

FORUM

HOW MY TEACHING HAS CHANGED

Elesha J. Coffman, Editor

The COVID-19 pandemic forced educators across the globe to rethink our methods, swiftly and dramatically. Could we help our students meet existing learning objectives in a radically new format, or did those objectives need to change? How is a Zoom lecture similar to and different from teaching in person? What equity concerns are more salient when bedrooms become classrooms? Pedagogy support groups mushroomed on social media as dilemmas and suggestions proliferated.

COVID-19 was merely an acute and widely experienced example of a recurrent phenomenon. Any of a number of circumstances can prompt a pedagogical reset, including but not limited to taking a new job, curriculum revision, response to political events or cultural developments, emerging trends in one's academic field, or life events such as having a baby. Overall, this strange, pandemic year seemed like a useful time to reflect on educational pivots.

The title of the forum echoes the decennial "How My Mind Has Changed" series in *The Christian Century*. Editors originally collected retrospectives on the Great War (published as "What the War Did to My Mind" in 1928) but subsequently discovered that the relentless march of change over time created an evergreen need to pause and take stock. The series, now nearly one hundred years old, has been distinguished by both the breadth and depth of contributions. In that spirit, contributors to this forum represent a variety of institutional contexts. They describe disparate responses to distinct challenges. They clearly care about their students, among whom we all now number as well.

For the Summer/Fall 2021 issue, I invite responses to a similar prompt: **How My Writing Has Changed**. Once again, submissions may address the pandemic or other subjects, and the timeframe can be the recent or less recent past.

ADDING A LECTURE ON THE SPANISH FLU OF 1918 DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC OF 2020

Christopher Price

To say that 2020 was an altogether different kind of year would be an understatement. The spring 2020 semester started much as other semesters have. Politics are a common topic of discussion among my colleagues in the humanities and social sciences wing of my small, rural community college. Early 2020 discussions were slightly different, as the first impeachment of President Donald Trump was a relatively unusual development, although discussion of the impeachment still revolved around politics. Around mid-February, however, the topic of discussion began to shift as news of the novel coronavirus spread. The closures of major universities such as Harvard in early March raised eyebrows, and my institution would soon follow suit. My institution, located in far northwest Kansas, initially decided to extend spring break for an additional week. During the first week of the suddenly two-week break, faculty learned that all instruction would move to an online modality in two weeks. Face-to-face classes met over the internet via Zoom for the rest of the semester.

I have a cache of lectures that I created in my doctoral program between 2011 and 2013, and I have revised them and added lectures periodically in the years since. Just before the extended break began, I covered the World War I period in my U.S. Since 1865 class. Spring 2020 and the additional week of spring break provided me with both the time and the motivation to create a lecture on the 1918 Spanish flu. I had a distinct interest in how that pandemic developed by this point. Additionally, the chronology fit perfectly, with the deadliest wave of the flu coming to the United States near the end of the war. I also believed that the debate over the constitutionality of social distancing protocols, mask mandates, and public meeting bans provided a great opportunity to look back into history and attempt to understand how people behaved during a previous pandemic.

For this lecture, I researched articles that discussed how cities that instituted non-pharmaceutical interventions such as social distancing requirements and public meeting bans fared compared to those that did not institute such directives. I investigated the theories that traced the origin of the Spanish flu.¹ I considered the steps different cities took to mitigate the spread of the flu and found that some of the strategies resulted from political considerations.² I read about the economic out-

¹ "How a Killer Flu Spread from Kansas to the World," *Wichita Eagle*, February 18, 2018, <https://www.kansas.com/news/local/article200880539.html> (accessed March 29, 2020).

² Eric Adler, "A Coronavirus Lesson? How KC's Response to 1918 Flu Epidemic Caused Needless

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comes of the deadliest influenza pandemic in recent world history and learned that its economic impact extended for decades as those whose mothers contracted the flu while pregnant tended to attain lower levels of education and earn less throughout their lives.³ These were not insignificant findings. When looking at restrictions on public gatherings, it quickly became apparent that these did not last for years or decades. They lasted for a few weeks. They included church and school closures. Some cities attempted to institute them a couple of times to deal with successive waves of the Spanish flu. There was some opposition, but life largely returned to normal after the outbreak subsided. My hope was that this information might put my students at ease, and that it would show that the local government in 2020 was not attempting to do away with their civil or religious liberties eternally.

