

CONFERENCE REPORTS

TEACHING WORLD HISTORY

Conference at the GHI, March 3–5, 2005. Co-sponsored by the GHI Washington DC and the GHI London. Conveners: Eckhardt Fuchs (University of Mannheim), Christof Mauch (GHI), Karen Oslund (GHI), Benedikt Stuchey (German Historical Institute, London).

Participants: Robert B. Bain (University of Michigan), Bill Bravman (Maret School), Roger B. Beck (Eastern Illinois University), Jerry H. Bentley (University of Hawaii), Arif Dirlik (University of Oregon), Ross Dunn (San Diego State University), Marnie Hughes-Warrington (Macquarie University), T. Mills Kelly (George Mason University), Matthias Middell (University of Leipzig), Katja Naumann (University of Leipzig), Susanne Popp (University of Siegen), John F. Richards (Duke University), Heidi Roupp (World History Connected), Tamara L. Shreiner (University of Michigan), Anthony J. Steinhoff (University of Tennessee), Peter N. Stearns (George Mason University).

Over the past three decades, world history has become a major teaching field and part of the history curricula for undergraduates and high school students in the United States. Efforts to establish this field as a subdiscipline have produced remarkable historical scholarship and led to the establishment of journals, organizations, and conferences. In continental Europe, however, with only a few exceptions, historians have thus far been reluctant to approach this field, and attempts to introduce a global perspective into secondary school and university curricula are still rare. Curriculum studies have only recently started to address this topic; international comparative studies do not yet exist. An effort to bridge this gap, the conference “Teaching World History” was the third in a sequence of conferences on world history and historiography organized by the German Historical Institutes in London and Washington since 1997. While the first two meetings dealt with the writing of world history since the early nineteenth century, the main goal of the third was to assemble academic practitioners of world history and representatives of the field of curriculum studies from several different countries to discuss the issues that arise in teaching world history both at the college and the secondary school level.

In the keynote speech, entitled “Performing the World: Reality and Representation in the Making of World Histor(ies),” Arif Dirlik empha-

sized the public pedagogical function of teaching world history. Focusing on the concept of historical spaces used in most world history research, he underlined the historiographical reasons for an approach that takes nations, civilizations, and cultures as the points of departure. He posed the question, however, whether these conventional spaces were autonomous subjects of history or whether they are themselves created by this historiographical approach. Dirlik argued that these spatialities are constructs of modernity and therefore need to be historicized in order to reveal those spatialities and temporalities that are suppressed by such an approach. Outlining different modes of conceiving world history, he suggested the concept of “world-history-as-totality,” which sees the globe as a frame of reference. This mode calls for the proliferation of the use of the concept of space in historical analysis and the recognition of the interaction between many translocal spaces, such as ethnic and diaspora spaces. Using examples from Asia and the Islamic world, he demonstrated not only the historicity, instabilities, internal differences, and even fragmentation of the notions of nation and civilizations, but also their function as mediator for bringing a hegemonic political order to the world. Teaching world history, therefore, brings with it the obligation to acquaint students with the “facts” of world history on the one hand, and to develop a critical perspective that articulates the suppressed in history and alternative ways of the historical process on the other.

The first session addressed the topic “Teaching World History in Secondary Schools.” In his talk “World History: Curriculum and Controversy,” Peter Stearns summarized the debates in the United States over the introduction of world history as a teaching program at high schools and colleges. Whereas academic worries from specialized professional historians and the lack of specific training were important causes for objections, Stearns argued that the cultural resistance by the national conservative establishment was the main force against the new teaching program, since it was seen as a threat to American values and the Western political heritage. The insistence on a national framework of history curricula at high schools corresponded to the resistance at the college level to replacing the traditional Western Civilization survey with world history courses. In addition, the flow and diversity of the U.S. immigrant population and the growing complexities of the U.S. world role—especially after 9/11—deepened the conflicts over new curricula between proponents of world history programs and their opponents. Despite the ongoing culture wars, Stearns believes that world history curricula have, on the whole, gained ground in American high schools and colleges. The resistance prevented neither the introduction of world history programs and standards in many states and individual school districts, nor the success of the Advanced Placement World History

course established by the College Board. Nevertheless, various issues, such as the quality of teaching, the uneven distribution of courses, teacher training, and competing views of the contents of world history, as well as of the relationship between world and American history at the curricular level, remain significant.

