Terror, Memory, and Meaning

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Intellectuals who memorize everything, reading for hours on end, slaves to the text, fearful of taking a risk, speaking as if they were reciting from memory, fail to make any concrete connections between what they have read and what is happening in the world, the country, or the local community.... The teacher who thinks "correctly" transmits to the students the beauty of our way of existing in the world as historical beings, capable of intervening in and knowing this world.... Therefore, it is as necessary to be immersed in existing knowledge as it is to be open and capable of producing something that does not exist."[1]

Introduction: September 11, 2001 - An Idiosyncratic Teaching Method[2]

My approach to teaching history is that the discipline essentially embodies the best of other humanities and social science disciplines. The processes of remembering, retelling, and reconstructing involve the higher domains of learning. Freed from the bonds of mere memorization of dates, the college history student analysizes, synthesizes, and evaluates the past and its sources. Such processes force the pedagogue continuously to re-invent methodology, evaluative tools, and narrative devices. This becomes especially true when the history instructor and his/her students confront the immediate past, for those recent memories more intimately involve subjective realities—bias, ideology, and partisanship. In the contemporary context, therefore, the teaching of 911 and related events of the United States invasion, conquest, and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq assume significantly heightened concerns for the classroom.

It is in devising effective approaches for investigating the immediate past in a post-911 world that the historian discovers that the classroom transcends the discipline of history to incorporate those of other colleagues.[3] Shorn of distance, the historian discovers that the classroom becomes similar to a sociological laboratory, probing the "relevancy" of current issues to learners' lives. Exploring the personal meanings of past experiences, the history teacher confronts the psychology of individual and collective agencies in constructing explanation from past occurrences. In order to comprehend some of the impact of past events on contemporary policy-making, law, and institutions, the historian assumes the mantle of economist, weighing cost versus utility. Consuming electronic and print media and deciphering such for the classroom, the history pedagogy critiques mass communication and popular culture, helping students comprehend how corporate entities create news and formulate prevailing ideologies. And in telling stories, the historian incorporates literary formulae in conveying literate, convincing, and interesting narratives to facilitate students in separating personal meaning from collective impression, manufactured consent[4], and hegemonic ideologies. These processes, of course, do not represent the complete experience for the post-911 historian, but they do evince the complexity of tasks confronting history teachers in connecting the immediate pat to the classroom.

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Such complexity, necessarily, is shared across the curriculum. All disciplines require teachers to emphasize relevancy, inter-connectedness, and skill-building in the context of current events. History, however, involves the unique task of providing memory across disciplines, for all subjects involve the recognition and comprehension of evolving ideas, methods, and practices, for which historical knowledge provides keen insight. Because of this, the historian owes it to various colleagues to focus not only on the recovery of the past but primarily on *how* the past *may be* remembered, for the process of remembering does not, for the sophisticated learner, imply truth but the manufacturing of truths that may be employed in diverse ways by individual and collective agencies. The following essay, therefore, attempts to reflect how a momentous event, such as 911, forces the history teacher to confront the immediate past, processes of remembering, construction of meaning, and the "relevancy" of methodology in a higher education classroom. Not intended as a scholarly treatise, the following personalized account seeks to evidence how the concerned educator may confront contemporary events and interpret them in both philosophical and instructional ways intended to broaden student awareness of the nature of scholarly disciplines and increase learner participation in creating a relevant classroom.

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As a social historian, I know that ordinary women and men make history. In the college classroom, however, it is sometimes difficult to convey that the history made by people like us is of a dialectic nature. While history exists as moments of human action, it also exists as the interpretation of those moments. The resulting narrative propels human collectives in any of several directions, which, in turn, create new histories. Fundamental to these forces of action, remembrance, interpretation, and reaction are the behaviors and thoughts of common, everyday people. What the events of September 11, 2001 allowed community college historians was to intersect the seemingly epic-making, globalized history on the television with the everyday lives of ordinary students. In this process history transcends the classroom to become a way of life, reflecting innermost thought and the most intensely personal experience.