Creating a lecture on the Spanish flu during a global pandemic was not at all what I had intended to do while on spring break. Initially, I had a trip planned to visit an out-of-state archive near family to work on a long-term research project. Government officials frowned upon interstate travel as COVID-19 spread, and both my destination and my current state of residence recommended fourteen-day quarantines after travel. The archive closed temporarily anyway. My investigation into the Spanish flu for this lecture unexpectedly led to some additional fruit. After the semester, I began looking through the *Chronicling America* website that the Library of Congress maintains. This site has digitized copies of many historic newspapers that were located throughout the United States. I found that many local papers covered the Spanish flu extensively. This newfound interest in a century-old pandemic led to a research article that is currently in the review process. My initial goal of working on a book-length project experienced delay, but this prospective article improved my knowledge of an important event in U.S. and world history. It also provided additional information related to the Spanish flu that I can incorporate in future lectures.

In the fall 2020 semester, I presented this lecture in a face-to-face format. My students seemed surprised to learn the parallels between recent government restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic and the actions taken by local governments in the early twentieth century. Understanding the similarities between historic eras can at times provide some level of comfort. My hope is that by helping students understand the past, they can come to better understand their present culture and living conditions. I anticipate continuing to present this lecture into the near future, as students will likely remember its main parallel as my grandfathers remembered Pearl Harbor and my father remembers the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Death," *Kansas City Star*, March 15, 2020, <https://www.kansascity.com/news/business/health-care/article241058181.html> (accessed March 29, 2020).

³ Douglas Almond, "Is the 1918 Influenza Pandemic Over? Long-term Effect of In Utero Influenza Exposure in the Post-1940 US Population," *Journal of Political Economy* 114, no. 4 (2006): 672–712.

“HOT PENS” AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Susanna L. Cantu Gregory

Letter writing grabbed hold of my imagination at a young age. Maybe my military family’s travels created the need to stay tethered to faraway friends and neighbors. Maybe my mother’s literature habit brought published journals onto the bookshelves of our house. I recall that her own “hot pen” continually modeled relationship building and action for justice through correspondence. My father, too, sent regular missives from his unaccompanied tours, complete with photos, drawings, and jokes. I saw and felt how he could be made present through the contents of his long-traveled envelopes. For all of these reasons, I recall taking to the habit of letter writing like a fish to water. At one point, in elementary school, I counted that I had gained twenty-five pen pals. Even now, letter writing, with stamps and ink and folded paper, is an integral part of my life.

So, given this comfort with the genre, when I began teaching historical theology to college students, I found myself inclining toward letter-writing assignments. First and often, I share letters with them to and from the historical figures we study. It can be awkward for students accustomed to cell phone texting to stretch their expressions into letter form, but they tend to get the hang of it quickly if they can read a few examples. I share letters to and from Thea Bowman, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King Jr., and Thomas Merton. We read letters from holy figures honored as martyrs and those neglected by the history books.

We explore what the letters bring forward and what they keep hidden, what they help us see that our other textbooks haven’t shown. I ask students to contextualize the letters or maybe, if the students are advanced, to search for change over time in a group of letters. Sometimes I have them write the letter that came before or after the one I assigned. Yet, these are the just the beginning.

After students have been invited in and found the world of letter writing friendly, I begin to challenge them. We read St. Paul’s letters and attempt to write to one of the early church communities or to a community today in the style of Paul. In another assignment, following an introduction to historical perspectives on the life of Jesus, students take on the role of an observer of Jesus’s death and write to an assigned constituency about their observations (with evidence from our course materials.)

The Catholic religious women who founded our university, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, are blessed with a robust letter-writing heritage. I am preparing to teach a course on this history and delighting in all the assign-

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ments possibilities. Members of the congregation have published several anthologies of letters to and from the foundress of the BVM order, Mother Mary Frances Clarke. The collections reveal more than a timeline or an institutional history can show. We see Mary Frances Clarke valuing manual labor for its economic and spiritual benefits as well as for her own joy. We see her resisting passivity in the congregation's relationships with bishops as well as complying with obedience to various requests from bishops. She builds up the stamina of a novice and gently, "sororally" corrects a more advanced sister's tendency to work too hard. We can even "read" the physical provenance of these documents in some places through rain drops, paper tears, smudged ink, and varied handwriting styles. I value this personal peek into an institution's history for the accessibility and motivation it provides for my students.

