter, and continued to Bull Run, Pea Ridge, Roanoke, and Fort Henry, all the way
to the burning of Atlanta. He covered all the major, eastern battles until the end of the war. He
had pictures from each of the battles, and pictures of the typical weapons used. He did not cover
Shiloh, Vicksburg, or General Grant, so I added some information on the importance of Grant to
the war. This was his last day of presenting, so I then covered the original discussions and later interpretations of the 13th-15th amendments, based on James Anderson’s work.

This was a normal day, except I had a fellow graduate student sitting in on both classes. Afterwards we discussed her impression. She was very impressed with both classes. She was amazed at how the students questioned each other and questioned me. She was also amazed that the students went off on tangents, but brought themselves back on track. The students also related the historical content to current events, looking for the relationships and rationale to current events, and some very abstract thoughts. She was also very impressed at the research skills the students needed to find pictures on the fly, to follow a discussion pictorially.

I was actually quite amazed at her comments. These were both, in my mind, normal classes. However, she was correct that the students had come to a level of participation which I considered standard. They were questioning the discussions in class, bringing themselves back on topic, and integrating the lecture material with pictures as the discussion occurred. They were critically thinking, socially learning, and, I would suggest, coming to a level of what web 2.0 learning may look like in the classroom. I had been amazed earlier in the semester when there was a progression of presentation styles from Emma to Logan to James. This behavior had reached a plateau by the fourth student presentation. However, at that point it would seem that I came to expect that level of presentation and interaction from the students. By the end of the semester it had been commonplace for the class, but from an outsider perspective was amazing. Through her eyes, I would also agree. It is interesting to note that this projection of images, which had become standard throughout the semester, was never mentioned in any of the data. It is possible that to the students, this type of behavior had also become commonplace. The learning and action had become, as I discuss below, implicit or tacit learning.
I asked Emma in the interviews about the changing of teachers at the computer, and how she loved the change and different views. I also asked the students in the interviews about multimodal learning. They felt it was attempted, or a step in the right direction, but not fully achieved. I did not get a student perspective on how students think about learning in general, or if their general view differed in this class. I also did not get a view of how the students specifically use technology. These are important things for educators to understand, and there is a small but growing literature on this. A future avenue of this study could be to expand this literature and ask students how they learn, how they learn with technology, and how they use technology. It will be important to consider what is not said, as in this case. I had become used to a level of participation and technology usage, as had the students. They did not mention it in the final or the interviews. I did not see it in the final weeks, only early on. Through examining what students say, what they don’t say, and reexamining data with fresh outlooks, important additions to the literature can be made.

Learning Theories

In chapter two, I looked at some of the learning theories which were influential for thinking about this study. While all of them helped inform the study, some of them were more useful in the final analysis. Below I briefly reexamine the learning theories, and discuss how useful they were for this study and potentially for further studies.

Constructivism. A part of Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of constructivism is that one person may be pushed into the zone of proximal development by an expert other. In an online or open classroom context such as this study, the “expert other” is a rather fluid title. Students who have researched a topic are contributing to a textbook and instructing the class. Their understanding of the material in some cases may be nominal, compared to their classmates. However, through
these interactions learning is occurring. The students are becoming, overall, more knowledgeable of the content. This happened as students read, listened to classmates, questioned classmates, and edited the wiki. They constructed their own knowledge or understanding of history. Tied in with this are Lave and Wenger’s (1991) ideas of peripheral participation. There are several examples of how the students learned from each other in different contexts.

The students in this project observed over a semester how their classmates taught the class and edited the wiki. Their teaching and additions reflected what occurred previously. Logan learned from Emma’s presentation, improving upon the format. James learned from Logan’s, in turn improving on that. This continued through several iterations eventually hitting a plateau in each class. There was also a social push to questioning, critiquing, and adding to the material for the teaching within each class. In each class I initiated this, but the students then began to do it also, and through the process learned.

Recently, a term has been coined to discuss constructivist learning in 3-D environments: presence pedagogy, or P2 (Bronack et al., 2008). The authors posit that there is something particular about learning in an online immersive environment which differs from in-class environments. The authors find that, based on Vygotsky and Lave and Wenger, with some sort of online presence a true community of practice can be formed which fosters collaboration for reflective learning. In this environment everyone is a potential instructor, peer, expert, and novice, from which all learn. The authors make a case for the 3-D environment fostering this type of learning. I would suggest, however, that this type of constructivist learning has occurred in this study. Everyone in the study was at one point instructor, peer, expert or novice, and through the process learned. Perhaps it is the design of the study, having the students teach the course and also use a wiki. Perhaps there is something to be said for the potential of continual
additions or interactions with peers in an online environment. Perhaps the virtual presence in an online environment is similar to an actual presence in an on-campus environment which continues online in the wiki. However, I would say that this idea of presence pedagogy is an apt, modern adaption of peripheral participation and constructivism for use in thinking about twenty-first century learning. The students are using interactive digital technologies, and this is key to the constructivist learning which occurs. In future studies, it will be important to keep these constructivist models in mind. They mesh well with the goals of socially democratic education and ideas of critical thinking, questioning, and discussion. The students, through their teaching and editing, are pushing each other to greater knowledge.

**Constructionism.** Some of my initial forays into using wikis built on Bruckman’s (2008) linking of constructionism with wikis. In her studies, she interviewed people who edited Wikipedia articles. She found increased care from those who edited Wikipedia, because they knew their edits were public. She linked this to Papert’s (Papert & Harel, 1991) ideas of constructionism, allowing people to play with and build knowledge. This also linked to the idea that people can build knowledge while working on projects which are meaningful to them. Based on this research and the lack of research on wikis, I began using them in my own course. In my pilot studies, I felt that there was increased care, which corresponded with Bruckman’s findings. However, on further analysis within this study, I found that there was little of this care when it came specifically to the wiki. This did not mean that the students did not care about their information, additions, and interaction, as evidenced by the data presented in chapter four. Their care was instead more focused on the presentations and their peers in the classroom.

It is possible that in my pilot studies the students did care about what they added to the wiki. However, it is equally possible that I did not do as in-depth an analysis to parse out the
difference in the care the students showed in the class versus the wiki. In order to understand this a bit more, I contacted Amy Bruckman whom I met at a conference a few years ago. I gave her an overview of my findings and theoretical framework. She responded that she and Andrea Forte have done subsequent and ongoing studies using wikis in secondary science classrooms (Forte & Bruckman, 2006, 2007, 2010). The findings from these studies have been more in line with my results. In the 2006 and 2007 studies, the students did not really care that the wiki was public, or that others would even want to look at what they posted. In the 2010 study, there seems to be a slight change as students are hopeful that at least a younger or less advanced student may someday use their research. However, a difference with these studies and mine is the integration of the wiki with the student teaching. I would suggest that the students did feel that their work was meaningful, and they did put extra effort into it. However, the extra effort seems to be focused on the classroom presentations rather than the wiki. The students certainly did their wiki edits. Some of them enjoyed the wiki for its availability, its place in a continuum, or its integration of students’ views. It is possible that the integration of the wiki opened students up to different points of view, questioning sources, questioning their classmates, and thinking about biases. These were all, from a social democratic stance, valuable for the students. So I do believe that constructionism is useful for thinking about wikis and digital technologies, however, I think it is also useful for thinking about socially democratic education. If the knowledge creation is dependent upon students finding the work meaningful, thinking about their world and what concerns them should be meaningful.

A possible variation or avenue for future study may be to focus more on Wikipedia itself. If the above study were done without the course wiki, but on Wikipedia or wikibooks, it is possible results may vary slightly. The students would be making edits along with the millions
of Wikipedia users. That could force them to think more professionally about their edits. It may also force them to think even more about biases and questioning of sources. It may add a competitive angle, as editors not in their class, more concerned with the information being publically available, could undo students’ edits. This would be an interesting future path of research.

**Connectivism.** According to the ideas of connectivism (Siemens, 2004), knowledge is contained in locations outside the individual; weak and strong network ties allow us to gain necessary knowledge. These networks could be digital or incarnate. Weak ties replicate current information, useless information, or information similar to what we already know. Strong ties give us new information, or information which differs greatly from what we already know. Several students, like Cain, commented on how they liked the wiki because it had the information and they knew they could go there to find it, so for them the wiki was a strong network. Students touched on the ideas of strong networks when they mentioned they looked up information either on websites or in books. They discussed some strong networks when they learned something from their peers, or weaker networks when they did not believe their peers knew the material in class or on the wiki. While the ideas of validity are important for critical thinking in a social democrat model, they are also important for connectivism, showing weak networks. Perhaps the trust students had in what I covered illustrated stronger networks. They are touching on and supporting ideas of Siemens. Bell (2010) has recently pointed out that connectivism is a newer theory and one which needs empirical work to support it. I believe that connectivism is also important to keep in mind for future studies. It is possible by integrating questions about networks, sources, or people, that students could rate for themselves which networks were strong and which were weak. If the intentions of a class or a study were to use
certain sources over others, perhaps action could be taken to influence the strength or weakness of a network.

