One of my colleagues argues that if an anthropologist from Mars landed on our campus and tried to figure out the purpose of a college education, she might conclude that it was to learn how to take blue book examinations. That quip deserves attention because it raises some crucial questions: What do we expect our students to be able to do intellectually, physically, or emotionally as a result of taking our courses? What kind of sustained and substantial difference can we make in the way they think and act? Furthermore, how can we best help and encourage them to achieve certain reasoning abilities, answer certain questions, develop particular intellectual habits or perspectives? How and what can we know about their progress in doing any of these things (How will we evaluate them? How will we evaluate our efforts to help and encourage them to "learn"?)?

In recent months I have wrestled with these questions and have discovered that answers do not come easily. We are too accustomed to speaking about what we plan to do in a course, too comfortable with seldom articulated assumptions about what students should be able to do intellectually, and too familiar with the vague little phrases that often litter our discussions of learning objectives ("learning the material" "thinking critically" "engaging the subject matter" "learning to feel comfortable with the material" "taking it to a higher level"). Even the notion of "knowing" the material lacks precision. Surely it implies more than the intellectual equivalent of remembering telephone numbers. But what? Just as surely it implies different outcomes in different classes. In one it might mean the ability to recall information; in another, merely to recognize it (to determine the "real" expectations, look at the tests and the way papers are graded--not at what professors might claim). Sometimes professors want students merely to comprehend interpretations (to be able to express pre-existing ideas in their own words); other times, they may expect them to apply information to the solution of some problem or to analyze arguments, synthesize evidence from a variety of sources into conclusions of their own, and even to evaluate conflicting views. In still others, they may require students both to remember particular information and to recognize its relevance in solving certain problems.

If we cannot spell out with considerable precision and detail what we expect intellectually, students must guess what counts as good work while we must chose teaching methods arbitrarily. Our discussions of pedagogy will likely concentrate on techniques, on a "bag of tricks," rather than on the intellectual definitions of our courses,
and we will struggle with how to define and evaluate good teaching, often emphasizing evidence about an instructor's presentations over signs of students' intellectual growth. With seemingly little to discuss about teaching except this or that strategy, scholars will naturally grow weary of any pedagogical matters.

In this essay I try to develop an examination of teaching that treats our courses as serious intellectual inventions, as serious as the scholarship we produce; that begins with questions about how we hope to change the way students think, act, or feel; and continues with inquires about the methods for best doing so--inquires that confront both our concepts of what it means to learn our disciplines and our notions about how people do learn. I am still not satisfied with the answers I have derived, but I offer my tentative conclusions to open the discussion and to illustrate a strategy that promises considerable reward for higher education. With that strategy we can develop a systematic approach to teaching history--or any other subject--beginning with what we want students to be able to do intellectually, continuing with ways to help and encourage them to achieve those abilities, and concluding with how and what we can know about their progress in doing so (How will we evaluate them? How will we evaluate our ability to help and encourage them to achieve those abilities?) I offer this essay not to prescribe a better way to teach my discipline (history) but to open a discussion and to illustrate how that dialogue might progress, a conversation that can improve our efforts to help students learn.

**Defining Learning Objectives**

Fundamentally, I want my students to be able to **judge historical questions** well (what happened, why it happened, what difference it made, what it reflects, what it produced, what it represents, what it was like, etc.). How will they make those judgments? In an ideal world, they might do original historical research, collect the evidence, and make their decisions. That, however, is unrealistic. Not even the professional historian can dig into the archives on every important question. Thus, I compromise. I assume that if they cannot do exhaustive research in the raw data of history, they can make the best judgments if they learn to read and evaluate historical scholarship, to assess different, sometimes conflicting, claims and arguments about the past. I also want them to **appreciate the significance** of the questions we are exploring together, to **formulate their own meaningful questions** about history, and to develop what I will call a "historical perspective."

