

Building to Beyond

Designing Courses to Empower Longer-Term Student Projects

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Problems

1. Capstones may not directly relate to or draw upon previous student work in a given major.
2. “Intermediate prerequisites” like our example, Historiography, also may not directly inform the rest of a given major, or to future capstones.

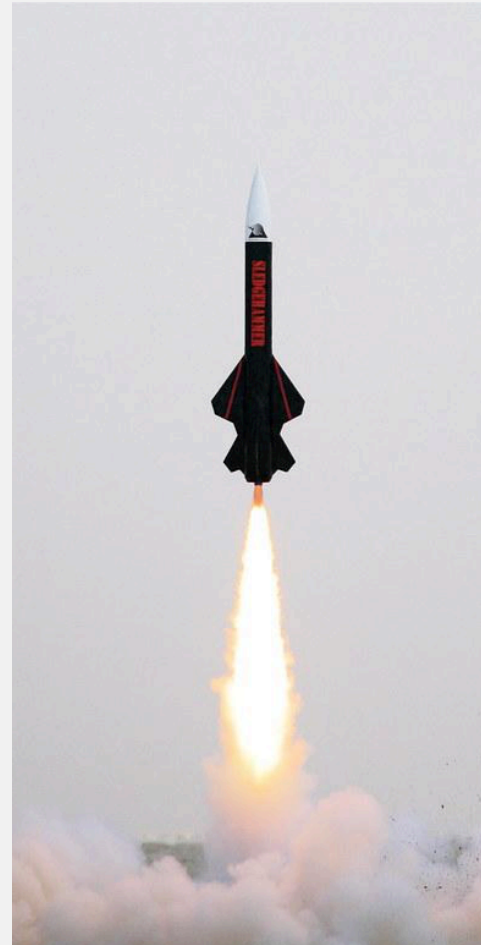
On both accounts, curricula for these majors fail to cohere. And students notice!

Our Agenda

1. Propose and describe our solution: launch courses.
2. Discuss BGSU’s HIST 3790/97 as a pilot design (five sections, F’19-S’21).
3. Hear from students who actually used HIST 3790/97 as a launch course
4. Question: How feasible are launch courses throughout the academy?

What is a Launch Course?

- A. A course in which students play with model rockets
- B. A course that introduces students to a new product that they *must have*
- C. A vertically-integrated course that purposefully prepares students to embark on a longer-term project



A what now?

A vertically-integrated course

That purposefully prepares students

For longer-term, independent work

Horizontal integration, as in Badley (2019, ch.6), enables students to connect learning from one class to another at the same time.

Vertical integration draws learning from one semester to another. One could also cautiously use terms like *curricular scaffolding* or *longitudinal development*. (Green 2008; Tang et al 2011; Thomas 2013)

What objectives does a launch course have?

Aims relevant to a major, or to the overall student experience, that endure beyond a given semester.

- **Transferable / Extensible Skills**
e.g. research, communication, presentation, personal reflection
- **Pre-professional Relationships**
both in and across the class, and maybe from research?
- **Long-term Mindsets**
e.g. growth, mindfulness, thinking about education, metacognition
- **Actual Projects?!**
With timetables set by students, no longer limited to one semester

An Odd Thought: Decentering the semester?

semester
semester
semester
semester

LIFE

**But what if the “center” of a course lies
outside the semester time frame?**

Badley (2019, ch.3) led his discussion on design by featuring **Centers**, informed in large part by Wiggins and McTighe (1998).

Let's start here

HIST 3970/3797: Historiography

F'19: two f2f sections won a teaching prize

S'20: a smooth transition to COVID norms

F'20-S'21: great success remote-online

No substantial revisions to the syllabus

All five sections involved setting students' sights beyond our time together

background inspirations

Edmund Burke, "On Taste" 1757

"Teaching which approaches most nearly to the method of investigation... tends to set the [learner] in the track of invention, and to direct [them] into those paths in which the [instructor] has made [their] own discoveries."

Samuel Dobben, at SoTL Academy 2018

"Teach us (students) how to use our devices like you (faculty) do."