I keep on assigning letters to read and letters to write in my courses because it slows down our syllabus. It takes time to appreciate or craft a letter. I tell students that they don't have to be as in love with letter writing as their strange teacher. In addition, I share that we undertake these assignments for two purposes. First, I want them to become sensitive to puzzles and unnamed figures embedded in the letters I share. Few of my students will be sparked to keep working with original materials on a question of their own choosing, but all of them can feel what it is like to ask a valuable historical question. And second, I help my students see that they too are communicators who have the power to narrate a history of faith. In this way they can also make history with a "hot pen" in whatever mode best suits them.

LESS LECTURE, MORE LEARNING

Elizabeth George

For many of my first classes, I lectured a lot. I spent hours and hours writing lectures, and I felt like I learned so much about what I was teaching. I was excited to share my knowledge with my students, and many of my early evaluations mentioned that I was “enthusiastic,” yet I was always frustrated when students seemed bored and remembered only a portion of what I had so enthusiastically “taught.”

A key moment of change occurred in a class I taught in grad school. It was a 300-level Native American History class with seventy-five students. I do not remember all of the details of the choices I made, but I remember having a good rapport with the students and that I decided to have an in-class debate about Cherokee Removal. We spent a lot of time preparing in groups, and when it was time to debate, students took the assignment very seriously. Many of them seemed to relish the opportunity to show off their knowledge and compete for class votes. The atmosphere was electric, and class time flew by.

Starting with that experience, I realized that I do not need to be the only one generating energy for the learning experience. In fact, when I can harness the energy in the room, the learning experience is dramatically enhanced. That class began a quest to find effective ways make learning a joint venture. One way I have done this is by using the sophisticated role-playing games associated with *Reacting to the Past*. *Reacting* games require and foster deep engagement with primary sources and historical events. Not only do the games share the responsibility for learning across all students, they also appeal to students to who are bored of lecture/test and students who boldly state on the first day of class that history is boring. When a game is in progress, it is incredible to see students so engaged that they refuse to stop playing just because class has ended—they simply move the game out into the hall.

Another way I have made learning a shared endeavor is by being intentional about teaching the students in the room, not hypothetical undergraduates. This approach includes building a rapport with students, finding ways to have fun without decreasing rigor, and relating what we are doing to real world events. When the history we are studying feels urgent and relevant, and the relationships we develop in the classroom are based on authenticity and trust, then we can have dynamic conversations in which everyone is comfortable participating.

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RESISTING THE COMMODIFICATION OF EDUCATION THROUGH LITURGY

David McFarland

When the Conference on Faith and History met at Calvin University in late 2018, it was my first on-the-ground encounter with our organization after a few years of reading *Fides* and following along via social media. I flew into Grand Rapids anticipating the sessions, eager to meet some Twitter connections in person, and excited for an opportunity to share from my experiences as secondary school history educator at a large Christian and International Baccalaureate (IB) World School on Canada's west coast.

The paper I presented then explored historical thinking as faith formation. Its specific focus was an interdisciplinary humanities program, first sketched out on pub napkins by me and a dear colleague, that for nearly four years became a capstone of literary, historical, and theological instruction in our high school. The IB Humanities program, or "IB Hum" as we called it, certainly enabled the best practices of coteaching and interdisciplinary learning. It even involved singing as part of a history and theology "masterclass," with the entire class standing around a piano on our auditorium stage at the beginning and conclusion of each week. At its height, it was an exhilarating pedagogical shift that harnessed classroom space, curricula, and semestered rhythms to create a spiritual and academically meaningful learning environment.

Two years have passed since I first responded to that call for papers. Scheduling complications, competing priorities within our school, and a global pandemic (!) have meant that the pedagogical innovation I shared so enthusiastically in Grand Rapids has necessarily fragmented back to its component parts. It is a loss, my teaching has changed yet again, but the professional development and, dare I say, my own faith formation remains indebted to this part of my history teaching journey.

