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## Addressing DWFI Rate Through Backward and Aligned Course Design

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**Yvette J. Saavedra, Ph.D.**

## **Addressing DFWI Rates Through Backward and Aligned Course Design**

### **Introduction**

The narrative below reflects the measures I undertook in my large (150+ students) History 201 course at CSUSB to improve student performance and learning. Utilizing the pedagogical concepts of Backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2001) and Aligned curriculum design (Alfauzan & Tarachouna, 2017) I re-evaluated the course to ensure that course content, in class activities, student assessments, and teaching strategies were in line with student learning objectives (SLOs) and course aims. Designing in class activities with an explicit focus on SLOs and course aim made a significant difference in how students approached exams and developed higher order thinking skills (HOTS). This focus moved them from Bloom's memorization/remember level, what students often think history is, to developing and employing critical thinking and communication skills that lead to factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledges (Anderson, et. al., 2014). Scaffolding in class discussion of course content (factual knowledge), with conceptual ideas developed through examination of primary sources using history methodology of analysis and interpretation led students to see the continuities, differences, and complexities of the past and present- thereby improving students' overall learning, literacy, and life skills.

### **Implementation**

To address the DFWI rate in the Hist 201 survey course I implemented a variety of changes ranging from class examining primary documents in class, I reminded students to come to next class meeting having read the sources. During the next meeting I allotted about 25 mins of class time to discussing the sources. We completed the usual historical analysis of who, what, where, when, why. Each of the docs represented different perspectives on a similar topic, during a specific time/era/theme. On screen I posed questions that assessed factual knowledge, as well as higher order thinking skills. This helped me guide students through the docs by showing them how to navigate through the different elements of the documents. The last part of the in-class exercise was to link the concepts covered to contemporary dynamics. In its entirety this exercise helped students see and practice the skills that would be assessed in the course exams. On exams, rather than simply asking about the primary documents by title, I provided excerpts from the docs I wished students to engage. Comparatively, student scores increased when provided the excerpt as opposed to simply referring to them by title. I take this to mean that they understand and can critically engage the sources, when the stress of recalling the specific documents was reduced. The modification described above was not difficult to implement. It was helpful to students because it helped by modeling the way I expected them to engage the work. Their answers, both in the class discussion and in exam, were more thorough and clearly illustrated factual knowledge and higher order thinking skills.

This modification in classroom approach speaks to larger reconceptualizing of what survey courses are. Studies show that survey courses in history as well as other disciplines, are often structured as the transfer of large bodies of content- covering an overwhelming and intimidating amount of information. Professors' experiential knowledge in the

classroom shows that thematic or question-based approaches, rather than exclusively content driven survey courses help student better organize the information they receive in the course. I found that by emphasizing specific themes rather than a 'content dump' based on the transfer of information of a large body of historical content students found the information to be more manageable. Using these sources in class, modeling analysis for and with them, then providing excerpts on tests, helped students see the broader historical picture through the examination of specific case studies.

What follows are portions of the Syllabi and Tests for History 201 (syllabi – Fall 2017 and Fall 2018; Test 1- Fall 2017 and Fall 2018). They indicate the changes described in the project narrative. Mainly, the syllabi show how I changed the valuation of course assignments and the implanting of online journal responses. The tests show how I changed the written portions of the exam to better reflect the in-class discussion assignments described in the project narrative. Below are illustrations of relevant portions of course syllabi.


## Hist 201 Syllabi

### Fall 2017 Syllabus


### Fall 2018 Syllabus

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Both Texts are available for purchase / rental at bookstore



Roark, James *The American Promise* (Volume II, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition-Value Edition) (Referred to as 'text' in syllabus) (the 6<sup>th</sup> edition is longer than this newer edition) ISBN-13: 9781319062002



Johnson, Michael, *Reading the American Past* (Volume II, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition) ISBN-13: 9780312563776

Articles and/or Videos - Uploaded on Blackboard (BB)

**EVALUATION**

QUIZZES AND PARTICIPATION	20%
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	25%
TESTS	25%
FINAL EXAM	30%

\*Refer to the "Details Section" of the syllabus for descriptions of each component

**GRADING SCALE**

A	90-100%	SUPERIOR, MASTERY BEYOND COURSE REQUIREMENTS
B	80-89.9%	ABOVE AVERAGE, CONSISTENT PROGRESS; MEETS ALL COURSE REQUIREMENTS
C	70-79.9%	AVERAGE, MEETS BASIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS
D	60-69.9%	BELOW AVERAGE, PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS; MINIMAL EFFORT AND PROGRESS
F	BELOW 60%	FAILS TO MEET MINIMUM COURSE STANDARDS