Question: can we do this in one semester?

A unique experience for each and every one

(Tomlinson 1999; Badley 2019, ch.9)

We can't get students to write an article in 12 weeks (Belcher 2009), but with broadly similar logic we can...

- Open the **social-academic context** (Mearsheimer 2018, 32-35)
- Let them make a “**meaningful mess**” (McNair 2019)
- *Design* the mess. (Tomlinson and McTighe 2006; Badley 2019)
- Meet some **DEI objectives** while we're at it? (Cooper et. al. 2011)

Axiom: Every student brings irreducible diversity from their unique life experiences, family and education backgrounds, topical interests, learning styles and priorities, and school / work and life ambitions.

How can a course design offer a *useful and safe space* for making these things known?

- Open choice of research topics
- Variable challenge levels
- Abundant peer sharing / review
- Opening up the future

Being SMART about Goals

(Doran 1981)

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Time-Bound

Goal: Have students conceive, pursue, and propose a project with a post-semester timeline.

Is 15 weeks enough time for students to:

- gather preliminary data and resources to inform further research?
- discover, assess, and engage with a fair sample of relevant literature?
- identify a relevant venue / audience?

Designing Backwards...

(Wiggins & McTighe 1998, Belcher 2009)

1. Main Objective / Specific Points →
2. Assessments →
3. Course Content / Delivery / Intervention

Objective: have students pursue a “faculty-style” History research project.

Assess: “junior versions” of academics’ primary research, engagement with literature, “shop talk”, presentation, peer review, and professional proposals →

Deliver: specific ideas in historiography and historical scholarship (and **model my work!**)

[Bonus!] Make sure students know that they can extend *their* timelines, too, by aiming and proposing beyond the end of the semester!

Building their future-oriented imaginary selves (Cognitive Apprenticeship)

Show students **our own steps** on the path to greater knowledge.
(Collins, Brown and Newman 1987)

Modeling tools, [here](#)

(Schumann 2020 [BG Fall Flex])

- Wiki / YouTube “like a pro(fessor)”
- Libraries and Academic Databases
- Archive.org and Google Books
- Winning with Machine Translation
(Schumann and Park 2019 [Kuyers])

Set **our own projects** within students' cognitive reach:

- **F'19**: paper on Anglo-French diplomacy 1748-54, given to ASECS, April 2021
- **S'20 / F'20**: book on the “stupid peace” of Aix-la-Chapelle 1748, work ongoing
- **S'21**: article on bad uses of “quadrille” in Diplomatic History and other fields.

This is not about *what I do*, but about *what students imagine they can do*.

From sage on the stage to...

Whatever “subject knowledge” may mean for Historiography and so many other courses, it’s a whole lot more than faculty can teach in 15 weeks. Students know this not least from the knowledge-democratized internet (Sanger 2012)! So...

- Curate a few key sources for students’ knowledge.
- Go there with them, and model their correct use(s).
- All journey together and discuss the experience and lessons
- **See where they go, and support them!** (Hodges 2017)

Course Essentials

HIST 3790/97

1. Theory (Humboldt 1821, 1967) and Practice (Matsuda and Gillis 1995)
2. Choose topics and collect data [tertiary / primary research]
3. Enter dialogues on interpretation (Graff and Birkenstein 2006)
4. Select an audience, and propose to pursue them!

Belcher (2009) always in the background

- Iterated Weekend Research... (Schumann et al [Findlay] 2019)
- But with a scaffolding twist:
 - 1-3. Basics and Data
 - 4-7: “Theory” and Interpretation
 - 8. Knowing your Audience
- Peer sharing / shop talk all along
- Presentation, research reflection, peer review after WR 3, 6/7, 8
- For the final presentation, **propose to take it forward!**

Where did the students go? What do they say?

