Edited by RUTH LARSEN, ALICE MARPLES and MATTHEW MCCORMACK

INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING HISTORY

Eighteenth-Century Studies in Higher Education

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON PRESS

Innovations in Teaching History

'The skills imparted by an undergraduate history degree are both timeless and constantly changing. This volume brings together seven innovative examples of how historians of the 18th century are changing pedagogy to meet the challenge of teaching with objects and texts – real, digital and sensational – online and in person. It is essential reading for anyone who thinks seriously about history and how we teach it.'

—**Tim Hitchcock, Professor Emeritus of Digital History, University of Sussex, UK**

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In memory of Arthur Burns (1963–2023)

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Notes on contributors

Arthur Burns was Professor of Modern British History at King's College London and Academic Director of the Georgian Papers programme. He was Literary Director and Vice President of the Royal Historical Society and Honorary Fellow of the Historical Association. He led three major digital history projects and published widely on Hanoverian and Victorian religious history.

Simon Burrows is Professor in History and Digital Humanities at Western Sydney University, Australia and previously worked at the universities of Waikato (New Zealand) and Leeds (United Kingdom). A digital innovator in research and teaching, he has since 2007 led the award-winning 'French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe' database project. Simon has convened a series of events which have contributed to the development of digital humanities locally and internationally, including the first 'Digitizing Enlightenment' symposium (2016) and the global online 'Building Digital Humanities' symposium (2022). He has led the Western Sydney's Digital Humanities Research Group since 2016. Simon's most recent book is *Digitizing Enlightenment: Digital Humanities and the Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2020), which he co-edited with Glenn Roe.

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Oliver C. Walton taught 'At the Court of King George' with Arthur Burns in his capacity as George III Project Coordinator and Curator, Historical Manuscripts at the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle. He has extensive experience in teaching with manuscript sources both in relation to this project and also his role as Researcher for the Prince Albert Society and the German Historical Institute project: 'Common Heritage: The Collections of Windsor and Coburg'. His primary research interest lies in British naval history.

Rebekah Ward is a sessional academic at Western Sydney University. Her research focuses on the history of print culture, particularly the twentieth-century book trade. Rebekah's doctorate, which blended traditional archival research with digital humanities approaches, explored how Angus & Robertson (the largest Australian publishing house) used book reviews as a promotional tool. She has published in *Australian Literary Studies*, *Publishing Studies* and *History* and presents widely on publishing history, book reviewing and the digital humanities.

Acknowledgements

This is a book about teaching history, but the process of it coming into being has a history of its own. It partly arose from a panel at the 2019 International Society for Eighteenth-Century Congress in Edinburgh on 'Innovations in Teaching the Long Eighteenth Century', featuring Alice alongside Sally Holloway and Peter D'Sena. Matthew was in the audience, and he and Ruth wanted to run an event on teaching the eighteenth century under the aegis of the East Midlands Centre for History Teaching and Learning (EMC), which at the time was hosted by Ruth's department at the University of Derby. They therefore joined forces with Alice to organise a workshop in June 2020: the EMC agreed to fund it, for which we are grateful. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that the conference had to move online, and we had interesting discussions about online teaching, which many of us were grappling with for the first time. Two years later we finally managed to have an in-person event at the University of Northampton, where the authors and other colleagues gathered for a workshop discussing the chapter drafts.

We would like to thank the authors for their excellent chapters and everyone who participated in the workshops for their contributions. As we were preparing the final manuscript in October 2023 we received the sad news that Arthur Burns had passed away. Arthur had always been upfront about his illness and nevertheless participated in the workshops and the writing process with his characteristic generosity, insight and good humour. He was a big part of this project, and cared very deeply about the teaching of history, so we would like to dedicate the volume to his memory.

— Ruth Larsen, Alice Marples and Matthew McCormack

Introduction

Ruth Larsen, Alice Marples and Matthew McCormack

In recent years, the eighteenth century has been a notable growth area in historical studies and related disciplines. This has not always been the case. A generation or two ago, its study was rather neglected, as it was sandwiched between two centuries that dominated scholarly attention because of their constitutional and social upheavals. Historians of the period therefore tended to work with scholars from other disciplines under the banner of 'eighteenth-century studies'. This led to the creation of a rich field that was often interdisciplinary and theoretically informed. The field today is thriving, and scholars working on the eighteenth century engage with very current topics such as colonialism, material culture, emotions, sexualities and ecology, among many others.[1] In particular, there is now more focus on the global aspects of the century, which are essential to understanding the period and its legacies. Given that the eighteenth century is often regarded as a foundational one for the modern world, much of this research has an overt contemporary relevance.

The eighteenth century is now widely taught in university history departments, but it also presents challenges. Students will typically not have encountered it as part of their school curriculum and they may have preconceptions that are off-putting.[2] The source material can appear long-winded or, in manuscript form, illegible. Much of this source material is now online, so students require digital skills to evaluate it, which they may not already have. The theoretical nature of some of the critical writings can make it challenging to teach, especially at undergraduate level. And undergraduates schooled in a single discipline (such as they typically are in the UK) can find the interdisciplinary nature of this literature difficult to engage with. Academics who work on the period are keen to convey that this is a fascinating and important period to study, but it can be a tough sell. Eighteenth-century modules have to compete for enrolments with fare that is more familiar from school, such as the Tudors or the Nazis in the English 'A' Level curriculum in England. In marketised higher education, where the viability of optional modules relies on students picking them, this can dictate whether a topic survives on the curriculum.

This collection of chapters will therefore reflect on how we teach the history of the long eighteenth century, focusing on pedagogical innovation and current developments in the discipline. Sometimes it can be a challenge to innovate in one's teaching. Once the considerable effort has been expended on creating a new course, the temptation is to roll it out again in successive years, and pressures on academics' time often prevent us from reflecting on and enhancing our teaching practice. Doing something new and creative can also face institutional obstacles, since university frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms often require teaching and/or assessment to be delivered in a particular way. Such work is highly necessary, however, so this book has two linked objectives. On the one hand, we want to offer a critical exploration of how eighteenth-century history is taught at university, with reference to developments in the field of learning and teaching. On the other, we want to give some practical examples of innovations in the teaching of history, focusing on particular modules and courses where this has been put into practice. This is intended to provide a guide for educators and to offer some exciting ideas to add to their toolkits. In this aim, it is hoped that this volume will be of interest not only to scholars teaching the eighteenth century but also to those who teach the study of the past more generally. As Alan Booth and Paul Hyland argued in their classic collection *The Practice of University History Teaching* (2000), there is a value to bringing colleagues together 'to review, research and innovate in history teaching' since it helps 'not only to promote the realisation of good practices and their testing under various conditions, but also to ensure that findings are more widely disseminated and embedded in the work of whole departments and the traditions of the discipline'.[3]

While research on the eighteenth century is a booming area for academic publication, there are relatively few published works that focus on teaching it at university level. Most pedagogical studies focus on literature[4] and tend to be within the US higher education context.[5] History at university level has its own distinctive pedagogies and disciplinary characteristics, so it requires dedicated treatment. But here too, relatively little has been published in comparison with the large literature focusing on the teaching of history in secondary education.[6] In UK higher education, much of this activity has been under the auspices of the Higher Education Academy and History UK, formerly the History at University Defence Group. This body was instrumental in the development of the subject benchmark for history in 2000, alongside other university disciplines. The history subject benchmark outlined the typical features of a history degree and the skills a student should cultivate while studying it. With periodic updates, the benchmark remains current to this day.

The current benchmark statement lists seventeen 'generic skills' that a student should have on completing a history degree.[7] Most of these are common to other subjects too, although this particular combination is characteristic of history. Much of the political discourse around history in British higher education concerns skills. This is also the case in other national academes such as Australia, although in the US there is more of an emphasis on maintaining a healthy democracy. Non-vocational subjects like the humanities are under pressure to demonstrate that they teach 'transferable skills' that prepare students for employment, countering charges that they are 'low value' in economic terms. John Tosh argues that it would be more effective to argue that disciplines like history teach skills 'whose value lies precisely in the fact that they are *not* generic, while still being relevant and useful'.[8]

This raises the question of how far history is a distinctive discipline, and the extent to which it has things in common with its disciplinary neighbours. History acquired a strong self-identity as a discipline relatively late: it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that it became institutionalised as a university subject, with its own epistemology and way of operating. In the eighteenth century, the people who wrote 'histories' would not necessarily have seen themselves as historians. They tended to be men of letters (and some notable women) who were recognised for their contributions to other fields, such as literature or philosophy. History was an imaginative activity and was regarded as a branch of the arts, rather than the science that it would try to become in the following century. This is arguably closer to the situation today, where cultural history is the dominant mode within the discipline. History has always been a magpie discipline, so the interdisciplinary world of eighteenth-century studies is a comfortable home for historians, and a good reflection of the century they study. Indeed, cultural history is fast becoming the dominant mode within eighteenth-century studies itself – which only a decade ago was dominated by literary studies – and has become the meeting place for other subjects across the arts and humanities.[9]

On the other hand, history does have distinctive features as a discipline. As well as listing generic skills, the history benchmark statement does a good job of outlining the cluster of attributes associated with studying the subject. For example, it argues that on completing a history degree, a graduate should be able to:

- understand the problems inherent in the historical record itself
- appreciate complexity and diversity of situations, events and mentalities in the past and, by extension, present
- understand how people have existed, acted and thought in the always-different context of the past
- marshal an argument in pursuit of meaningful questions about the past and, by implication, the present and future.[10]

Thinking about what is distinctive about historical study is instructive, not least because many of the assumptions students have about their identity as 'historians' can be problematic. Some of these are inherited from their experience at school, which is much more focused on gathering 'facts' and deploying them for assessment. One of the challenges of teaching first-year undergraduates is getting them to move beyond these assumptions, which can be deeply held. Students often dismiss 'bias' in primary sources, whereas perspective can be their most important feature. Students often assume that they should reject presentism, whereas historical writing is inevitably informed by the circumstances of its writing, and should arguably be activist. And students often seek to demonstrate empathy, which can be valuable but also tends to highlight the sameness of the past rather than its radical differences.

Fundamentally, it is important that students are aware of the nature of the discipline they are studying. History – as it is practised in twenty-first-century universities – is not a natural thing to do, and is the product of centuries of development and debate. Arguably students studying joint honours have a more critical perspective on this than their single-honours colleagues in the English higher education system, since they have to step outside of that way of studying to engage with their other subjects. History degrees typically have a component that covers the history and philosophy of the discipline, but students are less confident talking about methodology than in other disciplines where it is more explicit: indeed, historians often self-identify as having a 'common-sense' approach, so students can find it uncomfortable to critique this.[11] The eighteenth century often features prominently in these courses, since it was a key phase in the development of the discipline, which in its modern form rests upon Enlightenment forms of knowledge. It is perhaps not surprising that there has also, in recent years, been an increased focus on eighteenth-century research, teaching and learning practices and skills acquisition, both inside and outside universities, across a number of areas.[12]

It is vital to understand this since, as David Pace notes, ‘all academic learning is discipline specific’. Learning takes place within disciplines and ‘a discipline such as history represents a unique epistemological and methodological community’.[13] Not only should students understand the nature of their discipline but teachers’ efforts to enhance learning should be cognisant of it as well. Pace and his colleagues have argued that it is important to ‘decode’ the disciplines. Tutors should start by identifying ‘bottlenecks’ in a course that prevent students from learning. These often arise from unspoken assumptions about the nature of the discipline, so making these explicit can help students to learn about the discipline they are studying while also removing obstacles to learning. They argue that this process can help with student motivation and fosters deeper understanding.[14] While not necessarily following the ‘decoding the disciplines’ model, the chapters in this collection agree that it is vital for students to understand their discipline, both for its own sake and for the benefit of their wider learning.

It is with this in mind that this volume is structured around three key themes. The first of these is digital; one of the great benefits of studying the eighteenth century is the richness of digital materials that can be used by both researchers and students. The availability of resources such as Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) means that research tasks that previously would have taken many days and miles of travel can be undertaken within a classroom setting. As the chapter by Burrows and Ward shows, however, students need to be guided in using these materials in a way that not only helps them with the immediate project but also enables them to develop transferable skills they can use when working with data in both research and business environments in the workplace. These skills are both qualitative and quantitative. Numeracy skills tend to be neglected in history degree programmes, but they are essential when handling ‘big data’. While sources can easily be retrieved from large datasets and analysed qualitatively, this can lead to cherry-picking, whereas to get a sense of their representativeness and significance it is important to think about them quantitatively as well. Therefore, engaging with digital materials can require students to develop new skills.

Students' technical skills can also be employed to widen access to archival materials that have been digitised. There are growing numbers of projects looking for volunteers to transcribe archival materials so they can be used by the wider public, such as the 'Voices through Time: The Story of Care' programme, which is helping the Coram Foundation to digitise parts of the Foundling Hospital Archive.[15] There is a growing trend for students to undertake research projects commissioned by external organisations, in the form of live briefs, as part of their programme of study. This can include digital projects or producing archival guides for future researchers, reflecting the growing emphasis on 'authentic assessment' within higher education curricula.[16] The chapter by Burns and Walton shows how important it is to create a community of researchers among our students, and how this can have a positive impact on the wider network of researchers, as it has done with the Georgian Papers programme. This type of project develops both the subject-specific and transferable skills that are required of graduates in the twenty-first century.

These types of projects became especially important in 2020–21 when, because of restrictions following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a shift towards remote learning. Although history is a popular subject among those providing massive open online courses (MOOCs), within the UK there is very little provision of online BA History programmes.[17] While there has been some pedagogic work on teaching the eighteenth century online, the shift to digital teaching and learning meant a significant change in practice for many academics.[18] This led to a period of swift innovation in teaching and History UK captured some of this best practice in their 'Pandemic Pedagogy Handbook'.[19] This process has meant that academic staff are now incorporating some of the new approaches to teaching that they developed during this period, so thinking critically about both digital learning and digital skills is important in the development of new provision.

Advances in digital learning and teaching has not meant that there has been an abandonment of the classroom, however. It is important to remember that just because an approach is 'traditional' in its delivery style, it does not mean that it cannot be innovative. The vast majority of students' tutor-led learning, as opposed to independent study, is based within a seminar room or lecture theatre. We therefore need to consider both what and how we teach within these settings. Being 'student centred' is a key theme that appears throughout this volume as a whole, and is a particular focus of the second part of the collection on learning in the classroom. A student-centred approach can include engaging the students' senses, whether using smell, sight or their ability to listen and engage, as discussed in the chapters by Tullett and Larsen. Encouraging active learning can help to move students away from being passive recipients of their education and towards becoming co-creators in their educational journey. The concept of the 'flipped classroom' has been fashionable in recent years – whereby students prepare beforehand, apply these insights in class in a supported way, then explore further afterwards – but seminar teaching in the humanities has long employed variations of this model. Larsen's chapter explores how we as educators can best focus on what happens before, after and during the class.

Active learning can also be an important way of encouraging students to recognise their own responsibilities in the classroom, and outside of it. The theme of citizenship is picked up in the chapter by McCormack, both as a historical topic and as a way of thinking about oneself as a member of a society. This can include discussing complex subjects such as race or engaging in activities, such as singing, which can make students feel a degree of discomfort. As the chapters in this part show, this should not be avoided; rather, strategies should be employed to help students face things they find difficult or awkward. As Cohen has argued, by avoiding the 'uncomfortable', scholars can further marginalise historians and ideas that challenge received models of understanding.[20] This can be especially important in the discussions relating to the complex histories of the global majority, whose experiences are often ignored or simplified by many traditional narratives of the history of the eighteenth century. Therefore, engaging with the unfamiliar should be a central part of university education, and so providing a space where they can be safely 'uncomfortable' is a key consideration when thinking about module and programme design.

One of these uncomfortable but safe places can be the museum. The third theme of this volume is material culture and collections, which considers the ways in which using collections can enable students to develop interdisciplinary methodologies that can help them to explore the past. In recent years there has been a shift towards the 'material turn' among historians, and many of those writing about the use of objects in learning and teaching have been eighteenth-century scholars.[21] As Henry Glassie notes, an artefact-centred approach to the past can help scholars to explore the 'wordless experience of all people, rich and poor, near or far'.[22] Using objects with students can provide an engaging learning experience, and an enjoyably different one if they are accustomed to learning with texts. An encounter with a historical object can take you radically out of the present and provide a sense of connection with the past, which in turn can lead to reflection about what 'the past' – and the nature of our 'connection' with it – actually is. This again highlights the importance of engaging the senses and the emotions in learning, and of thinking about them historically.

Marples explores how, through the examination of collections, considering both the items and their object biographies, students can reflect on the intellectual, economic and social structures which meant that some things, and not others, came to form part of individual and national museums. The importance of collections for teaching has long been recognised, with many universities forming museums or special collections to support their students' education in a range of different disciplines.[23] As Kouneni's chapter considers, thinking about how these collections can be utilised effectively can benefit not only those staff working within institutions that have access to this form of collection but everyone who teaches with objects. Both of these chapters highlight how these collections can also enable students to encounter directly the colonial histories of the eighteenth century, and to think about the associated histories of the institutions and how they are displayed. In this, they speak to broader bodies of critical scholarship and activist practice working to decolonise higher education at every level of operation, highlight and address historical and contemporary links between the histories of education and histories of structural inequality, and advocate for more open dialogues between research, education, creativity and praxis.[24] This drive towards decolonised teaching practices exists alongside a strong backlash in the form of an actively hostile journalistic and social media climate that promotes the right-wing notion of a 'culture war'. Many higher education institutions display extreme operational inconsistency in this context: publicly championing increased diversity when it is advantageous but remaining silent when there is any perceived reputational risk. They also generally fail to address entrenched problems in racist, sexist, ableist and classist hiring and promotional practices, or adequately supporting or protecting those who do the hard, frontline work of improving teaching and research centred on individuals with protected characteristics.

Of course, there are other inequalities in the structures of academic research and teaching. In the UK, despite a proclaimed desire for 'research-led teaching', there is a tendency to separate universities into those with 'Teaching Excellence' and those with 'Research Excellence', according to the governmental frameworks which allocate funding depending on performance. Within departments, too, there can be a large divide between staff who are actively engaged in teaching (often younger scholars who are keen to embed inclusive teaching and service practices but are not necessarily established enough to be able to do so) and those who prioritise funding capture to pursue their own research (often from positions of privileged security with little demand for 'upskilling'). Other pressures include loss of permanent job status through large-scale departmental closures; difficulties in retaining talent in academic institutions due to precarity and blocked pipelines; and the excessive burdens involved in producing research and teaching materials, whether in addition to doctoral studies or within a particular area of work – for example, the demands often made on scholars of colour for additional research or forms of academic service in support of greater equality, diversity and inclusion, however real or tokenistic that may be. Reflections on teaching innovations can therefore open up further critical examinations of higher education.

The chapters by Marples and Kouneni reflect on the disparities in terms of the types of collections that are available to students at different types of university, since archival and museum collections tend only to be available in older and less accessible institutions. In recent years, though, there has been a growing focus on digital access to collections, which can make objects open to a wider range of learners. This has meant that students can now access objects from home, whether they are from their own institution's collections or those from museums on the other side of the world.[25] However, the importance of sensory engagement with individual objects can be lost when access to them is mediated either through a digital screen or a glass cabinet in a museum setting. Similarly, much early discussion of digitisation among academics and curators centred on the need to preserve and communicate the important material clues for understanding eighteenth-century manuscripts that might otherwise be missed, and this is demonstrated in various ways across different digital archives. This reflects a common theme throughout many of the chapters in this volume that reflexive learning along with gaining a deeper knowledge of the practices of historical research can support students to develop their own understandings of the past.

Throughout the volume, there is a strong focus on student-centred learning, an approach which can be applied to learning beyond modules focused on eighteenth-century history. By encouraging students to engage with their learning, whether it is through objects, in the classroom or digitally, they can be made aware of the endless complexities of the period without being overloaded. In many of these chapters, students are encouraged to think about 'lived experiences' – their own and those of the people they come across in the study of history. This means that they are aware of the wide diversity of experiences and peoples in the past, which can help them to 'foster empathy, and respect for difference', one of the characteristics associated with history graduates.[26] Considering students' own positionality and processes of learning allows for more responsive teaching. Innovative teaching is often shaped by holistic approaches that meet the students where *they* are and in terms of their priorities, motivations and personal epistemologies. However, it can also remind them that their 'place in the world' is not, and was not, shared by everyone, encouraging them to think about and reflect on the histories and impacts of difference. By giving them the tools to research the past, and to develop their own voices as historians, a history degree can foster the life-long skills that are crucial in a quickly changing world.

As well as being focused on student-centred learning, these chapters also consider the experiences of those teaching the students. All of the chapters share examples of teaching practice, including practical strategies for engaging students, drawn from a range of historians: from early career researchers to senior academics, and including researchers working both within and outside of universities, in the UK and Australia. The chapters demonstrate the value of investing in staff and subjects and embedding connected programmes of learning and development within university departments instead of the current reactive model that often relies on the exploitation of early career scholars on short-term, unstable contracts. In many cases, the examples of practice here seek to overcome or at least mitigate the obstacles created by the increased marketisation of higher education. The diversity of experiences presented here also draw attention to the structures of teaching and learning in the hopes of promoting further conversation and critical examination. The absences also speak volumes. We would have liked to have included a chapter that directly engaged with global histories and/or the histories of race, empire and colonialism, as these are increasingly central to our understandings of the eighteenth century. However, it is pleasing to see how these issues have been explored by a number of the authors in their chapters, showing how they are topics which are increasingly integrated into the teaching of this period.

We therefore hope that this volume encourages readers to consider the positionality of their own practice. Although explicitly focused on teaching the eighteenth century, the ideas presented within these chapters can also be utilised by those teaching other time periods or other related disciplines. While distinctive in its own histories (as all time periods are), there is nothing unique to the age which means that it requires its own exclusive approach. Many of the concerns of the age, such as the mediation of knowledge, constructions of self-identity and the relationship between the individual and the state, can be related to other centuries. Likewise, the focus on digital learning, classroom-based settings and the use of collections can also be applied to a wide range of modules. In bringing these chapters together, we hope to inspire others in developing their own innovative practices.

Notes

1 Penelope Corfield, 'The Exploding Galaxy: Historical Studies of Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34:4 (2011), 517–26.

2 As noted by Katherine Burn, 'Making Sense of the Eighteenth Century', *Teaching History*, 154 (2014), 18–27.

3 Alan Booth and Paul Hyland (eds), *The Practice of University History Teaching* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 9–10.

4 Mary Ann Rooks (ed.), *Teaching the Eighteenth Century* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009); Kevin Binfield and William J. Christmas (eds), *Teaching Laboring-Class British Literature of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2018); Jennifer Frangos and Cristobal Silva (eds), *Teaching the Transatlantic Eighteenth Century* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2020). See also the essays in Bonnie Gunzenhauser and Wolfram Schmidgen (eds), 'Special Focus Section: New Approaches to the 18th Century', *College Literature*, 31:3 (2004), 93–205.

5 For example, Katherine Lubey, 'Teaching Eighteenth-Century Black Lives', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 49 (2020), 145–9.

6 As noted by David Pace: 'The Amateur in the Operating Room: History and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning', *American Historical Review*, 109:4 (2004), 1171–92.

7 Quality Assurance Agency, 'Subject Benchmark: History' (2022), www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/history (accessed 20 January 2023), p. 16.

8 John Tosh, *Why History Matters* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2008), p. 128.

9 For example, contrast contributions to the *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* in the 2000s with today.

10 Quality Assurance Agency, 'Subject Benchmark', p. 4.

11 John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), p. 124.

12 Malcolm McKinnon Dick and Ruth Watts, 'Eighteenth-Century Education: Discourses and Informal Agencies', *Journal of the History of Education Society*, 37:4 (2008), 509–12; N. A. Hans, *New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013).

13 Pace, 'Amateur in the Operating Room', p. 1173.

14 David Pace and Joan Middendorf (eds), 'Decoding the Disciplines: Helping Students Learn Disciplinary Ways of Thinking', special issue of *New Directions in Teaching and Learning*, 98 (2004).

15 'The Foundling Hospital Archive', Coram Story, https://coramstory.org.uk/the-foundling-hospital-archive (accessed 12 April 2023).

16 Zahra Sokhanvar, Keyvan Salehi and Fatemeh Sokhanvar, 'Advantages of Authentic Assessment for Improving the Learning Experience and Employability

Skills of Higher Education Students: A Systematic Literature Review', *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 70 (2021). doi: 10.1016/j.stueduc.2021.101030.

17 Although there are a number of both Foundation and Master's-level programmes that are taught exclusively online, very few UK universities offer a full undergraduate history degree that can be studied remotely, with the Open University and the University of the Highlands and Islands being among the notable exceptions.

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Part I
DIGITAL HISTORY

Chapter 1

Letting students loose in the archive: reflections on teaching 'At the Court of King George: Exploring the Royal Archives' at King's College London

Arthur Burns and Oliver C. Walton

One of the great pleasures and advantages of researching the history of Britain in the eighteenth century over the past thirty years or more has been the vibrant international, interdisciplinary and methodologically diverse community of scholarship. This provides a setting and support for both individual and collaborative research projects, manifest in the flourishing British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, a number of active research centres in British universities and well-attended seminars such as that for British History in the Long Eighteenth Century convened at the Institute of Historical Research (IHR) in London. The century has also been at the heart of a number of the most important initiatives in digital humanities based in the UK, in many cases with a strong commitment to serving a wider historical public beyond the academy.[1] When in 2019 the IHR seminar convened a well-attended symposium on the theme of 'Eighteenth Century Now: The Current State of British History', as much as the themes of growing contemporary relevance and the diversity of approaches on display, it was the sense of a shared project developed over time and warm collegiality across sub-disciplinary divides and generations that was a key takeaway for many of the participants.

Almost all history degrees in British universities seek to develop students' skill as historical researchers and to expose them to the challenge of a variety of types of archive, commonly through the inclusion in the final year of a degree programme of a dissertation project. This certainly provides a good opportunity to develop the core subject skills that might eventually lead to the production of academic articles or monographs in traditional 'lone-scholar' mode. History degrees also increasingly include provision for group work, and modules which focus on public history and the forms of delivery most appropriate to it.[2] Nevertheless, group work can be a source of anxiety for students who are concerned that it places their assessment scores at the mercy of the weakest member of the group;[3] elsewhere in assessment collaboration may be explicitly discouraged; and decisions about the audience for projects are usually predetermined in the module specifications. In modules where there is a substantial body of historical knowledge to be delivered, there can also often be little time available to work on the skill-sets needed to translate these either into good academic prose or more public-facing forms – especially where online forms of publication are involved, for the functional digital native remains an elusive presence among the undergraduate population.