**Literacies.** Traditionally literacy has been thought of as that which is written or read. Giroux (1978) discusses the gains in critical thinking which can be made through writing. Historians privilege the written record. Freire, along with some oral historians, is one of the few scholars mentioned in this paper who would privilege what people know, whether they can read or not. Critical thinking skills may be learned from discourse or with writing. However, that does not leave a place for some of the media discussed in this study. The students used texts, sounds, pictures, and videos to teach the class and add to the wiki. It is important to consider the critical thinking which can arise from looking, listening, or watching these forms of media, or integrating them into a multi-media work.

I believe that thinking about technology and learning as a literacy is valuable. Just as language literacy is taught in all classes, thinking of multi-literacies or digital literacies is also important. Just as language fluency is considered a prerequisite for desirable jobs, digital literacy will hold an equal place in the future. However, digital literacy does not simply include words. Multiple literacies can include sound, video, pictures, simulations, and text. It also includes familiarity with digital technologies. Students need to be able to think about the knowledge they encounter in various formats and utilize each to the best of their ability.

However, just because technology is important and will be a major component of the future economy does not mean that it will be easy to implement. As discussed in chapter four, many students found the wiki to be overwhelming. Emma discussed how it is difficult to focus on history when you are freaked out about the technology. Bruckman and Forte (2010) had some similar findings in their most recent study. Technology offers many options for educators.
Technology could aid the learning process, make grading easier, allow multiple perspectives, or decrease other costs in money or time. However, if only the technology is learned in the history class, then the teacher taught mainly computer skills, not history skills. This is the equivalent of only learning verbs or adjectives in a history class. Digital literacy skills need to be promoted in all courses.

In this study there were fears at the beginning, and there were questions. The students were unsure how to edit the wiki and what to add. With small steps they made edits, learned that sometimes data needs to be saved, and figured out how to add the material. Once this was accomplished, they became less worried about the technology and could focus on the historical material. In this class it was not a problem. But if it was, it would be necessary to figure out how to remedy the situation. It would also be necessary to reevaluate the goals of the assignment and determine if they were worth the problems.

Some recent work by Friesen and Hug (2009) elaborates on these ideas. These authors touch on a term adapted from linguistic studies, which they call the “mediatic turn.” The premise of this theory is that media is a priori in our society, and in order to understand the society we must understand the current state of the evolving media. In some cases, this is related to ideas of Polanyi (1962) and tacit knowledge. Media is part of the tacit knowledge of our world. In order to gain a greater understanding of how students are learning with various media or literacies, we need to figure out how to make tacit knowledge explicit. Once we can do this we gain a greater sense for how to use the media as a pedagogical tool. In the process, students could critically analyze their media-laced world and critique it, thereby gaining a greater understanding of critical thinking and the relationships in their world.
This is certainly an area for further study, thinking about how students use technology and understand the different forms of media or multi-modalities. It is also ripe for thinking about how and if there really is a difference from past societies. There certainly was a change from oral to written language. There was also a change from manually to mechanically copied materials. However, the printing press allowed for copies of texts and images, so even late medieval people were dealing with images. The addition of sounds, video and simulations are certainly newer additions within the last century. Future studies could look at the history or the theories of learning which may be applicable to these different media. From a social democratic perspective, this learning theory is useful for thinking about meaning-making with multiple formats, with and without social interaction. This theory can also integrate nicely to point out multiple perspectives, biases, and encourage critical thinking. It does not, however, focus on social relations or interactions.

**Learning theories and beyond.** Does any one of these theories seem more useful for social democratic education, history education, or technology education? The above theories have all been influential for thinking about the current study. From a socially democratic perspective, each of them can be useful for increasing critical thinking, pointing out injustices, and attempting to help students question societal biases. From a technological basis, literacy and connectionism are certainly appropriate since they are theories from the digital age. Constructivism and constructionism have both been modified from their earlier versions to integrate technology. This was discussed with the work of presence pedagogy (Bronack et al., 2008) and Bruckman’s (2008) modifications to Papert. From a history standpoint, these theories run counter to many traditional beliefs on how history should be taught. However, each of these theories can illuminate parts of what the students in this class learned.
I do not believe it is possible to say that one of these is more fitted to the social
democratic, technological, or historical perspective. However, since the basis for this study was
a social democrat use of technology in a history class, the learning theories were all chosen for
their applicability. I think each of these theories holds value and should be considered, whether
separately or in conjunction with one another, for future studies like this.

Issues Raised

This study has shown what two classes of students experienced as they taught themselves
and used a wiki to co-author a textbook. However, it has been an action research study based on
my own teaching, as it has evolved and continues to evolve. Action research studies are meant
to help the investigator grow and improve his or her own work. There have been some issues
raised which will affect future classes. There are also some themes which arose which may be
generalizable for other researchers and studies.

Teacher control. A traditional role for teachers is that they plan the learning activities
for their students. However, these plans may be upset by emergent uses of a wiki (Forte &
Bruckman, 2007). Use of a wiki allows for endless amounts of text, pictures, video, and
permutations of all of these. Wikis can be edited by an entire class, at any point in the day. This
aspect of the wiki really takes the control away from the instructor. Teachers may plan an
activity, but they lose control over it with the wiki. It upsets the plans of the instructor. For
those whose focus is control, this is a problem. For those whose focus is democratic education
and creation of critical thinking skills, it is beneficial. So for those who may want to implement
a similar study from a socially democratic standpoint, they may have some experiences similar to
those in chapter four and five.
**Group assignments.** The group assignments in this class were mixed in their results. Initially, they were based on the belief that students can learn from each other and they would be more interested in a topic that they had chosen. This assumption was based on constructivist and constructionist ideas. The constructivist piece relates to the ideas of students constructing knowledge, and learning socially from their peers. The constructionist part relates to the ideas that students who pick a topic or area to research will put more effort into it. However, in implementation the students did not see the assignment as a group project, but as an individual assignment with multiple people working on it. Within the 104 class, the students put off the work until the last weekend. Within the 101 class, people actually taught parts of the class based on their work within the group. However, there was no group cohesion, nor a sense for figuring out the roots of a problem together. So this part of the project is something which needs to be reevaluated and retried. I believe the students teaching the class based on their group topics, in conjunction with their classmates teaching based on chronology, was useful for all. However, I do not believe constructivist and constructionist ideas were realized. I will have to reevaluate this project, and perhaps other educators can learn from some of my problems.

**Organization versus freedom.** An interesting consideration, brought up in chapter four, is the idea of organization versus freedom. Logan discussed how the wiki was overwhelming at first, but then she appreciated the “go with the flow” atmosphere of the class. However, this atmosphere also tricked her into not being as diligent as she felt she should be in a class. Roberto and Moira also wished they’d had some handouts, or more direction. Certainly the classes overall were laid back. The students taught the class and needed an open atmosphere in which to teach. We covered some difficult topics, and students needed to feel free to discuss these topics. The class was supposed to be led by the interests and research of the students. For
almost anyone who has risen through the ranks of standardized American education, this is a freeing but scary type of classroom.

These problems or ideas relate to the work of Forte and Bruckman (2006). They discuss how written artifacts emerge from a student’s understanding of the teacher’s instructions, rather than from a natural need to communicate a message well within a particular discipline. The students were looking for, almost groping for, this understanding. It was not communicated to them in a written format, but in an oral one. They would question and I would answer. However, the answers were usually related to their interests. Sometimes the answers were posed as questions, asking them what they felt or thought should be included. For the most part, this was done in front of the class so the whole class could hear, question, and decide what the understanding was. I was told this led to discussions outside of class and on Facebook about what was required or was supposed to be done. While they still came to their own understanding of the instructions or demands of the assignment, in their search I think they also came to their own understanding of how to communicate within the discipline of history.

In chapter four, Emma, James, and Moira discuss the process they went through as they added information to the wiki. These paths were based on where their research took them, absence of material they felt should be there, or events which they felt were not mentioned or were in need of elaboration. These additions were certainly not teacher directed, and were based on the students’ own research pathways. I believe this is an aspect of socially democratic learning, when the students are free to research and add what they want. They do their own research, rely on their sources, interpret the material, and add it in their own words. I believe by adding directions on how to do this, I would take away the incentive for them to do relevant
research. If the teacher provides a list of important content, it then privileges those historical individuals and puts the teacher in control.