I suspect these are fairly standard (although not universal) expectations, but they are still fairly general. Let's describe the specific intellectual abilities involved, beginning with the notion of "historical perspective." For me, historical perspective includes **at least two assumptions**, one intellectual habit, and two abstract intellectual capacities. When people have a historical perspective, they assume, as Ralph Lynn put it, that "people are people are people." Historical forces, not some defective or superior tribal gene, determine differences in the way various societies act. That "history" includes the experience of living in a certain geography, as well as all the political, cultural, economic and other institutions and trends that emerge. Second, they assume that all human matters (institutions, cultures, beliefs, and so forth) have a history; that is, they have a beginning
and probably will have an ending. Few, if any, aspects of human affairs are permanent--except humans. Everything changes. Changes have causes. White men are not naturally racists. The idea of race had a beginning and it sprang, not by accident, but from clearly identifiable causes (which we may struggle to identify and even develop conflicting attempts to do so). Because of changes, societies differ. The assumptions we make, the conclusions we draw about one place and time may not fit another. Such a perspective can, in turn, help students develop a kind of hypothetico-deductive reasoning ability; that is, the capacity to imagine and understand a world different from their own and to develop alternate hypotheses and draw conclusions based on that understanding. With a historical perspective, people always look for historical assumptions in the assertions and arguments others make about human affairs. When my students think about human affairs, I want them habitually to ask, What do I assume about history in drawing this conclusion, or even in asking this question? I want them to have a renewed appreciation for the power that historical assumptions have over the way people think and act, even for those who claim ignorance about the past. Finally, to build a historical perspective, humans must develop the mental capacity to imagine the passage of time. While I think it is possible to help students accept the assumptions and develop the habits and the hypothetico-deductive reasoning, I believe that humans can comprehend "historic time" only as the brain matures, and there is nothing I can do to speed up that process.

Because I assume that an evaluation of historical scholarship will help people make good judgments about historical questions, my students must learn to read and understand such interpretations. To understand an interpretation, they must, of course, know the central questions it tries to address and be able to put those questions and the resulting conclusions into their own words in ways that are consistent with the author's intended meaning. I think it also means that they are able to recognize and analyze the arguments that an author offers to support a conclusion. To analyze, they must be able to distinguish supporting evidence from conclusions. They must be able to distinguish between different types of evidence (primarily between observation and inference, between established fact and subsequent conjecture). They must clearly and explicitly recognize gaps in available information and the kinds of evidence useful in further evaluation of an interpretation. They must recognize when they reach a conclusion without complete information (usually the case in history) and be able to tolerate the ambiguity and uncertainty. They must recognize when one is taking something on faith. Full comprehension must also include an understanding of the implications of any interpretation, the point of view from which it came, the assumptions it makes, and the concepts it uses.

To make rational decisions between conflicting interpretations, students must, first, understand the nature of the agreements and disagreements they meet. They must, for example, understand the difference between agreements and disagreements in belief and agreements and disagreements in attitude, and they must be able to spot when one or the other takes place. Second, they must understand how the discipline tries to resolve disputes (the evidence and types of arguments it demands). Third, they must understand the uncertainty of any conclusions they draw and the problems they face in believing whatever they believe. In other words, they must understand that while history is a highly
interpretative discipline, it is not simply a matter of opinion. The discipline does have criteria for gathering evidence and making judgments. Part of that criteria stems from rules of reason and logic, rules that are common to most academic disciplines. Part of the criteria (especially the standards for evidence) comes from stipulations developed by historians, stipulations that are themselves subject to ongoing controversy, re-examination, and possible change.

Finally, to "draw their own conclusions" they must be able to do all the above, plus synthesize and evaluate evidence from a variety of sources. That is, they must be able to develop a thorough knowledge and understanding of the theses, arguments, and major pieces of evidence of important scholarship on any question; to determine the ways in which various interpretations agree and disagree; to make well-reasoned evaluations of those interpretations; and to develop some reasoned, albeit tentative, conclusions of their own based on ideas and evidence they may have gleaned from various sources. Implicit in all of this is the expectation that students will grapple with questions, arguments, and evidence in an attempt to find the truth, that they will not simply learn more sophisticated ways to support their most cherished prejudices (the difference between what philosopher Richard Paul calls critical thinking in the strong and weak sense).

