

Summary Report
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1.) Between July 2nd and July 17th I presented and participated in the World History Association conference in Ghent, Belgium and the International Big History Association conference in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The World History Association (WHA) and the International Big History Association (IBHA) are the foremost organizations for the promotion of world history through the encouragement of teaching and research. At both conferences I was careful to attend the workshops best suited to our student body here at UHMC. A few of the most valuable topics included “Turning Students into Historians,” “Teaching World History as Mystery,” “Re-Imagining the Role of History in the First-Year College Experience,” “Teaching the World Online,” and “The Globally Diverse, Wired, and Eager Classroom.”

As indicated in the titles, the workshops covered an array of issues pertinent to meeting SLOs and developing classroom activities. However, all of them stressed the benefit of embracing students’ individual agency. Their capacity to act and make decisions can be incorporated into role-playing scenarios and “detective work.” This helps students see history not as the organization of mere facts, but rather as an ongoing interpretation of evidence. In addition, each workshop stressed the value of exploiting students’ technological skills. The ubiquity of internet-ready technology (i.e. laptops, smart phones, tablets, etc.) can be used advantageously to deliver historically relevant content. The workshops revealed new ways to incorporate fiction films, podcasts, digital archives, and iTunes lectures into online and face-to-face classes. Lastly, the workshops stressed how to introduce students to the historiography and theory of world history. Students in HIST 151/152 should be able to wrestle with the prevailing schools of world historical thought,

including Dependency Theory, World Systems Theory, and Environmental Determinism, to name but a few. I learned that these theories, which for too long have been considered by some as “unnecessary” for lower-level classes, could actually be paired conveniently with specific historical eras. A taste of World History theory should maximize the students’ retention of the content by expanding their investigative toolkit. I have already shared these realizations with my fellow history instructors and we are working collaboratively to improve our classes accordingly.

2.) Heeding what I learned and gained from the conferences, I will present a workshop for the Humanities Department that details an array of ways to incorporate world historical perspectives into the classroom. Teaching within a trans-national, trans-regional, and trans-cultural framework is not limited solely to history, and can be applied effectively to all disciplines. All too often, both undergraduate students and non-history faculty interpret an introductory world history course as “a little bit of everything” from the Paleolithic era to the present. They see the course as something akin to a “greatest hits” compilation of influential individuals and events. Every “important” nation, society, and culture, they suppose, will receive certain attention as the course moves chronologically from primitive origins to high-tech modern life. Adopting world historical perspectives, however, complicates this narrative and forces students to see history as an intricate network driven by recognizable patterns, such as cultural diffusion, migration, and environment. This workshop will help faculty members approach world history not as a fixed “thing,” but rather as a set of questions that are trans-national, trans-regional, and trans-cultural in scope.