\*Detailed Grading Scale available on Black Board  
Students are strongly advised to retain a copy of all written work together with their notes and drafts until they receive the final grade for the course.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**


Review the "Details Section" of the syllabus beginning at pp. 5 for detailed information about assignments, office hours, items you'll need for the exams, study guides, late work, email, and other pertinent information. It also has information about important **Course Policies** regarding expected classroom behavior, attendance, computer use, cell phones, academic honesty, missed exams etc. **It is your responsibility to read and understand the policies in this section**, as you will be held to them. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to speak with me ☺

History 201 Syllabus | 2

**REQUIRED TEXTS – AVAILABLE AT BOOKSTORE**



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Articles and/or Videos - Uploaded on Blackboard (BB)

**EVALUATION**

<b>IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (INCLUDING POP-QUIZZES), ONLINE JOURNAL ASSIGNMENTS, CLASS PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>DISCUSSION PAPERS</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<b>25%</b>

\*Refer to the "Details Section" of the syllabus for descriptions of each component

**GRADING SCALE**

A	90-100%	SUPERIOR, MASTERY BEYOND COURSE REQUIREMENTS
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History 201 Syllabus | 2

As seen above, I changed the valuation for course evaluation. The fall 2018 syllabus shows that class participation counts for an equal percentage of other course assessments. This indicates to students that being in class (attendance), participating in class discussion of documents, contributing to lecture, and completion of on-line journals are crucial to success in the course. During the in-class review of the syllabus, I made sure to explain how these components built on each other and would be covered on the exams. In other words, I organized the assignments/activities that students engaged in/completed as a way of scaffolding knowledge and then having them implement in class through direct

review of the material. The exams below show how I changed the way I designed the written portion of the tests to better reflect my approach.

## History 201 – Test 1

Fall 2017

**Written Portion** 40 /40 points possible

**Identifications**  
This type of questions asks you to provide both factual and understanding of a term. Each question is worth 20 points total.

You need to answer the following elements:

**Who:** Who or what was involved? Describe the circumstances, provide the background. (4 points)

**What:** What is the term? Is it a person, even, ideology /concept? Define it in greater detail. (4 points)

**Where:** Location. Where did the person live? Where did the idea/concept originate? Where did the event take place? (4 points)

**When:** This is asking you about time. When did the event happen? When did the person live? When was the concept formulated or introduced? Based on whether you are discussing an event, person, or concept what the event or person you should provide an exact date, other times if it is an era. If you don't remember the exact date, I will accept broader time frames. For example, the late 1850s is acceptable, but the 1900s is not because it is too broad. (4 points)

**Why:** Why is the term important? In other words, why is the term significant in and of itself, as well as its broader significance? Think about consequences, why is the event, idea, person, important / significant? (4 points)

**PICK 2 OF THE 3 TERMS BELOW. ONLY ANSWER 2, POINTS WILL NOT BE GIVEN FOR ANSWERING MORE THAN 2.**

Be sure to indicate the terms you've chosen by NUMBERING YOUR RESPONSES ACCORDINGLY.

- Ideal of Domesticity
- Industrialization
- "Kill the Indian Save the Man"

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Fall 2018

A) Southern Europe almost exclusively.  
B) Northern and Western Europe.  
C) Eastern and Southern Europe.  
D) Western Europe almost exclusively.

**Part II. Short Answer** 60/60 Points total 20 points each

The questions below are based on required readings from the primary source reader, *Reading the American Past*. Use what you have learned from the text, class lecture, and class discussion to inform your answer about the document.

1. Use the statement below from Document 17-5, *A Plea to Civilize Indians* to inform your analysis of the phrase "kill the Indian, save the man." Remember to include when the phrase was used, who said it, and its significance. (20 points)

"It is a great mistake to think that the Indian is born an inevitable savage. He is born a blank, like all the rest of us. Left in the surroundings of savagery, he grows to possess a savage language, superstition, and life. We, left in the surrounding of civilization, grow to possess a civilized language, life, and purpose. Transfer the white infant to the savage surrounding, he will grow to possess a savage language, superstition, and habit. Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit. These results have been established over and over again beyond all question; and it is also well established that those advanced in life, even to maturity, of either class, lose already acquired qualities belonging to the side of their birth, and gradually take on those of the side to which they have been transferred."- Richard Pratt, *The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites* (1893).