In all these formats the undergraduate experience cannot capture the serendipitous manner in which academically rigorous research and public engagement often come together in historians' research lives. Nor do they reproduce the experience of a supportive community, not just among student peers but also with senior and junior scholars and archivists, that characterises the most enjoyable research projects, especially those which are based on collaboration rather than conducted in lone-scholar mode. Such projects enjoy a growing significance in the humanities. In this essay, we discuss a module which was designed to capture these aspects of the research culture in British eighteenth-century studies by drawing on the resources of a specific research project, the Georgian Papers programme, and reflecting on both the experience of teaching it and the student response.[4]

'At the Court of King George' and the Georgian Papers programme

'At the Court of King George: Exploring the Royal Archives'[5] (henceforth CKG) was created in 2017 as one of a suite of so-called 'opportunity modules' to be delivered in the Arts and Humanities faculty at King's College London. The modules were required to be interdisciplinary and sit outside department teaching offers, to accommodate experimentation in teaching and assessment, to reflect key themes in the scholarly life of the College and explicitly to promise students who selected them an expansion of their skill-set. This gave Arthur Burns a long-desired opportunity to create a module which would aim to bring students into the exciting world of collaborative humanities research, which had been an unusually strong feature of his own career. Ideally such a module should also help them to understand the way knowledge was produced out of an archive, and would emphasise the centrality of public history to any proper understanding of the historian's craft. Furthermore, the module would give students the opportunity to explore and experience the power of the digital in changing the way historians work. Thus it was important to use not cutting-edge but fairly basic – and thus accessible and inclusive – digital tools to develop critical approaches towards using archival catalogues, online presentation and website design, which would allow students to advance the research agenda and create knowledge through computation and visualisation, and to be creative in communicating their ideas electronically, liberated from the constraints of text on sequential pages but having to consider new issues such as usability.[6]

Arthur identified the perfect foundation for this module in the Georgian Papers programme (henceforth GPP).[7] This project, launched by Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor in 2015, was a unique collaboration between King's College London and the Royal Collection Trust, joined by primary US partners the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and William & Mary, with additional contributions from the Library of Congress, Mount Vernon and the Sons of the American Revolution. Its aim was to digitise, conserve, catalogue, transcribe, interpret and disseminate some 425,000 pages (65,000 items) in the Royal Archives and Royal Library relating to the period 1714–1837. In 2017 Arthur had become one of two academic directors of the programme, alongside Karin Wulf, then-executive director of the Omohundro Institute, taking responsibility for both the academic and public programming for the project in collaboration with Oliver Walton, a historian based in the Royal Archives as GPP Coordinator. All three were working with colleagues at the Royal Archives, William & Mary and King's Digital Laboratory on scholarly support for the digitisation and transcription programme under the oversight of Royal Archives Manager Bill Stockting and Patricia Methven, the former archivist of King's College London.[8]

The programme owed its origins in part to the Royal Collection Trust's recognition that the Georgian Papers in the Round Tower at Windsor were an underused resource. This was partly because there was no proper catalogue, but also reflected the fact that their nature was widely misunderstood. Although some 15 per cent had previously been published, the editions mainly focused on a narrow, predominantly political, subset of the whole collection. In seeking to make the whole collection accessible, the GPP helped transform understanding of it. Alongside – and in some cases to make possible – the cataloguing of the collection, the project partners sponsored an extensive and sustained programme of scholarly investigation of the archive through active research, leading to the creation of a network of over sixty GPP fellows who have each pursued their own highly varied projects in the Windsor archives, reporting back to the archivists on their findings and approaches, as well as sharing insights with each other and the project team at a series of workshops and public events.[9]

The Georgian Papers at Windsor are extensive, rich and diverse. While the largest single sections are those for the reigns of George III and George IV, the papers' chronological span extends from 1714 through to 1837. Monarchs loom large throughout, but there are papers relating to many other members of the royal family, notably royal women. They offer important materials on eighteenth-century medicine (including the reports, correspondence and other papers of the doctors who treated George III during his 'madness'), education, politics, cultural life and foreign affairs. There are courtiers' papers, financial papers and documents relating to the court, royal residences and household administration. The cast list is extensive. The contents are roughly classified in Figure 1.1; it should be remembered that with over 400,000 pages, even small slices of this pie chart can represent large numbers of documents.

The GPP therefore offered an ideal platform for a module of the kind envisaged. Although strongly associated with the court, this single archive offered a very wide range of documents and objects (from books to bundles of hair) which could support research into widely differing aspects of eighteenth-century history; it had a strong international research community already associated with it drawn from a variety of disciplines and sub-disciplines; and it had a community of archivists, librarians and cataloguers with considerable familiarity with the collection as a whole, which the wider project team was also gradually acquiring. Finally, it had

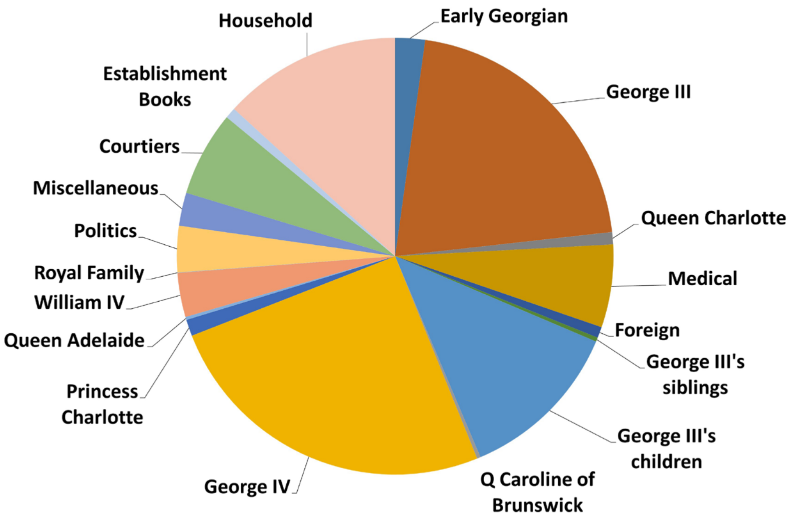

Figure 1.1: The contents of the Georgian Papers at Windsor.

a strong and varied outreach and impact agenda, with regular coverage in the press (even featuring at one point in *Hello* magazine), work with the Royal Mint and the Library of Congress, two major TV documentaries, and collaborations with two important stage productions during the course of the project: the West End production of *Hamilton: An American Musical* and the Nottingham Playhouse production of *The Madness of George III*, which was then selected by the National Theatre (NT) for an NT Live showing, recycled as part of NT at Home during the COVID-19 pandemic. These collaborations could not only excite students who saw evidence of the impact of the project with which they were associated beyond the university but also help them to think imaginatively about how historical research could make its way from an academic project into the wider public realm, and how their own work could find expression in ways that might also have potential in this regard.

Design principles

In conversations with Oliver and other colleagues, Arthur now sought to design a module that would reflect both the archive on which it was based and the learning objectives that had been established. Since the module had to be made available to students on different disciplinary programmes, it was likely that it would set a demanding challenge to students, especially those who were not historians: in one sense we would need to find a way to make them *all* historians, capable of researching content for a historical project, not least the 'facts' that underpinned it, even if their own discipline's skills could also be deployed.

It was decided that we should start with the documents in the archive. We should aim to introduce students to the full range of skills involved in presenting such documents to a variety of audiences. Central to this should be preparing some form of edition of a particular document or set of documents; indeed, we both believe editing has a rather undervalued place in historical training, not least because it demands both precision and rigour. The final choice of the document could be left in the student's hands but with the support of the module tutor(s): part of the challenge and also part of the excitement of the module would be getting students to select documents from among those digitised by the GPP that suited their own interests and skills, making it more likely that they would have the necessary enthusiasm to complete the project. It would also be the student's decision as to what sort of audience they wanted to work towards: we would encourage everything from a serious academic treatment to projects aimed at a wider public or school audience. The only common factor was that at the heart would be a digital and accurate presentation of the document(s) or object, accompanied by a transcription. Given the parallels between this and the GPP's own activity, this would be part of a wider aim of making students feel they were actively part of the project, rather than simply watching it from the sidelines, or indeed having things handed to them on a plate. Finally, again, very importantly to Arthur because of his long involvement in promoting history as a discipline of key importance in schools and universities as a source of highly desirable life and work skills, there should be opportunities in the module for the students to recognise the transferability beyond the academy of the skills they were acquiring and deploying in the course of the module.[10]

Delivering CKG

As eventually implemented, CKG became a final-year undergraduate module delivered over ten weeks, with a series of two-hour seminars capped off by a three-hour workshop in which each student presented their work in progress. For a number of the seminars the module lead tutor was joined by colleagues with appropriate expertise, thus modelling the collaborative spirit underpinning the module.[11] Oliver led sessions introducing the archive and training students in how to navigate and describe archival resources, as well as workshopping academic issues later in the module and co-assessing student work; for two sessions, concentrating on the digital skills involved in mounting the edition (on which more below), we were joined by a technology specialist from the faculty.[12] (In 2021 circumstances forced a role-reversal, with Oliver leading the module and Arthur making cameo appearances.) The edition constituted 90 per cent of the module's assessment, the other 10 per cent being derived from a group presentation at the halfway point in the module.

The module is supported by a very extensive virtual learning environment, which came into its own when the module had to be delivered online in pandemic conditions. As well as resources for each class, there is a huge range of resources which can be employed in the final editions, such as digitised maps and timelines on which events can be plotted, links to other internet resources relevant to the period (such as the public databases mentioned above) and other collections of digitised sources, major library and archival catalogues, recorded interviews with a number of scholars associated with the programme (concerning, for example, the monarchy's Hanoverian possessions, the court at the royal palaces, George III and his daughters), and an online archive of TV documentaries (including but not confined to those involving the GPP), films and plays which might inform and support the students' learning. Most importantly, there is also a bibliography of more than 400 items selected from the Royal Historical Society Bibliography of British and Irish History, accompanied by a set of short biographies of the key contributors to the historiography.

The delivery of the module had several distinctive features. Perhaps most strikingly, given the differences in prior exposure to history of the students taking the module, there was no direct teaching at all of the history of the Georgian monarchy or period aside from short introductions to both at the start of the very first seminar. Instead, in the first two sessions students were asked to tell the module tutors what *they* knew about George III, and to suggest the kind of topics that they might find interesting in the Georgian period more generally through delivering short presentations to the class about objects or images which encapsulated those themes (with the tutors also taking part in the exercise to emphasise that all were embarking on a journey of discovery together).

The teaching over the first half of the module focused on techniques and approaches. After an exploration of the GPP website's own resources, and the catalogue of the Georgian Papers maintained on the Royal Collection Trust website through which the digitised images are accessed,[13] there followed detailed introductions and exercises in exploring, interrogating and retrieving items from an archive, whether physical or digital; a discussion of the key objectives in creating editions for different types of audience; an introduction to palaeography and the tricks of the trade in reading eighteenth-century hands; and a discussion of how to research material effectively for contextualisation or annotation of a document or object. In the age of Google, students are often blithely unaware that search results retrieved in this manner are ripped asunder from their context. But for historical scholarship, of course, context is everything. We therefore invested time in teaching the students how to bridge the imaginative and intellectual gap between the digital surrogates they were working with and the archival and material realities of the original documents. In week five of the module students discussed with the tutor(s) their initial thoughts on document selection, receiving guidance on whether or not the document(s)/object(s) would present particular challenges, how to explore the themes that seemed most appropriate to the edition and the type of edition they hoped to produce. At this point the tutors assured themselves that the project was not either over- or under-ambitious, suggesting ways to refine the choice of document(s) as required.

All of these skills were initially put to use in the group projects. For these the students were divided up, on the basis of the interests they had declared in the initial sessions, to work together on a class presentation of a document selected by the tutors to reflect those interests. The groups then remained in place for the remainder of the course as peer-support groups for the individual editions. More generally, the students were encouraged to take note of fellow students' strengths, and to seek help from each other on issues such as palaeography and translation, as well as identifying contexts: thus modern-language students assisted others with short passages in foreign languages in documents for those without the relevant languages, while music, English literature and philosophy students often assisted historians in return for guidance on unfamiliar historiographies.

It is through such interactions that a research community is built and the lone-scholar model of humanities research challenged; building what has been called a 'community of inquiry' in pedagogical literature for history.[14]

The group presentations gave the students the opportunity not only to test the skills they had acquired in a low-stakes assessed exercise but also to apprehend the module tutors' expectations of the quality of work for the module. They were also able to see and learn from how others did things better (or worse!), whether in contextualising, text analysis, creativity or overall approach – something they could discuss in a short reflective exercise worth half the marks for the group project assessment, in which they offered an account of the successes and failures of their group and their own part in these, often with disarming honesty!

Just before the students selected their individual project, we introduced them to the platform for their digital editions. This was the open-source software Xerte, initially developed at the University of Nottingham[15] to help academics and other educators build viable virtual learning environments without requiring programming or coding skills. It is equally adaptable for the presentation of materials by students. It provides users with a considerable library of webpage templates on which they can mount documents or images and accompany them with hotspots, zoom functions, tables, timelines, film inserts or quizzes. It is thus in effect an entire toolkit for building a suite of webpages with very little prior technical knowledge, but which is not so elaborate as to completely solve every design issue at the click of a button. In places, workarounds sometimes become necessary, and ingenuity may be required. If a student is familiar with coding, they have been able to personalise their project further. Xerte has enabled each student to design, build and implement a suite of webpages to support an edition at the heart of which sits a digital image of an original document or object accompanied by a transcription (and sometimes translation) of the text where appropriate, alongside pages of contextualisation, interpretation, annotation, argument and other apparatus. The content, arrangement, balance and navigation of these pages were part of what was ultimately assessed: for example, was the Xerte object designed to support the user in the way most appropriate to the type of edition the student had opted to produce? Students presented an advanced plan for the webpages in an extended final class, in which the whole group was encouraged to query decisions and offer suggestions for further improvements, before the students worked further on the edition after teaching had ended.

Two further key decisions were taken about the approach to the assessment challenge which both differentiated the task from those for other modules at King's. First, no word limit was set for the edition. This reflected our view that, depending on what type of edition students wanted to do, very different approaches might be appropriate in terms of the balance of text and image, or between detailed textual commentary/annotation and discursive introduction/contextualisation. Rather than becoming unduly exercised over hitting a target length, we wanted students to think about the amount of effort a project would involve, and then support their decisions once an appropriate scale had been decided upon. This certainly felt risky, and it led on occasion to some quite substantial projects where a student's enthusiasm had been especially engaged. However, it did not result in students feeling overburdened, and they generally got the point that longer was not necessarily better. With sufficient consultation with the tutors we believe students have been good at setting appropriate goals for themselves, and it has removed one potential source of stress.

One thing that may have facilitated this was our wider approach to assessment criteria. We took the decision that these would not be made available until the halfway point in the module when the students had both been introduced to the techniques involved in producing a good edition and done some work on applying these in their group projects. Moreover, not least as a means of consolidating the learning from this section of the module, a classroom session saw the students themselves review the generic faculty assessment criteria, and then discuss in their groups how these could be 'translated' into edition-related specifics, the resulting lists being collected at the end of the class and then consolidated along with any additional criteria the teachers deemed essential into the 'official' assessment criteria for the module published on the virtual learning environment. We hoped that this would allow students to take some ownership over the module's approach, and to internalise the criteria and how they can be applied to the very diverse range of editions that could be attempted. We did not hand over assessment itself to the student body, however, as this would have required knowledge of the historical context for other students' editions, which would not necessarily have been available to other members of the class. As we noted above, class teaching focused on editorial and research methods and interpretation of results, leaving students to learn individually about the historical context relevant to their document(s); nevertheless, this historical context remained essential for the assessment of the content of the edition and its rigour.[16]

During the second half of the module, teaching moved into a workshop model as the students began work on designing and researching their individual projects. During these sessions, as already indicated, the groups formed in the first half of the course provided an immediate support circle for each student, while the tutors moved between groups to offer guidance and establish the needs, if any, of each student for more focused support. In two of these workshops the focus was squarely on academic questions relating to the historical content of the edition, giving students a surgery to which they could bring specific challenges or requests for guidance. In advance of the session, students were asked to compile a short 'who's who?' with short biographies of individuals who would be named in their edition, ensuring that they had commenced any relevant biographical research beforehand, not least in order to highlight persons whose identity remained uncertain. A third workshop focused on the design and presentation of the Xerte object, along with discussion of transcriptions and annotation in digital editions, a session attended by the technology specialist. The final session, in which the students presented their plans, managed to combine a celebratory mood with a last opportunity for students to test out their ideas and raise any nagging doubts they might have before heading off to complete work on their editions.

Outcomes and reflections

After several years of teaching CKG, we judge the module to have achieved or surpassed most of the aims we had in creating it. It has also achieved a degree of recognition for offering a new model for research-led teaching. Presentations about CKG at international conferences on pedagogy have attracted a lot of interest, and in 2020 the module was awarded the Teaching Prize of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

So what would we identify as the successes of this module? First, we have been delighted with the extent to which the module has managed to generate a 'research community' encompassing the students in ways that echo the wider community of eighteenth-century researchers. This has been partly within the context of the student cohort itself, where interdisciplinarity has been key. Students enjoyed learning from each other as they acted as 'subject specialists' in their various disciplines. During the group projects in particular they learnt to appreciate the different perspectives on a single document of the linguist, literature student, historian and philosopher, and this raised the level of their work. At the same time, we were particularly pleased with the way CKG generated connections between the students and the many academics who have been working on the GPP as fellows. In many cases the students were conducting detailed investigations of particular documents which could be of considerable assistance to academics with limited time in the archive, or without the time to look for references to their research outside the core archives for the theme in question. We were struck by the willingness and indeed enthusiasm with which senior researchers welcomed exchanges with students which might in other circumstances have felt burdensome. One explanation is that such contact took place at a point when the student had built up some intellectual capital of their own in relation to the document; another that such dialogue had been a strong feature of the GPP community more generally, with its workshops and sense of collective endeavour; a third that such contacts had been brokered by the module leads who themselves were part of that community.

Second, the editions have indeed ranged from the most traditional forms of scholarly edition, heavily annotated with careful identifications of events, persons and quotations in the text serving in some cases as the basis for redating or redescribing the document being considered, to public-facing introductions to documents designed to stimulate interest or engagement. Perhaps the most extreme example of the latter was an edition of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 1807 presented as a series of online games (involving, for example, transcription or identifying British property on a map of Lisbon) contextualised by a Brazilian mother filmed in Rio de Janeiro explaining Brazilian history to her child. Others have included tracing the subsequent history of diamonds identified in Queen Charlotte's inventories and presenting a first-hand account of Queen Caroline of Ansbach's death in the context of an explanation of the nature of her malady, with an actor voicing the testimony to give it greater immediacy (the soundtracks provided for many of the editions have been remarkable, with in one case readings of letters in the original French against a background of specially composed music).

In some cases the opening up of a document has involved extensive work on the part of the student to make it accessible. Two good examples of this involved documents written in archaic German scripts setting a palaeographic and a linguistic challenge. In both cases native German-speaking students were able to concentrate their energies on the former, and even allowed some playfulness, with at one stage of the navigation of one edition a set of options appearing to ask the reader whether they wished to skip a section on the technicalities of decoding the archaic script. One of the editions produced a translation and analysis of a large document detailing the contents of the Hanover Treasury for which the student received assistance from interested scholars in Germany, producing as far as we know the first transcription and translation of this document.

A number of editions have made research discoveries of their own. Several have helped identify the sources on which members of the royal family or court drew in their essays or commonplacing: one student did this for a meticulous edition and analysis of an essay by George III on Iceland; another (a mathematician) for his geometrical notes; another looked at Mary Hamilton's commonplacing, which revealed Mary Wollstonecraft among her readings. An early example which gave an indication of what was to come was a student who managed to make sense of the curious letter codes Queen Charlotte deployed in her jottings on early French kings as representing the dates of their accession, for which we have so far found no other example from the period. Soon after, another analysed the Prince of Wales's spending habits in the West End, identifying and mapping the shops he patronised, as well as suggesting that he was not quite as incorrigible a spendthrift as his reputation suggests.

Finally, a number of editions have shown great imagination and exploited the full potential of Xerte in interpreting a document. For example, despite the pandemic conditions, one visiting student used an inventory of George II's paintings at Kensington both to analyse the artistic traditions represented in his collection and to recreate the hang on a room-by-room basis. The resulting edition and transcription of a seventy-page manuscript went on to win a prize for the best undergraduate research conducted by a student overseas at the student's home university.

These latter projects have already been of great use to a number of researchers and the project team in their cataloguing of the collection. We hope before too long to mount the results of the best of them on the GPP website, along with many of the high-quality transcriptions the students have produced. This is a terrific testimony to the students and their engagement, and indicates that the idea of involving them actively in the bigger research project has not just been rhetoric, something that is not lost on students who have followed in their footsteps.

The module was a joy to teach, and the tutors learnt much from the students along the way. Student reactions to the module have also been overwhelmingly positive. They show not only that they genuinely felt that they were part of the GPP but also that they identified ways in which it provided opportunities to advance their historical skills which they had not enjoyed elsewhere. Rather than bemoaning the lack of lectures conveying the basic historical information, they often relished being given responsibility for their own research and information retrieval. We have also been delighted that for a number of students it has clearly been a significant factor in shaping their future plans; and even for those for whom this is not the case, they have left the module with a set of webpages which they had built and populated with immense imagination that they could share with potential employers.

To conclude, let us share some of the comments we have received from students who have taken CKG:

> This module was easily my favourite . . . It was very engaging all ten weeks and aroused my interest not only in the Georgian era but generally in research on historical topics . . . It was really a refreshing module as it is less academic and more of an interactive research based one . . . The atmosphere of the sessions were always great because of the kind manner of tutors and the active participation that was required from the students.

> It has been fantastic to feel part of an international historical project as it develops. I hope we can observe its development further after we finish as I now feel very engaged and invested in it. I have been very excited to feel I am putting my skills as a historian to new use, and it has been fantastic to engage in new methods of carrying out and presenting historical research beyond essay writing. It's been useful to think about these new ways of offering history to different audiences, and it is definitely something I plan to take further in my career.

> It has been a while since I took Court of King George III, but I just wanted to say . . . I had such a great time in your classes and it really has had a big influence on me. I spent the last few months

volunteering for a . . . Museum [and] had the opportunity to create part of their website. The experience working on a digital edition in your class gave me the confidence to attempt this project. The course also made me realize that it is my passion to work on digital editions and in the digital humanities field. In April I started a MA [and] have chosen to make Digital History the main focus of my degree . . . I hope to continue gaining experience in this field as I seek to pursue digital edition-related internships in the future. I just wanted to say thank you. It was you . . . who introduced me to this field in the first place, which I now know that I would love to pursue as a career.

I'm currently in the process of compiling my applications to history PhD programs in the US and I've been thinking a lot about how my research with you really impacted my academic career and research interests. Everyone I've spoken to about the project, or just the course in general, has been very interested, and I find myself talking about it for very long with anyone who will listen!

I can genuinely say this was one of the most unique and exciting courses I have ever been a part of! I would love to keep receiving updates on the Georgian Papers Programme!

Notes

1 Among others, the Bentham Project, the Clergy of the Church of England Database, the Legacies of British Slavery Encyclopedia of British Slave Ownership, London Lives 1690–1800, the Old Bailey Online and (behind a paywall) Eighteenth-Century Collections Online.

2 Both approaches are embedded within the subject benchmarking document maintained by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). See the March 2022 iteration at www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/history (accessed 28 March 2023).

3 For a summary account, see Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, 'Group Work in Education: Addressing Student Concerns', 2021, https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/groupwork.pdf (accessed 28 March 2023).

4 The genesis of this module was very much the outcome of the authors' practical experience in the classroom. In this chapter we make only sparing reference to pedagogical literature in part to underline how little this shaped the module, although many (though not all) features of it align closely with themes prominent in that literature. The specific context of the creation of the opportunity modules allowed us to overcome our frustration with the limitations of other formats for 'research-led' teaching by 'breaking the rules' of discipline-specific programme regulations. The case was made on the basis of the unique opportunity presented by the GPP, and we were enormously grateful to the external examiners and programme boards more generally who approached the module in such a supportive manner, judging it in terms of results rather than conformity to existing practice.

5 6AAHCF01 in the King's College London module catalogue.

6 There is a wealth of publications on user experience (UX), but a good starting point is the collection of resources provided by the Neilsen Norman Group, for example Jakob Nielsen, 'How Users Read on the Web' (1997), www.nngroup.com/articles/how-users-read-on-the-web (accessed 28 March 2023). Our thinking about non-linear communication is in part inspired by debates in museology, for example Helen Gaynor, 'Non-Linear Documentary and Museum Exhibition Design: Interdisciplinary Inspirations', *International Journal of Creative Media Research*, 3 (2020); Nina Simon, 'Museum 2.0: Should Museum Exhibitions Be More Linear? Exploring the Power of the Forced March in Digital and Physical Environments', *Museum 2.0* (9 January 2013), http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2013/01/should-museum-exhibitions-be-more.html (accessed 28 March 2023).

7 For the GPP, see the project website: https://georgianpapers.com (accessed 28 March 2023).

8 Other key members of the team were Julie Crocker, Sarah Davis, Laura Hobbs, Rachel Krier (Royal Archives), James Smithies, Sam Callaghan, Paul Caton (King's Digital Lab), Angel Luke O'Donnell (King's College London), Deborah Cornell (William & Mary) and Shawn Holl (Omohundro Institute). The full team is listed on the GPP website: https://georgianpapers.com/about/the-team (accessed 28 March 2023).

9 See the GPP website, in particular the list of fellows (https://georgianpapers.com/get-involved/full_list_fellows), the record of scholarly publications flowing from the fellowships (https://georgianpapers.com/2022/04/26/the-impact-of-the-georgian-papers-programme-on-scholarly-research) and the events page (https://georgianpapers.com/get-involved/events) (all accessed 28 March 2023).

10 This focus on 'learning by doing' and developing historical scholarship as a set of skills and practices is grounded in similar concerns to inquiry-based learning, on which there is a substantial literature. For a good introduction see Patrick Blessinger and John M. Carfora (eds), *Inquiry-Based Learning for the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences: A Conceptual and Practical Resource for Educators. Vol. 2. Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1108/S2055-364120142 (accessed 28 March 2023).

11 In its first iterations there was also a teaching assistant to help cope with large numbers, Miranda Reading, herself a GPP research fellow.

12 In recent years David Reid Matthews.

13 Georgian Papers Online website: https://gpp.rct.uk/default.aspx (accessed 28 March 2023).

14 See Peter Seixas, 'The Community of Inquiry as a Basis for Knowledge and Learning: The Case of History', *American Educational Research Journal*, 30:2 (June 1993), 305–24; Adrian Jones, 'Teaching History at University through Communities of Inquiry', *Australian Historical Studies*, 42:2 (June 2011), 168–93.

15 We are very grateful to Professor Jamie Wood of the University of Lincoln who first introduced Arthur to the possibilities of this software. For more information, see https://xerte.org.uk; for the range of page templates on offer, see www.nottingham.ac.uk/toolkits/play_8203 (both accessed 28 March 2023). For further discussion of the ways Xerte can assist in achieving assessment objectives, see Maria Kutar, Marie Griffiths and Jamie Wood, 'Ecstasi Project: Using Technology to Encourage Creativity in the Assessment Process' (2015), *UK Academy for Information Systems Conference Proceedings 2015*, http://aisel.aisnet.org/ukais2015/32. Wood's blog, 'Making Digital History' at https://makingdigitalhistory.co.uk (accessed 28 March 2023), platforms several relevant posts.

16 There is of course a considerable literature on student engagement in assessment, but for an example which explicitly engages with such engagement in the context of assessment remaining in the hands of the teachers, see Rosario Hernández, 'Students' Engagement in the Development of Criteria to Assess Written Tasks', *REAP International Online Conference on Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility, 29th–31st May, 2007*, www.reap.ac.uk/reap/reap07/Portals/2/CSL/t2%20-%20great%20designs%20for%20assessment/students%20deciding%20assessment%20criteria/Students_engagement_in_development_of_assessment_criteria.pdf (accessed 28 March 2023).

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Chapter 2

Introducing Australian students to British history and research methods via digital sources

Simon Burrows and Rebekah Ward

This chapter explores a pedagogical experiment: the development and impact of a unit on 'Britain in the Age of Botany Bay, 1760–1815' (BABB), taught at Western Sydney University (WSU) in Australia, from the perspective of the instructor and a former student. The unit, a third-year BA class in the History and Political Thought (HPT) specialism, taught in 2014 and 2016, attempted to capitalise on the ready availability of digital resources for studying eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century history. Its key assessment outcome was a 3,500–4,000-word extended essay based on original research using online primary sources. The unit operated across a fifteen-week semester, comprising thirteen teaching weeks, a one-week mid-term break and a study week. This presented various teaching, learning and assessment challenges for students and staff. The ways in which we addressed these challenges, and lessons arising from their mixed success, have wider applicability for teaching digital history and the provision of practical primary research to undergraduate students.

Contexts and challenges

WSU is a large regional/metropolitan university spread across eleven campuses in Richmond, Bankstown, Penrith, Campbelltown and Parramatta.[1]

This area, covering half of Sydney's population, is the motor of New South Wales's economic growth and home to a socially diverse community, including many recent migrants and traditionally working-class or deprived areas. Uniquely among Australian universities, WSU has a regional focus and mission written into its founding charter. This has given the university a mandate for socially focused research, a stance which contributed to its first-in-world position in the *Times Higher* Impact Rankings 2022 and again in 2023.[2]

By enrolments, WSU is Australia's second largest university, with around 50,000 students who speak almost 200 birth languages. Disproportionately large numbers of WSU students are first-in-family to attend university. In addition, a significant number of BA students are teacher trainees, so the HPT specialism needs to cater for their needs. This includes ensuring accreditation as modern history teachers by the New South Wales Board of Studies, Teaching & Educational Standards and, since 1 January 2017, its replacement, the New South Wales Education Standards Authority.

The HPT specialism arises from the Australian custom of having combined history and politics departments, though by 2014 the programme's emphasis was on modern history and the history of political thought. At the time that BABB was taught, the HPT major contained four compulsory units, including first-year survey units on 'Modern European History and Politics' and 'Global History'; a second-year thematic unit on the secularisation of political thought; and a third-year unit on 'Theories and Methods in History'. Nowhere in the HPT major was there a requirement to produce a sustained piece of primary source research. This is standard for Australian BA History programmes, though it has not always been the case. Research opportunities at WSU were reserved for an optional fourth-year honours dissertation. However, by the mid-2010s honours was being phased out in favour of a two-year Master of Research, based on the Bologna model. BABB was designed precisely to fill this gap: to allow students a taste of research and an opportunity to develop transferable, higher-level skills. Motives for this were intellectual, pragmatic and personal.