Eckhardt Fuchs presented a comparative overview of the historical background of world history teaching at the secondary education level in the United States and Germany in his paper on "Why Teach World History in School: Curriculum Reform in German Secondary Education." He showed that the varying traditions not only caused the development of different paradigms of history teaching, but also that German history instruction has been bound to a strict national perspective until the present. Curriculum issues have only become a topic within the German educational reform discourse because of the stimulus of international studies such as PISA. Fuchs demonstrated that the newly introduced history curriculum in Baden-Württemberg tries to take up some of the international developments, such as standards, output orientation, and a European perspective, but it fails to incorporate a true world history approach. Referring to recent empirical studies on the effects of history instruction on the development of a historical consciousness of students, he claimed that curriculum reform in Germany can only be successful if it abandons insufficiently empirically supported statements about the relationship between history teaching and identity formation in a global world. In contrast, he pleaded for empirical research on history instruction and curriculum in order to base history curriculum reform on scientific evidence and, in so doing, legitimize it in public discourse.

Susanne Popp's paper, "Integrating World History into a National Curriculum: The Concept of a Globally Oriented Historical Consciousness," took up this topic and discussed how to include a globally conceptualized world history perspective into the Eurocentric German history curriculum. In her view, such a transformation would improve the ability of students to understand regional, national, and European history from a global perspective. She argued that changing the focus or perspective of historical analysis is an important factor in a growing globalized historical consciousness that enables students to learn to explore local events in a global setting and to analyze global issues by considering local examples. In addition, students can learn about the impact of historical consciousness on the identity of human beings while also learning to respect different views on history in other parts of the world and in other cultural domains. Drawing upon some examples, Popp demonstrated how to place the curriculum of national history into a more global framework, under the precondition that more than five thousand years of German history are covered in the current curriculum. She proposed

embedding European and national history in a global approach of connections, interactions, encounters, and contacts of major civilizations, and therefore placing cross-era, long-term social change in a global and comparative framework while also conceptualizing the history of globalization.

In the last presentation of this session, "Creating National and International Assessments in World History," Robert Bain and Tamara Shreiner took the current instructional climate of assessments and evaluations, especially in mathematics, reading, and science, as a point of departure for their argument to introduce large-scale testing into history as a way to further world history education. Although the National Assessment Governing Board has already created and administered a U.S. history assessment, no assessment for World History yet exists, although the latter has been the fastest growing segment of the American school curriculum in recent years. The main obstacles have been the lack of a common structure of world history courses, the various types of world history, and the distribution of these courses throughout and across grade levels, which makes the development of a nationwide assessment difficult. In analyzing the growth and state of world history education at the high school level, Bain and Shreiner described four patterns of world history curriculum. Challenged by this diversity, the Assessment Board suggested three options for creating a common national exam to assess students' understanding of world history. Bain and Shreiner offered a fourth model that asks professional historians to join forces at the national and the international level and to take up the challenge of assessing world history for the sake of securing the long-term existence and high quality of world history education.

The second panel shifted the topic from secondary school issues to teaching world history at the university. Anthony J. Steinhoff opened this panel with his paper "In Search of a New Paradigm: World History and General Education on the American Campus." In the first part of his talk he focused on the relationship between world history and general education, arguing that, as a result of becoming the primary option for fulfilling general education history requirements, world history surveys as "mega Western Civilizations" have become unsatisfactory for students and teachers. The reasons are not only the huge amount of knowledge to be taught, the complexity of the pedagogical task, and the diversity of world history definitions, but also the ongoing debate on what constitutes general education. Exploring alternative ways of defining world history within general education, he suggested a link between the goals of the traditional liberal arts, such as the training and stimulation of the independent intellect, and world history teaching. Using examples from world history curricula and textbooks, he pointed out that such an ap-

proach needs a new conceptual and chronological framework for world history. Therefore, Steinhoff encouraged a thematic, microhistory approach to world history teaching that allows more choice at the level of course offerings and aims at raising the interest and engagement of the students.

