**How to Study for History 2C**

*or for pretty much any course in the humanities or social sciences*

**A. Modes of Analysis**

The lectures and readings operate on three levels of analysis, and so should you.

**1. What?**

This mode of analysis involves information, description, and data transfer. It includes names, dates, movements, events, and other things that you judge to be important for you to remember. This is what most people think of when they think of history.

Learning new information is important, but it is not the most important kind of understanding. It is just a starting point.

Subsidiary questions in this mode of analysis include things like:

a. How do we know this information?

b. How did the information come to us?

c. How reliable is the information?

**2. Why?**

This mode of analysis centers around causation. It goes deeper than simple description (as in A above) and questions why things happened the way they did. Subsidiary questions include:

a. Why did X, Y, and Z happen?

b. Who is responsible? For example, is this thing the result of individual action or social forces?

c. What was the social context in which this took place?

**3. So What?**

This is the deepest of the three levels of analysis, and ultimately the most important. It builds on the two others. Subsidiary questions include:

a. Why is this worth knowing?

b. What is the difference that knowing this makes? How does it change the way I understand the world?

**B. Read Before Class**

The lectures will make far more sense if you have done the reading for that day beforehand. The lectures do not duplicate the readings. The lectures take off from the readings—they make comparisons, address causes, critique interpretations, and attempt to provoke answers to "So What?" questions.

The lectures are designed to stimulate your thinking. They are not designed primarily to transfer information to you from the professor's mouth. They emphatically *do not* cover everything you need to know.

The textbook (Kevin Reilly, *The Human Journey*) is the least important book to read. It is primarily a reference tool to help you build a frame around the things you are learning in other ways or to answer questions you may have, to fill in gaps, to remind you of the big picture. It is concerned mainly (but not exclusively) with answering the "What?" questions.

The course reader (Kevin Reilly, *Worlds of History*) is the most important book to read. It gives you information, but more importantly it helps you to make comparisons between different parts of the world on specific issues. It helps you think more deeply about the "Why?" and "So What?" questions.

The other books are to take you deeper in specific topic areas. They are the books you are most likely to remember five and ten years from now.

Your learning takes place:

1. Primarily while you are alone and reading.

2. Secondarily in lectures.

3. Also in discussion sections.

4. In office hours.

5. In interaction with other students.

**C. Take Good Notes**

**1. On the lectures**

* After each lecture, take a minute to write a one-paragraph summary of the important take-away points.

**2. On the readings**

* Be sure to read the front matter and the section introductions in the reader and textbook, not just the content chapters.
* When you finish reading a chapter in the reader or the textbook, close the book and write a one-paragraph summary of the important take-away points.
* Do the same when you complete one of the stand-alone books (by Frederick Douglass, Chinua Achebe, Elie Wiesel, etc.)
* Keep a journal of your reactions to the readings, lectures, and sections.

**D. Remember: You are responsible for everything in the course:**

* The Reading
* The Lectures
* The Discussions