There were points early in the semester when I corrected students. There were points in this coverage when I may have used the words “right” or “wrong.” In balancing the freedom and control, it is also important to consider interpretation versus normally accepted events. In chapter five I discussed a student who covered Bacon’s Rebellion, saying Bacon was successful and died in old age. Since the rebellion was unsuccessful and Bacon died in the same year, this was not an interpretation, but was factually incorrect. I did correct the student. This was also earlier in the semester while I was still modeling questioning during presentations. As the semester progressed and students became more familiar with the presentations, these events occurred less frequently. Something which occurred more was interpretations of events which the students would then question, leading to informative discussions.

I believe that in this classroom, the students were able to think about many ideas in a different way. They came to expose biases and understand different points of view. They came to understand injustices and inequalities in western and American society. Christopher and James both touched on how they liked the freedom to research what they were interested in, and I would add that they learned about the bigger picture and problems in the process. I think there is a delicate balance between too much freedom and too much control. I am more wary of being the knowing educator than the laid back, seemingly unorganized classroom. Increase in order and organization may reduce the gains made in critical thinking. Having handouts, rules, and clearly outlined requirements could reduce the socially democratic effects. Other educators could potentially research a move from control to freedom to further define the tipping point.
**Trust.** A potential problem for some who may wish to implement some of this study in their own classroom is that of the instructor’s comfort level. I discussed with colleagues what I had done in my class, and some of my early thoughts on the study. They felt that the wiki was an interesting pedagogical tool. They also saw the potential learning opportunities in allowing students to teach the class. However, they were concerned over where a class may go if the students led the topics. It could lead into topics that were politically or socially uncomfortable. It could also lead into areas with which some instructors may not be as topically familiar. Considering my colleagues have either Master’s degrees or PhD’s in history, I would imagine this would be an even larger concern if it were applied in a K-12 setting where instructors have less historical background.

This concern over lack of background knowledge in specific areas, or discomfort at broaching certain topics, is valid. However, this is something which occurs even at the graduate level. If dissertation directors only took on dissertations in which they were an expert, no new knowledge would be created. I believe there are two things which need to be addressed. The first is that there are certain ways to go about producing knowledge within a discipline. This means that an American historian should be able to assess the research abilities of someone who studies European history. However, I think there is a larger theme which is more difficult to quantify, and that is the idea of trust.

Trust is central to this study. In chapter three, I discussed trust as it applied to morally good research and action research. I attempt to maintain an open atmosphere in the classroom so that various ideas can be discussed. In order for this to work, the students have to trust that I am not going to make fun of them or disparage their views. They also have to trust that I will allow others to have an equal say in the discussion, and hopefully this will allow all students to learn.
The students also have to trust that when they gave consent to be part of the study, that I would faithfully represent what they said, wrote, or did, and not distort their actions. For action research the idea of trust is integral, that I trust what the students said and did, since the research is based on their actions and mine.

In a Freirian sense, trust is also important in that the students touched several times on the fact that they could trust what I said. The students also trusted that I would not let the other students mislead them. So they had a sense of trust in what I said and in the methods of their instruction. I cannot be sure that this trust related to my discussion of biases. It is possible that they never got beyond the idea that educators know what they are talking about and thus should be trusted. However, I do not sense, for the most part, that this is what occurred. I believe that in a classroom with student teaching and a wiki, there needs to be a level of trust between the instructor and the students. The instructor needs to trust that the students are interested in their own education, have their own values and interests they want to pursue, and that through being exposed to different views they will grow. The students need to trust that the teacher has good intentions and is not purposefully leading them into misinformation. They need to believe that they are in a place in which it is safe to discuss ideas.

These are not ideas which are readily taught to us in our inculcation through the educational system. Even for disciplinary-educated instructors it can be scary to trust the students. However, as mentioned above, K-16 instructors have the ability to discern good research and to help students find out the answers. Topics will inevitably be raised in which the instructor in a course like this will not know the material, but he will have to trust the students as they do research, bringing the same skills he would ask the students to use in their presentations.
And in the process, the class, in a Freirian sense, has students as teachers and teachers as students.

**Reverse chronology.** In chapter two, I discussed the idea of working chronologically backwards in researching history, based on Misco and Patterson (2009). I recommended this to the students for their group assignments. Logically it made sense that students were more familiar with their own time than past times, especially in researching a topic they were currently concerned about. It would be easier to wade into the period they are familiar with than to jump into a past time and culture. I had only one student, Christopher, in the first week ask why they should do this and if they had to do it. I explained the reasoning, but no one worked backwards. In fact, after the first week the students never mentioned the idea again. For future classes it could be interesting to see how students learn history in this manner. Misco and Patterson’s thoughts were simply an interesting pedagogical idea, and not one specifically promoting a socially democratic stance. However, by reversing the traditional manner of covering history, it would be possible to reduce biases based on teleological ideas. It would also surely expose some themes which may have been overlooked.

**Views on presentations.** In chapter four, I looked at what the students thought about the presentations. There were five students who felt that they were the least valuable part of the class. Two students felt that on the whole they were valuable, but individual presentations had problems. Seven students felt that the presentations were very valuable to their understanding of history. Certainly each person is entitled to their own opinion on this aspect of the class. However, I feel that there is more to this breakdown than simply preference. I considered many options to understand why certain students would like or dislike this aspect of the class. I considered overall student performance, perceived effort of the students, variations in the classes,
preference for the wiki over the presentations, and views on biases or inaccuracies in student presentations. None of these explained the breakdown. However, as I thought about the specific students and their backgrounds, in conjunction with the readings from Giroux and Freire, a pattern did emerge. Those students who did not like the presentations or found them to be the least valuable part of the class were from traditionally advantaged parts of society. Those who liked the presentations were from traditionally disadvantaged parts of society. From a Freirian standpoint, this type of instruction gives voice to the traditionally disadvantaged, and they can see the value in their thoughts, views, and takes on history. It also makes the topic personal and relevant. I believe the dislike from the traditionally advantaged shows that this type of instruction touches on something which needs to be probed further. It may be that including multiple voices or views goes against traditional, standard knowledge. Perhaps it upsets a western sensibility within some of the students. I think it shows that socially democratic education is occurring. The voices of those traditionally disadvantaged are heard, and those traditionally advantaged are not privileged. This is definitely something to consider in future studies, to see if the results are generalizable. If these findings were replicated it could help further inform teaching in a socially democratic manner.

**Identity.** Some of the inspiration for the study relates to the constructivist work of Gee (2003) and its original applications to videogames and education. It is also related to the work of Thomas and Brown (2007). In these works, the authors discuss how students learn in a videogame through playing as a character, and that there is a merging of the identities of the player and digital character. While perhaps not as intense, we ask students to do this as they take science or history courses when we ask them to act or think like a scientist or historian. To a lesser degree, we ask them in history courses to think about what it may have been like in a
previous era, to be historically conscious. Within interactive digital technologies there is a
growing body of work on the roles of perceived online identity, related to the ideas of Turkle
(2005). Noffke (2000) also discusses the role of identity in socially democratic education. A
goal of history education has been to create senses of identity or a national identity (B. Anderson,
1991). Within the United States this has led to a preeminence of western, male thought. So how
do non-white, female students come to identify with imposed historical identities? It is
important to think about how online identity, personal identity, and national identity are created,
used, and leveraged in education.

The students in this study did not talk about online identity. Some, like Emma, talked
about the ability to empathize with or be transported to past times. These ideas of empathy and
transport can relate to identity. The class as a whole did not focus on the traditional, western
male orientation to history. There were several comments from Roberto and Moira applauding
this different type of coverage. For future study it could be interesting to probe more into how
students self-identify and how they identify with historical material. It may also be interesting to
bring in some of the work on historical consciousness (Seixas, 2005) to think about the links
with digital identity, self identity, national identity, and historical consciousness.

Impact of learning in this way. A question raised early in this study was about the long
term impact of learning in this way. Initially, I believe the question was related to the cognitive
development or changes which may occur in students exposed to interactive media in
conjunction with education. I do not believe a full answer to that question is possible from this
study. However, I can say that the students were engaged in the material and enjoyed the class,
which is not always the case in history classes.
I believe a more important answer to this question relates to the links between technology and the educational traditions discussed in chapter two. A class which uses wikis and allows the students to teach will certainly change the dynamic of education and how educators act. The conservative tradition is assaulted from many sides with the inclusion of technology. If students create their own texts and research their own material, there is no control over what is learned. This allows for students to learn about the founding fathers who owned slaves, and the genocide which came from European colonization of the Americas. Various voices and media can be included in the history. Certainly those supporting this position can attempt to maintain the status quo by not allowing the use of digital sources, not allowing technology in the classroom, or enforcing “correct” answers on standardized tests. However, this would further decrease the technological skills of the future workforce, and corporate interests would intercede on skills-based learning grounds.