- Four students from three different sections and semesters (Fall '19, Fall '20, Spring '21)
- Took the course face-to-face or remote-online (two of each)
- Different projects, different audiences, different post-course trajectories

Questions to bear in mind:

- How indicative are the students' experiences? Do they make a trend?
- Are launch courses and their corollaries pedagogically sound?
- **HIST 3790/97: *anomaly or prototype?***

Chloe Kozal

Class of 2024, majoring in History and Studio Arts

- Only freshman in the course
- Took the course as a personal challenge and to explore the History major

Project: Mail Art, U.S. Diplomacy, and Argentina's "Dirty War" (1976-83)

Diplomatic Research

- U.S. State Department, [Foreign Relations of the United States](#)
- Archive.org: [The Argentina Declassification Project](#)
 - Presidential Daily Briefings
 - Telegrams
 - Meeting transcripts
 - Limited Distribution Files

Mail Art Research

- [Oberlin Mail Art Archives](#)
 - Private virtual docent tour, the first in Oberlin's history
- [UT-Austin Blanton Museum Archives](#)
- [Lumholt Archive \(Denmark\)](#)
- [Artpool Archive \(Hungary\)](#)
- Attended [ISLAA](#) mail art talks
- Discussed research with BGSU Art and History faculty

My Research During and After Historiography

Alongside the proposal

- Presented at [BGSU's Undergraduate Symposium](#) for Research and Scholarship
- Wrote an article for BGSU's *International ResearchScape Journal*

Summer 2021 and beyond

- Essay in progress for Berkeley's *Afterimage*
- "F.R.U.S. Frenzy" (in common with *professional* Cold War historians!)
- InfoLEG, CONADEP's *Nunca Más*
- Investigating the role of religious organizations during the war

How did HIST 3797 launch me?

- Peer / Professional Respect (“resident expertise”)
- Modeling and opportunities for real-world application
- Self-efficacy → self-confidence

Launch courses can provide:

- More supportive systems + communities
 - “shop talk” in public classroom spaces (Badley)
- Student entrances into the academic and public spheres
- Empowerment, Purpose, Belonging
- Individual support
 - “private spaces” (Badley)

Bree Rosenberger

- 4th Year, AYA Integrated Social Studies Education major
- Took HIST 3797 in the fully remote version, fall 2020
- My work/project focused on the Japanese occupation of Korea, 1910-1945
 - Started with a focus on assimilation, explored many other topics by end
 - Personal area of interest at course conclusion: Taisho-era cultural rule, especially co-optation of Korean press by Government-General
 - Partial to work by Mark Caprio
- Extending beyond:
 - Continued work by completing my capstone Honors project the following semester
 - Final form of the project: 3 units of 3 lesson plans each on the occupation
 - Incorporated HIST 3797 knowledge and concepts from education courses

Reflections on Professional Development

- Most importantly, increased professional confidence and self-efficacy
- HIST 3797 and the completion of project were perfectly timed
 - Final year as an education student asks one to make the daunting transition from student to complete professional
 - 3rd year as an education student: preparing for the daunting professional/senior year
 - Completing a project empowered me to feel more confident I can handle professional challenges as well in the future

Final Takeaway

- Launch courses could be very useful for helping students navigate difficult transitions (internships, graduate school, careers)

Benjamin Stuck

- BGSU 2021 Graduate, Majored in AYA Integrated Social Studies Education
- HIST 3790 Project focused on the War on Drugs in the U.S. and the lasting impacts
 - My research continued to evolve past the scope of the course as my research topic narrowed
- Extending beyond the traditional classroom:
 - Met with Dr. Kalaf-Hughes of the Political Science Department to further narrow my research topic
 - Pursued and completed a BGSU (Fall 2020) CURS research grant to study an original scholarly question
 - Presented my research at the virtual Spring 2021 Undergraduate Symposium on Research and Scholarship
 - Presenting at this conference!

CURS Research Grant (Fall 2020)

- I studied the scholarly question, “to what extent does the current racial attitudes present in Toledo, OH reflect upon the legacy of the War on Drugs?”
 - Initially planned on having participants complete surveys
 - Explored possibility of having my research project certified by IRB
 - Decided to apply an oral history approach to my research project
 - Settled on an interview methodology (diverting from original plan)
 - What was the final outcome?