Of course, what I brought to the classroom on September 11, and since had been profoundly shaped by my own "ordinary" life experiences. In that sense, the classroom proved less a true laboratory in objective historical method than a mentored-experiment in introspection and discourse. What I sought to draw from my students was less a rigorously analytical examination of all the currents of military, economic, diplomatic, social, and other historiographical traditions that would help explain the events of those days, than a process of reflection drawing upon personal observation, emotional response, intellectual study, and interactive experience - a sort of Bloom's taxonomy[5] in practice, where the individual student interacted with news, personality, and debate to order a historical meaning from the events.

Where my approach differed from many of my Waubonsee Community College colleagues, especially those who sought to "give some kind of meaning" to the events while they transpired, was in my reluctance to play the instant expert. As a historian, I could not answer all--or even most--students' questions on Middle Eastern history, American diplomacy, history of terrorist activity, the logistics of New York metropolitan security forces, and so forth. I needed time, distance, and documents to provide meaningful scholarly analysis. September 11 provided none of those; therefore, I had to approach the subject less as an authority of content than as an authority of method. What I sought after September 11 was to engage students in the process of considering contemporary events more as history than the present. Leave it to psychology, economics, sociology, and other appropriate disciplines to apply a "real-time" lens to these events, I thought. Instead, I sought to use my discipline to help students perceive terror in relation to their memory and their ability to construct meaning from event and memory, thereby allowing them to function both as historical actor and historian.

While the method worked with varying degrees of success in my four different classes that week, it was conceived less through purposeful thought than fly-by-the-seat-of-pants planning. More likely, my teaching from Tuesday, September 11 through Thursday, September 14, was spent as many of my colleagues' classroom experiences had to have been--through a haze of doubt, anxiety, and a touch of fear. Nevertheless, I proceeded to do my job, although my history classes Tuesday the 11th through Thursday the 14th were not "on-task" in relation to the syllabus, but, while ancient Egypt and the colonial conquest of the Americas[6] certainly have their merits, I believed then and now that the interaction of personal consciousness and memorable event can produce true historical consciousness, and that result is the real goal of the history pedagogue.

Terror

It may be impolitic in this passionately patriotic era, but I was fascinated and a bit enthralled by the first news of September 11. Certainly, my initial reactions had nothing to do with glee over the loss of life or insouciant disregard for human feelings. Rather, as an interpreter of events--and that is one of the principal occupations of the historian even at the community college level - I was enthralled by the news coverage of the events involving the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

As for most of us, the morning of September 11, 2001 began simply. I had dropped off the five year-old at Kindergarten and the two year-old at preschool and was riding the back roads to work when I learned of the first plane crashing into the World Trade Center on WBBM-AM, the all-news radio station from Chicago. I thought to myself that the station would indulge in all the silly, sensationalistic coverage of the big, local, four alarm fire that always seems to dominate the local news. Then the second crash occurred. Now the discussion was about TERRORISM! While none of the early reports dared say it, the general tenor was that this was possibly the work of Islamic extremists, although most did not, at that point, discount homegrown reactionary militants. When the third plane struck the Pentagon, I knew that this particular Tuesday was going to be no ordinary day of classes. What I had done as the ordinary consumer of news radio was to take reports of the terror activity, memorize key moments, attribute specific meaning to those moments, and use those meanings to guide my subsequent behavior. Already, almost instinctively, I had envisioned a blueprint for utilizing the still unfolding events to inform my students of the historical process.

