

within the graduate student population. Possibly, those students not recruited will feel left out and inferior, generating resentment. This should not become an excuse for including students who, for whatever reason, will not produce a conference-worthy paper or who will only do so at an inordinately great cost to the faculty. Those who do not present could be given a role by inviting them to come along as observers, and perhaps they could help by reading and critiquing drafts.

Conference participation is and remains an extracurricular activity. The problem of creating division among the student body is probably greatest when the idea of participating in conferences is first introduced. It is more likely to be initiated by the faculty—as in our case—and students may perceive inclusion or exclusion as a judgment on their abilities. Tact and diplomacy on the part of the faculty are probably the best avenues to guard against negative fall-out. As the student culture changes and conference participation becomes more of a student-initiated activity, this is likely to become less of an issue.

The investment of time and energy on the part of faculty involved is significant. If the usefulness of encouraging M.A. student participation in conferences is not recognized by the department, or if it is recognized but tangible support is not forthcoming, faculty may be

tempted to forego the whole endeavor. However, nothing convinces like success. If we had asked other faculty members in our department to join us in our first effort, they may well have excused themselves with reference to their own, very full, research agendas. Now that they have seen our M.A. students in action, several other faculty members have expressed an interest in becoming involved in this exercise, which one of them termed a “pilot project.” Starting off with a small core of carefully selected students can help to allay concerns among colleagues about committing substantial time to an uncertain endeavor.

Conclusions

Despite all the anxieties during the time leading up to the conference, the students found the experience worthwhile. So did we. Although it had taken some arm twisting to get them to commit to participating and although the hand holding took more of our time than we had envisioned, the end result was a set of solid papers and coherent presentations. The students received positive feedback at the conference. In the months after the conference, they made comments about how scared they had been, but also about the confidence they had gained. They all said they would do it again, and three students currently are writing papers for their second conference.

As this group starts talking with the new students entering our program, their experiences will help a new generation of students decide to participate. The initial group will be able to help us address some of the anxieties the first group had with war stories all their own.

In sum, involving M.A. students in state or regional conferences provides them with an invaluable learning experience about the profession, while it simultaneously enhances the intellectual climate of the department. Although M.A. programs serve a variety of purposes, one of those is to help students make well-informed decisions about further study. Conference participation alone will not achieve that but, in the process of gaining a better understanding of what life as an academic entails, it should be helpful as a piece of the decision-making puzzle.

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Giving Flesh to Ideas: Constructing a Cultural Dialogue

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There is perhaps nothing more unsatisfying—for student or teacher—than the perfunctory term paper performed with formulaic diligence. The term paper is assigned to encourage a competent, if not critical discussion, of a particular topic through multisource research. Truth be told, students have neither mastered nor exhausted this

form. They have, though, grown tired of it, with the result that the unengaged student is left still unengaged.

The challenge is to get students excited about the course material without sacrificing the competent scholarship encouraged by the term paper. What follows is one approach I used in an American polit-

ical culture class. The course was the third of a year-long sequence in American culture that first-year students could take. The paper was a capstone to synthesize the previous two courses in English and history, though it would work for a stand-alone course. The assignment was developed in conjunction with David Crowe, an English professor

with whom I worked throughout the sequence.

The students were to set up a dialogue between two thinkers to discuss an issue facing American social, economic, or political life. Examples included concerns about industrialization, urbanization, and immigration as well as the changing role of women and race issues. I required the two thinkers in the dialogue to be contemporaneous so they would be more likely to address the same cultural issues, albeit from different perspectives. At the very least, the requirement would reduce the most egregious anachronisms.

In developing the dialogues, the students were to do justice to the respective points of view of the two thinkers. That is, the dialogue was to elaborate the perspectives of the participants in juxtaposition. Creating a conversation in which there was a mutual exchange of ideas required the students to develop a clear sense of not only the position and tenor of each thinker but also the critical differences between their positions. Without that contrast, the dialogues would lack direction and focus. I discouraged the students from having one thinker win the argument, as I feared this would lead to constructing “straw men” arguments. Instead, I was more interested in how the dialogue revealed the differing perspectives.

The students were to write in a voice sensitive to the thinkers’ styles of writing or speaking. This became a useful exercise that helped the students to become attentive to the language of the time as well as to the tone of the author. For example, it was important to portray the sense of pessimism that pervades Henry Adams’s works or the powerful frontier religious imagery that appears in Abraham Lincoln’s speeches. Paying attention to language and tone, in turn, provided the students with a more sophisticated and accurate rendering of the ideas.

Unlike a term paper in which the rules of citing and accrediting sources are well established, the dialogue is partly directly attributable material, partly an elaboration

of particular ideas, and partly fiction. Quotation marks and footnotes would make the dialogue clumsy because the thinkers would quote themselves. Instead of footnotes, the students were to prepare a 2–3 page “underbook.” This idea had its inspiration from William Safire’s book, *Freedom*, in which he writes a chapter-by-chapter discussion justifying particular ideas and words he puts in the mouths of his characters, explaining the scholarly arguments about the particular issue, indicating on what basis he resolved these debates, and pointing to moments of creative fiction. I highly recommend attaching a couple of pages from Safire’s underbook to the assignment to illustrate the idea.