At the same time, let me make clear what I do not require of my students (and here I say something that is pretty obvious). First, I do not expect students simply to "memorize correct answers," which I, or the textbook, will give them--as some college history classes clearly do. Unless my students confront conflicting claims, they cannot learn to make judgments. Second, I do not require that they "know all the facts," both because mere recall or recognition of a mountain of information is meaningless and because it is impossible to remember everything. Furthermore, some research has found that even if students develop what Chester Finn and others call "historical literacy," they may not judge evidence or conflicting claims well (see Samuel S. Wineburg, "Probing the Depths of Students' Historical Knowledge," Perspectives, March, 1992: 19, 21-24). I cannot give them all the facts and let them decide what conclusions to draw. Any historical account must pick which facts to include and in so doing is offering an interpretation of which ones are worth considering. For me history is ideas about the past. It is not the past. The past is dead and gone. The discipline is the way we formulate and question and evaluate and compare and contrast those ideas. In order for students to "learn history" they must become acquainted with both the ideas and the intellectual struggles that have taken place over those ideas. History is ideas not only that such and such happened but that such and such is worth noting. It is ideas about causes and consequences. It is ideas about implications. It is, fundamentally, ideas about change over time--how it happened, why it happened, what difference it made, how Isn't there something else that goes here about thinking is , etc.changes interact with each other.

I am not arguing that students need not remember anything. To make judgments, they must remember a great deal of observed and inferred evidence and previously determined conclusions. They must remember what they believe and why they believe it. Students must ultimately remember that certain information has implications for a given problem
and how they might apply that data to find a solution. Yet mere recall (or recognition) of isolated pieces will not suffice.

Finally, I do not always require that students do original research, that they discover some previously unrecognized piece of information. I do, however, want them to develop a thorough and rigorous understanding of the standards by which historians weigh evidence (realizing that some of those standards are constantly changing and often difficult to articulate) and an ability and willingness to apply those standards fairly in making choices.

**How do I help and encourage them to acquire these abilities? How do I teach?**

Let us turn to the business of developing an appreciation for the questions I want to raise and getting students to develop questions of their own. Here I will outline how I try to help students meet all of these learning objectives, that is, how I teach.

I always begin a course with certain questions that I want everyone to consider and master (in the sense outlined above). Maybe the important questions are about power—who has it, how did they get it, how did they use it, who challenged them for it, and how did they meet that challenge. Maybe the important questions are about why certain civilizations do certain things (get in boats and go bother other people) while other societies do not. It seems to me that historians are always trying to answer some fundamental questions about human beings and human societies. We study change over time. We always want to know whether a particular development (the violent conflicts or the unity or disunity they produced, for example) is something new and, if so, why did it happen. What does its occurrence suggest about the nature of a particular society, or about the evolution of human societies?

I also begin with the assumption that learning is most likely to be meaningful (i.e., make a sustained difference in the way people think and act) only if people believe they control what they try to learn. That is, I believe that human beings are naturally curious animals (at least when they are born), but that intrinsic interests tend to remain high only if the "perceived locus of causality" remains within a person. I must, therefore, find some way to reconcile my initial control of questions with what I see as the way people develop and maintain curiosity.

How can I do that? First, I try to help students understand the connection between the questions I raise and questions they like. I think I can do that by recognizing that the questions that interest me are important because of some previous inquiry, which, in turn, is significant because of some earlier question, which derives its own significance from some still earlier investigation, and so forth. We often live our scholarly lives focused on questions that lie several layers beneath the surface of matters that first intrigued us. In teaching, we must dig back toward the surface, to meet our students there, to recapture the significance of our inquiries, and to help students understand why our current
deliberations capture our attention. We cannot simply call out from our position deep within the ground and ask our students to join our subterranean mining expeditions.

If we help students understand the connection between current topics and some larger and more fundamental inquiry, we can find common ground with our students in those "big questions" that first motivated our efforts. We can then help students understand the connection between the current questions and some larger and more fundamental inquiry.