This allows for a growth in the prominence of the social liberal tradition, which currently accepts various voices, critical thinking, and various sources. To varying degrees this position will take over for the conservative position, allowing technology for job skills, critical thinking as a logic game, and more encompassing citizenship education. However, the lacking element will be the activism that is the goal of the social democrats. The wiki and open classroom can lead to both socially liberal and democratic education. There may be a leftward move, but not far enough. The social democrat position, however, can gain exposure online. There are potential allies who can gain from working together. There are those within the open source movement who feel that open information and sharing of information can lead to a better tomorrow. There are educators concerned with equity issues of race, gender, and economics. There are those concerned with the future health, environment, and safety of the world. By
bringing these voices together in a community, online and always available, it can increase the exposure of socially democratic goals. It can also be increased by educators willing to include them as part of their practice. So in answer to the question about the long term impact: it will lead to a change in overall practice, away from the conservative tradition. Whether there is a concrete change, or a re-conceptualization of the traditions, is left for future scholars and future studies.

**Implicit learning.** Another question raised in the early stages of this study was whether the students create their own implicit learning theory as they work with a wiki. This is a very interesting question, and one which I feel can only be partially answered by the current study. Before attempting to answer it, it is necessary to define an implicit learning theory. It has been defined as learning without awareness, a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that defies easy definition (Cleeremans, 2002; Gaillard, Vandenberghhe, Destrebecqz, & Cleeremans, 2006). The authors attempt to clarify this hazy definition by describing when it occurs:

Learning is implicit when we acquire new information without intending to do so, and in such a way that the resulting knowledge is difficult to express. In this, implicit learning thus contrasts strongly with explicit learning (e.g., as when learning how to solve a problem or learning a concept), which is typically hypothesis-driven and fully conscious. (Gaillard et al., 2006)

Based on the open definition, it is possible to say some implicit learning occurred. A case that I would point to is my observation of Francis, when he found and projected pictures of the discussion as it occurred. It could be argued that he had these skills previous to the class. However, as I mentioned, the students in the first few weeks surprised me as they built on each other’s presentations, integrating video, pictures, sounds, simulations and text. By the fourth week in the 101 class this became the norm. It was no longer considered surprising or amazing until pointed out by a visiting graduate student. The students learned how to illustrate points
with pictures or videos, and they could do so quite quickly. This became a mode of operation within the class. Since they did it, but did not mention this in the final answers or the interviews, I would conclude that implicit learning did occur.

It might also be possible to point to implicit learning in use of the wiki. Within the first few weeks students signed up for access, and slowly began doing edits. After these first few weeks, questions were no longer aimed at how to do edits, but rather what types of edits should be done. After a few more weeks, the only questions about the wiki edits were if students had completed the requisite amount. So I would again surmise that there was implicit learning which occurred with the wiki, as the students learned the mechanical procedure of editing the wiki, and the academic procedure of figuring out what to add.

A final area of implicit learning could relate to the ideas of discussion or dialogue. Bohm, Factor, and Garrett (1991) have discussed how to learn what is implicitly known. This is based on early work which looked at tacit or implicit thought (Polanyi, 1962). The manner of learning implicit thought, as described by Bohm, is intense dialogue. The dialogue needs to occur in an open environment in which others can question and ask how people know. Words can be described, and situations explained to further understanding. This method requires a mediator and is not planned for a classroom setting. Certainly it can be tied to some of Freire’s ideas. I would suggest that during the class, some of this was achieved. The students discussed topics, learned from each other, and participated in a dialogue. In some cases their knowledge grew out of what the group discovered over the semester. So in a Bohmian sense, some inroads were made towards learning implicit thoughts.

I would also say that through the wiki, there were some glimpses into implicit learning theories of the students. As Christopher discussed, he liked hearing about something and then
looking it up on the internet during and after class. He also liked how he could read about something, which led him to something else, eventually giving him a greater sense for the overall topic. I think at best, these provide glimpses of how students were learning and how they were thinking about learning.

From a personal standpoint, I would say that the intensive evaluation from an action research dissertation also leads towards implicit learning theories. Rachel Deitcher (n.d.) has discussed the implicit learning she felt occurred during her own action research dissertation. She felt she was able to experience, deliberately think about, and reflect deeply on her practice. These multiple significant experiences led to a substantial amount of implicit learning.

There is a whole scholarship of cognitive learning related to implicit learning. With focus on this work, it may be possible to examine implicit learning in studies like this to a greater degree. One could look at the implicit learning which occurs in technological use in the classroom, production though interactive digital technologies, reading of digital technologies, or the interrelations of action research and implicit learning. Further study of the cognitive sciences may be valuable to think about what and how people learn in these situations. It may also lead towards dialogue in interactive technologies, updating ideas of Freire or Bohm.

**Critical Thinking and Beyond**

As discussed in chapter two, critical thinking is important to the social democrats. However, it is a different type of critical thinking than that advocated by the social liberals. A difference I would draw between socially democratic thinking and other forms is the end result of action or activism. Students who learn in a course with critical pedagogy can learn critical thinking. It is action based on critical thinking, which would make it socially democratic. Burbules and Berks (1999) do an admirable job discussing the varieties of critical thinking.
They also discuss how critical thinking is not always a product of critical pedagogy. Within the parameters of this study, and for social democrats as a whole, I believe it is.

In order to institute critical pedagogy as practice, educators need to either forget or throw out many of the vestiges of traditional western thought. Educators need to accept that those in their classes have knowledge already and that all can learn more through dialogue. This dialogue incorporates myriad sources and myriad voices to come to a new social understanding. Certainly there are various types of social constructivist learning occurring through this practice. People may be pushed by an expert other. They may deeply care about a topic, and through their interest learn more or disparate views. They may question or believe specific types of sources or connections, and through these connections learn. Students and instructors will come to a greater understanding of their world as they encounter these different voices. This greater understanding may counter the effect of colonization in the process.

During and after a class like this, students should be able to understand that knowledge as a whole is problematic; it is a point of departure and an object of inquiry. However, it does not hold truth as they may have previously believed. As they discover this, they can hopefully see the links between facts and values and how they are related. Relationships to values and world views should also become apparent as students can then see political links. With this background students should be able to use this critical thinking as a tool in life to institute political change and change of the status quo, to act. This is not to say that all students will do this. Some may have a more social liberal view of critical thinking. Students need critical thinking for navigating their worlds and to assess the biases of their instructors, websites, and content overall.
Burbules (2006) discusses how some of the ideas of critical thinking and pedagogy may play out in a digital realm, touching on Gadamer’s idea of third spaces. Burbules describes this as a “conflict, a disruption of ordinary meanings that leads to a … reframing of the topic … that may indeed implicitly challenge the way in which a topic is originally being framed” (2006, p. 114). This third space is able to occur when there is perceived safety of interaction. I would say that in this class the students did have a third space which was part of the mode of critical pedagogy and led to critical thinking. Students felt safe discussing topics that are often not discussed or often led to heated, value laden discussions. They were able to do this through their instruction, questioning, and discussion, and through the equality of the classroom.

However, this interaction was not limited to the in-class meeting times, but occurred online as well. Burbules (2006) believes that interactive digital technology offers this third space. Users are able to interact with each other and with information in a manner that does not have traditional, narrative order. Users can link from one topic to the next with no specific hierarchical order to knowledge reception. I would add that in an online context, it need not only be textual. It can also include pictures, audio or video. The students were able to read the information in a non-linear order. They also added to the information, which allowed for their own creation of knowledge. Freire discusses acts of cognition as a key to critical pedagogy, not transference of knowledge. I would argue that as the students taught, added material, and heard and discussed history, they participated in acts of cognition rather than transference of knowledge.

This Freirian notion of acts of cognition is important when considering uses of technology. As Halverson and Collins (2009) have recently pointed out, no longer are we concerned with passing down information through oral or written means. The future of
education will be figuring out how to teach creation of knowledge, and most likely creation not
simply in a written format, but a multi-literate format of sounds, writing, pictures, video, and
simulations (Cope et al., 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Steinkuehler, 2008). Thus in this
new vision of education in the future, of interaction outside of the classroom, students or users
are offered a third space. They are focusing on knowledge creation. This is a new model and
one well-suited to the social democratic ideals.