Institutions respond poorly to crises, and so did mine in this instance. On campus, my colleagues and I were all visibly shaken - probably both with the enormity of the events themselves but also with the foreknowledge that we would have to communicate some sort of meaning of those events to our students in the next few minutes. We debated over whether or not to cancel classes. A call from "upon high" echoed down the academic food chain was that September 11 was "business as usual," but those of us who teach for a living understood that the classroom, above all else, is a highly dynamic, flexible, and spontaneous environment. Most instructors held classes. Some cancelled them. I - perhaps fearing wrath from "upon high" - told my students that class was *not* cancelled but rather was to be held in front of the nearest television or radio set. I also added that they should pay particular attention to (1) the events themselves and (2) the way that the media portrayed those events, hoping to engage my students as historians (i.e., understanding the events) and historical actors (i.e., consumers critiquing capitalist news corporations in their coverage of the events). With these instructions, my students and I sought the nearest media outlet to watch, feel, and interpret the news.

While I spent a good part of September 11 watching ABC news coverage[7] or seeking further data on the Internet, I also spent a considerable amount of time talking to colleagues in the hallway and watching students consume commercial news coverage. Much of good pedagogy results from being an acute observer of the dynamics of not only the classroom but the surrounding educational environment--discussions in the halls, groupings of students, teacher-student interactions, etc. In

contextualizing the events of September 11 for use in the classroom, I gleaned much from the informal classroom of the hallways and atrium of Bodie Hall, our principal liberal arts building on the central campus, where students, faculty, and staff could follow the news on a hastily-produced television monitor.

The response of colleagues was multi-varied. Some were in shock. Others struggled with how and whether to deal with the events in class. Still others philosophized about the day's events. Most of us were pretty shaken, but the intellectual pulse - particularly since in my corridor we were all classified "social scientists," although historians by and large are more comfortable with the humanities - compelled us to seek those larger meanings, connections, causations, and consequences that we use to create narrative in the classroom, deciphering the arcane knowledge of our discipline to largely first-generation college student, understanding, of course, that these neophyte learners also drive the creation of classroom narratives. The conversation in the hallway as faculty members digested the late-breaking news and observed student reactions to the events was intellectually electrifying. It felt like one of those rare moments in life--a graduation, wedding, childbirth, death of a loved one--when an individual feels completely alive--attuned to all the pulses of life. Instead of complaining about administrators, carping about lazy students, or discussing union news, we were engaged in serious intellectual discourse concerning the military-industrial complex, Islamic religion, the nature of war in the post-Cold War world, the consequences of American global hegemony, social class and military service, and generational discontinuities. Through the fog of disbelief of what we viewed on the television screen came a hundred different perspectives on how to internalize the events, comprehend them, and discuss them with students.

Discussion with colleagues, however, was only part of the experience in the hallway. More stimulating than the intellectual discourse with peers was the opportunity to observe students. On September 11, these observations allowed me to comprehend students as comprising diverse cohorts linked together largely by relative unfamiliarity with the larger issues of human experience--past and present. In other words, through casual observations I knew that despite profound differences in age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and educational background, the images and constructions of terror by Peter Jennings as a corporatized voice and by the students as individual interpreters of historical events represented the nexus between the process of memory and the act of creating meaning.

People debate the impact of September 11 on young Americans. It was their Pearl Harbor, Kennedy assassination, or Challenger explosion.[8] It was not really any of these. What few dispute, however, was that the events of September 11 introduced a radically new sense of vulnerability to today's college students. Combined with the bear market and the hotly disputed presidential election of 2000, the new millennium's college students suddenly encountered the stern reality that the present and future might not be as sunny as the immediate past suggested. In this sense, the terrorist acts of September 11 allowed the historian to connect today's college students with the real lives of ordinary people who participated in the Whiskey Rebellion, Coxey's Army, the march on River Rouge, the demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic National Convention--all those movements of the masses when people felt vulnerable, frustrated, afraid, and dis-empowered. Here, the historian must reach beyond the narrow boundaries of discipline to connect with the voices of adepts such as Maya Angelou, Vine DeLoria, Ronald Takaki, Angela Davis, and others, allowing instruction to transcend the *ennui* of everyday instruction. In the ugly reality of September 11 and the days immediately afterward, the opportunities were indeed rich for history instructors to use the events of terror to connect ordinary people and their everyday lives with historical memory and meaning. This is what I attempted in the days following September 11 with some success, some failure, and some sense of learning from those I sought to teach.