On an intellectual level, the unit's instructor Simon was convinced that WSU history graduates, particularly those who intended to pursue a teaching career, needed hands-on experience to understand the generation of historical knowledge. This would also align with official expectations – set out in the Australian History Threshold Learning Outcomes – that history graduates should be able to 'interpret a wide range of . . . primary materials' and 'examine historical issues by undertaking research according to the methodological and ethical conventions of the discipline', as well as more explicit statements around primary source-based research in comparable international benchmark statements.[3]

On a more practical level, the unit aspired to give WSU graduates an edge in a competitive employment market. Higher-level skills associated with historical study are highly valued by employers. These skills include formulating a research question; designing a systematic inquiry; gathering, recording and processing large amounts of information; data analysis; and presentation of findings. Indeed, the local business lobby has since recognised the critical importance and scarcity of humanities-trained graduates.[4] For these reasons, the BABB unit focused on helping students become aware of and able to articulate the transferable skills they were honing or acquiring. This is an area where the historical profession traditionally has a poor track record. In 2008–9, a survey of 1,445 first- and third-year history students at eleven Australian universities found few students associated historical thinking with skills and primary evidence, but instead emphasised research via books and articles.[5]

Finally, on a personal level BABB would allow the instructor to continue supervising undergraduate research projects. This had been a particularly rewarding aspect of his previous time at the University of Leeds (UK) where undergraduates in single honours history were required to undertake a 12,000-word dissertation, usually aligning it with their two-paper third-year 'Special Subject'. Having worked intensively with around a dozen third-year dissertation students annually between 2000 and 2012, Simon was excited at the possibilities for developing a scaled-down version for Australian students. It was also hoped such a unit would help recruit students into higher-degree study. As WSU does not offer European languages, prospects for recruiting students via his flagship 'Enlightenment and [French] Revolution' unit were poor.

The pedagogical philosophy of BABB was based on research suggesting that students engage better with historical methodology and research skills when 'embedded in the curriculum'.[6] This approach involves 'learning by doing' rather than attempting to teach skills in a more abstract manner, which many students find harder to understand. BABB included a set of skills podcasts, each recommended for watching at the appropriate week, to offer students targeted support with planning, research, analysis and writing processes (see Table 2.1). This ensured students had asynchronous

Table 2.1: List of research method podcasts

Week	Topic title	Week	Topic title
1	The Research Process	8	Planning Your Essay
2	Choosing a Topic	9	(Intersession break - no set pod)
3	Choosing Sources	10	Writing up the Literature
4	Interrogating Sources	11	Writing up Your Methods
5	Preparing a Bibliography	12	Findings, Intro and Conclusion
6	Starting Research	13	Reference
7	Work in Progress Report	14	Reviewing a Draft

access to training materials and, it was envisaged, would enable an experimental online-only delivery option. For technical reasons, online-only delivery was abandoned in favour of face-to-face classes (see below), but the podcasts were retained.

While BABB was therefore designed to allow students to engage with primary source materials, there was a simultaneous effort to expose students to (some of) the impressive digitised historical resources that are now available. Simon believed that an awareness of these resources and capacity to use them effectively were vital skills for both the future historians and history teachers who were undertaking the unit.

This ambition was well suited to the unit's thematic focus. As Simon Burrows and Glenn Roe observed in 2020, the eighteenth century has been perhaps uniquely well served among historical eras for richness and comprehensiveness of digital materials.[7] BABB capitalised on this by drawing particularly on three resources available to WSU students: Old Bailey Online and two remarkable research collections published by Gale, Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) and the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Burney Collection of Newspapers (henceforth the 'Burney Collection').[8] These sources gave students access to several centuries of records from London's central criminal court, the majority of books and pamphlets published in Britain or the English-speaking world across the eighteenth century, and a large sample of mostly London newspapers covering 150 years of British history.

It was not compulsory to use these digital resources but almost all students did so, particularly since accessing non-digital materials was impractical. Some students exploited other digital collections, too, including the Reading Experience Database (RED) or, for early Australian connections and newspapers, the Trove repository (a national database of Australiana holding over 6 billion digital objects), as well as holdings in the WSU Library, which aspires to host the best digital collections of any Australian university.[9] Particularly useful given BABB's focus on the long eighteenth century were ProQuest's British Periodicals and Gale's Nineteenth-Century British Newspapers.[10]

Interrogating digitised primary source materials requires specific skill-sets. There is, of course, significant overlap with traditional archival practices (such as critical treatment of sources, ability to synthesise and evaluate information, awareness of preservation processes and discussion of the impact of historical context) but other tasks require quite different competencies. For example, the relevance and scale of results within digital resources depends heavily on effective search techniques, and the comparatively easy access to huge swathes of information changes decisions around scope and sampling. BABB therefore needed to be designed in a way that addressed both types of skills. The development of these research skills – particularly in the context of the previous experience of students upon enrolment in BABB – is addressed in the following sections.

The specific collections featured in BABB – ECCO, the Burney Collection and Old Bailey Online – built on Simon's extensive experience using them in teaching and research. His Leeds honours dissertation students had been expected to choose topics related to his French Revolution Special Subject, but few felt confident with French-language sources. He therefore guided most students to research topics for which ECCO housed English-language translations of key sources, or to explore British reactions to the Revolution, particularly in the newspaper press via the Burney Collection.

As a specialist press historian, this played to Simon's strengths.[11] In particular, he could advise students how to sample and analyse complex eighteenth-century newspaper sources, and on the application of theoretical models for understanding newspaper materials. For example, some of his Leeds students found Habermas's conception of the 'public sphere' heuristically useful and empowering.[12] Others adapted Herman and Chomsky's model of filters in *Manufacturing Consent* to understand what appeared on the printed page, or devised thematic tables and symbological approaches to represent and analyse key themes and trends in a body of texts, drawing on Rolf Reinhardt and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink's work on the Bastille.[13] These competencies were employed again in BABB.

Also significant for developing the unit was Simon's experience of co-developing online research training and support materials at Leeds. These materials took MA and honours students through the various stages of their research process and served as a model and inspiration for the research pods in BABB. Monitoring the resource websites revealed each Leeds cohort, comprising around 220 undergraduates per year, viewed the dissertation support pages over 1,000 times. This proved an important way of supplementing the two hours of one-to-one supervision each student was entitled to receive. External examiners also praised these resources, linking them to discernible improvements in the quality and rigour of both undergraduate and MA dissertations and conference presentations. Several even recommended the Leeds model as best practice to their own institutions. The online training resources may also have contributed to an exponential growth in the Leeds MA history programmes, which grew in a single decade from eleven to sixty enrolments. Nevertheless, the big question remained: could these approaches and materials be adapted effectively to support an Australian undergraduate cohort in a more limited research exercise?

It was clear this adaptation would involve significant challenges. The most obvious was a lack of content knowledge among Australian students, most of whom had not studied British history before. It would thus be necessary to provide them with a crash course on the period at the very moment that they were being asked to choose a research topic. Nor were students likely to come to the unit with the same level of prior historical study that British undergraduates brought to their first experience of sustained research. The Australian education system follows a Scottish model, with students taking a diverse range of subjects at high school and in university humanities degrees. WSU students only need eight papers to complete an HPT major in a twenty-four-paper degree.

Further, what methodology or research skills students might have acquired at university were unevenly spread. The best prepared would have completed the HPT compulsory third-year unit on 'Theories and Methods in History', but some had not yet taken it and others were studying the units in parallel. Further, lower-level compulsory units were not built around skills acquisition. Instead, students would have taken a range of specialist historical units, including possible cross-listings from other specialisations, notably International Relations and Asian Studies or Cultural and Social Analysis. Many students also had no experience writing extended essays over 2,000 words or working with historical primary sources. Among those who had, some had only encountered primary sources at high school. However, Higher School Certificate history was not a prerequisite for enrolling in HPT.

Unit design and delivery

Simon was aware of the challenges that his BABB unit would present. During his first year in Australia he therefore consulted widely with colleagues, especially distinguished Australian colonial historian Carol Liston, a foundation member of the HPT team at WSU and an innovative teacher. Together they devised a strategy for supporting students through the research process, to try to ensure no-one was left behind or felt too daunted by the expectations of the unit. Fundamental to these attempts was an assessment philosophy that sought to reward engagement with process, and a week-by-week mapping of activities including face-to-face meetings, online support materials, lectures, tutorials, methods podcasts and assessments. Formal marks would be awarded in the planning stage for a project proposal, in the research phase for a work-in-progress video and during the writing-up stage for preparing source lists, glossaries and appendices, collectively amounting to 50 per cent of their grade. The main text of the extended essay was worth the remaining 50 per cent.

The project proposal was a formulaic planning document. It required students to provide an essay title (approved in advance by the tutor); a short description outlining the topic, its significance and how students would go about the research; a list of three to five questions they intended to ask of their sources; and an annotated list of primary and secondary sources. Detailed instructions were provided in the Unit Learning Guide (Course Outline) and students were provided with a worked example. A detailed assessment grid set out the expectations for each part of the document (see Table 2.2). This tick-box approach proved a double-edged sword. Despite a high level of guidance and support, some students struggled to score points against the rubric. For an exercise that was intended to reward student engagement with academic research processes, some students achieved grades significantly below the pass mark.

Table 2.2: Assessment grid for project proposal exercise

Criteria	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	4 marks	5 marks
Title	Offers a viable, appropriate and approved title	Not applicable. Only one mark is available under this criterion.			
Project Description (PD)	Describes a historical project, but in current form it is poorly conceived or unrealisable due to issues of scope, scale, originality or sources	Offers a viable essay topic in theory, but approach, methods and/or sources are ill-suited to the task	Describes a viable essay topic based on valid sources, but approach method, and/or historical significance need further elucidation	Describes a strong, original and viable topic based on valid sources but may require fine-tuning to realise full potential of topic	Fluently outlines strong, coherent and original project based on appropriate sources and addressing a valid historical problem
Key questions	Some questions could be answered from selected primary sources, but most are poorly focused or badly worded	Questions generally are answerable from chosen sources but wording or conception needs to be fine-tuned to produce a strong essay	Questions are generally well-worded and can be answered from sources, but do not fully address topic or all its angles	Questions are well-worded, appropriate to sources, and likely to give a rounded to questions in PD answer, but may be unrealistic or insufficient in scope	Questions are well worded, appropriate to sources, realistic in scope and likely to elicit a comprehensive answer to questions raised in PD
Primary and secondary sources	Identifies some useful primary sources and secondary literature	Identifies and differentiates between appropriate primary sources and some key secondary literature	Identifies appropriate quantity and quality of primary sources and helpfully prioritises key secondary literature	Identifies best available primary sources for task and systematically identifies and prioritises key secondary literature	Not applicable. Only four marks are available under this criterion.

To track student progress, offer variety in assessment and provide preliminary feedback on methods and findings, the second assignment was a work-in-progress video. The aim of this exercise was to show the topic was viable from available primary materials and worthy of study, and to give students feedback on their approaches and ideas. The resultant videos (mostly filmed on mobile phones) were a highlight of the unit and played to local student strengths. Most WSU students are verbally articulate and confident at presenting when compared with British peers. This is partly because of the prevalence of teacher trainees among the WSU student cohort, but also because public speaking has a more central role in Australian schooling. Students also reported the ability to record themselves made this less daunting than a traditional presentation. Recordings were also more equitable, since they could be reviewed more than once.

Finally, to further build student confidence and certainty, source lists, glossaries and appendices could be submitted in advance of the essay and awarded a provisional baseline mark. Students could make improvements to those materials before they submitted their final essay in order to raise their grade. As marks were awarded against relatively objective criteria, students who had engaged effectively with process could approach the essay secure in the knowledge that they would probably pass the unit even if they underachieved in the written component.

Using the activity map, Simon devised a timeline for activities with corresponding reminders (see Table 2.3). This was important because students only had a notional 150 study hours. By way of comparison, Leeds honours dissertation students had a notional 800 hours, comprising 400 hours of study in the 'Special Subject' and a further 400 hours to research and write their dissertations. Weekly reminders advised BABB students of impending deadlines, classes and opportunities to meet with him. Generally, the reminders suggested students run activities over several weeks. In the first week they might be told to 'start' or 'plan' an activity, in the second and third weeks to 'continue', and in the fourth week to 'finish'. This allowed students to track progress against key tasks but also allowed leeway for slippage.

The activity map also helped Simon to plot instalments of the unit's most distinctive feature: the fable of 'Lazy Toad and Stressed Bunny'. The protagonists in this allegorical tale are BABB students. Stressed Bunny, like many WSU students, is a hard-working, time-poor single mum who aspires to good grades. Lazy Toad is a carefree, slightly sleazy, chilled-out dude,

Table 2.3: Weekly reminder, week 9

• This week is the mid-term break so there are no online classes, methods podcasts or formal clinic hours. Students can email me to arrange an appointment at Kingswood on Tuesday or Parramatta on Wednesday • Use this time wisely (Uncle Simon's Avuncular Tip: taking a few days away to freshen your mind away from uni work counts as a wise use of time) • This is the best week to prepare your Work-in-Progress video presentation (due week 10). See the Unit Outline for more information. Remember this task has to be uploaded to YouTube – this takes time and requires a Gmail account – so allow time to organise the submission. Be prepared for technical hitches. You have plenty of time so technology failure is not an excuse for late submission • We're still in the research phase. Keep plugging away at those primary sources • While conducting your research, don't forget to collect unfamiliar C18 terms and submit them to the Unit Glossary on vUWS by week 13. You need to have done this to qualify for the Glossary Marks.

who believes, in local parlance, that 'P's ["Pass" grades] make degrees'. He uses every trick in the book to minimise workload.

Week by week, Bunny and Toad confront the twin challenges of life and study. They compare notes and tips, highlight the tutor's key messages and verbally spar as Bunny graciously knocks back Toad's invitations to chill by his pool. Prominent in their banter, however, are ways for students to work more efficiently, save time and hone research. Pride of place goes to Toad's triumphal realisation he can get by with sampling newspaper stories on his topic, London coffee-houses. Whereas Bunny sees sampling as a way to maximise the representative chronological coverage of her essay, Toad sees it as a means to cut his workload by 80 per cent. Nevertheless, the results of Toad's efforts surprise him. His methodological rigour in sampling earns him a distinction, but the thinness of his material prevents him from achieving his first ever high distinction. Thus the fable of Bunny and Toad addressed student anxieties in a light-hearted way, sharing study tips and reinforcing the messaging in the weekly reminders.

A key challenge of the unit was to ensure students got face-to-face supervision time. This had been an issue in the Leeds dissertation model, where, as noted above, staff supervision was rationed. In the context of WSU's thirteen-week teaching semesters, there was no way to give each student two hours of individual time. However, the structure of teaching at WSU provided useful ways to maximise supervision for students who attended regularly. Australian universities have relatively high drop-out rates from individual units, as students can re-sit or take alternative units. Class attendance is not compulsory, and work, assignments and family considerations, as well as, with increasing frequency, environmental factors (especially bushfires and floods), impact attendance. So, although twenty-five students could theoretically be accommodated in each hour-long tutorial, weekly classes averaged eight to ten students, allowing for more individualised supervision. Students were also encouraged to seek out the instructor during his weekly office hours.

Once they had chosen a topic, students were divided into groups of three to six students organised around their chosen subjects or sources. For example, in 2016, at the Bankstown campus, there were groups on 'Crime', 'Social Life' and 'Politics and the Press'. Each group was asked to attend a session each fortnight instead of a weekly class. These sessions combined intensive supervision with peer-to-peer discussion of ideas, challenges, approaches and use of digital resources. Across the unit, students who attended these sessions received greater supervisor assistance, and more peer support, when compared to individual students at Leeds.

Most WSU students had no prior knowledge of British history or the eighteenth century. A well-structured 'crash course' was thus essential. It comprised twelve hours of short lecture podcasts grouped into thematic clusters. These were posted online and could be accessed throughout the semester. Students could thus dip into topics that interested them, and if necessary (following Toad's example) ignore those that looked peripheral to their research. Tying the lecture podcasts together was an overview podcast and a 'case study' orientation podcast which sought to relate the material to students' local knowledge. It focused on a historical figure of local renown, the Reverend Samuel Marsden.

Marsden (1765–1838) was the second Anglican clergyman to arrive in colonial New South Wales.[14] Marsden's presence is ubiquitous across western Sydney but is also found in Leeds and New Zealand. To pique student curiosity, Simon stressed how Marsden's life and his own were mostly lived in the same places. Born in Farsley (Leeds), Marsden initially worked in his father's blacksmith's shop in Horsforth, where Simon lived from 2006 to 2012.[15] Via a youthful flirtation with Methodism, Marsden attracted attention from Anglican evangelicals, notably William Wilberforce, who paid for him to attend school in Hull and the University of Cambridge (Simon's hometown), before securing him a position in New South Wales.

In Australia, Marsden is notorious as 'the flogging parson' due to his reputation for handing out stiff court sentences to recidivist convicts. Across 'the Ditch', he is celebrated for having brought Christianity to Aotearoa-New Zealand. On Christmas Day 1814, he preached the first Christian sermon to Māori. A Christmas carol, *Te Harinui*, commemorates him and the event. Naturally, Simon sang a few lines and recalled performing it at a carol concert while working at the University of Waikato.

Marsden had a residence at Parramatta, the colony's one-time seat of government and site of multiple WSU campuses. A major street there carries his name. More than 20 kilometres away, on a 2,000-acre estate, Marsden built a homestead, Mamre House. An arterial road and a local Anglican school are named after it. All three are a short distance from WSU's Kingswood campus and Simon's first home in Australia. The charitable trust that runs Mamre House kindly allowed him to film his lecture podcast on Marsden there. Students saw for themselves the pasture where Marsden introduced merino sheep gifted to him by George III to help improve Australian wool yields. Marsden sent his wool back to be milled in Leeds.

Reflecting on Marsden's life story, Simon was able to link places and stories familiar to WSU students to major themes of British eighteenth-century social, economic, political, cultural and colonial history. The narrative covered religion, crime and justice, agricultural, industrial, and commercial revolutions, imperial expansion, global trade, monarchy, and, via Wilberforce, patronage, the slave trade, abolitionism and party politics. Ideas about race, class and the first peoples of Australia and New Zealand were also interwoven. Finally, the timing of Marsden's departure from Britain (July 1793) and arrival in Australia (March 1794) provided a jumping-off point to discuss the French Revolutionary Terror, the British patriotic response, and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

The most pressing challenge for students commencing BABB was to identify a research topic by the end of the third week. This was a new exercise for most students. Teaching materials gave them multiple forms of assistance. The Learning Guide included guidance on viable topics and contained a list of five potential thematic areas – consumer goods; fame, celebrity and the media; crime; sports and popular pastimes; and family, sex and marriage – with suggested topics for each. Every content podcast concluded by suggesting four or five potential topics for investigation, and the week 2 research method podcast addressed choosing a topic and preparing a project proposal. With this guidance, almost every student succeeded in submitting a topic for their essay assignment on schedule, or, failing that, a theme, which could then be honed into a topic through consultation with the instructor.

Having chosen a topic, students were supported and their progress monitored by regular small assessments items. The project proposal described above was due in week 6 of the semester; and the work-in-progress video provided an indication of how students were tracking in week 10. Glossary entries were due by week 13, though early submission was encouraged. There were also options for handing in a non-assessed essay plan and to bring bibliographies and appendices for 'pre-marking' in face-to-face meetings. The research essay itself was due at the end of week 15 (study week). This model had the disadvantage of imposing a significant number of deadlines but allowed tracking and interventions. Simon's relatively high research and administration loadings, which allowed him to teach into only one unit per semester, were helpful here. These factors allowed him to concentrate on BABB, facilitating fast feedback turnarounds and support to students.

Outcomes

Despite the time pressure, students came up with innovative topic choices. While some submissions, such as 'Sport and Leisure in the Georgian Era, 1760–1815' or 'Causes of the American War of Independence', read like undergraduate essay titles and required scaling back and refocusing, others showed ingenuity, imagination and a clear grasp of what might be feasible. The more novel and manageable topics included 'Marketing of Tobacco' and a study of 'Aldersgate General Dispensary and the Politics of Pharmaceuticals'. A significant number of students were inspired to study crime by the availability of Old Bailey Online and newspaper sources, and for some this linked to the convict origins of New South Wales, as in a project on women's transportation. One particularly imaginative student looked at the treatment and outcomes for Irish defendants at the Old Bailey.

The gender dimensions of crime and punishment were popular choices, with essay topics including 'Factory Women and Crime'. On the Kingswood campus, there was sufficient interest in gender issues to justify an entire 'topic group' of six students working on everything from domestic spaces to Hannah Snell's cross-dressing or the depiction of vice in *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies*. There were also groups at both Kingswood and Bankstown focused on politics and/or the press, including studies of newspaper coverage of Methodism and of the 1794 Polish rising. Another group looked at 'reading, culture and intellectual life', reflecting Simon's own interest in book history and student engagement with another WSU unit on 'Cultural History of Books and Reading'. The co-author of this chapter, Rebekah, was one of the students in this group. Here is how she describes the evolution of her project:

> I undertook BABB in 2016 in the third year of my BA. At the outset, the unit sounded simultaneously daunting and fascinating. I was eager to engage with historical methodologies, particularly to use primary sources to study a topic of my choosing. The idea that my entire grade rested upon a single project was unfamiliar, and thus intimidating, but the scaffolding outlined by the instructor was reassuring.
>
> Inspired by a content pod[cast] about the novel in the eighteenth century and a tutorial about the Burney Collection, I wanted to research newspaper coverage of books. This turned out to be an apt choice given Simon's speciality. Through consultation, I eventually decided to explore the initial reception of Jane Austen's novels. I had read (and enjoyed) the novels but did not want this to be a literary study.
>
> Secondary research, mostly in journal articles and monographs held in the WSU Library, revealed there was little consensus about Austen's immediate reception. Studies seemed to reach one of three (contradictory) conclusions: that Austen was initially a critic's novelist; her novels were not subject to critical commentary until the 1900s; or Austen was scarcely known before 1870. It became clear such contradictions had methodological foundations. Traditional reception studies relied on critical reviews (typically written by men), while other studies (often feminist ones) focused on the so-called forgotten voices of predominately female readers. I hypothesised analysis of the digital collections featured in BABB proposed a solution. These collections, I thought, would make it feasible to

> simultaneously address various types of reception and thus, hopefully, resolve such contradictions.
>
> My project focused on the years 1811–21, so rather than ECCO or the Burney Collection, I relied on other digital collections. After some initial training (involving watching the pre-recorded pods, alongside specialised assistance from the instructor), I was able – without leaving my remote home on the outskirts of western Sydney – to research what had been written about Austen in Britain some 200 years earlier. I located and examined literary reviews (via British periodicals), everyday reader responses (transcribed in RED), newspaper advertisements for the novels (in Nineteenth-Century British Newspapers), and library holdings and print run information (Cardiff University's 'British Fiction, 1800–1829'). Using materials across these various collections allowed me to conclude Austen's novels were well known and well received by both the British press and general public in the first ten years after publication, revising dominant narratives about one of the world's most famous novelists.

Not all students could be expected to relish the novelty as much as Rebekah. One enduring concern was that, daunted by the challenges, students might drop out of the unit. At WSU, drop-out rates are measured against enrolments on 'census day', which is several weeks into the semester. In the mid-2010s, drop-out rates tended to exceed 10 per cent. Rates of 20 per cent, not uncommon, were considered cause for concern.[16] The first time the unit ran, in 2014, one-third of students (n=17) enrolled at census day did not complete the unit. Of these, six did not submit any work and eleven only submitted the early assignments (see Table 2.4). Some of these students may have withdrawn due to their marks, but six were on passing grades when they withdrew. The high attrition rate was probably partly linked to the perceived challenge. As a result, in 2016 Simon focused on explaining what might reasonably be expected for each exercise. To build confidence, he informed students that there had been a near 100 per cent pass rate for students who completed the unit in 2014.[17] This expectation management seems to have had the desired result. In 2016 the drop-out rate more than halved (15 per cent, n=7).

Measured in terms of grades achieved, student outcomes in BABB were similar to those in the instructor's other third-year unit, 'Enlightenment and Revolution', which ran in 2013 and 2015, and had a drop-out rate between those of BABB in 2014 and 2016 (see Table 2.5).[18] This provides the most appropriate comparator because at undergraduate level in Australia there is no systematic double-marking or moderation via external examiners. Instead, internal exam boards keep a watchful eye on grade distributions to ensure general comparability.

At the top of the grade scale, the project provided an opportunity for students to shine: the rate of high distinctions in BABB was double than that in 'Enlightenment and Revolution'. The rate of distinctions was comparable. The fail rate among completing students was marginally lower in 'Enlightenment and Revolution', but not to a statistically significant degree. The main discrepancy in grades was at the pass/credit level. A relatively higher number of students in BABB scored passes and commensurately fewer scored credits, but this seemed to be due to demographic factors.[19] Thus, in terms of grade outcomes, BABB appears to have been no more challenging than comparable units. Further, despite only having 150 hours to learn the subject background and find and research a topic, with due allowance made for scale, the best essays in BABB compared favourably with good first-class honours dissertations at Leeds. This was an extraordinary finding.

Table 2.4: Student enrolments and completion rates

Year	Full enrolment (census day)	Passive: no submissions	Active: did not complete	Active: completed
2014	46	6	11	29
2016	45	2	5	38

Table 2.5: Grades in 'Britain in the Age of Botany Bay, 1760–1815' (BABB) compared with 'Enlightenment and Revolution', 2013/15

Grade band	Comparable unit	BABB 2014	BABB 2016	BABB (all)
Fail	6 (5.8%)	1 (3.4%)	4 (10.5%)	5 (7.5%)
Pass (50–64)	30 (29.1%)	9 (31%)	18 (47.4%)	27 (40.3%)
Credit (65–74)	41 (39.8%)	8 (27.6%)	8 (21.1%)	16 (23.9%)
Distinction (75–84)	22 (21.4%)	8 (27.6%)	6 (15.8%)	14 (20.9%)
High Distinction (85–100)	4 (3.9%)	3 (10.3%)	2 (5.3%)	5 (7.5%)

So what did students think of this experiment? Student evaluation at WSU takes two forms, a questionnaire on teaching and another on the unit. This division can be helpful in drawing distinctions between teaching quality and issues such as workload, administrational issues and teaching spaces. This proved the case with BABB. It should, however, be borne in mind that return rates for the surveys were low due to logistical issues involved in administering them.[20] In addition, Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) results for 2016 never materialised. The results should therefore be treated with caution. They nevertheless remain some of our best evidence available.

The 2014 SFT survey was unusually positive. On a ten-point scale, and across all categories, BABB averaged 0.7 and 1.1 points above the university average.[21] These categories spanned Learning/Academic Value; Staff Enthusiasm; Organisation/Clarity; Group Interaction; Individual Rapport; Breadth of Coverage; Examinations/Grading; Assignments/Readings; and Overall Rating.

Given this blanket approval, qualitative responses give a clearer guide as to what the students appreciated. Most mentioned instructor enthusiasm, but quality of feedback and the time spent with students were also commended. One student commented: ‘lecture pod[cast]s are full of valuable and precise information. Great feedback on assignments’. The same student praised ‘one-on-one time spent teaching me ways of finding sources and improving my understanding’. More unusually, another student applauded the way BABB prepared them for further study: ‘Teacher is very enthusiastic and this really made the subject great. It was sufficiently challenging for a 3rd level unit and I would recommend it as a prerequisite for honours or any other postgraduate [course].’

The main negative criticism in the SFT pointed to technical problems experienced in the online-only classes. Strange as it sounds after the experience of COVID-19 lockdowns, in 2014 the technology used at WSU for online classes proved unreliable, and even with a technician sitting with the instructor, students experienced issues of access and participation. After one session, the online classes were abandoned as impracticable. The only other suggestion for improvement in the student surveys was ‘demonstrating the ways in which to use the resources within a class’. Thus in 2016 greater efforts were made to target support and offer resource demonstrations in class time.

In contrast, the 2014 Student Feedback on Unit (SFU) surveys identified some issues for attention (see Table 2.6). In particular, two students 'strongly disagreed' with the statement that the workload was reasonable. One student clarified they felt the 'professional academic standards required' were unrealistic, and another added 'not everyone has the time or the wits to research, come up with and answer a unique question that they feel meets the marker's requirements'. However, of the six other respondents, four agreed the workload was 'reasonable' and the remaining two were neutral. Thus the majority of students, perhaps surprisingly, did not experience the workload as being out of kilter with other units. This conclusion was reaffirmed two years later when, of eight respondents, four students strongly agreed the workload was reasonable, two disagreed (but not strongly) and two were neutral. These improved results, if statistically meaningful, might reflect the expectation management measures described above and consequent reduction in student anxiety the second time the unit ran.