Within educational research, there are many views which advocate one take on how to
teach. This includes those who study Marx, race, gender, politics, history, sociology, and
philosophy, to name a few. In the exhortations about which field holds the most weight, we
often lose sight of the value within each school of thought. Throughout this semester, students
were exposed to Marxist thought. However, Marxist thought has been critiqued and falls short
when thinking about religion or race or gender. Students have been exposed to gender, race, and
political theories. Personally I believe that the juncture of these theories is where the value lies,
without one theory holding absolute sway. This was communicated to the students in the study
over this semester. I believe they have come away with a greater appreciation for history, and an
overall different take on the discipline. They have learned critical thinking skills and have been
exposed to critical pedagogy. Where they go from here, and what they do with it, will hopefully
begin a process of future change.

This study was based on social democratic ideals, using a history class to critique the
status quo, exposing flaws in modern society by having students examine history and teach
others. Technology was a component of this class, as was the open classroom. Through the wiki
and the open classroom, students learned in various constructivist ways. They were pushed by
their classmates, researched topics of interest, built knowledge, used connections, and were
encouraged to use technology as part of a multi-literacy. They were able to create knowledge for themselves and others using various formats of content. This is a technological model of what critical pedagogy for the 21st century can look like. In the process, I believe, the students became critical thinkers.

Giroux (1978) had his students in his own history class write as a group. Through this process he felt they became better critical thinkers, and also began to see the political level. I believe through the teaching and group writing on the wiki, my students also began to see the political. While they did not specifically say political, they talked a lot about biases, trying to figure out why people said or wrote the things they did. In this process I believe they discovered Giroux’s political level. As students in the 104 class thought about the creation of a race based, hereditary slavery within the Americas, they questioned the implications this had in the modern world. They also began to question some authors or some of their classmates. This is an instance of seeing the political in the history, and learning this through the teaching and the writing.

There is a level of political empowerment which comes as students create content or teach. Their knowledge matters and what they teach is important. As James said, he didn’t want to let his classmates down by not researching the material to teach. So his commitment to his classmates was strong, as was that of several others: Emma, Roberto, and Moira. In that process they began to get a sense for the material and how it fit into a greater whole. And as they thought about teaching, they consciously considered who their audience was and how best to convey the information. Emma discussed how she did this in class, and does it with her Facebook status updates. Roberto discussed how he considered the biases of his classmates and
tried to find information to counter them. These students were knowledgeable of their audience, their beliefs, and what they needed to find to persuade or dissuade them.

The process does not end here. Action research is a process of planning, acting, observing, and evaluating (G. L. Anderson et al., 2007). The initial planning for this project began at least four semesters ago. In that first class, the wiki was a smaller part of the class project and the student teaching was non-existent. Action, observation, and evaluation have brought the process to the current state. This study and write up is a grand evaluation. However, this leads to more planning and action for the future. There are also injustices and inequalities which have not been covered in the class, and those which are growing in society. As has been pointed out elsewhere (Burbules, 2006; Martin, 2009), there is a growing digital disparity. A part of the goal of implementing technology has been to help students use technology within a discipline as part of a literacy. This is not for some social liberal ideal of job training, but a growing concern of digital inequity. As Marx pointed out almost a century and a half ago, industrialization changed the world and how capital was understood. Digital production skills are a growing part of the future economy. If we do not teach those skills and point out the potential, growing inequalities, our students will be part of the digitally oppressed.

This is not simply a matter of the digital divide, where those with money are connected, creating a greater divide among those who are not. This is to say that those who know how to operate in a digital economy and the digital world will be those in power, and those who do not will be disenfranchised. In future classes I will attempt to address these inequities and make them more transparent to the students, so they can see how critical thinking can be applied to other facets of their lives. Perhaps the group projects which seemed less successful can transform into a project on digital inequality.
Conclusion

In chapter four the students learned to think about how to research. These skills were used for the wiki and for teaching. For the wiki they needed to add information, think about content choice, and question issues of validity and bias. For teaching they needed to find new information, integrate it with existing information, and relay it all to their classmates, gaining a greater sense for the material. This also enabled those listening to think about what they were hearing, how it related to existing knowledge, and assess what the instructor said. The students had freedom in their writing and their teaching, and they felt responsible for the material. At times this material, or the interpretation, was new to the students. They began to learn some of the history from a social democratic stance. In the end the students who researched, wrote, and taught began to think critically in a socially democratic sense. The material they encountered, the questions they asked, and the content they discussed did not reify the status quo. They began to see that history is influenced by those who write it, and the message they get across is important. Being able to see the message, decide for oneself, and perhaps enact change was important.

In chapter five, I illustrated some of the themes discussed in class which highlighted social inequities, and would fit within a social democratic position. Some of these issues related as well to issues of bias and validity. They also related to specific groups, or issues such as money, religion, and race. The students again felt that the history covered was not romanticized, but a closer look at what really might have happened. Through different perspectives the students also gained a different lens for examining history. Some of this related to thinking about history using modern examples, some of it related to the students’ experiences with the projects making things, reading texts, or playing historical simulation games. Overall these
themes were related to ideas of critical pedagogy. By attempting to put everyone on an equal footing, and learning from everyone, students began to see the value and worth of their own experiences, and how it can be applied to learning.

Finally, in chapter six I have examined major themes of the study, possible use, and future directions. Some of the study may be useful for instructors to consider if they were to implement a similar use of technology and pedagogy. Some researchers may find the experiences of the students useful for thinking about how students learn in a modern, digital classroom. Since this study proceeded from a social democratic stance, it is important to think about some issues for future research. One is the idea of trust and how is it used, thought about and considered. Another is the idea of identity. In a digital and corporeal world, what does this issue mean, and how should it be considered? Finally we should consider how students in the modern world can learn best. Certainly this study can only discuss those students who took the class, and generalizations from that are difficult. As I attempted to focus on critical thinking and acts of cognition, it is important to consider how this can be integrated in the future digital world, and its need to emphasize content creation.
References


Course Description: This course begins with the history of the ancient Greek and Roman world. We will examine the roots of democracy, empire, and education. The focus will then shift to the fall of Rome, the growth of the Byzantine Empire, and the growth of Islam and the western Middle Ages. This period is important for understanding law, religion, and the growth of the west. The focus will begin to shift northward and westward with the Renaissance, Reformation, and age of discovery. This will include periods of religious wars, colonization, and political revolutions. The course will end with Western European and American history at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Course Information:

Credit Hours: 4.0
Pre-requisites: ENG 099 placement
Meeting Place: D-218
 Instructor: Vance Martin, B.S.(Mod. Languages, Economics), M.A. (History)
Office: D-186
Email: VMartin@parkland.edu
Webpage: virtual.parkland.edu/vmartin
Course Page: http://virtual.parkland.edu/vmartin/history%20101.htm
Office Hours: 11:45-12:00 and by appt after 2:00

Course objectives: History 101 is an introductory course covering the events that have helped shaped the modern western world, and the United States. By the end of the course students should be able to:

- construct an argument using history as support
- defend an argument using history as support
- understand academic discussions based on history
- demonstrate a heightened understanding of history through: movies, literature, art, textbooks, artifacts, people, and videogames
Course Requirements:

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<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wiki textbook</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>4 quizzes</td>
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<td>Group Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Final Paper (paper, peer review, and presentation)</td>
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Evaluation and Grading:

Grading Scale:

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Parkland does not offer +/- letter grades

Quizzes:

You will be graded on your factual recall of important dates or ideas covered in the text through multiple choice and short answer questions. Your grade will be based on total number of correct answers.

Final:

The Final is a timed exam with essay questions only covering major ideas covered throughout the semester.

Wiki textbook:

History is not only dates and famous people. It includes these people and dates, but also everyone else. In the future it will include us. So how does a historian uncover, and know history? It is important to know certain keydates, and also some influential people. However, it is also important to understand how most people lived, and what was important to them. In order to do this, YOU will need to become familiar with a specific era in depth. This will be done by having you sign up for a specific chapter from the course wiki [http://historyofwesterncivilizationi.pbworks.com/](http://historyofwesterncivilizationi.pbworks.com/). You will be grouped with others and be
You will be responsible for writing the information for your chapter as well as integrating it with those before and after you. You will need to consult outside sources, integrate information from the lectures and cite the information. For class sessions you will be responsible for the material when it is covered in class. However, your responsibility will go beyond this with a written/online component that will help you and others understand history and hopefully do better on the tests. You will need to cover the keypoints of the chapter, information covered in class that may not have been in the chapter, other interesting information on the era with links or citations to where you got the information, influential people, and key social, cultural, religious, economic and political movements. You will need to have the wikis done before the week in which the material is covered, however will continue adding to them until almost the end of the semester. You need to sign up for this by the end of the first week or it will be assigned to you. However, just because you did not sign up for week one does NOT mean that you will not be doing anything that week. Those who sign up for week sixteen will need to read, proof read add, and edit information in previous weeks that need more information, just as those in week one will do for later weeks. Each person will be responsible for 2 edits per week. This is an ongoing project building on the work of past classes, eventually for use as the classroom text. Each person must cite 10 books.