Benefits of Extending Project

- I met with other BGSU faculty in another department, furthering my academic network as I narrowed down my research topic
- I completed my first form of independent research with relevance to our local communities and societal attitudes/tendencies
- I gained valuable academic and personal experience throughout the entire process (and met some amazing people!)
- In some capacity, my research has continued for nearly 2 years!
- How does this experience apply to my post-graduation life?
- HIST 3790 launch course design provided me the outlet I needed to continue my research past the 15 week course.....

Haley Hoffman

BGSU 2020 Graduate, first year master's student

Difference in Learning Styles:

- While research papers centered on specific areas can help students to grasp certain historical concepts, other learning styles can be more beneficial
- Allows students to explore their own interests and expands the classroom to other project styles

My Project:

- Wessex and the Edington-Chippenham Campaign of 878
- During this class, my research expanded to focus on the defense of Wessex such as the Fyrd, Alfred the Great, Anglo-Saxon warrior culture, and the effect of Christianity.

Expanding My Project

Tools of 3790

- Building a reading list of sources and diving into the historical conversation
- Several presentations to better understand points that need further research
- Have goals for your project to go beyond the classroom

Using the Tools

- How did the Edington-Chippenham Campaign affect the unification of England? What are current historians saying about this topic?
- How did Alfred the Great defend Wessex? What strategies and weapons were used to win?
- Answering these questions, applied for BGSU's *International ResearchScope Journal* and the Symposium on Medieval & Renaissance Studies in 2020.

Beyond the Classroom

HIST 4800 “Capstone Course”

- The course final project had confines of relating to “American Memory.”
- I kept the same topic because I had a goal of continuing my research, but I would need to change my focus
- Using the same strategies from 3790, I looked at the historical dialogue of current historians discussing early medieval England from an English point of view and an American point of view

Final Capstone Essay: “The Forgotten Memory of the Anglo-Saxon Edington-Chippenham Campaign”

Thesis: The Anglo-Saxon Edington Chippenham Campaign should be better remembered with importance attached to it in American collective memory because it allowed the army of Wessex to push back the Vikings and laid the pavement for the unification of England under Anglo-Saxon rule instead of Viking.

Working towards a career and graduate school

Furthering my research through public history:

- Historiography at the graduate level focuses less on your project and more on the career you want to pursue.
- The core values of HIST 3790 prepared me for this process because I had already been thinking about my research beyond the classroom.
- Keeping the same research outline I transferred my work from an academic focus to a public history focus.

Project Bounds: By exploring the important relationship between regional history and local identity I proposed a walking tour/memorial in the local community where the Battle of Edington occurred. The benefits of this project are twofold; firstly showcasing the importance of the battle in relation to the unification of England and secondly, giving local pride back to the community that houses the heritage of this historical event.

what else does “beyond” look like?

All four students might have made some compelling semester projects, but this course finished with “only” a proposal.

Many more students *might have* advanced their work since they already proposed to do so. Many more than these four stated at least an interest. What are faculty to do?

One answer: welcome and connect them across our extended professional networks both on and off-campus.

On campus:

- Independent Study Courses
- Senior / Capstone Research Projects
- Campus Grants / Scholarships
- Student Conferences / Symposia
- Campus Journals
- Launching into Graduate Programs

Beyond:

- Professional Correspondence
- Scholarly Presentation / Publication
- SoTL Presentation (**like this one!**)
- “Epi-professional” Artefacts, e.g. Lesson Plans, Children’s Books, Game Rules
- YouTube Videos / Wikipedia Entries

Conceptual Sequel: *Really* Building to Beyond

For faculty under present conditions:

- ***Please, involve campus partners!***
(e.g. **CURS**, **IRJ**, **BG Library**)
- Grant / scholarship support
- Help with extracurricular proposals, e.g. for conferences and journals
- Independent study courses
- Bring students to your conferences

More boldly...

- In class, move from teaching to advising; outside class, from advising to mentoring.
(Hodges 2017)
- Curricular revision to purposely integrate launch courses: aim at capstones? graduate programs?
- Curricular revision to purposely integrate projects in parallel
(BGSU History 2020-)

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Questions?