

I wish to participate in the 20 [REDACTED] Teaching Scholars program, with the hope of developing a teaching strategy and practices that will assist my efforts to train students to think historically in History 207 – Introduction to African American History. Since arriving at UWGB [REDACTED], I have relied upon my energy and passion to generate students' interest in this survey course and the study of history in general. Ethnic Studies courses like History 207 present the challenge of drawing a majority-white group of students into a subject that is not only unfamiliar to them but also one that is for some confrontational because of those phases that expose the depths of American racism and discrimination. Moreover, students typically enter history courses with a preconceived notion of history as a collection of facts agreed upon. Students routinely comment that my course introduced them to historical facts they had never heard before. I have taken pride in my very positive student and peer evaluations of this course, but I wish to achieve much more.

Utilizing a variety of technological resources and teaching strategies, I have strived to engage students in historiographical debates that reflect the multitude of African American experiences and scholars' competing interpretations of them. In the process of introducing students to scholarly debates on questions ranging from slave agency to the internal conflicts within the Civil Rights Movement, my own presentation of the evidence has generally been a bit too heavy-handed, leading them to adopt my conclusions rather than formulate their own. Consequently, I have fallen victim to the outdated practice of teaching a body of knowledge without training students to think like historians. Research reflects students' difficulty imagining history as anything other than what happened, which leads them to accept my lectures as the only possible truth. Moreover, students tend to perceive any disagreement as nothing more than a

clash of opinions, rather than recognizing that historians develop arguments about questions of causes and effects, the meanings of events, and continuities and discontinuities based upon their interpretation of particular sets of evidence.¹ I wish to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the Teaching Scholars program to transform History 207 to continue to educate students about African American history while finally moving closer to achieving the goal of facilitating students' development of historical thinking skills, which have wide applications well beyond the four walls of my classroom.

To achieve these goals, I intend to reorganize History 207 during the [REDACTED] semester, “flipping the classroom” and redesigning the in-class experience to concentrate more effectively on major historical debates about African American history. First, I plan to remove the lecture from the classroom. I will use lectures recorded using Lecture Capture software to provide students with the necessary context for debates, and students will be required to view these lectures before coming to class. Second, and more significantly, I plan to redesign classroom activities to concentrate on historical debates based upon students' review of primary and secondary sources. Students will draw upon these sources in order to formulate their own response to the questions. The intention is not to lead the class to a particular conclusion, but rather to reveal that the process of historical analysis often yields conflicting but nevertheless equally reasonable and sound arguments. My own role will be transformed from lecturer to facilitator, helping students to express and sharpen their arguments while thinking critically about competing positions. Given my tendency to control the classroom through lectures, the transformation of the classroom experience represents the most significant challenge I face in this project. There are a handful of lectures in which I elicit varying degrees of student

¹ Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, “The End of the History Survey Course: The Rise and Fall of the Coverage Model,” *Journal of American History* (March 2011): 1050-1066.

engagement, and I frequently discuss strategies with colleagues and have even invited peers into the classroom to observe sessions intended to be more student-centered than my normal sessions. However, this project requires the fundamental transformation of every meeting to educate students about the disciplinary standards, foster student engagement, and promote historical thinking. This challenge requires an in-depth exploration of best practices and student learning that I would begin in collaboration with other Teaching Scholars in the [REDACTED] and continue throughout each of the eight meetings I am committed to attend during the academic year.

In order to assess the effectiveness of my efforts, I plan to use my [REDACTED] semester offering of History 207 as the control and the [REDACTED] section as the variable. In the [REDACTED], I will deliver the material in my traditional manner to measure students' ability to learn the analytical skills of the historian. I intend to assess their work based on their written work, class discussions I intend to record, observations by colleagues, and students' self-assessment. I will then flip the classroom in the spring, utilizing the same methods of assessment that will allow me to compare students' ability to fulfill my learning goals. Working with the directors of the program and my fellow Teaching Scholars, I will be able to hone and process the assessment elements. If given the opportunity to participate in the program, I think that this project will have far reaching effects on my own teaching methods.