In constructing a dialogue, though, the students could not treat ideas as entities independent of the individuals who expressed them.

I then provided a list of possible dialogue pairings, though I encouraged the students to discuss alternate pairings with me. I attempted to develop combinations that contrasted perspectives about similar events. Some examples included W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, and Henry James, *American Scene*, in their discussion of the South; John Dewey and Anzia Yeziarska, whose overlapping public and private life make for potentially interesting dialogue; or Charles Eastman and DuBois, who both were struggling with the leadership of their respective movements.

The assignment in its dual structure yielded three important benefits. First, the dialogue, as it was unfamiliar to the students, encouraged experimentation and creativity (after some initial anxiety). Over time, students explored innovative

ways of enhancing their dialogue, from incorporating their foreign language studies (a French waiter in a cafe speaking to Gertrude Stein), to reading letters, diaries, and reminiscences to develop an awareness of context and voice. Rather than inadvertently allowing the creative student to substitute imagination for thoughtfulness, though, the dialogue resulted in a fusion of these two dimensions as students paid close attention to the historical as well as personal aspects of a particular position.

Second, the assignment required the students to articulate the basis of their understanding of the texts. This was done through the underbook. The underbook provided a venue for the students to explain what was purely fictional as well as the scholarly justification (including textual citation) for particular words and ideas placed in the dialogue. This aspect of the assignment had the most surprising results as some students who had written fairly average essays in previous assignments developed fascinating and thorough discussions in their underbook. This aspect of the assignment was critical as it held the students accountable for their interpretations.

The third benefit was to help demystify ideas. Often students are expected to confront ideas expressed in a highly abstract and conceptual vocabulary. These ideas, removed from their individual and historical context, appear unapproachable. In constructing a dialogue, though, the students could not treat ideas as entities independent of the individuals who expressed them. Instead, to make the dialogue realistic, students had to learn about the thinkers—their concerns, passions, and idiosyncracies—and their social, literary, and philosophic context. As ideas were given the flesh that creates and sustains them, they become more accessible. The consequence was a willingness and ability to engage in a sustained and intelligent discussion of the nature and implications of important cultural texts.

One important caveat: This assignment requires multiple drafts and a willingness to work closely

with the students. One reason is that the assignment taps a deep reservoir of uncertainty among students who tend to favor the status quo. In all likelihood, the students will search for the hidden rules of the game in the first few weeks, so it may be important to provide significant latitude and encouragement in developing their papers. Within several weeks, though, the students will become increasingly confident in their own

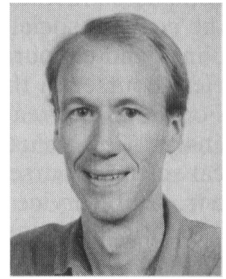
abilities and increasingly fascinated by exploring ideas and the individuals who developed them.

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APSA Guidelines for Teacher Training: Recommendations for Certifying Precollegiate Teachers of Civics, Government, and Social Studies*

Objectives

When the American Political Science Association held its second annual meeting in 1905, a major presentation was "What Do Entering College Freshmen Know About American Government Before Taking College Courses in Political Science?" From that time on, the Association has maintained standing committees and projects devoted to precollegiate education in civics, government, and politics. This is as it should be: citizenship education is a primary objective of American schooling, and political science is the core subject of civic literacy and competence.

The increasing concern over the competence of teachers and the preparation of students to participate fully and knowledgeably in American society now prompts the APSA to respond to requests for its recommendations regarding the certification of teachers of government, politics, social studies, and civics in secondary schools. The recognition that education must provide the foundation for students' academic skills and civic competency should also be addressed by recommendations as to the preparation of the elementary and secondary teachers who first introduce the study of American values and institutions.

Audiences: Who May Use These Guidelines

The guidelines have been prepared by the Association's Education Committee in consultation with many other faculty in political science and colleges of education. The guidelines are for reference and use by the following organizations responsible for designing curricula and training and certifying teachers:

- Colleges and universities with programs that certify elementary, middle and high school social studies, civics and government teachers
- State education agencies that establish standards for certifying or licensing social studies, civics and government teachers
- Agencies that evaluate and accredit teacher education programs
- Professional organizations for precollege teachers, particularly the National Council for the Social Studies, and the regional and state councils for the social studies
- Organizations that are examining and proposing reforms in precollegiate education
- Political science departments in colleges and universities who are responsible, wholly or in part, for providing the courses to be taken by teachers seeking certification

in social studies, civics, and government

The Certification of Secondary School Teachers of Civics and Government

Political Science

Teachers of civics and government in particular, and also of social studies, are advised to pursue a major in political science. The undergraduate political science major shares the objective of precollege civics and social studies instruction, namely ". . . [T]o maximize students' capacity to analyze and interpret the significance and dynamics of political events and governmental processes . . . [t]o equip them for coping with political events and governmental actions and problems in the future. 'Coping with' in this context means not merely to understand, or to manage their effects on society and on them individually, but also to evaluate and seek to shape them."

The political science major includes courses on democratic theory, constitutional democracy, and political institutions and processes that are the core of precollege instruction in civics and government. Moreover, the subjects and skills of a political science major are compatible with a broader social sci-