

Saturday May 22, 2010  
**Teaching Professor Conference, Boston, May 21-23, 2010**

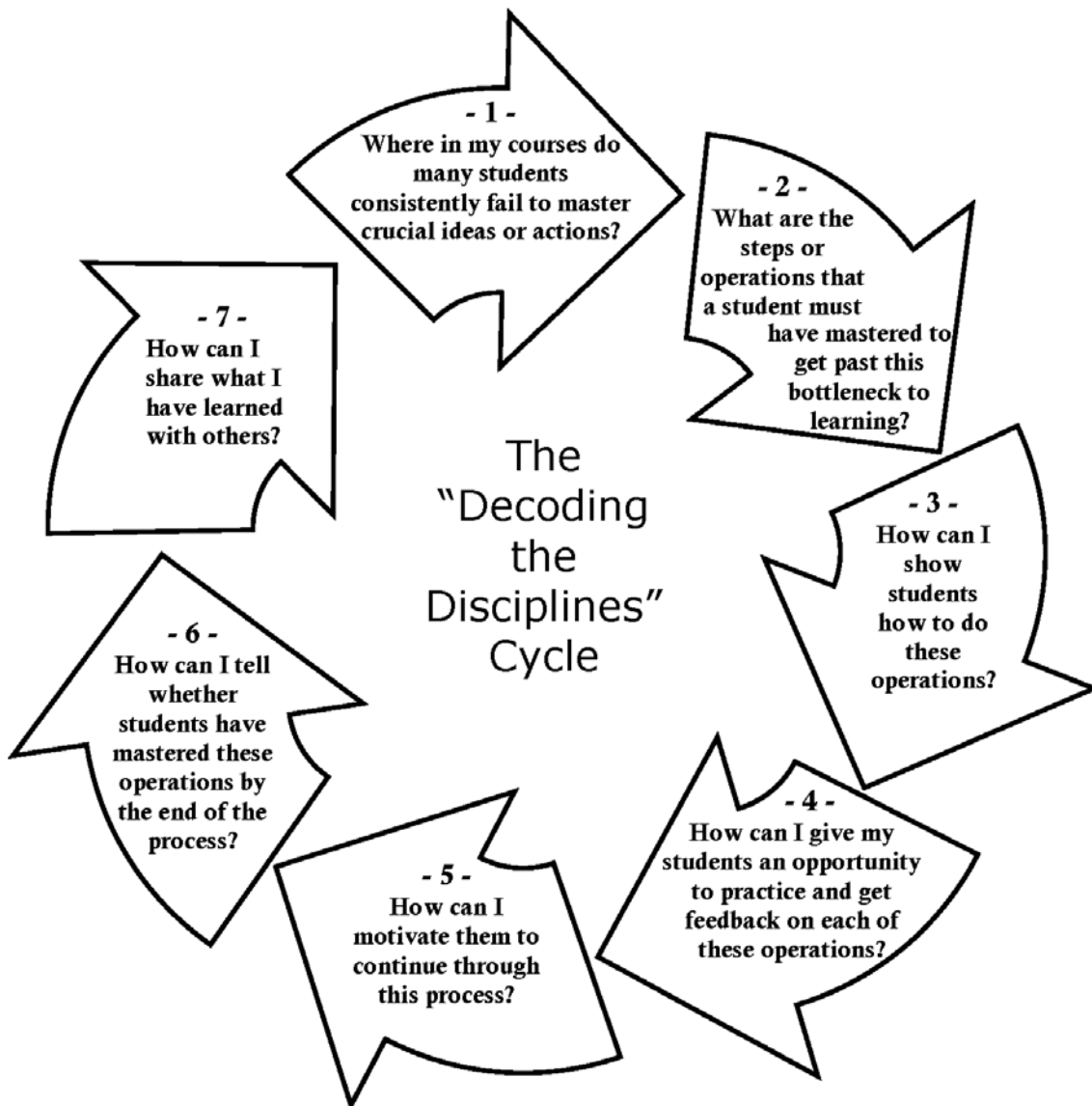
## **The History Learning Project Decodes a Department: Saying Farewell to Solo Practice**

**Leah Shopkow**

- I. An Introduction to the History Learning Project
  - Handout 1: The “Decoding the Disciplines” Cycle
  
- II. Defining Student Difficulties (the “Bottlenecks”)
  - Video: Two Bottlenecks in History
  - Handout 2: Table of Bottlenecks in History
  - Question: What are the common student difficulties in your discipline that scholars in your discipline would agree upon?
  