In retrospect, the instructional design changes were a deliberate resistance to the commodification of education and placed a greater emphasis on character formation via academic study. Expectations around academic achievement for our affluent "clientele" were and remain relentless. Added to this weight is the rhetoric of a religious subculture that tends to fashion the identity of Christian students as "world changers." At the risk of overstating its significance, "IB Hum" became something of a respite space within the humanities for many students navigating

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the crosscurrents of these identities and their attendant expectations. It is a recurring theme in the meaningful student/alumni feedback I receive, and it is difficult to quantify the relational trust gained with students as my colleague and I spent significant time with them, particularly in their senior year.

One dimension that remains from this experience is my heightened awareness of the broader tradition of Christian time telling, namely the liturgical calendar. Our high school students hail from mostly charismatic, low-church contexts where the liturgical calendar beyond Christmas (maybe with a bit of Advent thrown in) and Easter (maybe with a bit of Lent thrown in) is usually *terra incognita*. Allowing students to encounter the overlay of sacred time onto secular time throughout the school year activates historical thinking even as it informs their Christian identity. For example, instead of merely thinking of September and June, what might it mean that an academic year begins and ends in Ordinary Time? Or is there anything to be gleaned from the fact that IB candidates write their exams in early May, which is right around Pentecost? Liturgical seasons, like the academic calendar, proceed in both linear fashion and as recurrent cycles. Historical thinking alerts us to this interplay between change and continuity in the Christian year; at the same time, the particulars of the liturgical calendar can nourish spiritual development.

One of the preferred activities in my ad hoc devotional days prior to IB Humanities was to reflect on words drawn from the rich texts of Christian hymnody, particularly those that had some connection to historical consciousness. Most hymns I selected were unfamiliar to the majority of students, whose fluency was usually in more contemporary worship vernaculars. Isaac Watts's eighteenth-century paraphrase of Psalm 90, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," is one such example. Long before I had given any real consideration to how sharing this with a class might be authentically embedded in my pedagogy, I was content with its "relevance" for Christian students of history. But to have the opportunity to actually sing the stanzas with our students revealed new vistas for learning.

The global pandemic has only further precipitated reconsideration of our teaching practices. Fragmentation of student schedules continues to be a challenge in my context, and an IB Humanities-style program seems out of reach. Yet by a fluke of our newly imposed quarter system, I recently found myself with day-long instruction opportunities for an entire month with the current IB History cohort. It will likely be a long time before I can gather with students around a piano and sing during history class, but the fond memories and the pedagogical insights remain with me as a history educator and inform my current teaching reality.

CHALLENGING THE CANON WHILE TEACHING HISTORIOGRAPHY TO GRADUATE STUDENTS

Nadya Williams

In March 2018, an applied history conference hosted by the Hoover Institution at Stanford made national headline news for all the wrong reasons: the speakers lineup included thirty white men, but no women or people of color. While the outcry against “manels” that the event inspired was well deserved, I had been thinking for a while already that this very problem of limiting the canon is a consistent and insidious feature of graduate reading lists and syllabi. If all areas of history now include thoughtful historians who are women and people of color, why are reading lists too often still all-male and white? I teach at a regional comprehensive state university with a robust MA program in history, and this question is one that I have been thinking about, especially in connection with teaching the required seminar in historiography. It took me a few years to realize that the solution is one that is in my own hands.

The traditional seminar in historiography begins with the *Annales* School and Braudel. It then proceeds to cover several major theories and lenses of historical inquiry, such as Marxism, race, gender, microhistory and big history, environmental history, memory, and maybe a few more. In a rite of passage, at some point in the class, students may get to read their first Foucault monograph, and their lives will never be the same (counseling is provided upon request.) But on an average syllabus, the only guaranteed place where works by women are assigned is during the week on gender, where Joan Scott’s article on gender as a category of analysis has been a mainstay since its publication in 1986. Such a general syllabus indeed provides students with a good overview of where the profession has been. It is not, however, inspiring. It also implies that if there are women in the profession, all they ever study is women and gender. Likewise, there is little place on this typical syllabus for reading historians who are not white.

The first time that I taught this seminar, I tried to stick to the same model as presented in the syllabi of colleagues who have taught it before. And that is when I realized that this ossified approach to historiography was actually useless for the graduate students in my institution, most of whom are women, and many are people of color. Most graduate students in the program are, furthermore, training to be public historians. They are committed to the promotion of justice by uncovering and telling accurately the history of people and places previously ignored or misrepresented.