Let me illustrate with an example that will probably spark some disagreement from other historians. In teaching US diplomatic history I often spend some time on events immediately after World War I: Wilson's trip to Versailles, his attempt to win passage of the treaty and acceptance of US. entry into the League of Nations, his failure to take Republican leaders with him to France, his conflicts with Henry Cabot Lodge, and the divisions existing in the Senate at the time of the League vote, among others. The story contains some of the elements of classic tragedy--his decision to order supporters to vote against the treaty rather than accept a compromise--and it was always possible to win a degree of student attention to this subject. Yet students' interests in these topics always seems to turn on whether they became intrigued with the personal story of Woodrow Wilson. If they do, bingo, I have them. If not, I lose them. Without that interest, they have no concern for any of the scholarship surrounding this history.

How can I capture an interest that is both broader and deeper than some fascination with Wilson? I can if I invoke the larger questions involved here, if I help my students understand why any historian might find the events of 1919 fascinating. I submit that much of the original scholarly interest in Wilson's trip to Paris (at least the interest that first appeared during World War II) emerged from a simple, yet important, series of questions: Is it possible for human beings to avoid future wars? Could Wilson, or any other powerful individual, have prevented World War II with a different course of action in 1919 and 1920? Furthermore, behind these questions lies an even more fundamental inquiry: Can human beings control their own destiny and avoid calamities like wars, or does some kind of determinism--economic or otherwise--sweep us along, making us hapless observers and chroniclers of our own fate and the antics of even a powerful individual like Woodrow Wilson insignificant?. When I begin with these questions, all students listen and think, become intrigued, provoked, and curious; or, as we often say, they become "engaged with the material" (there are, of course, other large questions involved in the events of 1919 that I might also raise).

I have other ways to help overcome the conflict between my control of questions and the way people develop an interest. Second, while I want my students to develop a dispassionate examination of arguments, evidence, and theories, I encourage a passionate interest in the questions I raise. I see no conflict between this passion and a dispassionate pursuit of the truth (after all, scholars regularly display the ability to reconcile the two). For example, I teach a course entitled Why We Went to War: The United States in the Twentieth Century. In that course, I phrase the fundamental question simply and provocatively. Why are human beings occasionally willing to leave home, hearth, mothers, fathers, and cherry pie and march off into the wilderness to kill each other in
large numbers? Why do some human beings ask (or force) others to engage in such behavior? Here, the arts speak more eloquently than does scholarship. I ask students to view, read, or otherwise experience the way some artists have looked at human wars. I use music, motion pictures, poetry, paintings, and excerpts from novels and short stories. Once they become interested in the questions, the rest is easy. But they must understand that an artist's treatment of history does not usually offer evidence about historical developments and cannot substitute for an examination of the scholarship on important matters.

Third, I explain to students the intellectual rewards of pursuing these questions (sometimes simply the beauty of such a pursuit) and the costs--intellectual and otherwise--to them of failing to learn how to make better judgments about these matters. Most important, I try to telegraph my own enthusiasm for these goals.

Fourth, I challenge students to decide, consciously and deliberately, to take the course, to regard these questions as significant. I do so in a little "first-class-day" ritual of telling students what the course promises them--what they will be able to do intellectually if they really do what the course suggests (I use the language of "promises" rather than that of "requirements"). I let them know what activities they will be doing to develop the intellectual abilities promised (what we normally call requirements). Finally, I ask them to decide, considering what I just told them (the promises made and the activities assigned--come to class, read this material, write these papers, etc.), whether they really want to take this course. I promise them intellectual excitement and skills worth obtaining, but I ask them to make a decision and commitment. I first began using this ritual while teaching introductory US history classes at the University of Texas. State law required all undergraduates to take these courses. I reminded my students that these courses were, "by definition," a part of an undergraduate education at the university, but that they still had control because no one required them to pursue such an education at this university. I asked them to decide if they wished to do so, a decision that, strangely, most of them had never really contemplated. Ultimately, I trusted students to make that decision, and I made sure they understood the magnitude of the trust I placed in them.