- III. The Revelations of Collective Data
  - Handout 3a: Survey Instrument
  - Handout 3b: Data on responses
  - Handout 3: Work Clouds (Frequency Table)
  - Handout 4: Draft Argument Tree
  
- IV. Moving Beyond Solo Practice
  - Handout 5: Excerpt from Developmental Curriculum
  - Question: What strategies could you use to get your colleagues to engage with you in collaborative work about improving the quality of student learning?
  - Handout 6: References

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## Decoding the Disciplines



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## Handout 2

### Frequency of Bottlenecks in Interviews With 17 Faculty Members from the History Department

Compiled by Arlene Díaz

<b>Bottlenecks</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Nature of the Historical Discipline</b>		38	27.7
Understanding History as a discipline	19		
Developing and evaluating historical arguments	6		
Recreating historical context	13		
<b>Affective Bottlenecks</b>		35	25.5
Maintaining appropriate emotional distance	1		
Overcoming affective roadblocks	21		
Willingness to wait for answer to emerge	4		
Tolerating ambiguity and complexity	9		
<b>Primary Sources</b>		26	18.9
Interpreting primary sources	13		
Seeing artifacts from the past as the product of human choices that change over time	11		
Employing effective research methods	2		
<b>Analysis</b>		19	13.8
Moving back and forth between evidence and analysis	3		
Seeing people another time and place as people	15		
Understanding historical change	1		
<b>Reading</b>		14	10.2
Understanding how to read a textbook	4		
Learning to read critically	4		
Distinguishing main and secondary arguments and points	5		
Knowing how to skim books	1		
<b>Writing</b>		3	2.2
Developing an appropriate historical voice	3		
<b>Other</b>		2	1.5
Using appropriate language	1		
Understanding notions of Time	1		
<b>Total</b>	137	13	100.0

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### Handout 3a

#### Pre-Class History Assessment

*Please answer the questions below in **pencil** on the purple scan sheet. Please put your name on the sheets. Your name will be used to assign a number to your pre-test and post-test; your name and your answers will be kept confidential. Your instructor will only receive the tabulated results for the entire class, correlated by the randomly assigned number.*

*Do not worry if you have difficulty with any of the items. We are conducting a study of the way that college students learn history, not measuring your knowledge. Your thoughtful response to the following questions will help us teach history better in the future.*

- 1) How many college history classes have you previously taken?
  - a) 0
  - b) 1
  - c) 2
  - d) 3 or more
  
- 2) What is your year in college?
  - a) Freshman
  - b) Sophomore
  - c) Junior
  - d) Senior
  
- 3) What is your major? (If undeclared, leave blank.)
  - a) History
  - b) Humanities (English, Languages, Arts, etc.)
  - c) Business, SPEA, Education, or other Professional Program
  - d) Natural Science or Math
  - e) Political Science, Economics, or other Social Sciences
  
- 4) When you have two historical sources that conflict, how do you use them in a paper?
  - A. I follow the one that makes the most sense because it is more likely to be right
  - B. I include information from each one to make sure I'm not missing anything
  - C. I figure out why the sources conflict and include that in my paper
  - D. I select the information from each that matches the historical context
  - E. I decide which one is right and use that one in my paper
  
- 5) How do you analyze a first-hand account of a historical event?
  - A. Focus primarily on the facts contained in the document.
  - B. Ask questions such as who created it, when, and why?
  - C. Decide whether it provides a true account of what happens
  - D. Stick to what the document tells you
  - E. Gather all the written sources you can find

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6) Faced with diametrically opposed opinions of two individuals in the same historical period, my task is to:

- A. Pay more attention to the one that is closer to the course topics
- B. Judge which position is correct
- C. Concentrate on the ways that the two positions are really the same
- D. Just present the conflict as it is
- E. Understand why each individual might have thought in his/her way

7) When you are asked to identify an author's argument in a history essay or book you:

- A. Describe what the piece of writing is about
- B. Determine what position the author is advocating
- C. Identify the sources the author used
- D. Summarize the contents of the writing
- E. All of the above

8) Did your understanding of history change this semester?

- a) I used to think...
- b) Now I think...

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**Handout 3b**

**Fall 2008 Pre and Post Assessments Means**

Each answer had an assigned value of 0 to 4. Here, you will see the mean “answer” (value) for each question. For the whole assessment, the possible range is 0 to 16.