Across the 2014 SFU, scores for most questions were pulled down by two negative replies.[22] This may reflect the responses of two students at a moment when they felt challenged and insecure about the essay. But some answers hinted at identifiable issues, even paradoxical ones. Two students disagreed with the statement: 'There were clear guidelines for all assessment tasks in this unit'. This perhaps indicates that an abundance of support materials can overwhelm. A member of the 2016 cohort explained: 'different assessments were slightly confusing even though they were explained several times'. However, the comment may also have resulted from a specific difficulty some students had distinguishing between 'historic' and unfamiliar uses when deciding which words to include in their glossary. The glossary instructions were clarified in 2016.

The most positive SFU feedback validated the development of support materials. In 2014 no students disagreed with the propositions that 'The learning resources provided for this unit helped me to engage in learning' and 'This unit helped me develop my skills in critical thinking, analysing, problem solving and communicating'. These were the areas into which Simon had put most work and emphasis. Two years later, the SFU recorded improved scores in both these areas, and across the board.[23] In these areas SFU scores now exceeded WSU norms, indicating the unit was achieving its core aims. Moreover, taken as a whole, the SFU scores were at or above

Table 2.6: Student Feedback on Unit returns for 'Britain in the Age of Botany Bay, 1760–1815' (BABB) in 2014 and 2016 compared with average returns for Western Sydney University (WSU) and School of Humanities and Communication Arts (SHCA)

Question	2014	2014	2014	2016	2016	2016
	WSU	SHCA	BABB	WSU	SHCA	BABB
Coverage matched learning guide	4.2	4.3	3.8	4.3	4.3	4.3
I saw relevance to my studies	4.2	4.0	3.9	4.2	4.1	4.1
Learning activities helped my learning	4.0	4.0	3.6	4.1	4.1	4.3
Assessments helped me learn	4.0	4.0	3.4	4.0	4.1	4.1
I was able to learn from feedback	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.9	4.0	4.4
Clear guidelines for assessment tasks	4.0	4.0	3.4	4.0	4.0	4.3
Learning resources aided engagement	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.3
Unit provided flexibility for study	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.1	4.1	4.1
Learning spaces were adequate	4.1	4.1	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.0
Workload was reasonable	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.1	4.1	3.9
People treated each other with respect	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.1
Developed skills in critical thinking, analysing, problem solving, communication	4.0	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.1	4.3
Overall experience satisfactory	4.0	4.0	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.1

the university average for most questions. Aside from the workload question, student 'disagreement' – and hence negativity – had disappeared almost entirely. Among those studying in BABB in 2016 was Rebekah, who describes her experience thus:

Upon enrolment, it was immediately evident that this unit would be different to anything I had previously done in my undergraduate studies. BABB called for a new skill-set: selecting a topic; navigating unfamiliar digital collections; analysing primary sources; and writing a long-form essay. This amounted to a steep learning curve. Yet the curve and workload – which originally seemed unattainable in bald terms – were both manageable if you kept up with the schedule set out by the instructor. In my experience, the early weeks were particularly vital: you had to watch the pods and learn what sources were available as quickly as possible in order to select a viable research question. As Toad reflects in the 'Guide', being organised from the start was essential. After that, methods pods explained how specific collections might be used to find relevant materials (if any existed at all) as well as how to meaningfully navigate the immensity of various digital resources and how to critically interrogate primary sources such as, for my project, newspapers, letters and diary entries. Having access to the pods throughout the semester meant it was possible to rewatch them as needed.

This general content was supported by specialised assistance from the instructor during 'topic group' sessions, including advice for improving searches in the digital collections and analysing primary source materials. We also discussed the use of quantitative analysis in history, including the potential limitations, the effectiveness of sampling techniques and the importance of clearly explaining your methodology.

Challenges aside, the research process was remarkable. I was astonished by the ready availability of primary sources in the digital collections, particularly my capacity to access materials created 200 years ago on the other side of the world. And I was enthralled by the stories that could be told using those sources, particularly by drawing together records from distinct, but related, collections. Ultimately, the unit was the catalyst for me to undertake postgraduate historical research at WSU, first in a Master of Research and currently in a PhD, with the BABB instructor as my primary supervisor. Both projects have incorporated the analysis of book reviews (in this case from the archives of an Australian publisher) and have relied on skills I developed in BABB relating to dual digital-archival methodologies.[24]

Conclusions

Rebekah's experience, Simon's observations and available SFT and SFU evidence all concur that on many levels the BABB experiment was successful. Despite the time pressure and lack of familiarity with background material, historical methods and, in some cases, primary source materials, most students rose to the challenge of conceiving, planning, researching and writing a research essay within the space of a 150-hour unit. In the process, they extended and documented their transferrable skills and, in a few cases, produced studies of near publishable standard. Even the less successful students, by a series of carefully scaffolded exercises building up to the final essay, could demonstrate awareness of basic research skills and an ability to apply them. There were thus benefits to all students in a very mixed-ability teaching environment.

The experiment's success depended on careful planning, a well-conceived learning and assessment strategy, prior experience in teaching research methodologies, the ready availability of digital resources, and a support strategy that was generous with the instructor's time. He also found it necessary to review communication strategies around what was expected of students to build their confidence and reduce drop-out rates.

Worries remain that some students found the essay too daunting, perceived or experienced the workload as too high or considered the unit's demands too incessant. Some found the requirement to choose their own topic challenging, particularly as they were unfamiliar with British history and the period. Equally, student feedback suggests the unit's success depended heavily on the instructor's experience, engagement and teaching skills. In other words, personal factors may be important to the success of the pedagogical model described.

These observations point to ways to develop the model. Although a huge amount of thought went into planning the unit, from a student experience point of view an even tighter structure would have been helpful. The research essay could, for example, be further reimagined as a portfolio of assignments, in which students progressively write up research background, methods and findings, as well as appendices and source lists, particularly if topic and source choice were to be constricted. Giving students a more narrowly circumscribed set of topics and a 'paint-by-numbers' walkthrough of resources could streamline their experience and help reduce student anxiety. It would also enhance the utility of the 'topic group'.

Finally, WSU students might benefit from introducing changes to the HPT programme, notably by introducing a compulsory second-year unit addressing methodologies and sources. In combination, these developments point us towards relaunching and rebranding the unit under the more generic umbrella of 'digital history'. This would open up new opportunities for other WSU colleagues to teach into the unit on topics with which they are familiar across a broader spectrum of time periods, branches of history, digital resources and theoretical/methodological approaches. Equally, the co-authors of this chapter could leverage their own growing familiarity with digital resources for Australian history, notably Trove (particularly the newspaper collections) and the Digital Panopticon project (which brings together Old Bailey Online records with Australian convict archives). If these proposals can be navigated imaginatively, the original vision of a capstone research-focused unit might be achieved without leaving any student behind.

Notes

1 Information on WSU can be found on the university website at www.westernsydney.edu.au. Since 2016 the university has added new vertical campuses in Parramatta, Liverpool and Bankstown.

2 See www.timeshighereducation.com/impactrankings#! (accessed 1 August 2023).

3 Australian Threshold Learning Outcomes in History are laid out in Ian Hay et al., *Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project: Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities – History. Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Statement* (Sydney: Australian Learning and Teaching Council, December 2010). This document offers comparisons to the British Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) History Benchmark Statement, available at www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/history and the Tuning History-Specific Competencies for Europe and Latin America. For comparative evaluation of the various Tuning History-Specific Competencies, see György Nováky, 'The Same History for All? Tuning History' in *Enriching History Teaching and Learning: Challenges, Possibilities, Practice – Proceedings of the Linköping Conference on History Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, ed. David Ludvigsson and Alan Booth (Linköping: Linköping University Press, 2015), pp. 101–19.

4 'Business Doubts on Jobs after Uni Move,' *The Australian*, 2020. This article describes the response of the Australian Industry Group and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to the Morrison government's university fees reform. Both expressed concerns about the fee structures and particularly charging premium prices for humanities degrees, a move some commentators saw as an ideologically driven continuation of Australia's 'culture wars'.

5 Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Jill Roe, Adele Nye et al. *Historical Thinking in Higher Education: An ALTC Discipline-Based Initiative* (Sydney: Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2009).

6 Hannah Barker, Monica McLean and Mark Roseman, 'Re-Thinking the History Curriculum: Enhancing Students' Communication and Group-Work Skills' in *The Practice of University History Teaching*, ed. Alan Booth and Paul Hyland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 60–69.

7 Simon Burrows and Glenn Roe, 'Introduction' in *Digitizing Enlightenment: Digital Humanities and the Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, ed. Simon Burrows and Glen Roe (Liverpool: Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment, 2020), pp. 1–24.

8 For the Old Bailey Online, see www.oldbaileyonline.org (accessed 15 June 2022). ECCO and the Burney Collection are accessed from subscribing libraries' online catalogues worldwide.

9 See www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/index.html and https://trove.nla.gov.au (both accessed 15 June 2022).

10 These resources are accessed from subscribing libraries' online catalogues worldwide.

11 For his most sustained treatment of the press, see Simon Burrows, *French Exile Journalism and European Politics, 1792–1814* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 2000).

12 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

13 Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), chapter 1; Rolf Reinhardt and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997). Tables produced by Reinhardt and Lüsebrink cross-reference date-stamped printed works or addresses with key themes, using page ranges (p. 8) or a range of symbols to depict how themes are portrayed (p. 50).

14 There are a number of studies of Marsden. For a summary outline, see A. T. Yarwood, 'Marsden, Samuel (1765–1838)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/marsden-samuel-2433 (accessed 17 October 2023).

15 Marsden's place of birth and his father's workshop are commemorated by a plaque in Farsley and a discreet brick cross in the ground and notice at the top of Horsforth high street. Marsden is, however, almost entirely unknown in his hometown.

16 Since 2014–16, emphasis on retention has increased at WSU, partly driven by falling enrolments, but especially by the 2020 fee changes mentioned above, which exacerbate the cost of students failing to pass.

17 In 2014, twenty-eight out of twenty-nine students who completed the final essay received clear pass grades and the other was borderline.

18 Twenty-eight out of 131 (21.4 per cent) students enrolled in 'Enlightenment and Revolution' on census day did not complete the unit, of whom almost two-thirds handed in at least one piece of work. This was a significantly lower drop-out rate than for BABB in 2014, but higher than in 2016.

19 Specifically, the BABB student cohort in 2016, which was the cause of the discrepancy, drew more of its students from Bankstown campus, which recruits from a relatively socially deprived and ethnically mixed area where English is frequently not the birth language, and other history staff at WSU report students are more likely to find essay writing challenging. 'Enlightenment and Revolution' was never taught at Bankstown campus, and BABB was not offered there in 2014.

20 There were only ten responses to the 2014 SFT and eight for the 2014 and 2016 SFUs. In 2016, although the forms were submitted, the results were never returned to the instructor.

21 Aggregate scores for these categories across WSU in 2014 averaged between 7.3 and 7.9.

22 Across the thirteen categories in the 2014 SFU, eight had two negative answers, one had three and one had one. There were no negative responses to the three other questions.

23 Across all thirteen questions in the 2016 SFU, on a five-point scale, BABB scored on average 0.1 points above the university average.

24 Rebekah Ward, 'Publishing for Children: Angus & Robertson and the Development of Australian Children's Publishing, 1897–1933' (Master's thesis, WSU, 2018), http://hdl.handle.net/1959.7/uws:51862 (accessed 17 October 2023). The doctorate is titled 'Creatively Curating Culture: Angus & Robertson's Mass Reviewing Strategy, 1895–1949'.

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Part II
HISTORY IN THE CLASSROOM

Chapter 3

Sensational pedagogy: teaching the sensory eighteenth century

William Tullett

In his 1710 book *The Sensorium*, Matthew Beare informed his readers 'all the Senses may be reduc'd to the Touch alone; since 'tis by this, that all the others receive the Impression of Objects, striking on the external Organs'.[1] The idea of a sensational subject, who learnt about the world as it forced itself upon the senses, was central to how eighteenth-century writers (including educators) thought about the world.[2] This chapter asks how taking a sensational approach to pedagogy today can help teachers and students to understand eighteenth-century society and culture.

One of the recent turns in historical research has been towards the study of the senses, emotions and embodiment. A historiography of the senses has emerged that, influenced by work in sensory studies from anthropologists and sociologists, stresses the culturally constructed nature of sensory perception. This work traces the social relationships mediated by particular hierarchies of the senses and managed by techniques of sensorial power. It has also begun to unpick the types of sensory skill and habit that patterned past modes of perception.[3]

This chapter seeks to ask how we teach sensory – embodied – history in the classroom effectively and what implications this might have for teaching *eighteenth-century* history specifically. It focuses on how we might go beyond texts and images that are read or closely examined with curious eyes towards enlivening the senses of our students. This chapter focuses on a series of examples from the author's teaching that range across multiple senses but which chiefly concern themselves with smell, taste and sound.

The examples derive from modules investigating the history of food in early modern England and the history of sound, environments and technology since the sixteenth century.

It is worth highlighting that, as the above suggests, most of the modules in which I use the senses or discuss sensory history are not purely focused on the eighteenth century. They frequently cover the period 1500–1800 and often longer periods such as 1500–1980. I often find myself offering modules with wider chronologies. There are a number of reasons for this. There is a general tendency at many institutions in the UK for students to prefer modern history. A bit of nineteenth- or twentieth-century history sugars the eighteenth-century pill, a piece of disguise to trick the senses that the eighteenth century knew well.[4]

However, there are further practical and pedagogical reasons. I formerly worked at an institution with a very small number of staff who, due to lower numbers of students, teach a BA History degree with a limited number of optional modules. My chief reason for prefacing my chapter with this observation is that I think there is an interesting conversation to be had here about how we teach the eighteenth century as part of chronologically broader modules or in its own right (and whether those differ). There is also a conversation to be had about where eighteenth-century history sits in the context of curricula that are being hemmed in by various institutional pressures that result in smaller numbers of modules on BA History degrees.

However, there are also intellectual reasons for situating the eighteenth century in the context of broader sensory-historical modules. One of the strengths of sensory history is – or at least should be – its potential to rewrite our chronologies and to help us think outside of the chronological box set by centuries (whether long, short or average in length) or terms such as medieval, early modern and modern. As will be seen below, one of my goals in teaching sensory history is to enable students to expand their sense of chronological possibility in ways that are already being modelled in sensory scholarship. This might involve connecting contemporary tastes to a longer history that stretches back in time. For example, to understand the taste for contemporary street food sold in the City of London's square mile, we can trace shifting gustatory preferences that have origins in the sixteenth century.[5] Or, it might involve exploring the long-term continuities or submergence and resurfacing of particular relationships between the senses and society. For example, our own desires to regulate noise in order to promote privacy and nurture intellectual work find echoes in similar complaints ranging from the nineteenth century, through the Renaissance, to antiquity.[6]

Before I turn to some examples of how we might draw on such insights in teaching the eighteenth century, I want to briefly set out the pedagogic and historiographical context from which this chapter has developed.

The scholarly context: turning towards the material and the sensory

Over the last thirty years or so an increasing amount of historical work has focused on the senses and the emotions, mirroring a general turn towards the senses across the arts, humanities and social sciences.[7] In history this trend has emerged – largely but not exclusively – from a concern with the linguistic turn's focus on discourse.[8] Instead of a world full of texts, historians have begun to argue for a return to 'lived experience' – a tendency apparent not just in histories of feeling but in studies of material culture.[9]

This shift is mirrored in our pedagogic practice as well. In particular, material culture of all sorts has become increasingly integral to the way many of us teach, whether through direct engagement with material stuff or through the more mediated access to objects provided by the museum display or the photographic image. The popularity of resources such as Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, the Old Bailey Online and the digitised Burney Newspapers has put increased pressure on eighteenth-century-ists to also give access to – or at least emphasise the importance of – the *material* text when discussing primary material with students.

In recent years we have also seen the emphasis on the consumption, materiality and production of stuff in eighteenth-century history grow stronger than ever. We have far more knowledge of how shopping was negotiated than when a 'consumer revolution' was first identified in the 1980s. How things were made, how processes of production contributed to the meanings of things and how bodies, spaces and objects acted on each other have all been the focus of work in the last twenty years. So, in this context, it should make sense to integrate materiality further into our teaching and, in doing so, make room for the senses through which the material world was mediated.

There are, of course, other reasons for us to interrogate and deploy the senses in our learning that go beyond shifts in historical practice, teaching and scholarship. Increasing criticism has been mounted against scholarship that separates the senses into discrete learning styles.[10] Using the sense of smell in a teaching and museums context has been shown to aid the retention of memories and experience, diversify access and promote the well-being of learners.[11] We are only just beginning to get to grips with how the senses might be deployed critically in the classroom. But the work that does exist suggests that there are additional benefits to be derived from a multi-sensory pedagogic practice.

However, here we have to recognise that there is an ongoing debate within sensory history about how we – as teachers and researchers – should use our senses (or not, as the case may be). On the one hand, we have scholars who believe that we can, with varying degrees of accuracy, conjure precisely what it was like to hear, smell or taste the past.[12] On the other hand, we have individuals who are profoundly sceptical of any attempt to recreate the feelings of other periods or peoples.[13] According to this latter perspective, the very idea that the senses are historical militates against any attempt for us to engage sensorially with the past in the present. Both our own sensory habits, built up through twentieth- and twenty-first-century forms of education and experience, and the changed sense-scapes in which we exist mean that we can never come close to recapturing what it was like to experience the sensory past.

There are scholars who have walked the valley between these two opposing hills. One set contains those interested in physical space: for example, trying to figure out how far George Whitefield's preaching voice might have reached in a crowded street.[14] Rather than claiming to reconstruct how the past felt, these are attempts to reconstruct the affordances for smells and sounds offered by material environments. But another, middling, tendency has been to pay closer attention to sensing as a learnt, acquired, practice that is developed over time. The best recent work on the senses in eighteenth-century studies has done this.[15] From texts and material culture we can attempt to read back to these sensory practices.

Crucially, this work does not necessarily claim that we can reconstruct how the past 'felt'.[16] In fact, by attending to habits acquired over time, this scholarship highlights a roadblock on the path to 'feeling' the past – our own learned sensory habits as teachers and those of our students.[17] Our inability to unlearn the sensory baggage we have acquired in our own lives means that the type of embodiment thus produced will never be in complete sensorial simpatico with the past.[18] But this is not just a lament. We can turn this awareness of complexity to our advantage. What the senses can do in the classroom is teach us about how people in the past *learnt* to perceive their worlds. Many of the fields of knowledge that historians are interested in, from medicine and food to engineering and knitting, have relied on forms of sensory education and continue to do so in the present.[19] In doing so we can explore both the distancing differences and intimate similarities between our own sensory worlds and those of the past.

Sensing in practice

So let us consider some examples of how this might work in practice. Several examples I will now discuss come from a module for final-year undergraduate students on 'Food in Early Modern Society', which examined food – principally in Britain – from 1500 to 1800. The second seminar, after an introductory week on methodology and interdisciplinary approaches to food, took the students on a journey through understandings of food and taste in medicine across the period covered by the module. It centred principally on dietetics – first the humoralism dominant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – and indeed still apparent long into the eighteenth century – and secondly the rise of iatromechanical dietetics associated with figures such as William Cheyne in the eighteenth century.[20] In preparation students were asked to read some extracts from a range of works on regimen and some letters from doctors to their eighteenth-century patients.

After a lecture in which we introduced the key changes in the relationship between medicine and food, the seminar aimed to do two things. Firstly, I wanted students to understand how early modern individuals used their senses to understand the potential effects of foods on their bodies. I wanted students to get how heat, cold, moisture and dryness could be detected in foods; how links were formed between sensory impressions and qualities. I wanted them to understand the kind of broader analogical reasoning that could be found in eighteenth-century culture; the idea that roast beef makes one stubborn, strong, bloody and blunt.[21] Secondly, I wanted them to understand what it meant to be 'your own' doctor in the early modern period – and how this related to the more diffuse distribution of expertise about the body – including diet – that we find in the era before medical 'professionalisation' and the clinic.[22] At the end of the seminar students needed to go away with a feeling for how the senses were trained to recognise what was good or bad for you. They also needed to understand how, for fashionable eighteenth-century physicians, the exertion of authority over a patient's diet was often a matter of trying to educate them in and out of their senses. More broadly, I wanted students to understand how this might be similar – or different – to our current sensorial relationship with food.

To do this, the seminar focused around tasting a range of foods and drinks. Cheese, bread, cold meats, fresh herbs, spices, vegetables, fruits, milk, wine and some other food and drinks were set out on a table. Students were given some descriptions of different constitutions – largely based around humoral ones taken from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources. They were encouraged to identify how they would describe their own constitution by reference to these. Once they had done this, they were asked to fill a plate with items they felt would be 'good' for them and explain why – particularly referring to the smell, taste, appearance and feel of the foods.

The students were then encouraged to make a second plate. This time they were given an early eighteenth-century 'identity'. These identities contained a number of things – occupations, the place where they lived, gender, nationality and so on. The students then had to explain – based on their reading, the lecture and discussion thus far in the seminar – why they had put together the second plate and how it matched up to their given identities. Finally, the students were asked how these plates might have differed if their doctor was William Cheyne and he was applying his own principles of regimen to them. Students were paired up – one had to take on the role of the patient, the other had to embody Cheyne. The Cheynes were then tasked with making their iatromechanical theories seem common sense by reference to the qualities of the food arrayed on the table.

This series of tasks offered students the opportunity to effectively put seventeenth- and eighteenth-century medical thought into practice. Firstly, it denaturalised their own senses by getting them to approach their own relationship to food through a different perceptual schema. As experiments with contemporary sensory panels have shown, we might describe the same material that was used by early modern medical practitioners in very different ways today – drawing on a rich vocabulary of sensory comparison that invokes other scents or tastes that would have been unfamiliar to a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century individual.[23] The session gave students the opportunity to explore that experiential gap.

Secondly, in learning how to sense like an early modern gentleman, gentlewoman or physician, students were exploring how connections could be created between regimen texts, doctors' advice and the evidence of the senses, and how they could then articulate those connections. In other words, they were learning about how people learnt to sense – rather than directly re-enacting past experiences or re-embodying the feelings of past actors. Finally, by developing an eighteenth-century sensory identity for the second plate, only to be confronted with Cheyne's prescriptions for the final plate of the seminar, students were introduced to a key problematic in eighteenth-century dietetics – in a world where the patient's senses and embodied instincts were taken seriously, how did physicians make claims to medical authority and how could they use the exterior qualities of foods to make claims about their interior bodily effects?[24] To do this effectively, students had to work from the perspective of eighteenth-century sensory dispositions – patients of different types as well as physicians.

Perhaps the most pleasing part of this was that the students closed the circle I was creating in the seminar before I had to – they began to reflect on the distinctions between early modern ideas about food and the body and our contemporary fascination with invisible chemical constituents such as calories – they were interrogating contemporary notions that they might otherwise accept as 'common sense'.[25] By inhabiting a different sensory perspective, the students learnt something about their own day-to-day sensory practices. They thereby learn about the distance that separated their own senses from those of past subjects.

These activities also opened a conversation about the role of race, colonialism and imperialism in the maintenance of eighteenth-century sensory practices. Western academic traditions of knowledge production have, since the seventeenth century, 'conceived of the senses as necessary evils, indispensable but treacherous vehicles to be sorted out or unmasked'.[26] The same period that saw the emergence of new fields of knowledge and, latterly, academic disciplines in the West also saw attempts to match hierarchies of the senses to racial and cultural hierarchies. From Aristotle to the present, philosophers, medics and cultural critics have placed the senses into hierarchies – ordering them in terms of their utility, objectivity and stability. In the era of European expansion and settler colonialism these were mapped onto racialised hierarchies. This dismissal of certain ways of knowing the world – especially those beyond hearing and seeing – has been described as a form of 'epistemicide'. As Andrew Kettler's work has shown, Europeans in North America consistently emphasised the sagacious sensitivity possessed by indigenous noses. On the peripheries of empire, French Jesuits and Anglo-American naturalists both used their noses and the olfactory knowledge of Native Americans to seek out sustenance and saleable commodities. Yet in the European metropole this olfactory knowledge was de-emphasised in visual tabulations of botanical knowledge or treated with a degree of suspicion.[27]

Teaching through the senses offers an opportunity re-engage with the sensory habits that have been lost to practices of epistemicide or self-congratulatory histories of European 'improvement' of indigenous practices. One of the sample foods we smelled in our class was therefore chocolate. As historians have shown, the idea that Europeans adapted the scent and taste of chocolate to their own sensibilities, replacing spices with sugar, is largely untrue. Europeans in fact sought to recreate the indigenous experience of chocolate consumption, along with vanilla, pepper and foamy froth.[28] Students drew out the contemporary smell and taste profile of the average bar of milk chocolate consumed in contemporary Europe, with its soft, milky, rich and slightly cloying scent. This was then compared with a reproduction of early modern drinking chocolate, which included the spices that Europeans had in fact eagerly added in a recreation of the original indigenous drink. This led to an exploration of how Europeans often co-opted indigenous olfactory and culinary practices, altering their own palates to reflect the new consumables that they were importing. Rather than presumptions about how Europeans 'improved' the smell and taste of chocolate, students left the class with a sense of the hidden archives of indigenous sensing embedded in early modernity's new consumables.

Learning about how we learn to perceive – stepping outside our senses – is a crucial, perhaps radical, pedagogical tool. Early innovators in sensory studies often taught their students *how to feel* – for example, Raymond Murray Schafer, inventor of the term 'soundscape', who taught his students through a regime of 'ear cleaning' that privileged the sounds of nature over modern noise.[29] However, we want to teach students to sense critically, picking apart such normative sensory claims, rather than sense correctly according to a pre-ordained standard of 'good' or 'natural' sensory stimuli. Instead of teaching students how to feel, or how the past felt, we can teach them how people *learnt* to feel. This resonates with eighteenth-century pedagogic practice, which placed great emphasis on the senses.[30] In museums and collections knowledge was often consumed (quite literally in the case of specimens in the Royal Society and Ashmolean) through the senses.[31]

But these teaching methods also develop the capacity of students to lend a far more critical eye, ear, nose, tongue and touch to the world around them today. They are not discovering how people *learnt* to feel but they are developing their own ability to critique and understand their own subjectivities. They are learning about how they have learnt to feel and what they have learnt to feel. Drawing on Bruno Latour's discussion of Geneviève Teil's ethnography of perfumery trainees, we might describe this as a process of 'articulation'. In the course of training with kits of scents, perfumers are said to 'gain' or 'become' a nose. In the same way, encouraging our students to learn about the past through scent causes them to gain access to the senses of the past and greater understanding of their own senses. As Latour goes on to suggest, 'the more contrasts you add, the more differences and mediations you become sensible to'.[32]

We can see this process of articulation – in which both students' own sensory habits and those of past actors emerge into view – in a second example from the module on early modern histories of food. Trying to get students to understand the different conditions in which food was bought and sold in the eighteenth century, I gave my students a guide to sensory ethnography. This equipped them with a guide on observation as an ethnographic method for understanding both sensory atmospheres and the modes of sensing that occur within them.[33] I then provided my students with a range of source materials that were also to be read in preparation for that week's seminar. These sources were a set of excerpts on shopping from eighteenth-century housekeeping manuals, which often focused on ways of assessing quality and freshness.[34] When it came to the seminar, we spent the first half performing a sensory ethnography of Anglia Ruskin University's canteen. We then discussed the key aspects of the canteen that the students had noticed: the way the food was displayed; how people were expected to interact with the space; the acoustics of the room; and even the relationship between the smellscape and soundscape of the canteen and rooms around it.

I then asked the students to apply the same ethnographic methods that they had read about to the historical texts they had been asked to read. In particular, I asked them to consider how useful these sources were as a guide to the sensory experience of shopping in the eighteenth century. In discussing this question, the students explored what these sources might have missed and what other materials we might need to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about the sensory experience of buying and consuming.

But this also opened out into a far more interesting and important discussion about what sensory information does or does not make its way into our historical sources. We asked: how does sensing get converted into text – and how might that have differed in the eighteenth century? By moving from contemporary ethnography using their own senses to the eighteenth-century source material, the students were better equipped to think through these questions and about how sensory dispositions and habits might filter what does or does not make it into texts. But we also discussed the way in which these books were themselves used as tools for articulating eighteenth-century servants' or housewives' relationship to the sense-scape of shopping.