Finally, while I set much of the initial agenda ("this is the course I am offering") and maintain limits to how much I will change, I can include as many student contributions as possible. The first or second meeting I pass out a list of the major questions we will pursue. I ask students to read through the list and to answer the following: which of these questions interest you the most? Which ones (if any) fail to spark your initial interest? What additional questions interest you? It may be possible to adjust the course slightly to accommodate students' interests or to help individuals satisfy their curiosity and see the connection between their questions and the ones I plan to pursue. Ultimately, however, the students must, as I remind them, decide whether they have any interest in pursuing particular questions. If they do not, as I also remind them, they should drop the course.

We must, however, handle such maneuvers with care. I try to invite rather than confront, the way I might ask someone to dinner (we're serving meatballs and pasta), not the way I would challenge them to a dual. Ultimately, I must trust my students to make their
choices. Otherwise, their schooling will be meaningless, having little sustained influence on their thoughts and actions, even if I successfully coerce them into doing my bidding for the sake of that coveted grade.

**Helping Students Learn to Reason**

While I find such matters highly valuable, they do not teach the class. In organizing the "content" of the course, I distinguish between fundamental questions and immediate questions. The former are those "big" questions I noted earlier; the latter, the specific inquiries that will help answer the first. In some cases, I may dig through several layers of immediate questions before coming to the object of our focus in a particular class. I also try to help students follow the pattern of my digging.

Once we pick the object of our immediate focus (e.g., why did the United States drop atomic bombs on two Japanese cities in 1945?), I give students the opportunity to answer the questions, to read some of the important scholarship, and perhaps some of the raw evidence, on the subject, and to come together to exchange ideas with each other. At the same time--and this is highly important to me--I try to help them learn to identify arguments, both primary and subordinate arguments. Accordingly, in conjunction with the first reading assignment in any undergraduate class I teach (from freshmen to seniors), I ask students to read a section of a logic textbook on how to identify arguments (Irving Copi, *Informal Logic*). I divide the students into small, permanent and heterogeneous groups of four to six members and ask them to identify and even diagram (using Copi's method) one main argument and one supporting argument in the pieces that they are reading. I will also ask them to read Copi's discussion of agreements and disagreements in belief and attitude and to identify the types of major agreements and disagreements they meet in the scholarship they read (perhaps in the second reading assignment). Much of the initial discussion revolves around their attempt to make these identifications.

With subsequent assignments, I may ask them to focus on the type of evidence they read or on the identification of informal and/or formal fallacies. For example, I usually spend at least one session asking students to distinguish between observed and inferred evidence. Again, students can benefit enormously from working in groups. I may, for example, ask the groups to meet outside class to identify at least one major example of each type of evidence and to bring their examples to class. The discussion subsequently centers on both the identification of examples and a consideration of the implications of one type of evidence or another for the strength of the argument. Because I want students to develop a thorough and rigorous understanding of the standards by which historians weigh evidence, I also assign students to read original documents on some of the topics we consider, to draw conclusions from those sources, and to assess them. In essence, I try to promote a metacognitive approach; that is, a recognition of how one thinks, an appreciation of the importance of assessing one's own thinking while it is in process, and a routine and systematic application of a range of intellectual standards to that thought.
I want students also to ask probing insightful questions about the thinking of others. Permanent and heterogeneous groups allow students to learn from each other. They negotiate an understanding with their peers, constructing their knowledge in conversations with themselves and with each other. Such groups allow the instructor and students enormous flexibility in arranging a discussion. With them, it is possible to orchestrate a conversation even in a large class, perhaps beginning within the smaller groups, eventually combining them into ever larger and larger assemblies until the class meets as a whole. I provide students with critiques, responses to their efforts, while helping them to develop and practice the ability to examine their own thinking and that of their colleagues. I encourage people to think aloud and try to create a non-threatening atmosphere in which they can do so, but I also hold them accountable to a high standard of logical and reasoned thought. I do not refrain from challenging students if they offer shoddy reasoning or make unsubstantiated claims, and I encourage my students to challenge each other. At the same time, I never tolerate ad homonym rejoinders, either from myself or from a student. I try to help students appreciate that a challenge to their arguments will help them learn.

