

Reimagining the US History Survey

Rethinking Learning Objectives, Design,
Activities, Assessments, and Delivery Modalities

Driving Question

- Can we make the survey more engaging and interactive – without sacrificing coverage or rigor?

Design Thinking

- A deliberate, structured process for solving problems and fostering innovation.
- Begins with a focus on the “end user,” and that individual’s unmet needs, desires, and priorities.
- Address the challenge by:
 - Brainstorming
 - Concepting
 - Rapid prototyping
 - Iterating

Backward Design

- Ask what students should know and understand and be able to do.
- Design learning experiences to move students to mastery.
- Create assessments that evaluate whether students have attained mastery.

Alternatives to the Coverage Model

- Approaches that offer an alternative to an emphasis on factual knowledge are over a century old:
 - Source method of instruction
 - Problem-based approach
 - Cultural literacy and citizenship education
 - Historical mindedness
 - Lab courses emphasizing independent research

Learning Objectives

- **Core knowledge:** Mastery of essential facts, chronology, and periodization.
- **Historical interpretation:** Familiarity with significant controversies and conflicting interpretations.
- **Thesis formulation:** Ability to formulate meaningful, researchable historical questions.
- **Research skills:** Ability to locate, evaluate, and interpret primary sources.
- **Historical thinking:** Ability to describe development of institutions, customs, and values over time; understand contingency of historical events and the trade-offs that accompany historical change; and understand the perspectives of historical actors.
- **Historical perspective:** Ability to connect past and present.

Reimagine Everything

- **Pedagogy:** Evidence-driven, inquiry-based, problem solving, challenge-based, gamified, team-based, using multimedia
- **Assessment:** Points-based, competency-based, and performance-based
- **Delivery modes:** Flipped, fully online, field-based

Approach 1: Inquiry

- **American icons:** Symbols of nationhood
- **Hidden history:** Backstory of contemporary issues
- **Historical analogies:** Useful or misleading
- **Historical debates:** Questions of our past
- **History detective:** Solving historical questions
- **History's mysteries:** Unsolved puzzles of the past

Approach 1: Inquiry

- **How do we know?** How historians answer key questions
- **Hollywood vs history:** Cinematic treatment of the past
- **Judging the past:** Evaluating past decisions and actors
- **Myth vs reality:** Debunking myths and misconceptions

Approach 1: Inquiry

- **Predictions about the future:** How people in the past envisioned the future
- **What if?** What might have happened if a single event turned out differently
- **History through...:** Advertisements, architecture, art, dress, gravestones, maps, movies, music, names, photographs, political cartoons, and propaganda posters

Approach 2: History & the Social Sciences

- Placing key issues in the social sciences in historical perspective:
 - Urbanization
 - Modernization
 - Migration
 - Stratification, and
 - Families and the life course.

Approach 3: Comparative

- Major issues in US history viewed from comparative, cross cultural perspective:
 - Revolution
 - Civil war
 - Slavery
 - Industrialization
 - Growth of a welfare state.

Approach 4: Thematic

- Key themes in US history:
 - Rights and liberties
 - Citizenship
 - Presidential power
 - Diversity and gender

Approach 5: Gamification

- Make history class more game-like through role playing activities that recreate key debates in US history drawing on primary sources:
 - Drafting the U.S. Constitution
 - The impeachment of Andrew Johnson
 - Deciding to drop atomic bombs on Japan
 - Presidential decisionmaking and the Vietnam War

Approach 6: Uses & Misuses of History

- The uses of history for political or nationalistic purposes.
- The perpetuation of myths.
- History as a form of entertainment rather than enlightenment and reckoning with past misdeeds.
- Examining the value of historical analogies
- Drawing lessons from the past

Approach 7: History & the Professions

- Using history to help in the development of a professional identity by:
 - Introducing students in medicine, law, engineering, and business to the history of their fields
 - Exposing pre-professional students to the ethical issues that their future profession has faced

Approach 8: Cognitive Revolutions

- Fundamental shifts in outlook and values, including:
 - The growth of humanitarianism
 - The rise of psychological thinking
 - The emergence of environmental consciousness, and
 - the rights revolution

Approach 9: Presentist

- Focusing on the origins of contemporary controversies, such as:
 - Immigration policy
 - Foreign policy
 - Presidential power
 - Race relations

Approach 10: Freshman Research Experience

- Individual and team-based research opportunities
- Training in methods: oral history, local history
- Goal: To create a public resource