**Group Project:**

In the first week we will pick several modern topics which students are concerned about. Students will be grouped based on their interest in the different topics. These groups will meet throughout the semester, researching the topic from its earliest roots to the modern day. Each week these groups will be responsible for presenting their research to the class as it applies to the time period being studied. These groups will also be responsible for writing several essays throughout the semester. Their research on the topic will be posted within the course wiki throughout the different chapters as they apply. Each person in the group must cite 10 books.

**Project (Midterm and Final Paper):**

You will submit a digital copy in the 'drop box' in Angel. You need to sign up for the paper option by the end of week one. Depending upon the option you will submit all or part of your paper in the wiki as well or in lieu of in Angel.

There are 2 final paper options for the course, and each is divided into 2 main parts: the Midterm Paper and the Final Paper. For both options Paper 1 will need to be 4-6 pages *double spaced in Times New Roman 12 point font, with 1 inch margins*. The final Paper will need to be 8-10 pages *double spaced in Times New Roman 12 point font, with 1 inch margins*. For each paper you will need to have a bibliography of 10 books, or 30 journal articles, or 50 websites. *1 book = 3 articles = 5 websites*. Your grade will be based on mechanics, spelling, statement of argument, presentation of information, flow, use of secondary sources, citations and bibliography. The full rubric will be given in Vance’s Announcements three weeks into the course. There will be more on these options in the introduction, and through course announcements. Both of these options require you to look at history in very different ways from a normal course.
There are 2 final paper options for the course, and each is divided into 2 main parts: Paper 1 and the Final Paper. For both options Paper 1 will need to be 4-6 pages *double spaced in Times New Roman 12 point font, with 1 inch margins*. The final Paper will need to be 6-8 pages *double spaced in Times New Roman 12 point font, with 1 inch margins*. For each paper you will need to have a bibliography of 5 books, or 15 journal articles, or 25 websites. *1 book = 3 articles = 5 websites*. Your grade will be based on mechanics, spelling, statement of argument, presentation of information, flow, use of secondary sources, citations and bibliography. The full rubric will be given in Vance’s Announcements three weeks into the course. There will be more on these options in the introduction, and through course announcements. Both of these options require you to look at history in very different ways from a normal course.

Option 1: A lot can be learned from a videogame when used properly. This paper will have you look at history through interaction with a videogame versus your classmates. The videogame is *Civilization 4*. You must have or find a copy of this videogame available for PC or Mac. In the first week you will need to use the in game tutorial to become familiar with the game. While you are doing this you will keep track of your thoughts and experiences in a journal. While continuing the journal, in the second through sixth you will play against the computer to become more familiar with the game. By week six you will be playing against other classmates online. By week seven or either you will use the knowledge you have gained from the class, and play against other classmates using a period specific “mod.” The mod is a period specific scenario in which you will become one of the civilizations we have studied, with time accurate technologies, cities and resources. You may be able to recreate what occurred in history or change the outcome, but will gain a different perspective on the events we have studied through use of the videogame. Your first paper will be submission of your journal. Your final paper will be final submission of your journal AND a critical analysis of the game versus the class commenting on which is better from different standpoints of helping one understand the period. You will also have a list of questions to help you think about the analysis. You will also be responsible for a FAQ in the wiki.

Option 2: A lot occurs over the period of study of the course, however some things do not change too much. A Roman citizen would not have been too shocked at an American colonist’s accoutrements and technology. After the period of our course ends, however, everything changes. An American colonist would be lost with the technology of a modern student. This paper will have you look at technologies, methodologies of production, everyday work. You will pick out, with the assistance of the instructor, a technology or method of production. You will then write out how people from the Romans to the French under Napoleon did something. You will also then try to use the instructions you have read to produce the same product, documenting your work and submitting the pictures, and things learned from the procedure. For instance, clothing was made with by-products of animals, so you write about the history of leatherworking or cloth making, and then make clothing or leathergoods, documenting what you learned, ease, problems.....Paper 1 is the history of the procedure, the Final Paper the photo, written, or video documentation of your trials and tribulations.

Option 3: For those interested there may be a literature option as well speak with instructor.
Policies, Resources, and Information:

Attendance policy: If you do not login for the first 10 days of class you will be dropped. (5 days in the summer) Other than the first 10 days, attendance in the online section is not taken. However, in order to succeed by staying caught up and not falling behind, you should check the course at least 4 days a week in a full semester course, daily in a summer course.

Late Assignment policy: Late assignments will not be accepted and will receive a 0.

Make-Up Exam policy: Make-up exams will not be allowed. If you have a conflict or problem, contact the instructor before the due date. An exception may be made depending upon the circumstances.

Incompletes: Incompletes will not be given. Parkland policy allows for incompletes if 80% of the coursework is complete and you contact the instructor. If you have completed 80% of the coursework satisfactorily and contact me ahead of time, I may allow you to finish the remaining 20% after the course has ended. However, your final grade will be entered as earned, and changed at a later date if the work is completed.

Extra credit: On the whole, extra credit is not offered. However, there is one chance for extra credit. If you turn your final paper in 1 day before it is due you will receive 5 points extra credit. If you turn it in 2 days early you will receive 10 points extra credit. (2 days max.)

Academic Dishonesty Policy: Plagiarism can be a difficult concept to define; however, simply put, plagiarism is using other people’s ideas and words without *clearly acknowledging* the source of that information. It is important to note that in college we are continually exposed to other’s ideas. We read ideas and words in textbooks, hear them in lectures, discuss them in class, and incorporate them into our own writing. One must always keep in mind that you must give credit when credit is due.

In order to avoid plagiarism, you must give credit every time, whenever you use:

- Another person’s idea, opinion, or theory;
- Any facts, statistics, graphs, visual images (i.e.: drawings, videos, etc.) that are not common knowledge;
- Quotations of another person’s spoken or written words; or
- Paraphrase of another’s person’s spoken or written words.

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Nancy Rowley, Associate Coordinator, Office of Disability Services, Room: X148, phone: 351-2588, email: nrowley@parkland.edu

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Anita Taylor (Phone: 403-4580) or Gail Hoke (Phone: 351-2441) in D 120.
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Planning and self management skills: Learning in the online environment offers many benefits to choosing when to do your work. However, this is also a danger, making it easier to fall behind. You should plan on logging in daily to see what others have written and discuss the ideas on a daily basis. Waiting until the last minute may not allow you enough time and you may end up losing points. You should also work earlier and often due to the nature of the course. Online courses depend on electricity and Internet connections. By doing assignments before the last minute you can avoid last minute power outages and computer problems. You should also have a plan for computer use in case you experience problems. A note on quizzes, midterms, and finals, hereafter tests. Tests are timed from the moment you begin them and are only available a set time. If you start a test that is available for an hour and a half you only have 90 minutes to complete it. Tests also end at 11:55 pm on Saturdays. If you start your test at 11:30 pm on Saturday you will only have 25 minutes to complete it.

Tips on how to do well on assignments: The best way to do well in the course is to start early and to keep up with the readings and postings. Read all the postings, as other students may interpret the material in a different way that can aid your understanding. You may be able to get full points on posting by writing yours and replying to one person, but will gain a richer, fuller understanding of the topic by reading everyone’s thoughts. Reading all the posts will also help you on the tests when you may be asked to give two sides of an argument, an argument that had several sides presented through the discussion posting.
Common misconceptions or mistakes: This is an online class. This means that the material presented in this course is delivered over the Internet. This does not mean that this is an easier class. You can access the class 24/7, and you can proceed somewhat at your own pace. However, as in an on-campus section you are expected to know the same material and produce the same amount of papers. You may be saving time in transit and costs in gas, but in order to do well will have to expend the same amount of intellectual energy.