The next time I taught the course, 50 percent of the readings were by

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women and people of color. I will be teaching this seminar for the third time in fall 2021, and this time, 100 percent of the readings will be by women and people of color. Why? I could give the RBG answer—plenty of historiography syllabi over the past few decades have had 100 percent of readings by white men, and no one batted an eyelash. But I can also give a more nuanced and, more importantly, more Christian answer.

Training future historians involves stewardship. We are stewards of knowledge, of the profession, and of our students' growth and character. Time is a precious resource, and I want my students to use their time to read works that inspire them to write excellent historical scholarship themselves. In selecting books for students to read, I now ask: Does this book inspire someone to go forth and write a paper or (someday) a book of their own? And one key aspect of scholarship that we sometimes forget is that it matters who wrote the book. When considering if a book has the potential to inspire a future historian, we also have to consider the identity of the author. And so, when teaching a class of mostly women and students of color, as I do whenever I teach historiography, it amounts to something close to a microaggression if I assign a reading list consisting entirely of works by white men. After all, historians who are women and/or non-white are just as much a part of God's kingdom as historians who happen to be white men. On the first day of class, I tell the students to look around the room, and I tell them: This is what historians look like. I want the class reading list to reflect this statement as well.

Please note that I have nothing against white male historians. I am married to a phenomenal male historian whose character and scholarship inspire me to be a better historian myself. I regularly work with excellent white male historians, and I read and cite scholarship by excellent white male historians. But considering that most of the students in the class will be women and/or non-white, a 100 percent women-and-POC-authored reading list will actually be the most inclusive, rather than discriminatory, way to teach this class. The historical profession has a long history of excluding the voices of women and minority groups, whether from conference panels, journals, or syllabi. In a world where colleges and history graduate programs are increasingly populated by women and minorities, we are doing a disservice if we do not assign scholarship by them, both to the historians whose work we thus overlook, and to the students we are mentoring in our classes, who may get the message that people like them do not become historians. And that would have a negative impact on the future of the field. Besides, I believe that women and non-white historians in all fields of history are doing fascinating work that is often asking questions that male historians in those fields have traditionally overlooked. I certainly see this in my own fields of Greco-Roman military history and Late Antiquity.

So, building upon this framework, what will be on the reading list for this class? Given the current relevance of the misuse and abuse of the past by groups that have falsely represented themselves as conservative Christians and also historical experts, I plan to assign Donna Zuckerberg's *Not All Dead White Men: Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age* (Harvard University Press, 2018). Nell Painter's *A History of White People* (W. W. Norton, 2010) is an example of "Big History" that also presents a fascinating intersection of intellectual history and race. For an

example of productive scholarship on museums, I will assign either Amy Lonetree's *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012) or Andrea Burns's *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2013). I also plan to assign award-winning books by women and people of color, such as Monica White's multiple-award-winning *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019), and the Bancroft Award-winning Lizabeth Cohen's *Saving America's Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age* (MacMillan, 2019). Last but not least, while I have not yet selected the exact book I will use, I plan to assign at least one book that is written from an overtly Christian standpoint by a historian who is a member of the Conference on Faith and History.

Too often, as we work on our own scholarship, we forget that the readings we assign in our classes also have the chance to shape the future of the field. Choose wisely. No pressure!

TEACHING ON 9/12

Stephen Varvis

On September 12, 2001, the scheduled topic for my 9:00 a.m. Medieval and Early Modern Civilizations course was jihad, holy war. The course is part of a required general education world civilizations series. We had all been captured by the relentless replays of New York's Twin Towers burning and collapsing, people running from them, and first responders toward them. A whole set of strange terms was in the news—jihad, holy war, suicide bombers, martyrdom. Soon others would filter into the reports—Wahhabism, radical Islam, crusaders—along with names like al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.

I was nervous about the session. The day before 9/11, we had completed a discussion about the Five Pillars of Islam, the Prophet Mohamed, and the early expansion of Islam through the Abbasid Caliphate. I had been taught that when teaching a subject one should do so positively and appreciatively, pointing out the best in a tradition and people, before offering any kind of critical assessment. I had not gotten beyond that appreciative beginning. On the day after 9/11, the topics of the day were jihad, paradise, and the formation of Islamic law. We never got beyond the first topic.