This led to a discussion about the kinds of tacit knowledge that could not be written down but only acquired through practical, hands-on experience. One of the great benefits of deploying sensory pedagogy is that by enlivening sources and putting them into action, we acquire a better knowledge of the gaps in knowledge or technique that had to be filled in by the user of a text. Recipe books and household manuals are a great eighteenth-century case study, but the same applies to more modern audio-visual sources. For example, in a course on modern American media at Stanford, Kristen Haring asked her students to watch Julia Child's highly popular 1960s and 1970s cookery show *The French Chef* before asking them to recreate the recipes in a kitchen using their notes. In doing so, the students were able to understand the ways in which Child and the televisual medium made cooking accessible for 1960s Americans.[35]

A final example of how this articulation might work in practice comes from my module on sound and technology in the West from the 1500s to the present. One session focused on the relationship between time and sound. A wide-ranging historiography has examined the shifting relationship between the senses and time-telling. While noting that this was undoubtedly a halting and uneven process, even the most revisionist work admits that a shift in time-telling emerged in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as domestic, public and personal timepieces proliferated. An older regime of time in which sound had been absolutely central – with the twinkling bells and clock-born chimes – was slowly joined by an emphasis on the visual elements of time-keeping introduced by clocks and their hands.[36]

I wanted students to critically engage with the debate over this transformation in time-telling. Was there really a shift from acoustic to visual ways of marking time in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and to what extent is that shift still with us today? In order to broach that question, I encouraged my students, once again, to pursue a form of ethnography. I required each student to produce a sound diary, noting down the sounds around them during the course of a normal day. In putting together this diary I wanted my students to explore the extent to which their daily rhythms were indexed against sounds. After a lecture, which examined the relationship between time and sound in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we then compared their diaries with what they had learnt about the early modern period. While the key point I wanted the students to understand was that there was a limit to the sense in which vision 'replaced' sound as a mode of time-telling, the ensuing discussion actually brought out a series of other themes: students contrasted the private modes of time-telling embedded in contemporary phones, computers or clocks with the very public or civic time sounded by chimes or bells; they noted the contemporary proliferation of devices that told time such as microwaves, radios and TVs and this opened out into a discussion of other eighteenth-century time-telling tools aside from watches or clocks that included candles or the time it took to say a paternoster. In other words, the diary had helped students to articulate both past and contemporary relationships to time and had encouraged them to recognise the multiple times embedded in different visual, acoustic and material cues.

Conclusion

Using examples in which I deployed smell, taste and sound in the classroom, this chapter has argued that encouraging students to use their senses performs three interlinked roles. Firstly, it denaturalises the senses of students, forcing them to recognise that their own ways of perceiving are the product of both their particular social and cultural contexts and a series of historical changes that have taken place since the eighteenth century. Secondly, students are encouraged to sense differently – to try and understand the particular ways of sensing unique to the eighteenth-century subjects they are reading about and thereby adding material context to texts. Thirdly, and finally, students develop a more critical appreciation of their own sensory subjectivities. The process of learning through the senses, rather than just about the senses, is a route by which students learn to articulate their sensory subject position in relation to both contemporary and past worlds.

This sensory self-awareness should extend to how we treat pedagogical spaces. Sensory history has recently begun to make its influence felt in the history of education, where scholars have paid attention to the sensescapes of schooling.[37] Our classrooms are not the only spaces that both we and students use where specific sensory habits have been encouraged. The relative hush and absence of odours in libraries has a history. Rules about the proper *habitus* expected of patrons have often been used to exclude people from library spaces.[38] The same can be said of museums and galleries. Despite a renaissance of interest in multi-sensory curation, many of the museums that we use in teaching still expect students to embody a nineteenth-century 'look and don't touch' engagement with their spaces rather than a seventeenth-century sensory economy in which all the senses (including eating) were deployed.[39] We do not learn in a sensory vacuum and we ought to engage our students more with the sensory history of the spaces in which they learn.

As humanities scholars, our role is not just to provide content or skills but also to create individuals who are able to critically engage with the worlds around them. Art history and visual culture have, for the past few decades, noted the importance of training students to look, notice, attend and judge through the eye. One of the oft-noted justifications for this mission is that most people living in the UK, Europe and North America live in a highly mediatised world in which we interact with and consume visual media almost constantly. However, taste, smell and hearing are no less important. The vast amounts of sensory labour and design that go into our daily lives, from the smell of petrol and the taste of food to the sound of phones or the feel of the fabrics we wear, deserve critical attention. As in the case of visual culture, a humanities (and eighteenth-century studies) that engages all the senses of students will help students to avoid merely skimming the sensory surface in their future lives and careers. It will help to create graduates attuned to the complexity of the sensory world that surrounds and enfolds us, but which we frequently take for granted due to 'common-sense' habituation.

Notes

1 Matthew Beare, *The Sensorium* (Exeter: Sam Farley, 1710), p. 10.

2 See, for example, the introduction and special issue, Manushag N. Powell and Rivka Swenson, 'Subject Theory and the Sensational Subject', *The Eighteenth Century*, 54 no. 2 (2013), 147–51.

3 For a recent overview, see William Tullett, 'State of the Field: Sensory History', *History*, 106 no. 373 (2021), 804–20; for an attempt to plot the future of the field, see Mark Smith, *A Sensory History Manifesto* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2021).

4 For example, in the form of syrup, see William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine* (London: A. Strahan and & T. Cadell, 1790), p. 694.

5 Alex Rhys-Taylor, *Food and Multiculture: A Sensory Ethnography of East London* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 41–56.

6 Niall Atkinson, 'Thinking through Noise, Building toward Silence: Creating a Sound Mind and Sound Architecture in the Premodern City', *Grey Room*, 60 (2015), 10–35.

7 Although claims of a 'sensual' or sensory 'revolution' seem overdone, it is a notable outpouring of work. See Michael Bull et al., 'Introducing Sensory Studies', *The Senses and Society*, 1 no. 1 (2006), 5–7.

8 Carolyn Birdsall et al., 'Forum: The Senses', *German History*, 32 no. 2 (2014), 256–73.

9 See the telling references to experience in Sasha Handley, Rohan McWilliam and Lucy Noakes (eds), *New Directions in Social and Cultural History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

10 C. Morris, 'Making Sense of Education: Sensory Ethnography and Visual Impairment', *Ethnography and Education*, 12 no. 1 (2016), 1–16; F. Coffield et al., *Learning Styles and Pedagogy in Post-16 Learning: A Systematic and Critical Review* (London: Learning and Research Skills Council, 2004).

11 On memory, see J. P. Aggleton and L. Waskett, 'The Ability of Odours to Serve as State-Dependent Cues for Real-World Memories: Can Viking Smells Aid the Recall of Viking Experiences?', *British Journal of Psychology*, 90 no. 1 (1999), 1–7; on access, see 'Pilchards Pits and Postcards' Heritage Lottery Fund, 2015, www.sensorytrust.org.uk/projects/pilchards-pits-postcards.html (accessed 17 April 2023); on well-being, see Helen Chatterjee and Guy Noble, *Museums, Health and Well-Being* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 84, 86.

12 Peter Charles Hoffer, *Sensory Worlds in Early America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 12–13.

13 Mark Smith, 'Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History', *Journal of Social History*, 40 no. 4 (2007), 841–58.

14 Braxton Boren, 'Whitfield's Voice' in *George Whitefield: Life, Context and Legacy*, ed. D. Jones and G. Hammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 167–89.

15 For example, see Serena Dyer, 'Shopping and the Senses: Retail, Browsing and Consumption in Eighteenth-Century England', *History Compass*, 12 no. 9 (2014), 694–703; Mark Jenner, 'Tasting Lichfield, Touching China: Sir John Floyer's Senses', *The Historical Journal*, 53 no. 3 (2010), 647–70.

16 For other ways in which researchers and students can use their senses, see William Tullett, *Smell and the Past: Noses, Archives, Narratives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023).

17 The fact that when are in a classroom we are bodies in a physical space seems to have escaped the literature on history pedagogy (outside of work on object-based learning).

18 Mark Smith, *The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 2–4; Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 10.

19 For examples, see Anna Harris, *A Sensory Education* (London: Routledge, 2020); Karin Bjisterveld, *Sonic Skills: Listening for Knowledge in Science, Medicine and Engineering (1920s–Present)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

20 The core content was the sort of material discussed in the first three chapters of David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine, and Society, 1450–1800* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

21 For the longer history of these ideas, see Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

22 See the essays in Roy Porter (ed.), *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

23 Nils-Otto Ahnfelt, Hjalmar Fors and Karin Wendin, 'Historical Continuity or Different Sensory Worlds? What We Can Learn about the Sensory Characteristics of Early Modern Pharmaceuticals by Taking Them to a Trained Sensory Panel', *Berichte zur Wissenschafts-Geschichte*, 43 no. 3 (2020), 412–29.

24 For example, see Steven Shapin, 'Trusting George Cheyne: Scientific Expertise, Common Sense, and Moral Authority in Early Eighteenth-Century Dietetic Medicine', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 77 no. 2 (2003), 263–397.

25 A transition described in Steven Shapin, '"You Are What You Eat": Historical Changes in Ideas about Food and Identity', *Historical Research*, 87 no. 237 (2014), 390–91.

26 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 166.

27 Andrew Kettler, '"Ravishing Odors of Paradise": Jesuits, Olfaction, and Seventeenth-century North America', *Journal of American Studies*, 50 no. 4 (2016), 827–52; Andrew Kettler, 'Delightful a Fragrance: Native American Olfactory Aesthetics within the Eighteenth-Century Anglo American Botanical Community' in *Empire of the Senses: Sensory Practices of Colonialism in*

Early America, ed. Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 223–54.

28 Marcy Norton, 'Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics', *The American Historical Review*, 111 no. 3 (2006), 660–91.

29 Raymond Murray Schafer, *Ear Cleaning: Notes for an Experimental Music Course* (London: Clark & Cruickshank, 1989); for a critique of Schafer's 'aesthetic moralism', see Marie Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect, and Aesthetic Moralism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

30 Susan C. Lawrence, 'Educating the Senses: Students, Teachers and Medical Rhetoric in Eighteenth-Century London' in *Medicine and the Five Senses*, ed. W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 153–78; Silvy Chakkalakal, 'The Child of the Senses: Education and the Concept of Experience in the Eighteenth Century', *The Senses and Society*, 41 no. 2 (2019), 148–72.

31 Constance Classen, 'Museum Manners: The Sensory Life of the Early Museum', *Journal of Social History*, 40 no. 4 (2007), 896–914.

32 Bruno Latour, 'How to Talk about the Body? The Normative Dimension of Science Studies', *Body & Society*, 10 nos. 2–3 (2004), 211; for the research on which Latour bases his remarks, see Geneviève Teil, 'Devenir expert aromaticien: Y a-t-il une place pour le goût dans les goûts alimentaires?', *Revue de sociologie du travail*, 4 no. 98 (1998), 503–22.

33 Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (London: Sage, 2015).

34 For an example, see the material covered in William Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth Century England: A Social Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 43–7.

35 Erin Springsteen, 'Stanford Humanities Students Cook Up Julia Child's Recipes, Study History', *Stanford News*, 8 April 2016, https://news.stanford.edu/2016/04/08/kitchen-french-chef-040616 (accessed 17 April 2023).

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38 Shannon Mattern, 'Resonant Texts: Sounds of the Contemporary American Public Library', *The Senses & Society*, 2 no. 3 (2007), 277–302; Nat Lazakis, '"It Is a Non-Negotiable Order": Public Libraries' Body Odor Bans and the Ableist Politics of Purity', *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, 6 (2020), 24–52.

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Chapter 4

Let's talk about sex: 'BAD' approaches to teaching the histories of gender and sexualities

Ruth Larsen

Scholars such as Tony Harland argue that a university education can enable graduates to become 'thoughtful participants in society'.[1] However, Hannah Forsyth and Jedidiah Evans note that 'the way that history is written has been – and often still is – complicit in the perpetuation of empire, heteronormative sexualities, nationalism, patriarchy and forms of white supremacy'.[2] It is therefore important that history degrees have an inclusive curriculum that engages with critical issues. This can include modules that explore histories of gender and sexual identities, their diversities, and how they have been constructed by societies and changed over time. As gender history is also a route into cross-national histories, enabling students to examine how similar ideas were debated in different locations, it is possible to develop a student's ability to become, in Harland's phrase, a 'critic and conscience of society'.[3]

Therefore, although there was resistance to the inclusion of the histories of gender and sexualities in higher education curricula in the early parts of the twentieth century, in recent decades there has been a growing recognition of the importance of these topics in developing a broader understanding the past.[4] The histories of gender and sexuality are especially pertinent for scholars of the eighteenth century. As researchers such as Karen Harvey and Tim Hitchcock have shown, this was a period where there were new ways of discussing sex and sexualities, and gender identities were negotiated and reformed.[5] More recently, there has been an acknowledgement that 'the period's crucial investments in and consolidations of gender and sexual normativity' mean that eighteenth-century studies can be a fruitful arena for the study of queer and trans histories.[6] There is also a diversity of scholarship that means that students have a significant set of historiographical debates that they can engage with and develop their critical understandings of how identities were formed and renegotiated in this period. To support this, there is a wide range of accessible primary sources for students of the eighteenth century, many of them digital such as those available through Eighteenth-Century Collections Online and the Wellcome Collections. This means that students can develop their own voices as historians and chart the development of (and resistance to) shifting social norms and forms of patriarchy.[7]

It is therefore important that we think about how students can be active participants in these modules. This chapter considers strategies that can be employed for encouraging student engagement, with a particular focus on the seminar. In particular, it focuses on an approach which I call, with a certain degree of knowingness, 'BAD' pedagogy. This model stresses the importance of thinking about what happens *before* and *after* each session as a way of encouraging student engagement *during* a seminar. I do not claim that this is a radical way of thinking; it draws on existing pedagogical literature on how to design individual sessions, modules and curricula. In particular, it builds on research that has highlighted the importance of student-centred learning and placing student outcomes, rather than the tutor's desired outcomes, at the heart of teaching.[8] This is the model described by John Biggs as 'constructive alignment', which is focused not on what the teacher does but on what the students do.[9] What I hope this approach does, though, is bring this range of ideas into a simple single model that can be applied to a wide range of different modules in humanities degrees. By looking at case studies of how this approach has been applied to the teaching of the eighteenth-century histories of genders and sexualities to level 5 (second-year) students in a UK university, it highlights how a more holistic approach can help to encourage greater engagement within seminars and enable students to derive long-term benefits from their learning by supporting them to be articulate and critical thinkers.

The seminar is an important feature of many history degrees because of its focus on discussion, which is central to exploring the past within higher education settings. Therefore, much of the research on seminars has been focused on approaches that can encourage students to participate.[10] However, the forms that this engagement takes can vary, depending on subjects, modules and individual students. We also need to ensure that we are thinking about the needs of a wide range of learners, as not all students are comfortable in being active learners. In their study of student experiences of classroom discussions, Do and Schallert note that unlike 'the safe context of a lecture, in which a student could hide, to some students, particularly the nontalkers, the discussion was like a jungle with students needing to chart a path through unexpected thoughts, emotions, and actions'.[11] It is therefore important for the staff leading these sessions that they can provide a route map through the sometimes rocky terrain of a seminar.

However, this is not always easy. Many students feel uncomfortable talking, and it is important to remember that discussion-led learning is new to many higher education learners.[12] This discomfort can be exacerbated when a seminar topic is 'difficult', whether in terms of its complexity or due to ideas about social norms or etiquette. This sense of social awkwardness can impact a whole range of themes that historians consider; in discussions about race, religion and genocide, for example, students are often acutely aware of the need for sensitivity. This can mean that some prefer to remain silent, as this can be a way of either expressing tolerance of their fellow students' views or avoiding an argument.[13] Many students feel that it is not culturally acceptable to discuss some topics, such as sexuality, in open forums, and those students who have strong and/or divergent opinions about what is acceptable or unacceptable regarding sexualities may find it difficult to share these with fellow students.[14] This tendency towards self-censorship has been noted by lecturers in a wide range of disciplines who teach gender and sexuality at university.

This has led to a growing focus on strategies for teaching these subjects. For example, in their edited collection Murphy and Ribarsky include models of best practice including debates, role play, source analysis exercises and assessment strategies.[15] However, these learning and teaching texts have primarily focused on contemporaneous beliefs, experiences and representations of gender and sexuality rather than placing these into wider historical contexts. The challenge, and benefit, of teaching history can be the distance; it is easier for it to feel less personal, especially for periods before 1900. However, it is important to ensure that students do not fall into Whiggishness in their understanding of gender relations, and that they are guided in understanding the complexities of continuity and change. It can also be a challenge when using eighteenth-century sources that employ language and visual imagery that is not always in line with modern sensibilities. There can also be a strong tendency towards heteronormativity, both in terms of seminar contributions and in scholarly literature, and so it is often difficult to highlight that there were queer lives and queer experiences in the period.[16] So how can a historian overcome these challenges? I would suggest that thinking about the student experience *as a whole* and not just on the individual module is crucially important.

Therefore, we need to start with the *before.* This should not just be the week before an individual session but can include thinking about what happens before they start the module, and even the programme, as a whole. This can help to set into place the relationships and expectations which mean that students are ready to have complex discussions and debates about challenging subjects, such as sexuality. Induction activities can really help students to understand what is expected of them at tertiary level. There can sometimes be an expectation that many learners, especially those who can be described as 'traditional' students, know what is required of them at university. However, as Grace Sykes has shown, the old model of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' student is not helpful, and programmes and modules need to be designed to support a wide range of different learners.[17] Research, such as that of Gibson et al., has stressed the importance of university-wide induction activities in helping a new starter to 'become a student', as it should not be presumed that they necessarily know what this means.[18]

This is also true of becoming 'a historian', and so ensuring that students are made aware of the expectations as early as possible is important. This can be delivered through activities based around research tasks, such as history-based treasure hunts or co-working with fellow students in undertaking a shared task, as well as the more traditional discussion of the expectations that staff have of students and, crucially, vice versa. The process of induction, whether it is at programme or module level, can also help in the formation of positive staff–student relations, which may be through activities such as study trips, informal gatherings such as coffee mornings or one-to-one tutorials early in a module. Inclusivity should be at the heart of these induction activities, in terms of reflecting both the diversity of the student cohort and the histories that they will cover.

Providing a welcoming learning environment along with effective communication and a shared understanding of learning expectations can really help everyone to learn effectively, as well as supporting student retention by increasing students' sense of 'belongingness'.[19]

Another element which is important to consider when thinking about the *before* is the relationship of an individual module within a student's programme of learning. This is because curriculum design can also help to make students more engaged. Effectively designed programmes can ensure that student learning is scaffolded in order to support students to become more engaged and effective independent learners throughout their degree, and to achieve the intended learning outcomes.[20] By moving away from a focus solely on individual modules and towards programme learning outcomes, staff can be aware of how each module fits within a wider programme of learning.[21] This will usually include building student knowledge and skill-sets as they go through each level, through effective assessment and learning content design. In doing this, by taking a 'Universal Design to Learning' (UDL) approach, the diverse needs of students can be anticipated *before* they start a module, meaning that student support is built into the curriculum and module rather than being retrofitted.[22] Ideally, all staff teaching on a programme will be engaged with this process of curriculum design. Therefore, all colleagues, including those on fixed-term contracts, should be made aware of how the modules they are teaching fit with the wider programme so they can design their sessions accordingly. For example, if you are aware that students have already studied modules where source analysis was central to their learning but have not had to present formally to their peers, you can shape the content of your early sessions to draw on existing strengths in order to build new ones.

Supporting students to be engaged learners can also be driven by what comes *after*. This too should shape curriculum design; it is important to think about graduate attributes and how these are scaffolded through the degree as a whole. In relationship to effective seminars, strong oral communication skills can really enhance a student's employability, as well as giving them the confidence to explore key historical ideas and debates.[23] Providing opportunities for critical reading of primary and secondary materials, scholarly writing and effective reflection can also be an important element of developing skills that will support them through their degree and after graduation. These can therefore be incorporated into effective assessment design, and modules on the histories of gender and sexuality can be central in developing these skills.

There is increasing concern that students are ‘outcome driven’ in their learning, and this is often seen as problematic as it can reflect surface rather than deep learning.[24] However, understanding the strategic mindset and using it as motivation can have positive outcomes. Discussing with students why they are engaging in specific activities, and the benefits of doing so, can enable wider engagement. Part of this can be about long-term outcomes, such as enhancing their post-degree life opportunities; for example, an understanding of gender histories can be important in developing social awareness and interpersonal skills that are especially valued by many employers. This can help students realise that they are not just doing activities to pass modules but that the processes and skills they will develop in doing the work, as well as the knowledge they gain, could have lasting benefits. Therefore, encouraging students to be reflective learners can be important; encouraging students to think about their journey on the programme can help them to understand how they learn, what they have learned and how to continue to develop their own skills and knowledge.[25] This can be about not only what comes after the degree but also what comes next in the programme of learning (or in the immediate module). Helping students to understand how their engagement with an individual session can help them with future sessions and future modules, and encouraging students to reflect on this, can make learning more meaningful.

Thinking about the programme level *before* and *after* can help to shape the *during*. Below I set out how this ‘BAD’ pedagogy approach can be applied to teaching the histories of gender and sexualities. It draws on my experiences of teaching level 5 students in a UK university on a series of different modules that explored the interrelationships between men and women in the long eighteenth century. This academic material can be challenging, as it is very interdisciplinary in nature, and it often questions traditional ideas about gender norms by highlighting how they changed and were constructed over time. As with other modules on the degrees, these gender history modules were developed with the wider programme learning outcomes in mind, and the discipline-specific skills were mapped to levels and modules. Therefore, as a module leader, it was important for me to be aware of what students had studied before coming to these modules, and what the next steps were going to be.

This meant that these gender history modules not only focused on delivering key content but also developed students' skills in reading and critiquing primary sources, in addition to building their confidence in engaging with historiographical debates. They had been introduced to these ideas and approaches at level 4 (first year), but because these are key skills for history undergraduates, they needed to be reinforced at level 5 so that students were able to apply these effectively in their final-year extended projects or dissertations.

Over the ten years that I taught these modules, seminar-based learning was at the heart of the teaching strategy. Goodman et al. argue that the 'discussion-based classroom serves to foreground the relationship between talk and the production of knowledge'.[26] This knowledge was focused not only on critical understandings of gender history but also on historical methodologies. However, for these seminars to be effective, it was important to ensure that the students were prepared for each session. Providing clear frameworks for expectations and empowering students to become knowledgeable enough about key ideas or debates can facilitate effective classroom discussions.[27] The responsibility for student preparedness should not just fall on the students; academic staff can play a crucial role in giving students guidance and support in being prepared. Within history, there is a long tradition of encouraging students to read before sessions, and most lecturers will know that if students have properly prepared for sessions, it can be hugely beneficial during discussions and debates. Preparing for a session does not have to be just reading; other activities such as watching a pre-recorded lecture, engaging with other audio-visual materials or undertaking a research task can all give students more confidence in advance of a taught session. This approach, when also supported with post-session activities, has often been described as an 'inverted' or 'flipped' classroom.[28] One of the key benefits of this can be that students have more control over when, how and what they learn, which in turn strengthens their conceptual understandings.[29] In terms of these modules specifically, it was again important for me to think about the *before* and the *after* when developing individual sessions. I used a virtual learning environment to give students access to electronic journals and digitised extracts from key books for their set preliminary reading, which helped students to build their knowledge and expertise of the current debates that shape this discipline area. These texts were selected while thinking about their journey through the module as a whole, not just a single session, and with an awareness of the wider programme that they were studying. This meant that the students were able to build up their knowledge and understanding through a scaffolded approach.

This focus on reading and discussion-based teaching shaped the assessment model used, thus connecting the *before* with the *after* and the *during*. In order to encourage students to engage on a module, it is important to not only prepare students for learning but also to consider why they are doing it: what are they preparing for? While being ready for an individual session is of course important, the longer-term impact of the preparation should also be considered, as well as what might be motivating the students, which is often completing an assessment. There has been considerable discussion about the importance of assessment strategies that help students to learn as well as enabling tutors to measure their knowledge and understanding.[30] This is embodied by the assessment for learning approach, which has, at its heart, the goal that all assessments should help students to learn.[31] Ramsden argues that deep approaches to learning are encouraged by 'teaching and assessment methods that foster active and long-term engagement with learning tasks'.[32] For history students, engaging with research activities as part of their learning, which are then assessed, can also help them to develop their ability to engage with independent historical inquiry. This can be through an individual essay and/or through being assessed for their seminar participation, including leading a seminar as part of a group. This approach encourages a co-creation of knowledge, as they form communities of inquiry where they share research, ideas and debates, which in turn helps them to develop a depth of understanding for the topic and also enhances their transferable skills.[33]

These modules assessed students through both the submission of an individual essay and through the assessment of a seminar presentation and ongoing participation in the sessions. In terms of the seminar presentation, students were put into groups and each group selected which of the weekly seminar topics they were going to lead. The sessions that they led were usually between 90 and 120 minutes long. As part of these seminars the students were expected to encourage discussions about key secondary literature, which I set as the module leader, as well as leading wider debates based on their own research. As all students were assessed not just on the seminar they led but also on their engagement in seminars across the module as a whole, the 'presenters' were encouraged to ensure that there was a high level of interactive and discursive learning opportunities for their fellow students. While I facilitated these sessions, making appropriate interventions and encouragements as necessary, they were primarily shaped and led by the students.

For some students this was a challenge; while they had some experience of leading seminars at level 4, they did find it difficult, especially when talking about some of the more complex and/or socially difficult topics. Therefore, to help students develop the skills to be proactive leaders of and participants in discussions, I led the first four seminars. In these I modelled good practice; I designed the sessions so that they were focused on debating and analysing primary and secondary source materials through active learning. This is what I wanted the student groups to do when they led their seminars, and so it was important for them to see it in practice. Writers such as Alan Booth and Geoff Timmins et al. have explored ways in which history can be taught through active learning, including the use of discussion groups, role play, structured debates and so on.[34] Active, or student-centred, learning can help students gain a greater depth of understanding and bring closer together academic research and the student experience.[35] This can then, in turn, encourage students to be more engaged with the process of learning about the past. Enabling students to select their own primary sources for discussion means that they can develop their own understandings of key ideas and topics.

As Elaine Carey found in her teaching in the University of Detroit Mercy, the process of students selecting, presenting and discussing their own primary sources means that they gain a more in-depth understanding of key theoretical and conceptual ideas as they have directly engaged with historical research that they have *led*.[36] I regularly saw this in the sessions my students designed. For example, one group, who led a seminar on gender and empire, brought to the seminar a wide range of primary sources connected to the ways in which gender was understood by the British in India during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This included both written and visual sources on the subject of *sati* ('suttee' or 'widow burning') that the students had been able to access through various digital databases. By bringing these materials together, the students leading the seminar were able to encourage the wider class to think about how ideas about race were shaping ideas about gender, and to discuss the similarities and differences between the constructions of 'British' and Hindu femininities. Many of the points raised by the students were sophisticated ideas, which built on both the set secondary reading and their own independent research about the histories of race. This shows how, through working collectively as a class, students were able to develop their own understandings and knowledge of the subject. This focus on students shaping their own learning means that they can become independent thinkers and so gain, in Kreber's phrase, their own 'authenticity'.[37] In order to gain these benefits, they needed to see it in practice, and that is what I was able to demonstrate in the first few weeks.

Another benefit of leading these first sessions was that it also enabled me to get a better understanding of how the students worked together. There was already a good working relationship in place; as there had been programme-level induction activities for these students at both levels 4 and 5, they had already got to know each other and me. However, these first few weeks meant that we could re-establish these connections within the context of the module. It is important that a good relationship between the tutor and the students is formed to enable high levels of engagement. As Hardman notes, 'students' attitude towards cooperative learning is highly dependent on how the tutor promotes and manages the dialogue and discussion arising from the student-to-student interactions'.[38] This meant that they were also able to form relationships with one another before they began to lead the sessions themselves. Do and Schallert note that the social culture of the seminar has a considerable impact on the feelings of the learners.[39] Therefore, if a relaxed learning environment can be developed, the degree of anxiety can be reduced, and the willingness to work with other students can increase. This is especially important when teaching the histories of gender and sexuality. Part of creating this positive social culture was developing a collective understanding of what made a good seminar. We discussed this openly, and in the weeks before the first student-led seminars we formed a 'mock contract' about what was required from the people leading the seminar, the tutor and the rest of the student group in order for a session to be a success. Collaborative learning can lead to a greater depth of understanding if staff and students engage with it fully and recognise that both groups need to play a role in creating a supportive and active learning environment.