In his paper "Global History and Global Studies: A European Perspective and the Leipzig Experience," Matthias Middell introduced a recently established graduate program at the University of Leipzig. After suggesting four reasons for the current differences in the state of world and global history teaching in the United States and Europe, he argued that on the one hand, world history research and teaching in Europe take different shapes than they do in the U.S. On the other hand, the attempts of the European Union to homogenize structures of higher learning and to decrease state regulations offer the chance for the universities to develop their own curricula and programs. The University of Leipzig, with its long tradition in world history and the structural changes after 1989, which strengthened the area studies programs, utilized this opportunity. Leipzig's new doctoral programs in transnationalization and occidentalization since the mid-1990s, its summer school for doctoral students since 2002, and international networks and programs created over the past decade all opened the path for the inauguration of a European Master's program in global studies in 2004. This program is co-funded by the EU Erasmus Mundus program and involves three other European universities. In the final part of his talk, Middell presented the structure and the contents of the program, which, in contrast to the survey courses at American colleges, is taught at the graduate level, and is therefore designed completely differently.

Katja Naumann's paper, "The Debate on Transnational and Global History in Germany," filled out the picture of the state of world history teaching and research in Germany by reconstructing some debates on world, or global, history that have been taking place there in the last five years. These debates have raised four major points: the role of national history in relationship to global history; the differences between "transnational history" and global history; the challenges that this history offers for the professional standards of historians; and the question of whether global history should be seen as an additional field analogous to established fields, or as a new method of analysis that questions existing categories. Naumann pointed out that, while much of this debate has been conducted on a theoretical level, there has been little attention to practical issues and questions. She therefore called for more consideration of how institutions, journals, and conferences can and should foster the study of global history, of the audience for global history, and, importantly, of the future career possibilities for global historians. The field of

global history can only flourish in Germany and elsewhere if doctoral programs are created to train global historians, and if post-doctoral fellowships and faculty positions open in larger numbers than has hitherto been the case.

The third paper of this session turned the focus away from the United States and Germany. Marnie Hughes-Warrington discussed the status of global education and world history at Australian universities and secondary schools in her talk, "World Histor(iograph)y Education: An Australian Perspective." She emphasized the uniquely Australian aspect of world history curricula compared to the German and the U.S. cases: that is, the turn toward historiography already in high school education, especially in New South Wales. Taking Macquarie University as an example, she argued that the establishment of a world history teaching and research program beyond the first-year survey was possible through this historiographical turn. Since 2002, Macquarie has offered a world history program at all levels based on the questions of what world history is, what purposes it serves, what its historiographical traditions are, and how it might be taught and researched. This program replaced the previous tradition of world history initiated by David Christian's "big history" course at Macquarie. The new focus on historiography, designed by Hughes-Warrington and outlined in her talk, is justified because it provides a basis for discussing ethical issues, and because historiographical reflections expose the patterns of privilege and exclusion in historical practice. In addition, it fosters an appreciation of the local, regional, national, and international contexts of world history writing and helps clarify the contents and purpose of world history. Most importantly, Hughes-Warrington concluded, historiographical studies address the problem of the purpose and audience of history in general. In his talk "An Emerging Field: World Environmental History," John Richards argued that environmental history provides a good structure for teaching world history, also offering one of his own classes, on world environmental history at Duke University, as an example. The concerns of environmental history are necessarily global, as environmental changes are not limited by national or regional boundaries. In addition, Richards pointed out, other themes, such as the history of science, technology, and medicine, gender history, labor history, and the history of migration, also lend themselves well to world history approaches in the classroom.