Memory

One of my chief concerns in having students examine the historical perspective of the terrorist attacks and their ramifications was to probe the issue of memory.[9] In one sense, the study of memory might seem too theoretical for introductory history surveys in a community college setting. However, one may explore the theoretical while keeping it - at least in students' immediate perspectives - personally relevant. The events of September 11 proved especially valuable in allowing me to communicate the complex relationship between memory and theory to my students while doing so with a topic of intense interest. Indeed, on the Wednesday and Thursday following the terrorist attacks, I was amazed when my student informed me that I was the first of their instructors to deal with September 11 in the classroom, a reminder of how flexible the discipline of history may be in coping with complex issues.

After allowing students on Tuesday the 11th to watch and listen to the events through various media outlets, I knew on Wednesday the 12th that I would have to cover the events in the classroom. After discussions with colleagues, observing student reactions, watching news analyses, and constructing my own meaning of the events, I knew that I had a responsibility as a historian to deal with the immediate past in the classroom. My decision, therefore, was to proceed with introductory exercises on Wednesday and Thursday that allowed students to examine how they came to remember and think about September 11.

My decision was relatively easy since the relationship between history and memory has been of great interest in the past few years. Eight years ago, the *Enola Gay* affair at the National Air and Space Museum provoked considerable controversy over the way public institutions commemorate the past while incorporating serious scholarship. Historians have studied memory in relation to culture and "collective memory," the use of remembrance in autobiography in comprehending and commenting upon contemporary society, and the role of remembrance in constructing political consciousness. A particularly fascinating examination of the issue of memory and meaning – especially *apropos* to the examination of the role of scholar as documentarian, interpreter, and communicator is that of Margaret Strobel, who, on reflecting on oral interviews with Swahili women in the 1970s, comments:

> I realized that events and people might be forgotten. I also understood that as the political climate changed people might choose to speak about events in different ways. But I had very little sense of how, unconsciously, the record held in memory might change over time. For that insight, I had to go through the process of examining my own experience, memory, and personal documents.[10]

This process of memory, how it is put together, used, and altered over time, proved quite intriguing when considering how to approach the events of September 11, 2001.[11] And I discovered that it proved intriguing to students as well.[12]

In an article "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History" published a little more than a year before September 11, 2001, Patrick H. Hutton noted that three profound topics dealing with memory and history "reflect[ed] the issues of our times."[13] So, too, did the events at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania represent the issues of our time. To represent haphazardly the impressions of my students, September 11 involved the following topics:

- cheap, accessible transportation;
- migrating, distanced community networks;
- reliable, instant communication;
- authoritative, globalized news coverage;
- zealous, fundamentalist anti-Americanism;

- expansive, hegemonic American paternalism, and;
- the underlying psychological irrationality of modern life.

These issues re-appeared numerous times in discussions of how September 11 would be remembered. At no other point in the history of the United States to 1877 or European Civilization to 1648 (the courses I taught fall semester 2001) could I have arranged for the convergence of such relevant topics. However, September 11 allowed me to inter-relate these contemporary issues in relation to the issue of how momentous events were remembered by individuals. The continuation of the crisis with the anthrax scares, "war" on terrorism, economic crisis, political debate, and related events provided ample opportunity the rest of the semester into the next to use the events of September 11 to prove the issues of historical events, their remembrance, and the construction of specific meanings relating to them.

As mentioned previously, for my two classes that met on Tuesday, September 11, I instructed the students that the "best history lesson" they could receive that day was to find a television or radio set and follow the events and analyze the news coverage. However, the first classes with which I met following the terrorist attacks had not had contact with me since the Monday, September 10. For these classes, an American history survey to 1877 and a European history to 1648, I devised two different exercises to begin the class sessions. The exercises I posed for students were to:

1. "Write a brief paragraph describing what you were doing when you first heard the news of the World Trade Center attacks and what your first thoughts were regarding the events." and;
2. "Write a brief paragraph describing who you first suspected of perpetrating the attacks on the World Trade Center (even before the news analysts gave any significant information) and why.