Part of the shared agreement about what makes a successful seminar was for all parties to be prepared. This included doing the pre-session (the *before*) work. To support this, an element of the assessment was the completion of a seminar participation form. These forms, which also use the *before*, *during* and *after* approach, were first devised at the University of

Derby by my colleague Professor Ian Whitehead and are used on a number of different modules throughout the history and English programmes. In the forms the student logs what they read in advance of the session, and their critical responses to the texts. This means that they can prepare some key notes and ideas about the materials, which can help some of the more nervous students to contribute more effectively, and to try and reduce the degree of anxiety that some students feel when making a point.[40] They also formally note what contributions they make during sessions, and how they are connected to their wider research. This means that, when grading student participation, it is possible to move away from quantity to quality, as some of the most engaged students may make relatively few contributions to in-class discussions. Research has suggested that the number of utterances made by an individual student does not necessarily reflect the quality of their critical understanding.[41] Participation forms can therefore allow the quieter but more critically engaged student to shine, and can be especially supportive to students who have different learning styles. This is especially important in modules where there are some topics under discussion where some students may self-censor. Finally, students reflect on their engagement after each session on the participation form, as well as completing a longer reflective piece about their engagement on the module as a whole. This encourages them to take ownership of their own learning and to develop strategies for future sessions and modules. This means that students identify that they are on a journey through the programme, and how the before, after and during all interconnect.

These seminar participation forms therefore not only formally capture students' preparation and participation but also encourage them to become active and engaged learners. Gehring and Nicholson have found that students welcome the use of participation forms. While, at first, they can find them time-consuming to complete, they commented that this form of assessment means that more students engage within discussion and debates and that they are more likely to prepare for the sessions.[42] I have found this to be the case for these modules. Since adopting these forms, it is clear how much more engaged students have become, and it encourages them to be more engaged learners. It also enhances the quality of the student-led seminars. Because they are doing the weekly reading, and writing about it, they are more able to make interconnections between different critical ideas. It also encourages them to move away from some of the 'lazy' assumptions about gender and sexuality, and so can prevent ill-informed presumptions about past experiences and discourage heteronormative approaches. Students are also very aware that while they only lead one seminar, they are being assessed throughout the semester. This helps them to recognise that they have a crucial role in making seminars work every week. While researchers have found that some students can see student-led sessions as problematic, as they prefer to be taught by the tutor rather than hear the possible misunderstandings of their fellow learners, it is important that we confront the idea that university learning is a passive experience.[43] This ongoing assessment encourages this more active learning approach, and can mean that students have the confidence to talk about complex topics which may need a degree of sensitivity to discuss effectively. The fact that, during my ten years of teaching these modules, most students fully engaged reflects the real benefit of effective module design, delivery and the integration of assessment for learning into the teaching, using the notion of constructive alignment.[44]

The 'BAD' pedagogy approach can have a positive impact on the way in which students engage with their learning throughout a history degree. Creating, at both module and at programme level, a student-centred curriculum that considers where students are starting from and where they are going can impact on both their studies and their long-term opportunities. Pedagogic research suggests that students are more likely to engage with 'deep' learning when studying a topic that is of particular relevance to them, which can then have a direct impact on their attainment; gender history can be one of those 'relevant' topics.[45] A student-centred approach also encourages students to be researchers and co-producers, and the depth of sources and materials on the histories of sexuality in the eighteenth century allows students to develop their own voice as historians. It is not just about the past; it can also help the students' future too, as well as enabling life-long learning.[46] Student-led seminars are one way to do just this as they encourage a co-creation of knowledge which is supported by the depth of learning facilitated by the seminar participation forms.[47] However, as Hardman argues, it is important that we do not solely place the responsibility for learning and engaging with the students: the tutor also plays a crucial role by ensuring that the seminars are dialogical, thus encouraging engagement.[48] It is also important not just to focus on an individual seminar; lecturers need to consider how single sessions fit within the module and the programme as a whole. This can help tutors to employ strategies to engage students by showing them how they are on a wider programme of learning. I would also argue that the way the seminars are set up, using the 'BAD' pedagogy model can also help to produce a strong tutor–students relationship that can enable them to engage fully in the sessions. This can mean that students feel more capable of discussing the complex, and sometimes socially difficult, subjects that they will encounter on a history programme and develop their own confidence to discuss a wide range of topics, including talking about sex.

Notes

1 Tony Harland, *University Challenge: Critical Issues for Teaching and Learning* (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 89.

2 Hannah Forsyth and Jedidiah Evans, 'Authentic Assessment for a More Inclusive History', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38.4 (2019), 750.

3 Harland, *University Challenge*, chapter 5. For an elegant discussion about how female contributions to Enlightenment discussions in Spain can be incorporated into modules exploring either Enlightenment or gender histories, see Catherine M. Jaffe, 'Spanish Feminist Texts in Interdisciplinary Courses on the Eighteenth Century: Decentering the Teaching of Gender and the Enlightenment', *Dieciocho: Hispanic Enlightenment*, 44.2 (2021), 373–82.

4 Krassimira Daskalova, 'Women's and Gender History in the Balkans: Looking Back over 50 Years of Teaching and Research', *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, 48 (2018), 191–200; Becki L. Ross, '"The Stubborn Clutter, the Undeniable Record, the Burning, Wilful Evidence": Teaching the History of Sexuality', *Atlantis* 25.1 (2000), 28–38.

5 Karen Harvey, 'The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century' *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), 899–91; Karen Harvey, 'The History of Masculinity, circa 1650–1800', *Journal of British Studies*, 44.2 (2005), 296–311; Tim Hitchcock, 'The Reformulation of Sexual Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century England', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 37.4 (2012), 823–32. The scholarship on this topic is extensive, but other key works include Julie Peakman (ed.), *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011); Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 383–414.

6 Kirsten T. Saxton, Ajuan Maria Mance and Rebekah Edwards, 'Teaching Eighteenth-Century Literature in a Transgendered Classroom' in *Heteronormativity in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, ed. A. de Freitas Boe and A. Coykendall (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 169; Julia Ftacek, 'Jonathan Swift and the Transgender Classroom', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 43.3 (2020), 303–14.

7 Ross, 'The Stubborn Clutter', pp. 32–3.

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10 S. B. Goodman, K. B. Murphy and M. L. D'Andrea, 'Discussion Dilemmas: An Analysis of Beliefs and Ideals in the Undergraduate Seminar', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 27.1 (2014), 1–4.

11 S. L. Do and D. L. Schallert, 'Emotions and Classroom Talk: Toward a Model of the Role of Affect in Students' Experiences of Classroom Discussions', *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96.4 (2004), 633.

12 Do and Schallert, 'Emotions and Classroom Talk', p. 621.

13 Goodman et al., 'Discussion Dilemmas', pp. 11, 17.

14 Shawn Trivette, 'Sexual Secret Cards: Examining Social Norms and Cultural Taboo around Sexuality' in *Activities for Teaching Gender and Sexuality in the University Classroom*, ed. Michael J. Murphy and Elizabeth N. Ribarsky (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2013), p. 58.

15 Michael J. Murphy and Elizabeth N. Ribarsky (eds), *Activities for Teaching Gender and Sexuality in the University Classroom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2013).

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20 Biggs and Tang, *Teaching for Quality Learning*, chapter 7.

21 For a discussion of the important of programme-level learning outcomes, see Kent Löfgren, 'Curricular Design and Assessment: Moving Towards a Global Template' in *International Perspectives on Higher Education: Challenging Values and Practice*, ed. Trevor Kerry (London: Continuum, 2012), pp. 127–41 and Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, 'Quality and European Programme Design in Higher Education', *European Journal of Education*, 38.3 (2003), 241–51.

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44 Biggs and Tang, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*, passim, especially chapter 6.

45 Ramsden, *Learning to Teach*, p. 65.

46 Jones, 'Teaching History at University', p. 193.

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Chapter 5

Engaging students with political history: citizenship in the (very) long eighteenth century

Matthew McCormack

For a long time, political history dominated the teaching of history in British universities. Certainly until the social history revolution of the 1960s, the type of history that was taught was predominantly political, and was of very particular types. Whig histories focused on English constitutional development, concentrating on the improvement of institutions and lauding the efforts of privileged actors who contributed to this design; and even critiques of this approach tended to be establishmentarian and elitist in their outlook.[1] Following the rise of social and then cultural history, political history became more marginal in the profession, and indeed has often been the type of history that progressive histories have defined themselves against. This chapter will reflect on how best to approach this now less familiar form of history with undergraduates, who often have negative preconceptions about studying it. It will suggest that teaching eighteenth-century politics in terms of 'citizenship' can make it relevant to today's students and will think about some pedagogical strategies that can help to make the experience of learning about it more meaningful and engaging.

Of course, political history has not been static since the 1960s, and has been regularly revitalised by wider developments in the discipline. Social history was often very political in its focus, using Marxist and feminist theory to explore the political life of working men and women, opening up histories of popular politics and protest.[2] And cultural history has enabled new histories of political culture and identity, notably the 'new political history' that focused on the mobilisation of identity categories and the cultural exercise of power.[3] Increasingly, the focus of historians has been away from the state's institutions and personnel and towards the worlds of extra-parliamentary and popular politics. Work on politics in the long eighteenth century in recent years has been notably rich in this respect, including studies of gender, empire, space and material culture.[4]

Even in the light of these shifts, political history can be a tough sell for undergraduate history students. Many will have encountered political history of a fairly traditional type at school:[5] some will have been put off by the experience and come to university with a strong preference for social history; some will be enthusiastic about it but may well have been drawn to politics degrees (or dedicated joint programmes like Manchester's Politics and Modern History) rather than history. Even when they are keen on politics, the political history of the eighteenth century poses particular challenges. From the mid-nineteenth century, British politics settled down into a clear party system that is recognisable to students today, where parties had infrastructures and programmes, and elections had clear outcomes and were fought on national political issues. But the 'First Age of Party' of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries should not be approached with this modern frame of reference, and the subsequent century certainly cannot. Parties were very provisional and were based more upon personal connection and interest than ideology: indeed, most MPs were independents. Elections were mostly uncontested and had much less bearing on the choice of the government: the Lords was more prestigious than the Commons and prime ministers tended to sit there. Much depended on the preferences and personal connections of the monarch, and the exact power relations between the various branches of the political system were complex and constantly debated: everybody talked about the 'constitution' without anybody agreeing what it actually was.

Eighteenth-century politics can therefore be an alien and incomprehensible world. For a long time, the dominant approach to it was that proposed by Sir Lewis Namier in the mid-twentieth century. As a corrective to the presentism and sweeping assumptions of the Whig school, Namier argued that historians should instead embrace its complexity: historians should focus on the detail of high political life, concentrating on the individual motivations and personal connections of its well-documented protagonists.[6] While in some respects this humanised politics, it arguably made it more baffling: its anti-teleological emphasis made it difficult to construct clear explanatory narratives; its dense empirical detail made it inaccessible to the non-specialist; and its elitism made it difficult for most people to relate to. While the world of popular politics has now been opened up to study by subsequent generations of historians, it is still difficult to approach eighteenth-century parliamentary politics without understanding the intricacies of the court, party connections and familial ties. For example, much of the work on women in Georgian politics has been in this Namierite mould, since in practice the women who exercised the greatest political influence in this interconnected familial world – and who left source material – were of the social elite.[7]

Students coming to university will likely not have studied eighteenth-century politics before. This is not in itself a bad thing – and part of the point of a history degree is that students get exposed to new topics – but it does raise the question of how best to approach it in the light of the challenges noted above. Furthermore, if lecturers are running an optional module, then they have to persuade students to choose it or it may not run. This is the task I faced when I moved to the University of Northampton in 2004 and was asked to design a third-year option based on my research interests. With regular updates, it ran most years until 2022. In common with many history degree programmes, the degree at Northampton starts with modules that are quite broad, introductory and often team-taught and concludes with modules that are more specialist, research-driven and individual. Some degrees call such final-year options 'special subjects' and typically offer choice here. How then should I package Georgian politics in a way that assumed no prior knowledge, took into account recent developments in the historiography and was appealing to students?

Political history as citizenship

The module I designed was entitled 'Citizenship and Gender in Britain, 1760–1918'. It was partly designed as a 'long-nineteenth-century' module because of the curriculum I had been employed to cover, but also because of the story I wanted to tell. A key focus of the module was the campaign to reform citizenship rights that started with campaigns for manhood suffrage in the 1760s and concluded with the granting of the vote to women in 1918. Because of the space required to set up the topic, and because

I argued that these two centuries of debate were essentially conducted in terms that were established in the eighteenth century, around half of the module content concerned the Georgian period.

Drawing on my PhD research – which became my first book – I argued that the key political question in this period was: what sorts of people are fit to be citizens? And specifically, who should be granted the parliamentary franchise? Since this political question involved negotiating the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in social terms, this proved to be a very good way in to political history for students who were more familiar or comfortable with social history. My doctoral research had been influenced by the linguistic turn, thinking about how the language that historical actors used informed their view of the world, and in particular how identity categories were constructed and negotiated.[8] In the module I wanted to connect scholarship on Georgian political discourse with that on the Victorian and Edwardian periods, particularly the work on the Second Reform Act of 1867 by Catherine Hall, Keith McLelland and Jane Rendall. They argued that the Act sought to 'define the Victorian nation' in terms of gender, race and class: the new voters of 1867 were defined as British working men, in distinction to their 'others' represented by foreigners, paupers and women.[9] In tracing a concept over a long period, the module was influenced by my experience as an undergraduate at the University of York, where third-years took a 'Comparative Special Subject' focusing on a theme such as 'heroes' or 'revolutions'. Such modules are demanding and have an important summative function at the end of a degree.[10]

While the module explored various ways of defining the political subject – including national identity, social class, education and property ownership – the key focus of the module was gender. I proposed that this was the key category when negotiating the boundaries of political inclusion and exclusion, and invited the students to disagree with my proposition. In the course of tracing this theme, the module introduced the wealth of work on the political histories of gender, women and masculinity. Although this scholarship is now well established, when the module began in the 2000s it was recent and in some cases controversial: students were asked to consider whether a history of political masculinities was desirable from a feminist point of view, or whether it was just a reassertion of 'men's history' in a male-dominated and traditional field. The focus on gender proved to be a useful entry point for students, who had typically studied women's history before (partly at school but also in a first-year introductory module) but had not necessarily studied politics, and who were often vocal in expressing a preference for social history. It helped them to evaluate an otherwise unfamiliar historiography in terms of current social and political issues. Political history remains a rather 'male' field – both in terms of its practitioners and the people it studies – but enrolments for this module tended to be majority female.

A further reason why 'citizenship' was a relatable focus for students was that it was (and is) a current political issue. Citizenship has been a political buzzword in Britain since the 1990s, and remains so to this day. John Major proposed a 'citizen's charter' of rights and David Cameron focused on the citizen's obligations as part of a 'big society', but it was New Labour who really made it central to their project. Tony Blair introduced citizenship tests for immigrants, which included many questions about history that applicants effectively had to learn by rote (not least because many of the official 'correct' answers were quite problematic).[11] It included questions about popular culture as well as constitutional developments, suggesting that their vision of history was as much about national identity as it was about political education. After the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, the Labour government focused on fostering a sense of belonging among groups in society who felt disaffected and excluded. This included the introduction of citizenship as a subject in schools. The educationalist Audrey Osler has reviewed Labour's approach to citizenship in their education policy, and notes that there was a fundamental tension between their desire to prescribe 'British' values and their cosmopolitanism. Blair argued that 'democracy, rule of law, tolerance and equal treatment for all' were British values, whereas the foreign secretary Jack Straw noted that these were international values that had developed in a unique way in Britain over the course of its history.[12] It was therefore necessary, Straw argued, that Britons knew their nation's story in order to understand the country they lived in today.

The place of citizenship in education, and the relationship of history education to citizenship, has long been a key political issue in Britain. Peter Yeandle argues that history education was central to citizenship in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but that it was not primarily conveyed in history books themselves but rather in texts such as literacy primers. He further argues that the Victorians sought not to inculcate 'crude' nationalism but rather to foster citizenship and morality: rather than just telling schoolchildren that the empire was a good thing, for example, it emphasised that the English were an 'imperial race' with suitable qualities and a special mission.[13] John Tosh agrees that history has had a special place in citizenship education in Britain. He argues that the purpose of citizenship classes in recent years has been to 'intensify the sense of belonging . . . by anchoring it securely in shared narratives about the past'. History teachers may not have been involved much in delivering the citizenship curriculum, but that is only because history 'is still regarded as a course in citizenship in all but name'.[14] If this was true of New Labour, it is even truer of the Conservatives' reform of the national curriculum for history in the 2010s. The education secretary Michael Gove argued that British schoolchildren should learn their 'island story' in chronological order, so they could value the progression of its political institutions. This distinctly Whig attitude came under criticism from the historian Richard Evans, who argued that history education should foster critical skills rather than be used as a vehicle for identity politics.[15]

Tosh too has taken issue with the way in which history has been appropriated for prescribing models of citizenship, and argues that there are more productive ways for conceiving of the relationship between history education and citizenship. Most historians would agree that their subject 'provides a training in the rational evaluation of evidence and argument'. This is surely a good thing, but history is hardly the only subject that does this. More fundamentally, it provides a historical perspective, which 'enhances the citizen's capacity to make informed judgements about the issues of the day, to participate in public discourse, and to make intelligent use of the vote'. Approaching the present in this way – 'thinking with history' – enables students to illuminate current issues and to think about what is distinctive about the past.[16] A key justification for the value of history should therefore be that it makes its learners informed, critical citizens.

These questions were addressed directly in the module. Education is a key theme in feminist history, since Georgian feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah Wheeler saw deficiencies in women's education as a cause of their subordinate condition and education reform as a means of improving it. Another week focused on Victorian debates about education with respect to the moral qualities educators were supposed to foster, such as 'character' and 'independence'. We discussed the role of education in preparing children for citizenship, and how the introduction of compulsory education was explicitly linked to the widening of the parliamentary franchise. As the Liberal Robert Lowe argued in 1867, it was necessary 'to prevail on our future masters to learn their letters'.[17] This session was of particular interest to the students taking the module who were seeking careers in teaching, and in successive years more of the students had themselves studied citizenship at school. They were therefore able to reflect critically on that experience and to connect their own knowledge of education and political debates today to the historical context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Pedagogic strategies

The design of the module was by no means revolutionary. Indeed, it was organised in a fairly conventional way, but I did employ a number of strategies with a view to enhancing student learning and engagement. The module ran in one term of eleven or twelve weeks, with a weekly workshop of around three hours. This time was used flexibly, with short lectures, discussions, document exercises and other activities. The module size varied from about ten to about thirty: in years when it was larger, I split the group in two in the third and fourth hour to give the students more of a seminar experience. A typical format for the class would be to start with a concept (such as the public sphere or feminism) which we would then put into historical context in the second hour. In the final section we would focus on a case study (such as the Queen Caroline Affair or military volunteering) which we would introduce with a student presentation and then explore in small groups with documents. As Peter Frederick notes, small-group work can provide an 'energy shift' and can empower students to talk about their ideas in a space that may feel safer than a whole class.[18] At the conclusion of the session, we would evaluate the concept in the light of what we had discussed, and set up the learning for the following week.

The first session of the module was entitled 'What is citizenship?' After setting up the practicalities and aims of the module, we explored the concept in detail without necessarily getting into the eighteenth-century context. We began with a brainstorm, getting students to think about what citizenship entailed in terms of rights, duties and attachments. They discussed this in small groups and filled in a grid on a worksheet, which we then fed back to the class to come up with an agreed list on the whiteboard. This was invariably a rich discussion that lasted over an hour. Students discovered that this was actually a tricky concept to define, and the examples they drew upon from ancient history to the present day did not necessarily fit the model consistently: the lesson of the exercise was 'it depends', since citizenship has meant different things in different times and contexts. Along the way, I used various examples and sources to stimulate discussion. Among these was the film *Starship Troopers*, which I had encouraged them to watch as preparation for the module. I showed a clip of the opening scenes where the characters debate the nature of citizenship in a school classroom, before joining the military to fight aliens. Although *Starship Troopers* is on the face of it an unsubtle sci-fi war movie, it is based on a novel by Robert A. Heinlein that advocates a classical republican form of citizenship, where 'citizens' earn their rights through military service and 'civilians' are second-class citizens.[19] The 1997 film adaptation by Paul Verhoeven sends up the fascism of this source material, so is a sharp political satire. The clip led to a discussion about the reciprocal nature of citizenship, and we referred back to it later in the module when examining wartime contexts where political rights were earned through service to the nation, such as during the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War.

The module had a strong focus on primary sources and source analysis, which is appropriate for final-year study. For every session I produced a worksheet with multiple primary sources for students to analyse in class: this was usually on paper, but I used electronic versions during the COVID-19 pandemic for online or socially distanced classes, which worked equally well. Many of these were extracts from texts, which students read individually then discussed in groups, before reporting back for a whole-group discussion. In early classes, these required quite a bit of scaffolding – with context to set them up and direct questions to draw out the analysis – but as the students grew more familiar with the material, they were increasingly able to do this without direction from me. Every week we also used visual sources, particularly satirical prints from the Georgian period and cartoons from later periods. Students often assume that pictures are easier to analyse than texts, but they quickly appreciated that visual satire has a complex language that would have been familiar to contemporaries but can be obscure today. Over the course of the module they therefore learned the lost art of 'reading' a Georgian print, and they became more confident doing this with practice. Students made links between the highly visual political culture of the Georgian period and that of today, which is characterised by video clips and internet memes. In later years I also introduced material sources such as badges and memorabilia, so the evolution of the module reflected my own development as a historian, away from the linguistic turn and towards histories of objects and embodiment.

A further way in which textual source material was brought alive was through performance. In the third week on 'political masculinities', we studied an extract from a political stage play of 1757, *The Fall of Public Spirit*. This introduced the characters of Old Time and Ancient Spirit, who travelled through time from ancient Britain to 1757 – a time of moral panic and military disaster – and were appalled at the immorality and decadence that they beheld.[20] This text is fairly flat on the page, but contemporaries would likely have experienced it in performance rather than through silent reading, so getting the students to recreate it as a performance provided insights into the source. In particular, it brought out the force of the political message and how models of masculinity were embodied and politicised. In the following week on the culture of elections, we studied some election songs from the infamous Westminster Election of 1784. Music was a prominent feature of elections at the time, and new lyrics were written to popular songs of the day to support particular candidates and comment on the political situation. Since we know the tunes to which they were set, it is possible to perform them. I played an audio clip of the sea shanty 'Roast Beef of Old England', then led the group in a rendition of 'The Female Patriot: Or, The Devonshire Duchess', which had been set to this tune.[21] Singing is a very accessible form of musical performance that does not necessarily require equipment or training. Although some students found the exercise slightly embarrassing, taking students out of their comfort zone is a positive experience in the classroom if it is managed sensitively. Discomfort can take you radically out of the present and lead to reflection: in this case, it highlighted the emotion and physicality of singing an election song, leading to insights about what an election would have been like to experience in bodily and sensory terms.

As a 'special subject'-type module, the module involved in-depth work on the historiography, and necessarily had an extensive reading list. Most history modules involve a great deal of reading in order to prepare for classes and to work on assignments. History is not a subject where a set body of knowledge is acquired in a sequential order, and tends not to rely on textbooks or primers to deliver this, preferring to focus on specialist literature.[22] For the most part, history lecturers either set specific reading for a given class or provide a reading list from which students can make selections, and assume that this is going on in the background. As Effie MacLellan cautions, however, undergraduate students in general 'are not proficient readers'. They can of course read, but 'reading to learn' is a distinctive skill that has to be fostered.[23] Reading is fundamental to the learning of history, and is often the start of the learning process, so this is part of our disciplinary practice that needs to be 'decoded' if students are going to get the most out of it.[24]

This module therefore had a very explicit focus on the reading process. In the 2006–7 session I carried out a study within the module, with the intention of gaining a greater understanding of how students read. I also hoped that, in the process, students would think about how they themselves read: sometimes it is useful to have a 'triggering event' to encourage students to reflect on their learning practices.[25] I used a series of anonymous weekly questionnaires that asked students what they had read, how long they had spent on it, whether and how they had taken notes, and what they got out of it. In general, this revealed that the students were not reading as much as I had assumed, but that I could improve the way that I set up the activity to help them to get more out of it. The students reported that they appreciated knowing what to look for in their reading – such as a research question or a theme – which provided a focus for their preparation. This made note-taking more of an active 'research' activity rather than a passive exercise in fact-gathering. Some students revealed that they had quite sophisticated methods of note-taking, which enhanced their understanding of the material. MacLellan advocates 'elaboration strategies' such as paraphrasing and summarising as ways for students to gain ownership of their reading, and to promote deep, active learning.[26] I applied these insights to the module in subsequent years and set up reading activities with much greater care.

The assessment strategy for the module changed over the course of its life, partly due to shifts in departmental and institutional policy. The module was assessed by a combination of essay, presentation and examination: in some years it was all three, and in others it was the essay with one of the other two. Of all the assessments, the presentation was probably the most conducive to active learning. Students were tasked with finding a primary source from the period covered by the module, to deliver a spoken presentation about it in class and to take questions from their colleagues. Students could select a text or an image, and in both cases they drew on the skills in source analysis that we had developed over the course of the module. Presentations on visual images worked particularly well, since students could demonstrate how they were 'reading' the visual elements while displaying the image on a screen. This assessment was therefore set up as a 'research' task, and some students went to considerable lengths to find sources that addressed the module's themes and to research contextual information about them. This demonstrated the benefits of treating students as researchers, and the possibilities for including research tasks in undergraduate teaching outside of its traditional locations such as the dissertation.[27]

Conclusion

Overall, the module provided an effective way in to Georgian politics for students who had not studied it before. The focuses of 'citizenship' and 'gender' had several benefits. By thinking about the social and cultural nature of the political world, they enabled students to discuss politics using familiar methodologies, and without the need for substantial factual background knowledge. They connected politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to political and social issues in the present day, and the focus on 'citizenship' in particular highlighted the historical background to many of today's controversies such as immigration, education policy, Scottish independence and Brexit. They also emphasised the importance of historical study to good citizenship, since it is vital to understand the nature of our political system if we are to participate in it in an informed way and make reasoned decisions about political questions. Indeed, both the students and I would frequently switch between discussions of the historical context and the present day. Students often arrive at university with a sense that historians should avoid presentism and bias, but this module demonstrated that a contemporary and personal perspective enriches our understanding both of the past and the present. This strong contemporary focus contributed to the active learning and higher-level understanding that the module sought to promote.

By way of a coda, the module is unlikely to run again as my role at the university has changed. But in a sense it will live on, since I published a book based on the module in 2019.[28] This was explicitly written as a student textbook and a teaching aid, and I hope that it will be used in similar courses elsewhere. Writing the book was also a learning process for me, since I went about it in a very different way to my previous research publications. Rather than being driven by primary research, it was based on my class materials and my experience of teaching. Instead of a lengthy bibliography, each chapter has a brief guide to further reading. The style of writing was intended to be accessible to the non-specialist, and it was challenging to explain big ideas in a clear and readable way. Writing the book forced me to reflect on how public history should be communicated, which was in itself a lesson in good citizenship.

Notes

1 Herbert Butterfield in *The Whig Interpretation of History* (Ann Arbor, MI: Bell, 1931).

2 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963); Geoge Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

3 James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 5.

4 For example: Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (eds), *Women in British Politics 1780–1860: The Power of the Petticoat* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); Mark Knights, *Trust and Distrust: Corruption in Office in Britain and Its Empire 1600–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789–1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Joan Coutu, Jon Stobart and Peter Linfield (eds), *Politics and the English Country House, 1688–1800* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2023).

5 Marcus Collins, '‘Historiography from Below: How Undergraduates Remember Learning History at School', *Teaching History*, 142 (2011), 34–8 (36).

6 Louis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London: Macmillan, 1929).

7 Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c. 1754–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1998).

8 Matthew McCormack, '“The Independent Man” in English Political Culture, 1760–1832' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2002). This became *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

9 Catherine Hall, Keith McLelland and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race and Gender in the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

10 Tim Hitchcock, Robert Shoemaker and John Tosh, 'Skills and the Structure of the History Curriculum' in *The Practice of University History Teaching*, ed. Alan Booth and Paul Hyland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 47–59 (p. 58). They are still a feature of the York history degree, but are now called 'Comparative History Modules'.

11 'Historians Call for a Review of Home Office Citizenship and Resettlement Test': open letter to the journal *History* (21 July 2020), https://historyjournal.org.uk/2020/07/21/historians-call-for-a-review-of-home-office-citizenship-and-settlement-test (accessed 31 January 2023).

12 Audrey Osler, 'Patriotism, Multiculturalism and Belonging: Political Discourse and the Teaching of History', *Educational Review*, 61:1 (2009), 85–100 (86).

13 Peter Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire: The Politics of History Teaching in England, 1870–1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 2, 174.

14 John Tosh, *Why History Matters* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2008), pp. ix, 125.

15 Robert Guyver, 'England and the UK: Conflict and Consensus over Curriculum' in *Teaching History and the Changing Nation State: Transnational and Intranational Perspectives*, ed. Robert Guyver (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 159–74.