Class began with a sober introduction. I spent time recognizing the horrific images on our TVs, holding space for student expression of disbelief, anger, and fear, and praying briefly for those who lost loved ones and those working round the clock to save others. In the remaining time, I presented an outline of traditional teaching on jihad. Questions came hesitantly at first, then relentlessly. At several points, I had to admit that I did not have an answer and would have to do some additional study, promising to return to the topic. The class was scheduled for sixty-five minutes. We did not adjourn early.

In the end, more than a few students expressed gratitude that they had a least a little understanding of the kind of thinking and belief that was—and was not—behind the scenes they watched. I went home exhausted to my family and more news, with a sheet full of questions that I would need to research.

That research and the teaching changes that followed continue through today. My first task was to develop a deeper understanding of Islamic teaching on holy war, including its similarities with, differences from, and development alongside just war teaching. I also had to give attention to the dynamics of just war practice that easily transform into holy war, as seen later in press reports. The im-

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portance of these efforts was heightened when debates appeared in both academic and more broadly intellectual journals and in the popular press about whether the proposed U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq should be considered just wars.

I had been trained in connections between medieval Christendom and Muslim societies. Next, I pulled out my books on medieval and classical Islam, eventually purchasing a shelf-full more, and dusted off my notes. I read systematically in both traditional and Salafist movements going back into the early centuries of the caliphates, leading up to Wahhabist and Islamist movements in the modern world. This also required deepening my understanding of the Islamic tradition of political thinking, its political vocabulary, and its practice as it developed and differed in medieval and modern Arab, Persian (Iranian), and Turkish regions. This all became part of discussions about how political, legal, and diplomatic decisions were made in Western and Islamic contexts.

Teaching these subjects at a Mennonite institution with an active center for conflict and peacemaking, where reconciliation has a special place in the curriculum and co-curricular programs, requires care and, sometimes, a determined effort to pursue topics that the university community finds difficult. Students, however, continued to raise questions in classes. I understood that my responsibility was to engage those questions, to encourage my students to ask more, and to assist in the development of their understanding.

There were also reports in the news that offered examples of good relations and reconciliation between Islam and other “Peoples of the Book.” I studied and we discussed the relations between Abrahamic religions in the Middle Ages and after. We considered how to distinguish between accurate representations of those historical relationships (in Muslim Spain, for example) and distortions produced for political purposes today across the ideological spectrum in Western and Islamic reports. Speakers from around the country showed up locally, advocating different forms of appreciation for diverse cultures, tolerance, and the opposite. Students attended seminars about the theological relationships between Christianity and Islam. These too became occasional topics for the classroom.

In the years following 9/11 Osama bin Laden issued fatwas on video calling for jihad against American and Jewish crusaders. Students again raised questions. I had a graduate student, a veteran concerned about the current wars, interested in the crusades. This gave me an additional reason to renew some old studies, and I deepened my reading. If we were to understand the use of crusader language today, we had to understand not only the significance and insignificance of the crusades in medieval Europe and the Middle East, but also how those crusades and their significance were understood in the nineteenth and twentieth century in both civilizational spheres.

Subjects that had been peripheral to my teaching through the 1980s and '90s—a few minutes on jihad and the expansion of Islam, an occasional question about the crusades—became topics that prompted constantly changing questions as the news, wars, and popular discussion developed or devolved. I hold religiously to one rule as a professor: never let a student's question go unrecognized, or without discussion. I encourage them to raise questions. It is my experience that if the student can formulate a question, she or he is already learning. If I do not have

an answer, I research the question and bring back what I have found, and sometimes the question becomes the research topic for a student paper. At times I raised the questions, but students recognized the import of those questions and further explored the topic by adding their own. After 9/11, I regularly started a class with a clipping of a news report, read a paragraph or two, and asked if there were words in the story that raised questions for them. That is all it took.

Today students do not jump in as easily as they did ten, fifteen or twenty years ago. Many of today's students were born about the time of 9/11, and they do not remember the capture of bin Laden in 2011. But reports are still in the news. America still has troops in the Middle East. There are still suicide bombings not only in Western countries but within Muslim societies as well. There have been other events that have changed my teaching—the 500th anniversary of the first voyage of Columbus in 1992, the fall of the Soviet Union and its satellites just before—but none has required the full-scale development of my own understanding and teaching so dramatically, for so long, and over such a range of topics as 9/11 and jihad.