Now, I certainly do not consider these to be the most profound questions one might have asked regarding September 11, but, when I discovered that I was among the first teachers at my institution--even on Thursday-to broach the subject in class, I feel that they served their pedagogical purposes effectively.

The questions themselves asked students to consider several aspects of history and memory. First, students had to recall not the specific event but on a deeper level their feelings toward and perceptions of the event - something very difficult for historians to uncover through research. In this aspect, the exercises worked well, for two classes developed a very interesting discussion thread regarding the way human emotion might distort or enliven the historical record. Second, students created primary source documents. In my classroom, I particularly emphasize the role of primary sources in creating a historical narrative. Here, students participated in the sequence of living through an event, conceptualizing the event, and presenting the event to another: a wonderful laboratory experience in the processes of historical study. Third, students acted as both historical actor and historian, and in discussions we sought to comprehend (and I will admit not always most effectively) how interpretation may be shaped by personal recall, bias, and social category. Finally, the exercises and ensuing discussion allowed students to look at what factors contribute to the creation of primary source documents, especially in a media-conscious age, when television news and popular entertainment contribute to cultural stereotypes from which one might make snap judgments even without satisfactory evidence available.[14]

The questions themselves served principally as icebreakers and opened up a wide spectrum of questions and debate on the events. While I will reserve many of these issues for the next section on historical meaning, it is appropriate here to mention one line of questioning I raised that I resurrected at the beginning of spring semester to introduce the concepts of historical memory. After pursuing the questions of what had happened, who might have done it, why it happened, and what would be the result, I raised the question of how the events might be remembered. On the surface, this question, of course, appears absurd, particularly when framed in the context of the students

imagining themselves as grandparents thirty or forty years in the future answering the question from their grandchildren: "What was September 11 like"?[15] But students responded well after a hesitant beginning, focusing, again, on their emotional state: shock, disbelief, anger, and confusion. Vivid memories that I imagine will remain the most vivid as their other September 11 memories of missed classes, breakfast food, television station watched, plans gone awry, and so forth are forgotten.[16]

All in all, I was pleased about the way classes responded to the questions I posed, even though we largely lost the focus on ancient civilizations and early colonial history for the rest of the week. While scheduled content fell by the wayside, I felt that the practical historical experiences in comprehending events, dissecting the processes of memory, and constructing memory were well worth the effort. Ideally, I hoped that by mentioning and reiterating the worth of historical memory of ordinary people I underscored for students the really "democratic" nature of history that allows even the relatively powerless or dis-empowered in a globalizing world to express their voices and comment to one another, leadership, and future generations about the meaning of historical events.

And historical memory does shape meaning, for both the first-hand observer, who produces the primary sources, and the historian, who uses those sources. In this regard, especially since the Bush administration has defined the crisis of September 11 as an ongoing one in the present "war on terror," I think it is important to note that the use of September 11 continues to be of significant value in the classroom, especially now with the related American invasion of Iraq in March 2003. As one of my students recalled from fall semester, I sought to address the confusion of the crisis by making "correlations about what's happening now and the past," allowing students to understand the links between historical events and the present.[17] In that sense, with the term just concluded (Spring 2002), I allowed students in both my European Civilization and American history classes to receive extra credit by participating in the "Stories of September 11" web archive,[18] specifically archiving their own recollections of that day's events in a digital database for use by scholars, educators, and the public. These memories then served as the text - the narrative - from which one may construct meaning and study the ramifications of individualized and collective historical meanings.