16 Tosh, *Why History Matters*, pp. 120–1.

17 Quoted in A. Ottway, *Education and Society: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education* (Oxford: Routledge, 1953), p. 62.

18 Peter J. Frederick, 'Motivating Students by Active Learning in the History Classroom' in *The Practice of University History Teaching*, ed. Booth and Hyland, pp. 101–11 (p. 104).

19 Robert Heinlein, *Starship Troopers* (New York: Putnam, 1959).

20 Anon., *The Fall of Public Spirit: A Dramatic Satire in Two Acts* (London, 1757).

21 *History of the Westminster Election, Containing Every Material Occurrence . . .* (London, 1785), p. 494.

22 Contrast, for example, economics: Paul W. Richardson, 'Reading and Writing from Textbooks in Higher Education: A Case Study from Economics', *Studies in Higher Education*, 29:4 (2004), 505–21.

23 Effie MacLellan, 'Reading to Learn', *Studies in Higher Education*, 22:3 (1997), 277–88 (277).

24 David Pace, 'Decoding the Reading of History: An Example of the Process', *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 98 (2004), 13–21.

25 MacLellan, 'Reading to Learn', p. 283.

26 MacLellan, 'Reading to Learn', p. 281.

27 Adrian Jones, 'Teaching History at University through Communities of Inquiry', *Australian Historical Studies*, 42 (2011), 166–93 (189).

28 Matthew McCormack, *Citizenship and Gender in Britain, 1688–1928* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

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Part III

MATERIAL CULTURE AND MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Chapter 6

Beyond 'great white men': teaching histories of science, empire and heritage through collections

Alice Marples

In the past few decades, the history of eighteenth-century science and medicine has been transformed. These linked fields of research have, since their inception, been overwhelmingly concerned with the glorification of 'great men', those seen to exist within a canon of intellectual giants and public-minded individuals who forever altered the ways in which we understand our world. Revealing their dogged and supposedly selfless pursuit of enlightened progress was believed by eighteenth-, nineteenth- and many twentieth-century historians to provide a helpful model for Western society and, through aggressive colonisation and imperialist projects, the rest of the world. This has been the essence of such scholarship from the early modern period onwards.[1]

Recently, however, there has been a deliberate move away from studying scientific individuals and their ideas as if they were lone scholars in a study – a philosophical image that has cast a long shadow – and more towards what Nicholas Jardine calls the 'hybrids of scientific knowledge and practice bound up in the worlds of everyday life, culture and politics'.[2] Questions of agency, materiality and epistemology now help scholars explore how various forms of scientific and medical knowledge permeated eighteenth-century life, from urban shops and kitchen gardens to high society and the high seas. It is increasingly clear that objects and skills crossed complex geographical, cultural, material and experiential boundaries, even as the limits of who and what constituted 'science' became more severely drawn across the centuries. Research in this area now interrogates meanings of connoisseurship, invention, appropriation, exploitation, exchange, marketing and mimicry, among much else.

A critical part of this revised approach to the study of scientific and medical knowledge has been the exploration of the many ways in which it was collected in the early modern period and subsequently transformed into 'modern' physical taxonomies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The history of collecting as a discipline in its own right was established in 1983 as the result of a conference held in the world's first 'public' museum, The Ashmolean in Oxford. This event, and all the work and discussions surrounding it, ultimately kick-started three decades of conversations uniting curators, academics, artists and engagement professionals on how best to explore the tangled histories of collections.[3] Collections of all kinds – from large national institutions and universities to private cabinets and the semi-public ones of voluntary societies – ceased to be seen as neutral spaces of learning or leisure or the benign results of an individual collector's idiosyncrasies. Instead, they began to be understood as valuable repositories of a diverse array of histories, revealing the labours not only of those who had the wealth or power to create them in the first place but also all those whose contributions of knowledge, labour and material, both voluntary and forced, actually constituted them. Exploration of these have reinforced how closely tied histories of collecting are to imperialism, slavery and exploitation, as the lives and remains of non-white individuals were harvested to construct the hierarchies of Enlightenment science and philosophy.[4]

With all this valuable historical work, the question remains: how can we best present such contentious histories within both museum spaces and classrooms? A response to both aspects of this question can be found in the Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum, which was opened within a recreation of George III's library in 2003. It evokes both the early modern 'Cabinet of Curiosity' and the eighteenth-century encyclopaedic worldview, disrupting assumptions around modern museum conventions by breaking down material and intellectual boundaries and highlighting the pre-disciplinary jumble of strange, mundane and 'exotic' objects. It is deliberately designed to encourage visitor conversation and is regularly used by students and teachers across London and beyond. Visitor enjoyment of this space is supported by frequent guided tours and object-handling sessions which remind students that the modern museum-going experience of 'look-but-do-not-touch' is actually not how things have always been. The gallery is an example of how historical objects and collections can be used to disrupt assumptions regarding the transfer of information from state 'knowers' to public 'learners' and encourage reflection on both embodied experience and institutional representation, past and present.[5]

Such interventions have links with the 'material turn' of historical scholarship and subsequent popularity of incorporating objects into higher education teaching. This also relates to the current vogue for representations of the early modern Cabinet not only in museums but also across the broader art world.[6] However, such approaches have prompted intense debate in wider museological, educational and philosophical scholarship. In a museum context, for example, the category of 'Curious' is understood by some as sanitising, potentially working to purify violent histories of colonialisation and exploitation by removing curatorial responsibility from objects amassed by seemingly 'amateur' eighteenth-century collectors and naturalists. In the classroom, critics similarly worry over the potential promotion of singular, extraordinary objects, partial stories and set hierarchies of expertise or experience conditioned by the kinds of materials that tend to survive. There is a worry that these methodologies seduce by spectacle, and do not adequately support students in interrogating issues of power and control within the structures of appropriation and display that continue to draw a profit from these collections.[7]

Yet these issues are the ones that are at the heart of current research into the history of science and medicine in the eighteenth century and have, in essence, been debated in various ways since the formation of the earliest collections of natural knowledge. Engaging students with these discussions helps them to understand that Western scientific knowledge, despite historic claims by its supporters, was never created in controlled settings separate from society or without the efforts of a vast array of individuals and peoples from around the globe. It also speaks to urgent contemporary debates on the public understanding and institutional representation of this period of European expansion, exploitation and institutionalisation.

The reflections here are the result of many years of research and teaching in the history of early modern science and medicine and the history of collections but are specifically focused on the experience of teaching a first-year undergraduate course at the University of Chester in 2018–19, entitled ‘Collecting Nature: From Cabinets of Curiosity to the 21st Century Digital Display’. While this is just one story, and necessarily skewed towards my own research interest, this account is intended to be useful for thinking about how we, as teachers of the eighteenth century, grapple with the material, institutional, intellectual and cultural difficulties of our period of study and its heritage. It argues that the answer ultimately rests in how we can get students to engage with what Alice Procter has called ‘the dirt beneath the surface, where the money and power came from, and how these objects came to be chosen [for display] over others’.[8]

This course was first proposed by a permanent academic at the university who was subsequently awarded research leave and needed quick cover for their teaching. I then designed and delivered the course as a very precarious, ‘post-postdoc’ academic. I was undertaking a short-term, reimbursable research fellowship in one city and administrative work at a university in another, alongside a host of additional forms of employment. It ran for one year, and then both I and the permanent academic moved on to other institutions, and it was unfortunately not run again. This information is included as part of this chapter’s broader motivation to encourage focused attention on the practical, material and social contexts of research and learning throughout history. Deeper exploration is urgently required of all the ways in which academic (and student) precarity is affecting research and teaching in UK academia, often deepening existing structural inequalities. As the University and Colleges Union have repeatedly stated in successive strikes since 2018, backed up with a growing body of contemporary data and research: working conditions are learning conditions.[9] In this case, the students on the course were disappointed they were not able to continue developing their interests in these subjects beyond the first year.

Objects across time and space

As this chapter demonstrates, there is a great deal of value in being able to draw students into the long history of collections as pedagogic ‘contact zones’ – spaces of cultural interaction and negotiation, of both intellectual inspiration and social subjugation, where expertise might be constructed but also, crucially, endlessly contested.[10] Going beyond the singular object or Cabinet to teach the broad-ranging histories as well as local practices of Western collecting and display helps ground students in the inherent subjectivity of knowledge-making and learning at all levels of society and activity. In so doing, this pedagogical approach encourages the active exploration of the eighteenth century's complex contemporary legacies in a dynamic, inclusive and fundamentally self-reflexive way. Throughout the course in question, lectures and seminars explored the historical trajectory of objects and collections-based learning from early modern natural historical inquiry to nineteenth-century public education – essentially, from the Renaissance Cabinet of Curiosity to the 'encyclopaedic' collection and panoramic worldview of the modern world, as well as revisionist and postmodern contemporary criticism involving collections and their histories. This overarching temporal and thematic framework was designed to give students a foundation for understanding how social, economic and political contexts shaped scientific and social knowledge in the past, and allow them to interrogate this further in more dynamic, task-orientated sessions.[11]

Towards the end of the first term, students were asked as a group to use this knowledge to design their own three-room exhibition on early British histories of collecting and collections. They were given twenty-five examples of historical objects and images with varying amounts of accompanying information, including Robert Hooke's 1665 *Micrographia* engraving of a flea; Edward Tyson's pygmy skeleton; a narwhal horn in the collection of Museo Civico Medievale in Bologna; Mary Delany's 'Nymphaea Alba' collage; and Josiah Wedgwood's Cauliflower-ware teapot, as well as a whole host of other curiosities, prints and material (medical and otherwise) that could potential provide a way into the history of collections. Students were asked to conduct research on these items as a group and then select around ten to fifteen for inclusion in their exhibition, according to the narrative that they had designed together. The exhibition the students constructed saw the visitor travel through displays on natural and artificial 'rarities', through to objects of empirical investigation and attempts to systematise and popularise science and, finally, broader cross-cultural collecting and commerce. The students' exhibition prompted discussion about curatorial choice and audience, as well as what objects and stories are excluded from both historical record and museum narratives.

In another session, we discussed Neil MacGregor's BBC Radio 4 documentary, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, and listened together to the episode about the Hawaiian chieftain's feather helmet or mahiole seemingly obtained by Captain James Cook on his third voyage (1776–80). This is a significant object in the history of exploration and empire, given as a valuable gift from the Hawaiians as an apparent token of esteem only a few weeks before Cook was killed in his attempt to kidnap the ruling chief of the island, Kalaniʻōpuʻu-a-Kaiamamao, in a failed negotiation tactic. MacGregor discusses the value and sacred nature of the materials used in the helmet, and the ways in which materials and meanings may have been translated between the Hawaiians and the Europeans, as well as the significance of the object's historical and contemporary political resonance. While the object discussed by MacGregor is housed in the British Museum, and one of several collected on the voyage, the original feather helmet placed on Cook's head by Kalaniʻōpuʻu was given to the Dominion Museum in Wellington, New Zealand by Baron St Oswald in 1912. It was subsequently bestowed via long-term loan from the Bernice Pauahai Bishop Museum to the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, demonstrating the power of reconnecting objects of empire with their source communities.[12]

With this awareness of how an object might become transgressive in multiple ways by its movements into and out of collections, the students were then asked to devise similar presentations for assessment on museum objects discovered via engagement with museum websites. They were prompted to detail their original cultural and material values, the processes of their acquisition or display, and their changing meanings as they moved across different spheres of activity. One group, for example, chose The British Museum's platypus holotype with the missing skull. They explained its cultural significance for Aboriginal Australians, as well as how difficult it was for Europeans to categorise the animal: it was only accepted by the Western world as evidence of a real animal in 1799, when the British Museum's keeper of natural history, George Shaw, scientifically described it. The students also reflected on the creature's symbolic role in post-Second World War international relations. Another group chose the ubiquitous 'Feejeean mermaid' – another touchstone in histories of collecting and global exchange – and used it to explore the commercial dimension of collection-making and -showing, from seventeenth-century merchants and coffeehouse-men to 'the greatest showman' and subject of a recent popular film, P. T. Barnum. They also highlighted the prevalence of mermaid myths around the globe, and how monetarily and intellectually profitable it might be to engage with such symbolic histories. In this way, students were encouraged to think about cultural and temporal relativity and resonance when approaching both objects and collections, and they spontaneously situated these within their own ideas and experience.

Individual, local, national, global

Moving from the ideological and practical underpinnings of the collection, transportation and display of individual objects, the course then shifted its examination to the historical and political trajectories of different kinds of collections. Students were encouraged to think about how different collection histories reflect varying attitudes towards science, public education, region and nation, and have been deployed by different groups for different purposes throughout history. This shift was supported through physical visits to multiple collections where students were assisted in identifying and decoding each museum's organisation and architecture and encouraged to think further about the historiographical debates on empire, knowledge and power we had covered in class. Founded in 1839 as the UK's first teacher training college, the University of Chester does not possess its own collection – the highly varied and often unequal relationship between university heritage and resources and access to social and cultural capital will be addressed later on in this chapter – so instead we visited the city's Grosvenor Museum. The focus of this session was the relationship between museum collections and their geographical and social contexts.

Many smaller civic museums were founded with the collections gathered by local amateur societies and clubs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This means they often represent regional landscape, history and culture in a much more direct way than the collections found in large national museums (often established with the collections of one or more individual rich patrons). Not only that, but they also have different funding streams and relationships with their audiences as well as surrounding institutions of higher education. Learning about and exploring these aspects of the collection helps situate students within their specific localities of learning, and provides an overarching framework for understanding the relationship between the individual and the collective on the one hand, and local and national on the other. This is also something that might be usefully explored with regard to contemporary questions of crowdsourcing engagement activities by museums and, more broadly, the practice of 'citizen science' over time, both dynamic areas of current research.[13]

The changing relationships between museums and peoples was a key theme in this course. At the World Museum Liverpool, the class discussed the city's history as one of a number of wealthy ports built with the profits made through Britain's undeniable and significant involvement with the slave trade. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Liverpool scooped up the spoils of empire and pumped them into the industrial revolution, the influx of money and power contributing to distinctively rapid urban, social and intellectual development in this city, alongside many others, including Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol. This well-known history is deeply entwined with that of the development of public science and collections in the UK. As one example, the important Manchester surgeon, collector and hospital-builder Charles White was said by his contemporary Thomas De Quincey to have 'by one whole generation run before the phrenologists and craniologists – having already measured innumerable skulls among the omnigenous seafaring population of Liverpool, illustrating all the races of men' (see Figure 6.1).[14] White was an early architect of biological racism.

Like many other northern industrial cities, Liverpool was hit hard with aggressive deindustrialisation by successive Conservative governments from the 1970s onwards, with the resulting devastation at odds with its

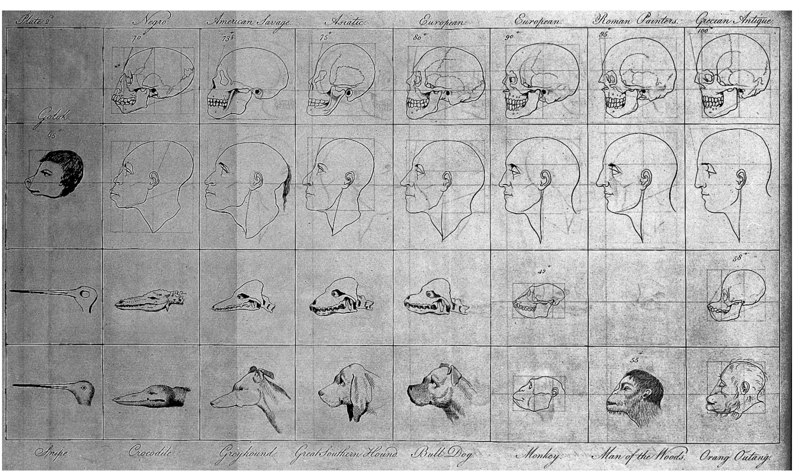

Figure 6.1: Fold-out from Charles White, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables* (London: Dilly, 1799). Wellcome Collection, Public Domain Mark.

former imperial splendour. This chequered history is evidenced in William Brown Street: named after the nineteenth-century MP and philanthropist who donated the land for the building of a public library and museum, it has recently been transformed by targeted regional renewal schemes, and has specifically benefited from Heritage Lottery funding. Liverpool has become a definitive example of 'culture-led regeneration' policies, where investments into infrastructure and creative economies deliberately combined with targeted public learning, community and arts engagement programmes have essentially transformed the city, its museums and its people. The opening of the International Slavery Museum (ISM) in 2007 is perhaps symbolic of this entwined urban and social history. Beginning life in the aftermath of the Toxteth riots of 1981 as a dedicated gallery space in the Merseyside Maritime Museum in 1994, the ISM has shifted from permanent display to permanent institution through activist projects and working with Liverpool's Black community. The ISM has, under the directorship of Dr Richard Benjamin, led proactive discussions of research and exhibition co-production, community partnership work and institutional articulations of the legacies of slavery and imperialism.[15]

Students were excited by their ability to actively link a museum's past and recent history to its contemporary role in local and national society, which they were able to divine from displays. So, for example, at the World Museum Liverpool, many of its African collections are displayed alongside a series of contemporary 'counterpoint' lino prints by Ghanian artist Atta Kwami, reframing and reworking sketches of some of the artefacts: the Royal Liver Building alongside a similarly shaped African comb, for example, or shapes taken from the Liverpool Docks alongside bright patterns reminiscent of Kente cloth. Students were encouraged to think whether and in what circumstances the inclusion of such artwork should be considered a form of celebration and representation, or a means to augment and, indeed, neutralise and essentially excuse the colonial African materials on display there. One student even connected this back to an earlier seminar on William and John Hunter's collections, the relationship between eighteenth-century science and art (William Hunter was the first professor of anatomy at the Royal Academy of Arts), and the linked investigations into the human body and the question of enlightened aesthetics.

More broadly, the students responded extremely well to the ties between historical themes and contemporary debates or social initiatives. Many of the most fruitful discussions were on diverse issues of inclusivity, representation and engagement. These were all, without exception, driven by the students themselves as they reflected upon syllabus topics using their own knowledge and critical reading of various forms of news media. So, for example, a session on early modern fossil-collecting and the careers of Mary Anning and Gideon Mantell, both important figures in the history of science but barred from formal inclusion and recognition, led to a debate on contemporary barriers to education, funding and advancement for both female and working-class scholars. Another session was on ‘Living Bodies to Objects of Scrutiny’ and involved the Hunters and their role in the development of collections-based surgical teaching and museum collections. Discussion here focused on the Charles Byrne and Sarah Baartman campaigns to remove their bodies from display, the broader impact of the Human Tissue Act of 2004 on museum ethics and repatriation efforts, and the growing field of disability history, something which excited the students very much.[16] Throughout the course, eighteenth-century issues and topics were demonstrated as linking directly to a variety of important and interesting contemporary cultural, political and ethical discussions, and the relevancy of the period was undeniable.

Breaking down barriers

Teaching in this way invites students to explore and reflect on all the many ways in which tenets of Western science, medicine and society have been constructed and expressed through museums over time, and how this is a key part of understanding broader economic, political and cultural systems and their entwined histories: colonialism and imperialism; slavery and racism; misogyny; class discrimination and working-class education; human zoos, freakshows and spectacles; state-sponsored genocide and the hoarding of human remains; the destruction of the environment; and so on. In doing so, it makes them alert to broader discussions of cultural management and curatorial responsibility in how these histories are either engaged with or ignored: ultimately, how hierarchies of power have been constructed in science and society, and the range of alternative perspectives which interact with them. This kind of teaching encourages critical examination of all outward-facing aspects of collection management and education: accessibility and diversity campaigns, art installations and radical re-readings, public education programmes co-produced with local or source communities, or otherwise created and then presented by the institution in question. Illuminating instances of apparent failure and the reception of criticism alongside more successful ventures, and encouraging conversation about the process, help make it clear that collections are not passive and neutral but active and contested sites, which can – but do not always – allow for the questioning of authority and the sharing of many different forms of expertise. They open up the conversation for students to respond emotionally, on their own terms and with their own prior knowledge, and then to reflect on their reactions, building critical self-awareness and an understanding of many different perspectives in the world around them, while simultaneously honing their ability to analyse and respond effectively to them.

This approach also encourages a greater understanding of the ecosystems of history, heritage and education, the societal forces that unite and divide, the links and the lacks. By exploring such histories, the students are situated within an ever-evolving relationships between museum collections, institutions of higher education and the various publics that engage with them. This reveals how contingent knowledge-making is and always has been; how access to and understanding of collections are subject to issues of geography, funding, audience, policy and politics, community action, and so on. Ultimately, this makes the structures of the world more visible and breaks down some of the real and imagined barriers between institutions of higher education and the world around them, as well as within 'The Academy' itself.[17] It provides explanations as to why some universities have their own museums while others do not, why some towns may have a thriving cultural sector and others do not, why some students appear to have access to greater social capital than others. In this way, intersecting inequalities can be identified and understood, and not merely accepted and thus perpetuated, unthinkingly and ad nauseam.[18]

The impact of this can be measured not only in abstract but also practical terms. For example, towards the end of our course, we travelled to the University of Manchester and were given a tour of the buildings and their histories by a Manchester Museum volunteer, Jemma Houghton, who at that time was also a PhD student at the Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine. Jemma was able to provide an overview of some active curatorial projects and collaborations and facilitate an encounter with the collections she supported, including pedagogical plaster plant models, wet specimens and nineteenth-century microscope slides. In doing this, she provided a direct example of how university hierarchies and structures can be broken down to give undergraduate students a greater sense of academic community and ownership, as well as a broader awareness of local collections (whether human, material or manuscript) and possibilities for their own future and development. At the end of this day, two of the students asked Jemma about volunteering opportunities at the museum (see Figure 6.2).

The individual, social and academic benefits of activities which help build this more holistic experience of research and play a role in personal and professional development are becoming increasingly apparent. There is a growing body of research on the importance of academic work which explores the creation and representation of university heritage, in whatever form that takes.[19] It also reflects broader trends within the Higher Education and GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum) sectors and the increasing emphasis placed by funding bodies on promoting the movement of knowledge and the transfer of skills across institutions and conceptions of research. The value of this is perhaps exemplified by the success of collaborative doctoral schemes (such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership, launched in 2012)

Figure 6.2: Photograph of Manchester Museum Collections encounter. Image credit: Alice Marples.

and the impact that these former students are having on the structures of historical research and teaching across diverse spaces, highlighting the many opportunities and challenges involved in collaborative research. Teaching the history of collecting in science, medicine and heritage in this way, then, actively places this kind of work in a long view from the early modern period to the present day. This encourages an appreciation of the history of research-driven education, in and of itself. It reinforces an awareness that knowledge has always been a composite of different interests, networks, influences and materials, made up of both formal and non-formal elements across a range of private and public spaces. It also demonstrates how this history has been represented in different ways to tell certain stories about self, society and nation, while excluding others, and asks how this might change in the future.

As well as complementing recent changes in how heritage and academic institutions engage with both their publics and their own workforces, this approach also suits the highly heterogeneous and blended way that most young people learn while directly imparting and promoting the information and digital literacy skills required to navigate contemporary society.[20] It encourages critical engagement with a variety of mediated sources both online and in real life. Sessions held in the IT Lab at Chester that focused on analysing museum websites, online exhibitions and even catalogue platforms were a (slightly surprising) success.[21] Prompting students to explore and articulate the potential objectives behind the participatory strategies of universities and museums, both online and offline, supports the understanding of them as active parts of society. Examining how these institutions engage with local communities and current affairs, and how this shapes their representation, helps demonstrate that learning and styles of learning are not just handed down but constantly being debated, experimented with and altered in response to the times. Similarly, getting students to reflect on their own pedagogical experiences – how they themselves respond to certain campaigns, certain articles, certain objects or displays – allows them to better articulate their needs and advocate for themselves and their ideas, better enabling them to deconstruct the world around them.

Conclusion

At a time when the colonial and imperial legacies of all institutions – museums and universities included – are under intense and extremely vital scrutiny, collections provide a rich ground for the kind of connective research and teaching required to engage students in the study of the eighteenth century.[22] This chapter has made the case that this approach should be a component of all history teaching, from the first year onwards, and not left to the third year, to separate public history modules or to MA studies. As Jim Bennett and many others have said, museums and other scientific collections are never neutral: and it is *because* of this that they are useful not only as objects of study but also as living resources for reflexive knowledge creation and communication across academic, curatorial and public interests.[23]

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Chapter 7

Teaching eighteenth-century classical reception through university museum collections

Lenia Kouneni

This chapter focuses on the process, challenges and benefits of using physical materials from museum collections of the University of St Andrews to teach eighteenth-century art and its engagement with archaeology and classical culture. The discussion will present the process of designing the module curriculum, the challenges it posed and the responses of the students; it will focus on the different ways museum objects were studied, displayed and utilised in order to enhance learning. This case study is a reflection on the practice of object-based learning (OBL) using museum and special collection objects to promote student engagement and understanding of concepts and ideas around classical reception. The discussion will also address the difficulties and possibilities of an object-based approach in the light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, considering the use of digital objects through newly developed digital tools.

OBL is a pedagogy based on active or experiential learning using objects to facilitate deep thinking.[1] This student-centred, inquiry-based approach for 'learning about, with and through objects'[2] is used increasingly by many academics across higher education (HE).[3] University College London museums have been leading the field of enquiry into OBL and its particular benefits for university programmes and have developed projects focusing on exploring the ways in which museum collections can enhance learning for HE students.[4] In OBL inquiry is focused on physical materials and sensory experience. Recent scholarly literature has endorsed the value of engaging with objects in making learning real; objects act as multi-sensory 'thinking tools' to inspire discussion and group work, promote lateral thinking, and ultimately deepen students' learning.[5] Objects motivate students to ask questions and to seek answers.[6] Students are generally enthusiastic when presented with real works of art, manuscripts or scientific equipment. They get far more excited and involved in front of real objects than reading a textbook. Objects have the power to create a 'wow' factor, as Kirsten Hardie has argued; they 'surprise, intrigue and absorb' students, adding fun to learning.[7] Research has also illustrated that 'object-handling has a long-lasting effect and relationship with memory'.[8] Haptic engagement with an object triggers emotion and aids memory retention.[9] Students and audiences who engage with actual objects are able to recall knowledge about them and their associated stories better than their peers exposed to digital surrogates.[10] Touching an object is 'a startlingly intimate act and can do more to connect a student with the ancient world than watching a dozen documentaries or sitting through 100 lectures'.[11]

This method forms the basis of my approach to teaching the eighteenth century and its reception of classical culture as part of an art history honours module entitled 'Classicism in Western Art: The Legacy of Greece and Rome'. Running annually, this module considers definitions of the classical, appropriations of classical forms and ideals, as well as changing attitudes to the past and the discipline of classical reception. A large part of the module focuses on the eighteenth century and its broader engagement with archaeology and classical culture. Classes consist of weekly lectures and seminars; the seminars are arranged in small groups of seven to ten students and they provide the ideal setting to experiment with teaching directly from objects. I designed these sessions to complement more formal learning based on lectures in order to create an environment that fosters students' inquisitiveness. These hands-on sessions are centred on specific objects from the museum collections of the University of St Andrews.

Since its foundation in the fifteenth century, the University of St Andrews has amassed collections for the purposes of teaching, research and display, as many British and European universities did.[12] From the second half of the seventeenth century, the university's historic collections were on display in the colleges and shown to visitors as part of a standardised tour.[13] The range of ethnographic, anthropological and natural history material entering the university expanded throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; this expansion relates to intellectual curiosity and to what Matthew Simpson refers to as the 'related culture of British imperialism'.[14] These diverse objects, collectively referred to as 'the Curiosities', were placed in the university library alongside literary tools for their interpretation, such as books on natural philosophy and manuscripts.[15] Their display in such a context emphasised the university's connections with patrons, staff and alumni, and its international links. In 1838, the university and the Literary and Philosophical Society of St Andrews jointly established the first formal museum in the United College buildings.[16] Displays in the Upper Hall in United College showcased the collections of mainly natural historical specimens but also anthropological and archaeological objects (Figures 7.1–7.2). This transfer of the 'Curiosities' collections out of the library context marked an important stage in the history and meaning of the university collections. The modern, rationally ordered displays in United College demonstrate a shift from a culture of 'Curiosities' and wonder to one of scientific inquiry. As Helen Rawson

Figure 7.1: Upper College Hall, North Street, St Andrews, looking east, c. 1910. Courtesy of the University of St Andrews Libraries and Museums, ID: StAU-BPMus-1.