Specific study strategies: There is a lot of reading on your own in the course. You have to read at least a chapter a week, and some of these chapters are almost 50 pages long. I would suggest reading 8 pages every night of the week. This will break the material down into smaller sections. I would suggest logging in daily to the course to read announcements and postings from other students. By reading a little every day and logging in daily you may be able to break the discussion questions up into parts and discuss them as you cover the material, and come back to them when you have a little more background. Ask questions on the discussion boards. From experience, students who log in on a daily basis receive grades several letter grades higher than those who log in once a week.

What I expect of you, what you can expect of me

I expect you to read the lectures and visit the websites I give you. I expect you to take part in the discussions. I expect you to turn in your papers on time, and either post to the "questions..." discussion board if you have any questions, or email me for personal problems. I expect you to have done your own research, and written it in a coherent manner. I expect you to be understanding and supportive of other students in the course.

You can expect me to answer your emails and questions within a 24 hour period, perhaps a little slower on weekends. I will check the course at least once daily. You can expect quick turn around on grading assignments. You can also expect that I will take part in the discussions and be understanding and supportive of all my students.

Course Calendar and Important Dates (Specific course content for each week can be found in Angel):

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<td>March 5, 2010</td>
<td>11:55pm C.T.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>March 8, 2010</td>
<td>11:55pm C.T.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Midterm grades entered March 9, 2010
Spring break Mar 20-28
Final Paper for Peer Review April 10, 2010 11:55pm C.T.
Quiz 3 April 12, 2010 11:55pm C.T.
Final Paper April 25, 2010 11:55pm C.T.
Last day to withdraw April 29, 2010
Quiz 4 May 3, 2010 11:55pm C.T.
Final May 12, 2010 1:00pm C.T.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ch. 1-2</td>
<td>Jan 11-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch. 3</td>
<td>Jan 19-</td>
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<td>Ch. 4</td>
<td>Jan 25-</td>
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<td>Ch. 5</td>
<td>Feb 1-</td>
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<td>Ch. 6</td>
<td>Feb 8-</td>
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<td>Ch. 7</td>
<td>Feb 15-</td>
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<td>Ch. 8</td>
<td>Feb 22-</td>
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<td>Ch. 9</td>
<td>Mar 1-</td>
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<td>Ch. 10</td>
<td>Mar 8-</td>
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<td>Ch. 13</td>
<td>Apr 5-</td>
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<td>Ch. 14</td>
<td>Apr 12-</td>
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<td>Ch. 15</td>
<td>Apr 19-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ch. 16</td>
<td>Apr 26-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>Apr 30-</td>
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Parkland Student Policy and Procedures can be accessed at http://www.parkland.edu/studentpolicy/index.html
Course Description: This course begins with an examination of the pre-Colombian world. We will examine European history as it effected colonization, and the different colonies that were created in the Americas. Focus will then shift specifically to the English colonies, and the formation of the United States of America. After discussing the founding of the United States we will examine westward expansion as we build up to the Civil War and Reconstruction. We will focus on the economic, political, cultural and social forces that have shaped the United States.

Course Information:

Credit Hours: 4.0
Pre-requisites: ENG 099 placement
Meeting Place: D-143
Meeting Times: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 1-2
Instructor: Vance Martin, B.S.(Mod. Languages, Economics), M.A. (History)
Office: D-186
Email: VMartin@parkland.edu
Webpage: virtual.parkland.edu/vmartin
Course Page: http://virtual.parkland.edu/vmartin/history_104_homepage.htm
Office Hours: 11:45-12:00 and after class

Course objectives: History 104 is an introductory course covering the events that have helped shaped the United States. By the end of the course students should be able to:

- construct an argument using history as support
- defend an argument using history as support
- understand academic discussions based on history
- demonstrate a heightened understanding of history through: movies, literature, art, textbooks, artifacts, people, and videogames
Course Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiki textbook</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (paper, peer review, and presentation)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Evaluation and Grading:

Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parkland does not offer +/- letter grades

Quizzes:

You will be graded on your factual recall of important dates or ideas covered in the text through multiple choice and short answer questions. Your grade will be based on total number of correct answers.

Final:

The Final is a timed exam with essay questions only covering major ideas covered throughout the semester.

Wiki textbook:

History is not only dates and famous people. It includes these people and dates, but also everyone else. In the future it will include us. So how does a historian uncover, and know history? It is important to know certain keydates, and also some influential people. However, it is also important to understand how most people lived, and what was important to them. In order to do this, YOU will need to become familiar with a specific era in depth. This will be done by having you sign up for a specific chapter from the course wiki http://unitedstateshistory1492-1877.pbworks.com/. You will be grouped with others and be responsible for co-writing a
textbook on the course wiki. You will be responsible for writing the information for your chapter as well as integrating it with those before and after you. You will need to consult outside sources, integrate information from the lectures and cite the information. For class sessions you will be responsible for the material when it is covered in class. However, your responsibility will go beyond this with a written/online component that will help you and others understand history and hopefully do better on the tests. You will need to cover the keypoints of the chapter, information covered in class that may not have been in the chapter, other interesting information on the era with links or citations to where you got the information, influential people, and key social, cultural, religious, economic and political movements. You will need to to have the wikis done before the week in which the material is covered, however will continue adding to them until almost the end of the semester. You need to sign up for this by the end of the first week or it will be assigned to you. However, just because you did not sign up for week one does NOT mean that you will not be doing anything that week. Those who sign up for week sixteen will need to read, proof read add, and edit information in previous weeks that need more information, just as those in week one will do for later weeks. Each person will be responsible for 2 edits per week. This is an ongoing project building on the work of past classes, eventually for use as the classroom text. Each person must cite 10 books.

**Group Project:**

In the first week we will pick several modern topics which students are concerned about. Students will be grouped based on their interest in the different topics. These groups will meet throughout the semester, researching the topic from its earliest roots to the modern day. Each week these groups will be responsible for presenting their research to the class as it applies to the time period being studied. These groups will also be responsible for writing several essays throughout the semester. Their research on the topic will be posted within the course wiki throughout the different chapters as they apply. Each person in the group must cite 10 books.

**Project (Midterm and Final Paper):**

You will submit a digital copy in the 'drop box' in Angel. You need to sign up for the paper option by the end of week one. Depending upon the option you will submit all or part of your paper in the wiki as well or in lieu of in Angel.

There are 2 final paper options for the course, and each is divided into 2 main parts: the Midterm Paper and the Final Paper. For both options Paper 1 will need to be 4-6 pages *double spaced in Times New Roman 12 point font, with 1 inch margins*. The final Paper will need to be 8-10 pages *double spaced in Times New Roman 12 point font, with 1 inch margins*. For each paper you will need to have a bibliography of 10 books, or 30 journal articles, or 50 websites. *1 book = 3 articles = 5 websites*. Your grade will be based on mechanics, spelling, statement of argument, presentation of information, flow, use of secondary sources, citations and bibliography. The full rubric will be given in Vance’s Announcements three weeks into the course. There will be more on these options in the introduction, and through course announcements. Both of these options require you to look at history in very different ways from a normal course.
Option 1: A lot can be learned from literature when read properly. This paper will have you read a piece of period literature from a list following. In the first paper you will write a biography of the author of the text covering their entire life and the key historical events of the time period in which they lived. You must become very familiar with the author and their time period in order to understand the text for the second paper. After you have submitted the Midterm Paper you will read your text looking for items that you feel can tell you more about the time period in which the author lived. You may have to meet with the instructor to discuss your text as it is not possible to cover all of the different topics from all the texts in this description. You will then need to consult other texts to support your views as you discuss the author's time period from the text, supporting it from secondary works. In essence you are attempting to understand a small period of history, in depth, through the words of an eloquent author who lived in that period. You must cite at least 5 books per paper.

Option 2: A lot occurs over the period of study of the course, however some things do not change too much. One of Colombus' sailors would not have been too shocked at an American colonist’s accoutrements and technology. After the period of our course ends, however, everything changes. An American colonist would be lost with the technology of a modern student. This paper will have you look at technologies, methodologies of production, everyday work. You will pick out, with the assistance of the instructor, a technology or method of production. You will then write out how people from the first colonist to those on the brink of the Civil War did something. You will also then try to use the instructions you have read to produce the same product, documenting your work and submitting the pictures, and things learned from the procedure. For instance, soap was made with by-products of animals and ashes, so you write about the history of making soap, and then make soap, documenting what you learned, ease, problems.....The Midterm Paper is the history of the procedure, the Final Paper the photo and written documentation of your trials and tribulations. You will also bring in the product for your presentation. You must cite 10 books for your midterm paper.

Option 3: Machinima or Colonization- for those with interest and capability, talk with instructor. Colonization will be responsible for an FAQ in the wiki.