Meaning

Teaching about historical memory is a bit easier than teaching about meaning. One might use the old standby - the metaphor of the children's game of "Telephone" - to demonstrate how, in even a short space of time, key facts or ideas change or may be forgotten.[19] Meaning, on the other hand, deals first and foremost with interpretation and the diverse social and cultural categorizations individuals and their collective groups bring to the processes of dissecting, analyzing, and perceiving the past. For myself, the various meanings of September 11 came in stages - most of them (following the personal reaction and scholarly contemplation) influenced by the classroom. Interestingly, these incremental reactions to the terrorist attacks and subsequent events brought me, in order, a sense of rebellion, astonishment at initial student comprehension, fear of intellectual censorship, and some celebrity. What is most significant in the context of this article is how each of these related to the classroom environment in the wake of September 11.

I do not know why the news of the terrorist attacks emboldened me in relation to my institutional role as an untenured Instructor of History, but it did. This sense of empowerment allowed me to make the decision to suspend normal class activities and direct my students to act as historical observers and interpreters viewing the events on available media outlets. When informed by campus officials that September 11 was "business as usual," I felt safe in interpreting my prerogative as a teacher to create alternative outlets for learning even if they occurred outside the traditional classroom.

My engagement on the issues of September 11 and their meaning for the classroom continued the next day when I espied a posting on H-RADHIS. The posting read, in part:

> We invite a dialogue about the meaning, in history past present and future, of these extraordinary attacks on the symbols of US capitalism, political-military might, and global reach... Like many of you, I have to teach tomorrow, and given that it is a "US Survey, 1877-" class, I can hardly avoid talking about these events. What to say? Why did it happen? What should (or could) be done in response? I am looking for advice, but also serious thoughts…[20]

What a timely query! Just what I had been contemplating all night and morning. So I responded (I believe the first who did), with five points, three of which directly informed my teaching on the 12th and 13th. I wrote:

1. I took quotes from NY Times this morning--letters from Americans and foreigners, editorials, and Anthony Lewis' column--to use to provoke reflection over interpretations and meanings--I also included Malcolm X's quote about "chickens coming home to roost" and Jesus' "blessed are the peacemakers" to juxtapose to media and political snap judgments.
2. In class we may work with a model along the lines of: Why-to What-to-Legacy/Consequences; that is beginning with what we know happened yesterday, we will backward [sic] into reasons Why such happened and then proceed to begin pondering what might result--globally, nationally, individually....
3. I will try to stress to students Thursday [the 13th--classes that I had sent to media outlets] why I did not want to talk about events in class Tuesday, preferring for them to follow the news. Historians like distance and tend to dismiss snap judgments. The need for a collective experience--particularly for a generation largely inured to such disasters. The need to mark oneself in a period of time....[21]

These thoughts translated themselves into questions following the classroom exercises utilized in relation to historical memory. The very act of responding to Van Gosse's query proved cathartic as well as instructive, further demonstrating the valuable resource of H-NET in broad scholarly and pedagogical discussion of pertinent issues in the discipline. In other words, although I already knew others were doing so, it was helpful seeing a colleague (even one I did not know personally) articulating his own struggle with how to historicize September 11.

My principal fear in translating the above thoughts into the classroom on September 12 and 13 was that the discussion might degenerate into a session of supercilious nationalism, angry war rhetoric, or Arab bashing. Students proceeded to astonish me. I had sought to discuss September 11 in terms of "military attacks, deprivation of personal liberties, anti-foreign sentiment, new types of political debates, airline market slump, ramifications in world markets" - in other words, to probe profound meanings in the tragedies.[22] Students were not only willing but also able to take the discourse from the initial level of individual reaction to more provocative topics of personal consciousness and interpretation, historical meaning and generational identity, and the nature of hegemonic American power. Being a historian on the left, the last particularly amazed me. While there were statements of anger and some calls for "revenge," most students who spoke articulated a sense that expansive and aggressive American global commitments had contributed to the events by provoking hostility in other parts of the world. For students in the midst of this type of crisis to consider - whether their assessments might be perceived as correct or not - a connection between the history of American foreign and military policy and the resentment of other peoples (whether justified or not), I regarded as a fundamentally mature intellectual perspective. I would find, however, in the days to follow, that increasingly the most vocal students either did not share or had lost the ability to analyze September 11 as the result of historical processes that related to specific actions by nation-states and militant collectives. And, in this process, my initial sense of rebelliousness--in pushing the discourse of the

contemporary crisis into one of critiquing the state of American policy in the last half century--gave way to a gnawing fear of potential censorship.