In the panel on textbooks for world history, Roger Beck pointed out the problems of inclusion and the potential of bias in world history textbooks in his paper "World History Textbooks: Have We got it Right Yet?" He posed the challenging question of how we can make readers from other cultures in other parts of the world feel that we are accurately portraying their history in our world history textbooks. Is it possible to

write a textbook that treats the military conflict in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s in a way that would satisfy both readers in the United States and in Vietnam? There are no clear answers to such a question, but it opened up the issue of the different interests and audiences of world history textbooks, which was taken up by Jerry Bentley in his paper "The Construction of Textbooks and the Negotiation of Interests." Bentley delineated five separate constituencies of world history textbooks: textbook authors, textbook publishers, the scholarly community, student readers, and the general public. Even though world history and world history textbooks have often been made the subject of the "culture wars" in the United States, as noted by Peter Stearns in his paper, Bentley argued that each of these five constituencies has an interest in the writing and teaching of a world history that does not aim to serve a particular ideological agenda. In his view, the United States' position as a world leader gives American students and citizens a particular moral responsibility to understand world history and the role of American history within world history. Such an understanding should be an ecumenical one, dominated neither by ideologies of the right nor of the left.

In the final panel on world history and the new media, T. Mills Kelly and Heidi Roupp in their well-integrated papers, "The Role of Technology in World History Teaching" and "Teaching World History: Establishing the Teaching Field," discussed how world history teachers could make use of media inside and outside of the classroom to enhance world history teaching. After presenting some of the concerns and problems surrounding new media, such as Powerpoint presentations in the classroom and student research on the Internet, Kelly recounted some of his experiences as director for the Center for the Study of History and New Media at George Mason University. He presented one of the projects of the center, the website World History Matters (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorymatters/>), which provides students with historical case studies involving primary sources, with both images and texts, in order to enhance student learning outside the classroom. This website also contains a guide for students to direct them to historically accurate websites for research and to help them evaluate the content of the websites they find. Kelly also noted that he found that the use of media enhanced student learning much more effectively when it was used outside the classroom by individual students for self-directed learning, rather than by presenting websites and Powerpoint-directed lectures inside the classroom. In her presentation, Roupp discussed the challenges and opportunities of teacher training in a world history context. She pointed out some of the problems and need for teacher training in the world history field, noting that few teachers have ever taken a world history course before they are asked to teach one. They also have only limited time and money

to undertake more training alongside their full-time jobs. In the second part of her paper, she discussed two possible solutions for these problems. First, she described the two-week world history summer workshops for teachers sponsored by the College Board, the World History Association, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Stavrianos Teaching Fund, which have been offered since 2000. This workshop includes readings by world history scholars such as Peter Stearns, Jerry Bentley, Patrick Manning, and Kenneth Pomeranz, as well as discussion of pedagogical techniques for critical thinking skills. A second means of disseminating teacher training material is by the electronic journal World History Connected (<http://www.worldhistoryconnected.org>). This journal publishes research articles on world history, articles on pedagogical issues, and reviews of world history teaching resources. Access is free, and the site has had over 70,000 visitors since its founding in 2003.

The conference concluded with a roundtable panel discussion in which Bill Bravman, Arif Dirlik, Ross Dunn, and Eckhardt Fuchs participated. This lively discussion took up many of the questions raised in the papers. One major area of discussion dealt with the aim and contents of world history teaching, teacher education, quality assessment, subjects, and methods. A second topic focused on the ideological implications, cultural contexts, and political dimensions that are embedded within world history teaching. For the American participants, one important outcome of the conference was an awareness of the rise of world and global history in Europe that is based on different traditions and scholarly contexts and therefore takes on different shapes in the structure and contents of world history courses. For the German participants, it was useful to discuss the various issues with American colleagues and to gain a better understanding of the world history field that is, after all, not nearly as homogeneous and academically established as it might appear from the outside. Nevertheless, the discussions also revealed the commonalities between the United States, Europe, and Australia, which is the assumption that if world history, and history in general, are to achieve any educational goals and exercise any pedagogical function, they both depend to a large degree on how world history is composed and what purpose it serves. To date, the contents and purpose of world history have often been the subjects of heated public controversy, especially in the United States. This conference therefore provided the opportunity to examine past debates, reassess the current state of the field, and look toward promising future directions for teaching world and global history.

Eckhardt Fuchs and Karen Oslund