

QEP Faculty Champion Reporting: Fall Semester 2013

Faculty Champion: Jeffery B. Howell

Critical Thinking Goals

HIST 2111 (3 Classes)

In class, through a variety of exercises, we addressed the issue of African American Slavery. I wanted the students to understand the mechanics of the international slave trade, the realities of slavery in pre-Civil War America, and the centrality of slavery leading to the Civil War.

HIST 2112 (2 Classes)

In class, through a variety of exercises, we addressed the issue of Jim Crow racism between the end of the Civil War and the late twentieth century. I wanted the students to understand the complex nature of de jure and de facto racism in the Deep South as well as the rest of the country.

HIST 1111 (1 Class)

In class, through a variety of exercises, we addressed the issue of diffusion of ideas throughout ancient societies in Eurasia and Africa, especially in regards to one group's religion having a direct impact on the religion of a neighboring people. I wanted the student to grasp the idea that human civilizations have always borrowed and adapted ideas and technology from neighboring peoples.

Teaching Strategies

HIST 2111

I employed several strategies. I taught about African American slavery in multiple lecture components. I used videos to give a visceral image of the horrors of slavery. We read several excerpts from primary documents in class. We took class time to discuss the nature of slavery in the United States. Finally, the students read the autobiography of Frederick Douglass,

a man who was born in slavery in the US and went on to become one of the leading abolitionists in the US in the antebellum period.

HIST 2112

I employed several strategies. Many of my lectures included a component concerning the African American struggle for civil rights in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We watched videos concerning issues like Reconstruction, black migration to the North, and black activism during the Civil Rights movement. We read in class some primary documents from the era. We took class time to discuss key leaders in the civil rights movement, and the problems they faced. Finally, the students read *Black Like Me* by John Howard Griffin; a white man who colored his skin brown in order to live as a black man in the South in the late 1950s.

HIST 1111

I employed several strategies. Many of my lectures included a component concerning the idea of diffusion, i.e., the idea that one civilization produces technology and ideas that are adapted and modified by another civilization. In class, we discussed the nature of several ancient religions and noted similarities and differences. For example, we compared and contrasted ancient Babylonian religious texts with those of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). Finally, the students read a paper I wrote in graduate school that looked at the similarities between the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Israelites, and Christianity.

Assessment Methods

HIST 2111

I assessed my students' critical understanding in variety of ways. In class discussions, I asked them questions to probe their understanding of the topic and challenge their assumptions. On objective tests, I gave multiple choice questions that called for them to analyze the answers and find the one (out of five choices) that did not fit with what we learned in class. Finally, I gave the

class an essay test on the Douglass book where they had to answer several critical thinking questions. An example question: **“In his book, Douglass mapped out the psychological and physical brutality of American slavery. In this essay, analyze and detail how slavery was even more brutal for women.”**

HIST 2112

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HIST 1111

I assessed my students' critical understanding in variety of ways. In class discussions, I asked them questions to probe their understanding of the topic and challenge their assumptions. On objective tests, I gave multiple choice questions that called for them to analyze the answers and find the one (out of five choices) that did not fit with what we learned in class. In the critical analysis paper, students had to read my paper and then evaluate the merits of my argument. They were given several questions to consider as they read my paper, and then they were to work their answers into the paper. An example: **“What kinds of sources did Dr. Howell use in his paper to make his arguments? Are the sources credible (they were to look many of them up)? Do the sources verify or disprove his argument?”**

Conclusions

Success/Problems

I found in all my classes, that taking time for class discussions, and then probing at the student's answers helped them to come to a more critical understanding of the issue at hand. Having the class do outside reading (whether a book or paper, as well as primary documents) and then taking a critical analysis test (or writing a critical analysis study), worked well. The students grew in their understanding of analysis/synthesis and came to better comprehend that assumptions must be evaluated, and that issues must be studied and analyzed.

My one major problem came with the HIST 1111 class. I need to do a better job of helping the students learn how to evaluate evidence. Many were at a loss concerning how to judge between logical arguments and personal prejudices.

Qualitative/Quantitative Results

HIST 2111 (3classes)

78/87 made a C or Better on the Book Critical Essay Test. (Those who failed either did not read the book or did not show up for the test).

HIST 2112 (2 Classes)

50/60 made a C or Better on the Book Critical Essay Test. (Those who failed either did not read the book or did not show for the test).

HIST 1111 (1 class)

21/28 made a C or better on the Critical Analysis paper. Three of the students did not turn in a paper.

How will being a faculty champion for critical thinking impact your approach to teaching? **I have become keenly aware of bringing a multitude of critical**

thinking components into my class, whether through lectures, discussions, and tests.

If you worked with a faculty mentor, who did you work with and how did the mentor assist you? **I worked with Daniel Mancill. Daniel always took time to share with me what he is doing in his class. He listened to my ideas and offered encouragement or critiques of my ideas.**