All of these "exercises in reasoning" serve the larger purpose of helping students to judge conflicting claims about the truth. These individual skills of identifying arguments, distinguishing between types of agreements and disagreements, and so forth, are useful and sometimes even necessary to the larger task, but are not sufficient. The ability to think rationally and critically is larger than the sum of its parts. I want students to develop that metacognitive awareness--to think about their own thinking--yet I do not want them to lose sight of the broader goal of this education: the ability to make judgments about history. Thus, I must often balance their experiences carefully. In the early part of the term we may (depending on the background and ability of the students) spend much time carefully and even meticulously distinguishing between observed and inferred evidence or between types of agreement or disagreement, but I want the discussion to turn quickly to questions of interpretation, to let the metacognitive awareness occur in the context of evaluating ideas about the past.

Thus, while some initial discussions begin with What are the arguments? What are the types of evidence? What are the types of agreements and disagreements?, most deliberations begin with questions that focus on historical controversies. Here, a series of five questions works extremely well:

A. **Exploratory questions:** What are the facts; what is the problem; what are the key definitions? At this level, I am often asking students to summarize and re-summarize the various interpretations they have found. "What's the key argument here?" "Do you agree with her identification and statement of the key argument?" "How would you put it?" "What key arguments do you see?"

B. **Testing questions:** "Are there any acceptable interpretations here and why?" "What do we know and how do we know it?" "What are the implications of accepting this interpretation?" "What are the problems?" This can sometimes be a brainstorming session in which students try to generate as many theoretical positions as possible without critical review (that will come later).
C. **Relational questions:** "What interpretations have we considered; how do we compare interpretations?"

D. **Priority questions:** "What interpretation do you accept?" "Why?" "What do you reject?" "Why?"

E. **Concluding questions:** "What have we learned here?" "What implications for our conclusions?" "What questions remain unanswered?" "How do we answer those questions?"

Groups serve another powerful purpose if I structure them so that students see them as an opportunity to learn rather than as an obligation. My courses contain a great many "opportunities" to read, usually more than most students can do in one term. If I allow and even encourage students in groups to split the reading and to share their summaries, analyzes, and evaluations with each other, each group--not the instructor--then assigns readings to its members. In so doing, I have managed to shift some of the responsibility for defining the education to students, even if it is a kind of collective responsibility. My method says that one does not "take" a certain history, rather that within a course we have an opportunity to explore some--but only some--of the ideas and literature connected with a certain history. There is much more that one can read.

In all of my contacts with students, I constantly try to create what Roger Schank calls an "expectation failure." Such a strategy stems from the idea that when people learn, they wrap what they hear, see, feel, smell, read, and taste around some mental model in their brain. If I expect students to learn, to change their mental model, to build a new mental model, I must put them into a situation in which their mental models will not work. Or, as Schank puts it, they must encounter an idea, some information, an experience, that causes them to say, this is not what I expected. Or, as we more traditionally put it, I must challenge them intellectually. If there are no surprises, if I do not stretch their thinking, they do not learn anything new. At best, I only remind them of what they already know.

**What happens in class?**

Do I lecture? Not necessarily, but lecturing can serve some worthy purposes. I use two types: Because I want to help students develop the ability to make judgments rather than memorize "correct" answers, some important lectures are not about "history," but about how to learn history. Rather than reading the "text" to students, I help them learn to read more analytically and actively, providing suggestions, for example, on how to read on three different levels: how to look for a major thesis, how to identify major arguments in support of that thesis, and how to find and classify key pieces of evidence. One lecture might show students how to examine a book; another, how to find an argument; still another, how historians weigh evidence.