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2. Use the statements from Document 18-2, *William Graham Sumner on Social Obligations* and Document 18-4, *Andrew Carnegie Explains the Gospel of Wealth* to explain how Andrew Carnegie's views of the obligations of wealthy people to the poor and to society compare with those of William Graham Sumner? Remember to refer to Social Darwinism in your answer. (20 points)

**William Graham Sumner:** "We each owe it to the other to guarantee rights. Rights do not pertain to results, but only to chances. They pertain to the conditions of the struggle for existence, not to any of the results of it; to the pursuit of happiness, not to the possession of happiness. It cannot be said that each one has a right to have some property, because if one man had such a right some other man or men would be under a corresponding obligation to provide him with some property. Each has a right to acquire and possess property if he can... If we take rights to pertain to results, and then say that rights must be equal, we come to say that men have a right be equally happy, and so on in all the details. Rights should be equal, because they pertain to chances and all should have equal chances so far as chances are provided or limited by the action of society. This, however, will not produce equal results, but it is right just because it will produce unequal results- that is, results which shall be proportioned to the merits of individuals."- William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (1883).

**Andrew Carnegie:** "There remains...only one mode of using great fortunes;... in this we have the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth, the reconciliation of the rich and the poor—a reign in harmony... It is founded upon the present most intense Individualism, and the race is prepared to put it in practice by degrees whenever it pleases. Under its sway we shall have an ideal State in which the surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, the property of the many, because administered for the common good; and this wealth, passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if distributed in small sums to the people themselves."- Andrew Carnegie, *Wealth* (1889).

3. Explain how the demands of labor unions such as the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor, and critiques of monopolies illustrate the broader negative social, economic, and political consequences of the Gilded Age. Use the statement from Document 18-3 *Henry Demarest Lloyd Attacks Monopolies* and Document 20-4, *Samuel Gompers Letter to the American Federationist, 1894* to inform your answer. Remember to briefly describe the specifics of this era. (20 points)

**Henry Demarest Lloyd:** "Liberty produces wealth, and wealth destroys liberty... Our businesses—cities, factories, monopolies, fortunes, which re our empires, are the obesities of an age gluttonous beyond its power of digestion. Mankind are crowding upon each other in the centers and struggling to keep each other out of the feast set by the new sciences and the new fellowships. Our size has got beyond our science and our conscience. The vision of the railroad stockholder is not far-sighted enough to see into the office of the General Manager; the people cannot reach across even a war of the city to rule their rulers; Captains of Industry "do not know" whether the men in the ranks are dying from lack of food and shelter; we cannot clean our cities nor our politics; the locomotive has more man-power than all the ballot-boxes, and millwheels wail out the hearts of workers unable to keep up beating time to their whirl. This is what we are witnessing in the world of livelihoods... there is but a passing phase in the evolution of industrial Caesars, and these Caesars will be of a new type—corporate Caesars..."- Henry Demarest Lloyd, *Wealth Against Commonwealth* (1894).

**Samuel Gompers:** "Probably you have not read within the past year of babies dying of starvation at their mothers' breasts. More than likely the thousands of men lying upon the bare stones might after night in the City Hall of Chicago last winter escaped your notice. You may not have heard of the cry for bread that was sounded through this land of plenty by thousands of honest men and women. But should these and many other painful incidents have passed you unnoticed, I am fearful that you may learn of them with keener thought with the coming sleets and blasts of winter... Year by year man's liberties are trampled underfoot at the bidding of corporation and trusts, rights are invaded, and law perverted... You may not know that the labor movement as represented by the trade unions, stands for right, for justice, for liberty. You may not imagine that the issuance of an injunction depriving men of a legal as well as a natural right to protect themselves, their wives and little ones, must fail of its purpose. Repression or oppression never yet succeeded in crushing the truth or redressing a wrong."- Samuel Gompers, *American Federationist* (1894).

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The Fall 2018 version of the exam asks similar questions to those on the Fall 2017 version but in a different way. For example, questions 27 and 28 on the fall 2017 exam are asked on the fall 2018 version in questions 1 and 2. The latter version provides paragraphs from primary documents discussed in class in great detail. Simply providing these short quotes helped students to think through the question- not simply provide memorized info- which often result in clear cut (correct/incorrect) answers- such as in the fall 2017 version. Posing the questions in this detailed way- allows student to engage higher level thinking skills and give more thorough analysis- something they practiced during in class discussion.

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