Presentation

In the final week you will be asked to give a short presentation of your midterm and final project. This presentation need only be 5-10 minutes, and can be done from notecards or powerpoint. If you did the technology option you should bring in some pictures and your product. The goal of this project is to let others see what you did and allow them to learn from you, their peer.

Peer Review

Near the end of the semester you will submit your paper in Angel. You will be required to read and comment on your classmates papers. This is done to give you a clearer vision of the assignment, to help your classmates and to help yourselves. This is a graded assignment.
Policies, Resources, and Information:

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<td>Quiz 2</td>
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<td>Apr 5-</td>
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<td>Presentations</td>
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Parkland Student Policy and Procedures can be accessed at http://www.parkland.edu/studentpolicy/index.html
Appendix C

Questions

Group Assessment Questions- asked over 2 assessments

1. What is the name of your group?
2. What is your name?
3. Has your group decided on a question? Or decided what you will be looking for as you research your topic?
4. What is your group's question, or what have you decided to research?
5. Have you divided up the work within your group?
6. How have you divided up the work? ie who is doing what?
7. Have you found relevant literature to research your topic yet? If so, what?
8. How far into the research would you honestly say YOU are? At this point saying none is fine, or if you've only done a little searching, or if you think you're totally done.....
9. At this point, IF your group were paid $1000 for the work you have already done, how would you divide it up? For your answer you can simply put...Adam $100, Billy $200....as long as the division of money by group members = 1000. Please put your name instead of me.
10. Finally, at this point in the process, are there any questions that you have for me? Perhaps general questions I can answer in class, not singling you out. Perhaps more specific questions, that I might need to discuss with your group only? Do you need direction? Literature ideas??????
11. Have you posted anything related to your group work in the wiki yet?
12. What overall problems did you have with this assignment? How could they be corrected in future semesters? What information could I give future students on day 1 to solve these problems for them?
13. Did you enjoy this assignment? Why or why not?
14. What did you learn from this assignment?
15. Do you feel this is a valuable assignment for a history class? Please explain.
16. Did this assignment give you a better sense of problems throughout time? ie how they began and how they still show up? Please explain.
17. Finally... think about your experience or comfort with technology at the beginning of the semester compared to the present moment. Do you feel that this course gave you more experience with technology? Do you think this experience will be valuable? Please explain.
Final Test Questions

1. This semester you have had several ways of learning about history. The outlines, the wiki, other student's presentations, lectures, the textbook, and your own final assignment. Please reflect on these six different ways for learning history. How did each help you? Were there other ways you learned history this semester? Were there other ways you would have liked to have learned? What did you expect to get out of the class? Did you get that? What would you like to have gotten out of the class?

2. What were the five most important things you learned from this course this semester. Why were they important?

3. You have been required to do lots of different assignments, and learn in different ways. Think about all the assignments. How would you improve upon them? Which ones worked best for you? Why? Which ones were least effective for you? Explain fully.

Questions approved by IRB before preliminary exam

1. How many years have you studied history?
2. Do you enjoy history? Why/ not?
3. What is your favorite subject? Why?
4. How many online classes have you taken?
5. What is your perception of online classes?
6. Did you have preconceived notions about online classes?
7. What were these notions?
8. Did you have a preconceived idea of this class?
9. Did you have a preconceived idea of this teacher?
10. How familiar would you say you are with videogames?
11. Which ones?
12. How often do you play them?
13. What is your perception of videogames?
14. Do you think that a learning process occurs when playing videogames? How?
15. What was your experience like with this course?
16. What was your experience with the videogame?
17. Did the game help your understanding of history? How?
18. What was the game able to convey the text was not? How?
19. In what respects was the game better or worse at helping you understand material?
20. Would you continue to play this game?
21. Was the class enjoyable?
22. Was it difficult?
23. Do you think you learned a lot?
24. Briefly what did you learn?
25. How does it compare to on campus classes?
26. On campus history classes?
27. How many college level courses have you taken?
28. How many online?
29. When did you first start reading?
30. Do you enjoy reading?
31. What types of material do you enjoy reading? Why?
32. What types don’t you enjoy reading? Why?
33. Why did you pick the work that you did?
34. Did you enjoy it?
35. What were you able to tell about the time period from the work?
36. Did you think it was an interesting project?
37. An enjoyable project?
38. What did you learn from it?
39. Has it changed how you look at history? At lit?
40. How familiar would you say you are with technology?
41. What types?
42. Have you ever used a wiki before?
43. Do you think that a learning process occurs when reading or using a wiki? How?
44. What was your experience with the wiki?
45. Did the wiki help your understanding of history? How?
46. How did the wiki, the lectures, the book, the final project, the presentations, and the people in the class help you understand history better?
47. What were the five most important things you learned in the class?

Interview questions approved by IRB after preliminary examination of data

1. Do you feel that you learned as you prepared to teach? As you taught? How?
2. How did you feel as you taught? (trying to get at some sort of internal learning, perhaps new theory through the tech used in most presentations)
3. Looking back on the class, what sticks with you the most, the “facts” of history, the stories, the big picture, how to look up the info, or something else?
4. Please think back on memorable points in the class for you. What were they, why were they memorable?
5. Several students commented they weren’t always sure about what their classmates were saying as they taught? Ie they didn’t believe it or trust it. Do you agree with this statement? If so did it have any effect on how you received this information, or how you received the info? How?
6. Of all the sources you used this semester which ones did you question the validity of? (trying to tie it to Starkey and ideas of web 2.0 learning)
7. How would you define critical thinking? Do you think this class has helped you with that? How? Were there specific assignments/discussions which apply? What helped your critical thinking skills, please give an example.

8. Did you see a political link to the history which was covered in class? Did this political link relate to biases in history?

9. The future of education will be figuring out how to teach creation of knowledge, and most likely creation not simply in a written format, but a multi-literate format of sounds, writing, pictures, video, and simulations (Cope et al., 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Steinkuehler, 2008). Do you feel this was achieved this semester, if so how, if not how would it be achieved?

10. Do you remember the video shown the first day of class on the history of the universe, and did that have any effect on how you viewed history this semester? How?

11. Did the diagram I drew about shallow chronological knowledge, in depth period knowledge, and thematic knowledge have any effect on how you viewed history this semester? How?

12. Were social inequalities discussed in this class? Which ones? How were they discussed? (ie one side, multiple perspectives) Did you know about them before? If so, what? What was discussed in class? Did that change your view how?

13. Did the open view-ability of the wiki have any effect on your postings? ie did you ever think about it?

14. What type of info did you put in the wiki most? Why that type?

15. Did you find other types of info posted by others to be more useful? Why?

16. How did you decide what to add to the wiki? ie what influenced it?

17. Did you feel invested in what you were teaching or adding to the wiki?

18. What types of sources (thinking of books, articles, websites, classmates, teacher, other instructors, friends) did you use most for teaching and adding to the wiki? Why? (Trying to develop Siemens connectionism link)

19. Which sources were most useful, why?

20. Did you find it was more useful to find out dates, people…facts, or more useful to think about the bigger picture and how to find information?

21. Several students commented that they didn’t learn sugar coated history or now they were more cynical does this apply to you, how?

22. What role did I play in your education this semester compared to all the other sources (classmates, wiki, books, websites, articles, projects…)?

23. OR perhaps Who/what had the biggest influence in your learning this semester? How?

24. How/What did you experience adding to the wiki? Teaching the class? Participating in class?

25. As you were doing edits did your information search take you off into tangents which lead to greater learning or understanding for you, but which didn’t make it into the wiki or your teaching? Please give an example of one or two of these instances.
26. Describe the learning which you felt occurred for you, which may not have made it into the classroom teaching, discussion, or your wiki edits and final paper.
27. Did the final presentations help solidify any of the learning which occurred throughout the semester for you? (ie depending on if you made something, played the videogame, or read a book depending on class did the other presentations tie stuff together for you)
28. What did you learn from the presentations overall (ie not specific facts)?
29. Do you think the class was taught as predetermined? (ie was the American Revolution a given leading to a great modern US, or Rome had to follow Greece all leading to a modern US)
30. Did the class include enough different views, perspectives on history? Like what?
31. Before taking class how did you think about history?
32. After or during class did you think the same or did your view change? How?
33. Before taking this class what did you think the purpose of history was? Has that changed during or after the class, how?
34. Do you think history can be biased? How? Was the history covered in the class biased? How? Did the class help overcome some biases? Was it through the instruction or assignments, please elaborate?
35. Please describe your experiences using the wiki.
36. Please discuss your experience with the lectures (student or teacher) the content, the discussion, and the info in the wiki.
37. Do you have any questions about this study or any final thoughts on the class which I did not ask about?