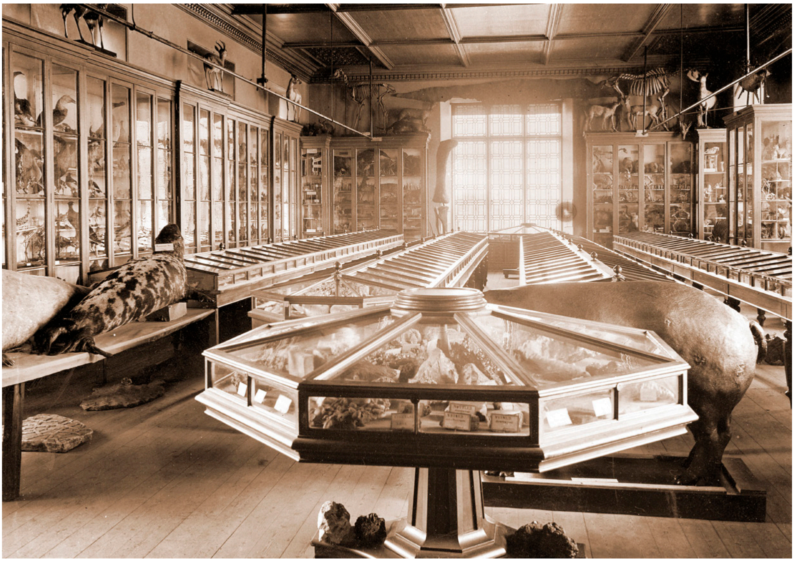

Figure 7.2: Upper College Hall, North Street, St Andrews, looking west, c. 1910. Courtesy of the University of St Andrews Libraries and Museums, ID: StAU-BPMus-2.

has argued, this change is associated with wider cultural shifts related to the Enlightenment and its legacy, British expansionism during the Age of Empire, and the development of modern science.[17]

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, there was increasing use of the university collection as a teaching resource for scientific subjects. This is not unique to St Andrews, of course; universities have been informally collecting since at least the mid-sixteenth century in order to support their teaching and research missions.[18] During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, university departments accumulated extensive collections, particularly concerning the study of art, archaeology and geology.[19] Many university collections were formed as an instrument to support teaching and were an integral part of student experience in the nineteenth century; they played an active part in explaining, describing and archiving nature and science.

In the early nineteenth century, following the decline of the Literary and Philosophical Society, the university assumed sole responsibility for the museum and its holdings, which in 1912 were transferred to the Bell Pettigrew Museum, funded by Elsie Bell Pettigrew in memory of her husband James Bell Pettigrew, Chandos Professor of Medicine

(1875–1908).[20] The Bell Pettigrew functioned as a university and public museum until the 1950s, when it was reduced to only its zoological collections; it still is today a rare survivor of an Edwardian zoological teaching museum and deeply embedded in departmental teaching. Collecting for teaching and research purposes has continued throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the fields of zoology, geology, archaeology, art and ethnography, among others. However, during the twentieth century object teaching and use of collections fell from popularity, not only in St Andrews but also around the world. It was only during the late twentieth century that universities and faculties started to look again at their collections with renewed interest.[21]

In the 1990s, the Museum Collections Unit was established in St Andrews with responsibility for all the university's artefact collections, from art, ethnography, archaeology and numismatics to the science collections, including anatomical, geological and zoological specimens. After a long developmental stage, a new museum, MUSA (Museum of the University of St Andrews), was opened to the public in 2008. Today, the university collections consist of about 115,000 objects from art, history, science and medicine, housed in three locations: the Bell Pettigrew Museum and the newly extended and refurbished Wardlaw Museum (the previous MUSA) and a dedicated collections centre. The university actively promotes these collections as 'active, and available for research and teaching'.[22] In addition to these, the university library's special collections hold printed books, manuscripts, photographs and the university archive. As part of a wide consolidation and digitisation project in order to raise the profile and functionality of the collections, a large part of these objects is available online through a dedicated site.[23] Although the rich and diverse range of the collections offer opportunities for teaching and research, the majority of staff and students are not familiar with the nature or extent of the university collections. This is not unique to St Andrews; it has been recognised that one of the main barriers to wider use of OBL in HE is a general lack of awareness by staff and students in institutions of their special collections.[24]

Having worked on the university collections for my research, I was aware of their potential and eager to explore them for use in the classroom. I thus redesigned 'Classicism in Western Art: The Legacy of Greece and Rome' to include seminars that would focus on object-based instruction. It has been a rewarding experience but one that also has had a few challenges. Locating material relevant to the eighteenth century and to the learning outcomes of each session was the first hurdle. As mentioned earlier, the online database does not include all the objects in the collections. It took considerable time to browse and talk to curators in order to come up with a list of objects I could use in my seminars. An institutional circumstance that proved beneficial for my module redesign was the integration of collection data across the university into a single online database, making it easier to locate material. More recently, a re-evaluation of internal governance structures led to the merging of libraries and museums, bringing them together into a new administrative institutional entity with common strategic planning approach and themes. This integration facilitates engagement with library and museum collections across the curriculum and offers more opportunities for contributions to teaching and learning across the university.

The logistical aspects of organising object-led seminars are also important to consider.[25] OBL is a collaborative endeavour requiring support and input from special collections librarians, curators and archivists. There were a number of decisions and preparations to make, from finding suitable rooms and deciding on table arrangements to confirming the availability of curatorial staff to source and transfer the objects. Specialist library and/or museum staff are present in these seminars and introduce students to safe ways to handle objects and historical documents. All seminar sessions take place in rooms where the students can spend time working in small groups of three or four, contemplating an object and sharing their thoughts, responses and ideas (Figure 7.3). Students generally felt that the layout of the room, with the desks set up in a U-shaped configuration, was effective, as they could move around to encounter the objects and their feedback noted 'the fun of being physically active instead of stagnant at desks'. While reading a book or listening to a lecture is a passive way of learning, OBL facilitates a more active encounter with objects.

Moving around the room, students are responsible for leading the sessions. OBL is participatory in principle and a practice based on – but also supporting – inclusive pedagogy. This approach enables a degree of autonomy and agency on behalf of the students, but it also means that as a teacher I had to shift from content expert to facilitator and find effective ways to support students with their enquiries. As one of the students observed, this method 'is more time consuming and less dense in its transmission of information than a standard lecture'. This comment speaks to what I consider to be two of the key challenges of OBL. Multi-sensory

Figure 7.3: Room and desk arrangement. Image credit: Lenia Kouneni.

analysis encourages slow, semi-structured learning; students need appropriate space and time. How as teachers do we fight the prevalent 'content tyranny' that encourages us to push through as much as possible in a session? OBL is not about placing an item in front of students and 'explaining' it to them, nor is it about handing them documents that will do so. Instead, the intention is to strive to engage students' senses and material literacy to draw out the complexities and long histories of objects.

Thus, before providing any information on specific objects, I ask students to talk with each other to attempt to define what it is they see when they look at the object in front of them. Our seminars start with a close looking exercise, examining, describing and sometimes even drawing the physical characteristics of the object, focusing on its materiality. Subsequently, students work together in groups to formulate questions around its use, meaning and interpretation, and they can search the internet for more information, if needed. This process of decoding an object helps students to develop transferable skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication.[26] Students recognise the benefits of this approach and their feedback described OBL as an exhilarating and refreshing way to learn that fosters collaboration and improves investigative and reasoning skills.

In order to demonstrate in a more concrete way how I use OBL within my practice and in the context of teaching eighteenth-century approaches to antiquity, I now provide two examples of specific seminar topics and objects. One of the object-based seminars focuses on the concept and experiences of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour. For this session, I brought together objects from the Special Collections and Museum Collections: a display case filled with eighteenth-century cameos collected by Grand Tourists and two travel journals. The case with intaglios is part of a group of six housed in the university collections without much information regarding their provenance (Figure 7.4).[27] The first comments and questions revolved around the physical properties of the wooden case, discussing its potential use. Students examined closely the plaster cameos, noticing their varying sizes and depicted themes and being particularly inquisitive about their modes of production. The discussion then moved to broader issues around eighteenth-century display practices, the relationship between producers and buyers, the reproduction of the material culture and imagery of antiquity for a contemporary audience, and the market for souvenirs.

Alongside these intaglios, students examined another type of 'product' of the Grand Tour: the travel diary. I brought to the classroom two travel journals that recorded the same journey: one written by James David Forbes, a geologist and principal of United Colleges, St Andrews, and one written by his sister, Jane Forbes. Their journals described the long

Figure 7.4: Students looking at impronte (plaster cameos). Image credit: Lenia Kouneni.

continental journey they took between July 1826 and July 1827. Students had an opportunity to examine them, turn their pages and consider them in the context of travel writing. But they also became witnesses to the different approaches and experiences of Jane and James, which prompted a discussion on gender. Even within the restricted time of the seminar, students indicated that Jane's journals present a feminine perspective compared to her brother's diaries, descriptions and drawings. Having the two next to each other, students could look closely at both text and image, and compare the descriptions of a female traveller to that of a male one.

Another seminar takes the form of a case study and centres on a local antiquarian, Lieutenant General Robert Melville (1723–1809). In 1791, General Melville wrote a letter addressed 'To the Rector, Principals and Professors of the University of the City of St Andrews' offering a medallion portrait of himself by James Tassie for display in 'a small space in your Public Library among the more valuable Donations there'.[28] Following a close reading of the letter, students considered Melville's motivations and the way he presented them (including his writing tone), but they were also eager to know more about the display of portraits in the university library during the late eighteenth century. With the assistance of one of the university curators who was present during the seminar, students uncovered the history of the collection of 'curiosities' formed in the university library and its growing pantheon of images of eminent men.

Together with the letter, students examined the medallion portrait created by James Tassie, focusing initially on its style inspired by classical models and its material, Tassie's invention of a new medium, the vitreous glass paste (Figure 7.5).[29] Discussion moved to broader issues around the rise of portraiture in the eighteenth century and patronage. As we delved deeper, students became interested in the life and career of the specific sitter and patron of this portrait. The Fife-born Robert Melville was an antiquarian, interested in the Roman period and a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, but he was also an army officer, colonial governor and inventor of two types of naval gun, the 'carronade' and 'melvillade'.[30] Melville was governor of Guadeloupe and in 1760 governor to the Ceded Islands (Grenada, Dominica, St Vincent and Tobago); he owned estates, including two large plantations and enslaved people. Thus, the objects of this seminar directed students to consider the colonial context for archaeological collecting, art patronage and antiquarian interest in the late eighteenth century. At the same time, these objects are undisputed manifestations of the imperial and colonial contexts for the collections at St Andrews and the involvement of Scotland (and Fife) in the British imperial project. When Tassie's medallion of Melville was displayed in the library, it was surrounded by weapons of war and a bust of George III, as visual evidence of the success of the Empire and its conquests.[31]

Figure 7.5: James Tassie, medallion portrait of Lieutenant General Robert Melville, vitreous paste, 1791. Courtesy of the University of St Andrews Libraries and Museums, ID: HC982.

Melville's letter and medallion gave students the opportunity to appreciate troublesome and entangled meanings, understand better complex and abstract concepts, such as imperialism and colonialism, and tackle legacies of enslavement and empire.[32] OBL can be a significant tool in disrupting, transforming and even decolonising collections. Teaching with such objects also contributes to the University Museums' Strategic Plan to address colonial histories and institutional legacies.[33] Part of this strategic objective is the project *Re-Collecting Empire*, which explores entanglements of cultures resulting from colonial encounters in the past, and how creative responses can add new dimensions to heritage objects through examining and re-telling their narratives.[34] The inclusion of objects linked to colonialism and empire in teaching not only raises student awareness of such issues but also furthers the university's processes of decolonisation.

When working with any collection, it is imperative that we acknowledge the impact of imperialism and colonisation. Biographies of objects and their interactions with collections are deeply revealing of colonial culture. University collections in Scotland create a space of learning that offers the possibility for revealing the many legacies of empire and slavery present in Scotland's heritage.[35] Placing these objects in front of students and allowing them to interrogate their materiality alongside their origins, meaning and histories is a useful approach in bringing new light to existing collections. Students realise the need to confront imperial legacies within the university collection and wider society. Within the context of growing calls to decolonise institutional spaces, OBL offers an example of how universities and museums can redeploy their cultural assets to support a more democratic, ethical and authentic representation of their collections, their purpose and their origins.[36]

Teaching with university collections often aligns and supports broader university strategies. An interesting aspect that students raised in their feedback is the personal connections that they felt they formed with the history of the university. The University of St Andrews highly values student experience and satisfaction.[37] It is a small university that fosters a sense of community and belonging in its students. Bringing into the classroom objects that are part of the university's heritage provides students with an opportunity to learn about institutional history and feel part of its long tradition. Beyond their didactic value, these objects and collections help form the identity of the university. They provide material evidence of institutional research and tangible proof 'of the evolution in knowledge and teaching which was taking place in the university in the past and continues to this day'.[38] Collection objects are thus central to the creation of a distinctive institutional identity.[39]

Although the University of St Andrews has two museums, the majority of the collections are stored in a collections centre and are currently underutilised and isolated from student life. Incorporating them into teaching allows them to be released from cabinets and storerooms, to populate tables and student attention, and to play a more dynamic and central role in university experience. Teaching with these objects – investigating, questioning and re-writing their narratives – builds new value and purpose into university collections.

After I organised these hands-on, physical interactions with objects for my seminars and ran them for a year, in spring 2020 I was faced with a challenge that I had not anticipated. The new, pandemic-adjusted teaching structure removed many of the opportunities to engage physically with the collection. This sudden shift affected the planning, organisation and implementation of all teaching activities. Object-based seminars were not possible in the format I had designed, but I was eager to attempt to adapt them to fit the new restrictions and learning realities of the pandemic. The most obvious solution was to employ a digital image. As argued earlier in this chapter, there are clear pedagogical advantages in direct object handling that involves all the senses in comparison to learning through digital surrogates. However, it is also worth noting that there is a long history of mediating objects. The photograph of the nineteenth-century display of the university collections in United Colleges shows objects inside cases that create tangible boundaries between objects and viewers/users. Teaching with these objects was often mediated through glass. In the present climate, the screen replicates the boundaries of glass cases, while enabling a new kind of experience. Discussions of the materiality of digital media have raised interesting issues around the literal, physical and networked qualities of digital artefacts and systems.[40] Digital museum objects have traditionally been described as surrogates and thus as lesser than their physical counterparts; they are, though, objects with their 'own materiality, aura and value'.[41]

Following the pandemic, museums have investigated how best to use online and digital collections in learning and engagement. The curatorial team of the University Museums was eager to explore digital technology as a means to enhance people's experience of the collection remotely and as a way to support teaching and digital delivery. The Director of Libraries and Museums of the University of St Andrews, Katie Eagleton, together with members of the University Museums in Scotland (UMIS) group, initiated a joint research project entitled 'Online teaching with digitised museum collections', supported by funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council.[42] At the same time, the Museums team and digital technology experts worked together to explore software that would provide an engaging and interactive experience in using museums and special collections digitally. The result was Exhibit, a digital tool that enables anyone to create interactive presentations with digitised material from the university (and other) collections, including 3D models, manuscripts, rare books, artworks and photographs. It is easy to use and can be shared or embedded in PowerPoint, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, WordPress and web pages.

With the support of the curatorial team, students enrolled in the 'Classicism in Western Art' module engaged in digital OBL. They were given links to specific objects from the online catalogue and I employed Exhibit as a teaching tool. For instance, I created a digital storytelling of a Grand Tour journal written in 1822 by Thomas Moody and illustrated with watercolours by Joseph Axe Sleap (1808–59). Exhibit allowed me to annotate passages and zoom in on details of the text and image, drawing students' attention to specific passages, images, techniques and details (Figure 7.6).[43] I also asked students to collaborate in small groups to research individual works and create their own exhibits for a selection of objects in the university collection. They all received training from the Library Application Services Manager on how to use Exhibit and support from the Collections curators. Students engaged with this exercise enthusiastically and reported that it increased their confidence in the use of digital tools to conduct visual analysis and tell stories about individual objects. They also emphasised that it made them feel more comfortable with navigating digital collections and archives and it enhanced their knowledge of the university collections. Moreover, Exhibit challenged them to be creative and write in a different way, prompting them to think about accessibility and communication. Students who participated in these digital object-based seminars engaged with individual objects in an experiential learning environment and acquired both subject-specific knowledge and transferable skills.

My experience during the last few years has shown that digital technologies are a good complement to learning with physical collections

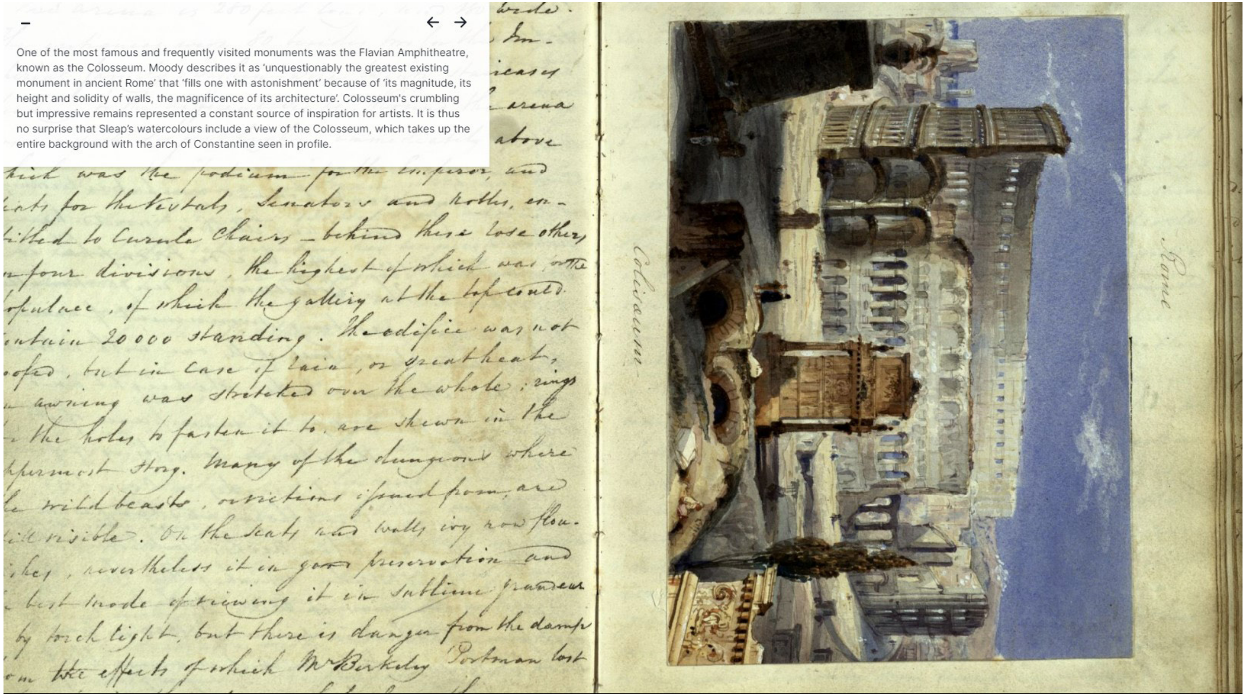

Figure 7.6: Screenshot of Exhibit (https://exhibit.so/exhibits/6YwhPoBWivhGsLXyO2Dw) featuring Thomas Moody, 'Journal of a tour through Switzerland and Italy in 1822', with twenty-four watercolour illustrations by Joseph Axe Sleap. Courtesy of the University of St Andrews Libraries and Museums, ID: msD919.M7E22 (ms229).

and serve as an important tool when access to the physical collection is restricted. Although engaging with physical objects is different to engaging with digital objects, both offer opportunities for learning. Aside from the context of the pandemic, digital images are an alternative to further challenges of OBL, including large class sizes, student-to-object ratio, suitability of classrooms, availability of curatorial staff and access to objects outside of class, to name just a few. Access to high-quality digital objects allows students to study them at their own pace and outside of class time. However, this experience also showed that digital collections and tools cannot replace the tangibility of the physical objects. There are some aspects and benefits of OBL that cannot be achieved through the use of digital images; students, for example, commented upon the value of being able to feel the weight of the object or its tactile details. On the other hand, digital images give students access to a larger number of objects and facilitate a different level of engagement with them; students can study them from home, they can use annotation tools and they can present their work in an engaging and accessible way.[44] Used in conjunction with physical encounters with the objects, digital objects extend the students' experience of the collection. They cannot be touched, smelled or felt in the same way that physical objects can, but it has been argued that they possess some type of matter.[45]

Now, more than ever, we need to think carefully and creatively about course design and delivery. We need to be able to continue to support, inform and enrich the learning of our students. OBL, either through direct engagement with objects, or working with digital images and tools, gives us an opportunity to create a more experiential, interactive experience. It encourages students to participate actively, take control of their learning, learn from one another and foster an academic community. The immersive nature of the OBL experience leads students to explore their own attitudes towards their learning. It also introduces them to the rich history of university collections and fosters future collection advocates.

Notes

1 The bibliography on OBL is extensive; a valuable resource focusing on higher education is *Engaging the Senses: Object-Based Learning in Higher Education*, ed. by Helen J. Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan (London: Routledge, 2015), which brings together contributors from universities and museums across the world and presents a comprehensive exploration of OBL as a pedagogy for higher education.

2 Scott G. Paris, *Perspectives on Object-Centered Learning in Museums* (Mahwah, NJ: Routledge, 2002), p. xiv.

3 In 2013, more than 700 university courses were taught in the United Kingdom using university museum collections: Liz Hide, UMG (University Museums Group) and UMIS (University Museums in Scotland), *Impact and Engagement: University Museums for the 21st Century* (University Museums Group and University Museums in Scotland, 2013), http://universitymuseumsgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/UMG-ADVOCACY-single.pdf (accessed 14 June 2022).

4 Helen J. Chatterjee, 'Staying Essential: Articulating the Value of Object Based Learning', *University Museums and Collections Journal*, 1 (2009), 37–42; Chatterjee, 'Object-Based Learning in Higher Education: The Pedagogical Power of Museums', *University Museums and Collections Journal*, 3 (2010), 179–81; Rosalind Duhs, 'Learning from University Museums and Collections in Higher Education: University College London (UCL)', *University Museums and Collections Journal*, 3 (2010), 183–6; Leonie Hannan, Rosaling Duhs and Helen J. Chatterjee, 'Object Based Learning: A Powerful Pedagogy for Higher Education', in A. Boddington, J. Boys and C. Speight (eds), *Museums and Higher Education Working Together: Challenges and Opportunities* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 159–68; Thomas Kador, Leonie Hannah, Julianne Nyhan, Melissa Terras, Helen J. Chatterjee and Mark Carnall, 'Object-Based Learning and Research-Based Education: Case Studies from UCL Curricula', in *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Perspective from UCL*, ed. by Jason P. Davies and Norbert Pachler (London: UCL Institute of Education Press, 2018), pp. 156–76.

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6 Pam Meecham, 'Talking about Things: Internationalisation of the Curriculum through Object-Based Learning', in Chatterjee and Hannan (eds), *Engaging the Senses*, pp. 77–94.

7 Kirsten Hardie, *Innovative Pedagogies Series: Wow – The Power of Objects in Object-based Learning and Teaching*. Report from Higher Education Academy, 2015.

8 Devorah Romanek and Bernadette Lynch, 'Touch and the Value of Object Handling: Final Conclusions for a New Sensory Museology', in Helen J. Chatterjee (ed.), *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), pp. 275–86 (p. 284).

9 Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and Their Visitors* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 145; Judy Willcocks, 'The Power of Concrete Experience: Museum Collections, Touch and Meaning Making in Art and Design Pedagogy', in Chatterjee and Hannan (eds), *Engaging the Senses*, pp. 43–56.

10 Andrew Simpson and Gina Hammond, 'University Collections and Object-Based Pedagogies', *University Museums and Collections Journal*, 5 (2012), 75–81; Rebecca Sweetman, Alison Hadfield and Akira O'Connor, 'Material Culture, Museums, and Memory: Experiments in Visitor Recall and Memory', *Visitor Studies*, 23, no. 1 (2020), 18–45.

11 Anne Tiballi, 'Engaging the Past: Haptics and Object-Based Learning in Multiple Dimensions', in Chatterjee and Hannan (eds), *Engaging the Senses*, pp. 57–75.

12 Ian Carradice, 'Funding and Public Access through Partnership with Business', in Melanie Kelly (ed.), *Managing University Museums: Education and Skills* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001), pp. 133–43. St Andrews was Scotland's first university and the third in the British Isles. Teaching began in 1410; full university status was obtained in 1413 with the signing of the Bull of Foundation by Pope Benedict XIII. See Ronald G. Cant, *The University of St Andrews: A Short History* (St Andrews: University of St Andrews, 1992), pp. 1–7.

13 Helen C. Rawson, 'Treasures of the University: An Examination of the Identification, Presentation and Responses to Artefacts of Significance at the University of St Andrews from 1410 to the Mid-19th Century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of St Andrews, 2010), pp. 37–44.

14 Matthew Simpson, '"You Have Not Such a One in England": St Andrews University Library as an Eighteenth-Century Mission Statement', *Library History*, 17, no. 1 (2001), 41–56 (51).

15 Matthew Simpson, 'St Andrews University Library in the 18th Century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of St Andrews, 1990), pp. 12–15 and appendix 1: List of curiosities in the possession of the St Andrews University Library.

16 William C. McIntosh, *Brief Sketch of the Natural History Museum of the University of St Andrews* (St Andrews: University of St Andrews, 1913); Simpson, 'St Andrews University Library', pp. 11–12.

17 Rawson, 'Treasures of the University', pp. 267–77.

18 Geoffrey D. Lewis, 'Collections, Collectors and Museums: A Brief World Survey', in J. M. A. Thompson (ed.), *Manual of Curatorship* (London: Butterworths, 1984), pp. 7–22; Patrick J. Boylan, 'Universities and Museums: Past, Present and Future', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 18, no. 1 (1999), 43–56; Marta C. Lourenço, 'Contributions to the History of University Museums and Collections in Europe', *Museologia*, 3 (2003), 17–26.

19 Chatterjee, 'Object-Based Learning in Higher Education'.

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21 Kate Arnold-Forster, '"A Developing Sense of Crisis": A New Look at University Collections in the United Kingdom', *Museum International*, 52, no. 3 (2000), 10–14; Dan Bartlett, Nicolette Meister and William Green, 'Employing Museum Objects in Undergraduate Liberal Arts Education', *Informal Learning Review*, 124 (Jan./Feb. 2014), 3–6.

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25 Joe Cain, 'Practical Concerns when Implementing Object-Based Teaching in Higher Education', *University Museums and Collections Journal*, 3 (2010), 197–201 is very useful.

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28 University of St Andrews, 'Letter from General Robert Melville Presenting a Medallion of Himself to the University', UYUY459/A/20, https://collections.st-andrews.ac.uk/item/letter-from-general-robert-melville-presenting-a-medallion-of-himself-to-the-university/763068 (accessed 28 April 2023).

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30 'A Biographical Sketch of General Robert Melville of Strathkinness: Written by His Secretary With notes by Evan W. M. Balfour-Melville and General Robert Melville', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 14, no. 54 (Jan. 1917), 116–46.

31 Simpson, 'You Have Not Such a One', 48–9 discusses the expansion of British trade and the British Empire, and the symbolism of the 'weapons emblematically laid down and inert' in the University Library before the bust of the king and portrait of Melville.

32 On OBL and decolonisation, see Lainie Schultz, 'Object-Based Learning, or Learning from Objects in the Anthropology Museum', *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 40, no. 4 (2018), 282–304 and Catherine Kevin and Fiona Salmon, 'Indigenous Art in Higher Education: "Palpable History" as a Decolonising Strategy for Enhancing Reconciliation and Wellbeing', in Thomas Kador and Helen Chaterjee (eds), *Object-Based Learning and Well-Being* (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 60–78.

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35 Emma Bond and Michael Morris (eds), *Scotland's Transnational Heritage: Legacies of Empire and Slavery* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023) outlines some of the many legacies of empire, trade and slavery and offers a range of practical and intellectual methods to help diversify the stories we tell about those legacies.

36 See also Garth Benneyworth and Lourenço C Pinto, 'Sol Plaatje University as a Case Study for Decoloniality: Object-Based Learning as Applied to Heritage Studies', *South African Museums Association Bulletin*, 4, no. 1 (2019), 1–9 and Christina J. Hodge, 'Decolonizing Collections-Based Learning: Experiential Observation as an Interdisciplinary Framework for Object Study', *Museum Anthropology*, 41 (2018), 142–58.

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43 You can find the Exhibit at this link: www.exhibit.so/exhibits/6YwhPoBWivhGsLXyO2Dw (accessed 31 January 2024).

44 Olivia C. Frost, 'When the Object Is Digital: Properties of Digital Surrogate Objects and Implications for Learning', in R. Parry (ed.), *Museums in a Digital Age* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 72–85.

45 Paul M. Leonardi, 'Digital Materiality? How Artifacts without Matter, Matter', *First Monday*, 15, no. 6 (2010).

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