

Summary notes: Session 3 – Workshop A1

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When began teaching totally about content – “stand and deliver teaching” – until realised “it’s not about what you say but it’s about what they hear”. Lendol shared his “Lecture about M. L. King at Selma” story (students couldn’t care less).

Students learn that history is about content – something useless to them. Instead, bring students in to the production of historical knowledge – engage alternate points of view and give care to evidence, skills, habits, dispositions – needs to be married with content.

Alan Booth: In 80s-90s skills implicit in the curriculum. Orthodoxy not talked about – content was everything. Innovation was introducing new topics into curriculum. Government started to worry about employability, became more of a mass undertaking – students not analytical, critical, not good at doing research. But what if you are unhappy with content led teaching, but also unhappy with employability / transferable skills agenda.

Instead:

- Develop skills of the historian
- Enhance confidence
- Introduce fun

Interest in skills, but beyond what the government wanted re: employability.

First year course where students confront the habits that students have from school. Have them connect that with what they are doing now. Practice key skills. Have them mark each other’s essays. Have them give oral presentations. Gain confidence by working in groups. Second and third year students would run their own seminars (tutorials). Fourth year students lead their own: prepare agenda, select readings from list. Students critique their own work. By doing so they gain confidence and became more skilled as historians. *Skilled* not skills. Produces more rounded people.

“Think, pair, share” activity. How do you marry content and skills? Produce good, practical idea to take back to campus.

Activity

How to marry skills and contents – designing an environment to get good ideas out on the table.

Independent work first – 5 min, then group work.

Plenary discussion

Best ideas:

- Find your own primary sources and report back in tutorial.
- Tell stories from different perspectives of participants.
- Pick three sources that don't match up with the claim of the week and one which does.
- Two claims, and which piece of evidence is relevant and which one isn't
- Skills and content linked by modes of argument – teach academic argument - /They say I say/ by Gerald Graff = “argue speak”. All thinking starts with what someone else says.
- Mechanics of essay – spend hours identifying topic sentences, understand sentences, and how to attach primary source reference.
- Very large introductory classes with lots of content – dispense with mandate for content, then focus on most essential things.
- Relevance – send students into the streets to find examples of the history they are teaching: war/war memorial.
- Argument / critical thinking? Perhaps we should focus on instilling passion in history – focus on the human aspects of history, people are basically the same but constrained by context – historical contingency. How does historical study effect the way the world is now. Skills + content + disposition.
- People become historians because we want to analyse and interpret – but we want to do that to certain bodies of content.
- How much content to students remember?
- Historians unwilling to throw out content – that is what we have to fight; don't think that Lendol and other are hostile to content, but are fighting our tendencies.