How many history courses previously taken		Two historical sources that conflict, how do you use them in a paper?		How do you analyze a first-hand account of a historical event?		Faced with opposed opinions of two individuals in the same historical period, my task is to:		When asked to Identify and author’s argument in a history essay or book you:		Assessment Total	
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
None	Mean	3.09	3.13	2.83	3.24	3.34	3.53	3.22	3.20	12.37	13.09
	N	355	354	355	355	350	355	351	355	356	355
	Std. Deviation	1.408	1.321	1.331	1.206	1.214	1.053	.552	.521	2.799	2.488
1 course	Mean	3.25	3.43	2.93	3.36	3.38	3.53	3.28	3.16	12.76	13.48
	N	97	96	97	96	96	96	96	96	97	96
	Std. Deviation	1.225	1.064	1.277	1.162	1.145	1.095	.495	.466	2.577	2.062
2 courses	Mean	3.27	3.17	3.06	3.68	3.54	3.75	3.11	3.15	12.97	13.75
	N	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71
	Std. Deviation	1.287	1.363	1.182	.824	1.012	.788	.494	.402	2.552	2.322
>3 courses	Mean	3.38	3.29	3.39	3.53	3.56	3.71	3.24	3.21	13.47	13.75
	N	210	211	211	211	209	211	208	211	211	211
	Std. Deviation	1.152	1.291	1.087	.967	1.046	.877	.529	.504	2.510	2.428
Total	Mean	3.21	3.22	3.03	3.38	3.43	3.60	3.22	3.19	12.80	13.39
	N	733	732	734	733	726	733	726	733	735	733
	Std. Deviation	1.307	1.287	1.264	1.112	1.142	.990	.534	.498	2.703	2.418

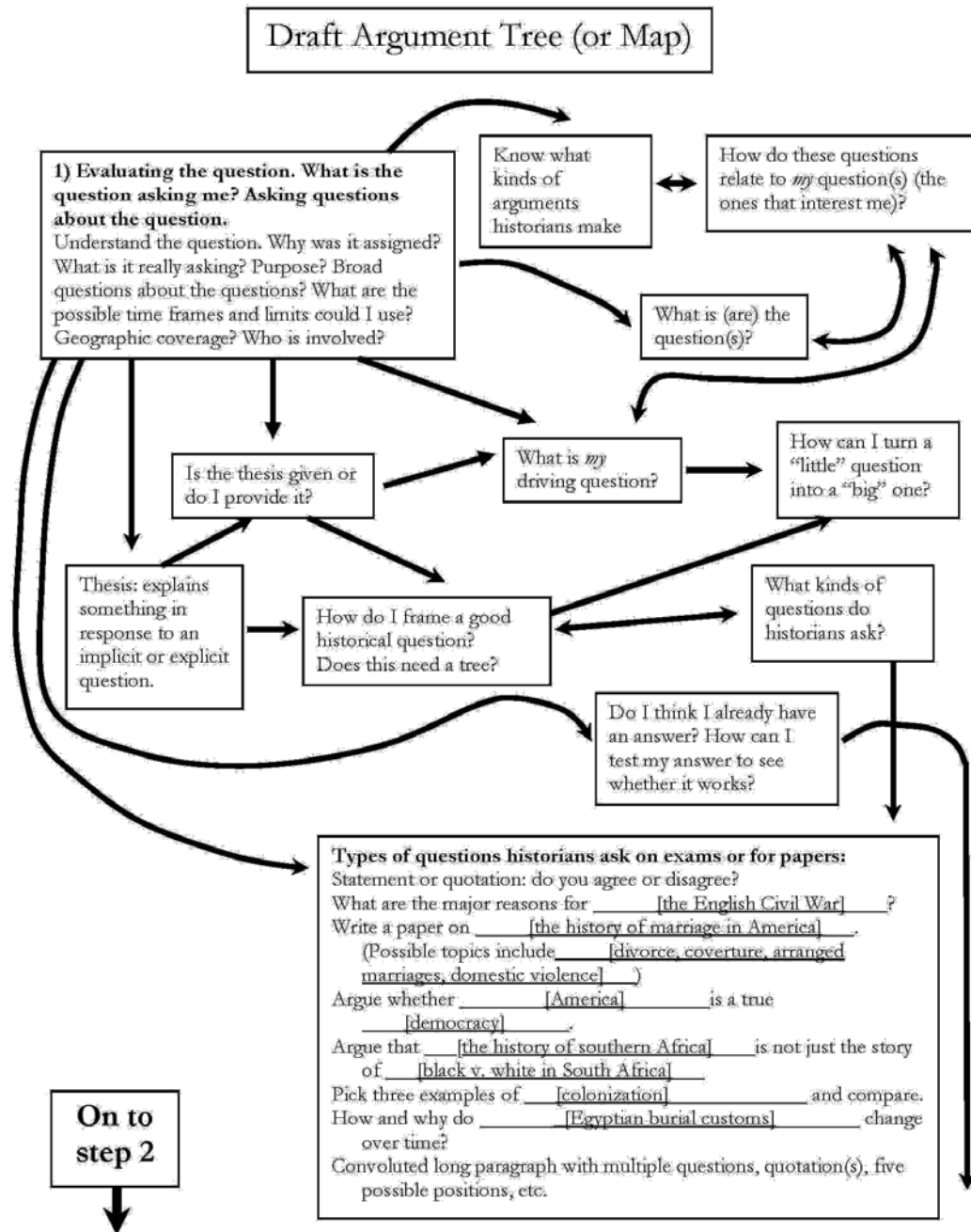
Source: History Learning Project, Survey of 19 history courses, Fall 2008.