Sometimes, I offer my answers to the historical questions (a "traditional" lecture). Yet I recognize that such lectures cannot transmit an understanding because understanding is a process that develops within one's mind. Students, like the rest of us, must construct their understanding, their knowledge, of anything. Lectures can, however, display a disciplined mind constructing that reality, providing an instructive illustration of how to think.
To do so, the lecture should explain its purpose and then offer an argument, beginning with some fundamental question that it intends to answer, raising and framing that question in a way that will help students understand why they might become interested in it, reminding students of the related larger questions and the intellectual and physical costs of failing to answer those questions. I have often found it to be enormously useful to relate the questions (and the topics) to the lives of the students, to events and issues that concern them. I sometimes raise questions about the possibility that some historical concern might help us better understand a contemporary matter of pressing significance (sometimes, to reject, at the end of the lecture, the notion that history is a big book of answers, agreeing with Russell Bostert that history "does not indicate solutions, even to the most pressing or directly related of today's problems, but endeavors to enlarge understanding of them"). Next, I discuss how people in the discipline have struggled with the question (history is ideas about the past. The discipline is the way we formulate and question and evaluate and compare and contrast those ideas. For students to "learn history" they must become acquainted with both the ideas and the intellectual struggles over those ideas). How has the study of these questions changed? Are these "new" questions? What has produced the changes? In short, I introduce controversies that excite historians, but I must do so with care. A discussion that centers only on some highly specialized concern will generate little excitement among most undergraduates. I must focus on the central questions of the discipline, questions that will excite students; and I must do so in a way that will intrigue. When I introduce secondary and specialized questions, I must help students understand how they relate to more prominent matters. I must help students understand why anyone is interested in the particular questions that scholars spend their lives investigating and debating with each other. Finally, I offer my answers and reasons, asking students to assess the case before them in much the same way they have been doing with written scholarship on the issue, and, thus, always leaving them with questions.

Why do I think aloud rather than in a paper that I might ask my students to read? If I am there merely to convey information, I may have trouble justifying my existence. Students can read so much faster than they can listen. Was B. F. Skinner right? Should the lecture have disappeared with the invention of the printing press? I like what Dexter Perkins said on the subject. "I am old-fashioned enough," the historian wrote in 1966, "to believe that some values to be communicated in the classroom are not easily communicated by the written word. One is a zeal for knowledge, another is perspective, and still another is an appreciation of other outlooks and points of view. . . . We learn from example in this world, and a teacher is an example of a person. . . . thinking. . . . those engaged in college teaching [must] recognize that their responsibility is not alone to advance knowledge but to stimulate and inspire. . . ." I also like William Arrowsmith on the subject. "Charisma in a teacher is not," the philosopher wrote, "a mystery or nimbus of personality, but radiant exemplification to which the student contributes a correspondingly radiant hunger for becoming."

Talking allows us a rich variety of ways to communicate, means that the printed page does not. A gesture can sometimes substitute for words, reminding an audience of a point already articulated. I want my students to feel comfortable and at the same time to
experience the kind of uneasiness that stems from intellectual excitement and curiosity and intense concern with a particular question, the tension that emerges primarily from the questions that we ask but that can resurface with a wry smile or even a raise of the eyebrow or other appropriate gesture.

Lectures do, however, have limitations. They can promote passive observation rather than active thinking. I must, therefore, treat my oral communication as a conversation with the students (even if it is one I occasionally dominate) rather than as a performance I am giving. I interact with students, ask them questions, look at them. Frequently, I stop and ask them to discuss ideas with me or with each other or to work in pairs to discuss and rework their notes. I engage in what Michael Salemi calls "two-way talk." I even find it beneficial to stop a few minutes before the hour and to ask each student to respond on paper to the following questions: 1) what major conclusion have you drawn from this lecture; 2) what major question remains in your mind. Such an exercise promotes active learning and helps me develop a better insight into the level of student thinking about the material.

That "two-way" talk can help me overcome still another problem common to both oral and written communication. When people hear or read anything, they attach what they encounter to already existing mental models of realities, or to what Roger Schank calls "their stories." Our words do not travel seamlessly into the brains of our readers. Rather, they wrap around those stories, perhaps changing them but ultimately following their contours. What people already think has enormous influence on what they "learn," on the mental models that emerge from their education. As Mark Twain put it, "It's not what you don't know that hurts you. It's what you know that ain't so!" If I know nothing about what my students are thinking, about how they "receive" my stories, I am merely shooting in the dark. If, conversely, I maintain a dialogue, constantly testing their waters (not for the sake of evaluating them but to monitor my efforts to help them learn), I can adjust to their "distortions," refine my language, challenge their thinking, and hope to have a sustained and substantial influence on the way they construct reality. I can also stimulate and respond to their curiosity rather than simply driving them blindly.

In recent years, I have used a series of interpretative lectures combined with case studies. In a senior-level class on the United States and the World Since 1945, for example, I have used five case studies. Each case deals with an important issue, both for the historian and for the people who lived with the events under examination. The cases provide historical accounts but also raise a problem that students can contemplate; sometimes, problems of historical interpretation; other times, questions about what policies might have worked best. Students work in their groups to discuss the cases and prepare for the class treatment. We do some cases as simulations in which I assign each group to play a particular historical faction. In class, the various groups play their roles, arguing in behalf of a particular perspective or policy. We do other cases as an examination of some interpretative issue, often using it as an opportunity to consider various schools of thought or to raise questions about evidence. Here I often use the five types of questions noted earlier, mixing full class discussions with discussions within the groups (Exploratory questions, Testing questions, etc.)
How do I know when they learn?

Currently, I ask students to make judgments about historical questions in papers they write both in and out of class. But I also try to provide plenty of response to their efforts long before and separate from any evaluation of their work. I frequently stop and ask them to respond in writing to some question. In spring 1995 I experimented with a radical approach to grading, trying to separate grading from teaching. An outside anonymous reader (a historian from another university) evaluated a final paper to determine much of the final grade. During the quarter, I provided suggestions and instructions on a series of "practice papers," taught students how to grade their own work, and let each student know what "grade" each practice paper would most likely receive if submitted for a grade. As I became coach rather than judge, the students lost their initial uneasiness and concentrated not on grades (none of this "why didn't I make a better grade?") but on how they could learn to think and write. As a group, the students produced one of the best sets of papers I have ever received from a class of freshmen.

In spring 1996 I tried an additional experiment, asking students to write a reflective essay about their own thinking in which they discussed the specific reasoning abilities they acquired or improved during the term. That assignment asked students to make a case that they understood and were able to use the reasoning abilities they described, and therefore deserved a certain grade.

What can go wrong?

While students respond well to this systematic approach, the most serious obstacle to its success comes from the expectations many students have about the nature of learning and, therefore, about what should take place in class. Many students enter college thinking that all knowledge comes from authorities and that education is a matter of learning from those experts. Other students believe all knowledge is merely a matter of opinion. Education, for these people, is little more than a game. They find out what professors want and then give it to them on examinations. They seldom if ever assume that schooling might permanently change the way they think and act. Both groups expect professors to dictate "correct answers" that they will memorize for examinations. Talking to other students in class is a waste of time and money.

How can I help students overcome such attitudes and develop a more sophisticated epistemology? I can do so with a frontal assault that introduces them to the whole issue of what it means to learn and ask them to think about their epistemology. I try to help these students understand that they construct knowledge, not simply receive it, and that I expect them to learn to construct (to learn to think), not simply memorize "correct answers." I talk about these issues early in class and return to the subject often. I search constantly for questions that will help students examine their thinking about learning. I might also ask them to read some of the work on how students develop intellectually (the work of William Perry, for example) and ask them to compare their thinking to the categories discussed in that literature. I might ask them to read some of the literature on
becoming an educated person (an excerpt from *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, for example).

There are other problems that arise. I am concerned that I do not do enough specifically to foster a historical perspective and its abstract reasoning abilities. I assume that if students learn to judge historical arguments and immerse themselves in debates about historical arguments, they will develop a historical perspective, but I'm not sure they do--even "A" students. Do my students habitually ask themselves what historical assumptions lie behind their most cherished beliefs? Ten years after they leave my class, can they imagine a world, a time different from their own? Or do they grow increasingly comfortable with their own place and era, willing to accept the way the powerful characterize the past for some self-service and no longer able to see themselves in contrast to some ancient people.

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