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## Handout 4



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## Handout 5

### Prototype Developmental Curriculum (Adopted in Principle by IU History Department)

<i>Level of Thinking<sup>i</sup></i>	<b>100 Level</b> [ <i>Comprehend/ Recognize</i> ]	<b>200 Level</b> [ <i>Interpret/ Apply</i> ]	<b>300 Level</b> [ <i>Explain/ Evaluate</i> ]	<b>400 Level</b> [ <i>Create</i> ]
Nature of Historical Discipline & Analysis	<p>Learn about the interpretative nature of the historical discipline (vs. idea of a history as a compilation of facts and dates).</p> <p>Students will learn to distinguish between broader themes, evidence and opinions in texts, and an appreciation for the complexity of both change and continuity over time.</p>	<p>Expand understanding of the interpretative nature of the historical discipline by illustrating how historians make interpretations of the past using primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>One major aim of the courses at this level is to interpret specific examples in terms of broader themes/context/processes. Students should be able to recreate historical context.</p>	<p>Appraise historical interpretations.</p> <p>Students will evaluate different interpretations and historical materials for a single historical problem. Should be able to compare a range of perspectives or viewpoints that arise from looking at a series of documents</p>	<p>Synthesize multiple historical interpretations and possibly group them by school of thought.</p>
<i>Bottlenecks &amp; Difficulties for Students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Thinking of history as a compilation of unrelated dates and facts, not as a method to interpret the past.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Distinguishing main and secondary points in readings. This is also an issue when taking notes in lecture.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Understanding historical change</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Because students do not see the role of history or of the historians as that of interpreting, deriving meaning from the past, they do not see history as a subjective discipline where arguments are based on the interpretation of evidence.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Identifying with people from another place and time.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Understanding notions of time.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Seeing artifacts from the past as representing human choices that change over time.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>History should provide a "truth" in the view of many students. Thus, many do not understand why they need to evaluate different arguments about a problem of the past. They see themselves as unsuited to provide their own insight/opinion on an issue.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Dealing with ambiguity in sources</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Unwilling to wait for an answer to the problem studied.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>The interpretative nature of History implies that there will be different interpretations and that the assumptions/theoretical perspectives followed by scholars can be actually grouped by school of thought. These interpretations and school of thoughts on an issue do change over time. This historiographical perspective entails a higher understanding of the interpretative nature of the discipline on students, which many majors lack.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>when sources are ambiguous, they are unwilling to both wait for an answer to the problem studied, and to accept the</i></li> </ul>

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				<i>contingency of it.</i>
Dealing with Evidence: Primary sources	Discriminate between a primary and a secondary source and their uses in research. Learn how to analyze/learn to question a primary source will be explicitly emphasized in these courses: Who wrote it, when, why, audience, historical context, inferences that can be drawn from it, etc. In other words, students will comprehend how to extract information from documents and relate it to broader course theme(s).  Recognize the place, time and human agency behind the production of a primary source.	Interpret the human agency within the context of how an artifact from the past was produced and of the times in which people lived.	Evaluate the trustworthiness of sources. Students will be expected to compare and contrast <u>diverse</u> and potentially conflicting primary sources for a single historical problem.	Develop relationships among multiple sources and synthesize the major connecting issues among them.
<i>Bottlenecks &amp; Difficulties for Students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Recognizing the variety of primary sources and interpret them.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Recreating historical context and connecting it to a document.</i></li> </ul> <i>Beginning to empathize with people from another place and time.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Recreating historical context and connecting it to a document.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Identifying, empathizing with people from another place and time.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Dealing with ambiguity and contradiction in historical sources</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Recognizing major points in primary and secondary sources.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Producing some sense connecting multiple sources by themselves.</i></li> </ul>

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### Handout 6

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### Links

American Association of Colleges and Universities Value Rubrics

<http://www.aacu.org/value/index.cfm>

Carl Weiman Science Education Initiative <http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/>

Force Concepts Inventory: <http://modeling.asu.edu/R&E/FCIforw.html>

Freshman Learning Project <http://www.indiana.edu/~teaching/communities/flpindex.shtml>

History Learning Project: <http://www.iub.edu/~hlp/>

Lesson Study Project <http://www.uwlax.edu/sotl/lsp/>

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