Self-censorship always occurs in the classroom. Teachers rein in their ideological perspectives, simplify complex historiographical debates, couch critical remarks with comments non-threatening to the learner, and so forth. The events of September 11 required especially careful restraint. I first became aware of this in a Diversity Chat on Tolerance that our institution's Diversity Council hosted.[23] I was co-facilitator of that event and found it necessary to intervene on a couple of occasions when one student in particular sought to use the event to denounce "anti-Americanism." Fortunately, many of the students were also ready to meet the challenge and articulated a view of patriotism that did not espouse negative group stereotypes. At about the same time, I had to deal with a student who objected to some of my comments in an introductory online class module that explored the philosophy of history and historiography from a provocatively leftist perspective.[24] Her tone bordered upon redbaiting,[25] and I replied forcefully that the ability to critique power structures and relations was critical, especially in a time of crisis. The episode convinced me of the further need to take the idea of criticism to a new level in the classroom, and, during a History Lab, on writing the class returned to the topic of September 11 to explore the critical method and its purpose. I purposefully used the then nearly monolithic approbation of President Bush and his policies to explain that the role of an educated, informed citizen in a republic was to criticize the prevailing power structure to ensure that it adheres to fundamental societal values and principles.

While I did worry over being too aggressive in my classroom and institutional discussions of September 11, I did find myself enjoying a bit of celebrity over my efforts. Because of my posting to H-RADHIS, a reporter for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* interviewed me, and I appeared in an October feature story. I explained to the reporter that in the classroom I utilized discussions of September 11 to get students "thinking about where, for one person, patriotism ends, and terrorism begins," drawing analogies between different epochs and peoples.[26] In addition, I argued that the insecurity spawned by the crisis offered a pedagogical opportunity to have students envision their lives in a more global framework, linking their own "ordinary" lives with larger historical forces. This celebrity was more than personal, for it allowed me to have two of my students interviewed by the *Chronicle* reporter, an experience that permitted the students to view themselves as individuals valued for their opinion both by their instructor and by an outside authority figure. The interview process allowed these two students to connect their classroom experiences with a larger world of information and debate that, hopefully, broadened their perspectives and historical vision.

The broadening of student intellectual focus, I believe, has become the most significant pedagogical consequence of September 11, and its subsequent global consequences allows history educators to return to the events in various ways. As an icebreaker exercise for the fall of 2002, I returned to the idea of how memory and history interconnect, perhaps using September 12 newspaper coverage to evoke student responses and evaluation of reportage and their own memory. In Western Civilization, September 11 is an excellent devise for exploring the slippery slope of nationalism and patriotism. The events also lend themselves nicely in relation to the study of religion, particularly the Crusades and modern imperialism, a correlation that convinced me to peruse Karen Armstrong's *Battle for God*, a history of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic fundamentalism.[27] In American history, the "war against terrorism" allows me to explore ideological labels. Were American revolutionaries, especially in the brutal southern campaign, "terrorists" or "patriots" in the 1770s? Did the use of genocidal warfare against Amerindians or the deployment of atomic bombs against Japanese civilians make the United States a "terrorist state"? In essence, September 11 provides very provocative themes in which to explore individual and collective myths, values, identities, and consciousness and will for a long time to come.

Conclusion: The Use of the Present to Teach the Past

In graduate school one learns of the various dangers of "presentism" when teaching or writing history. Indeed, I always tell my survey students that historians usually give the more recent past scant coverage for various reasons. The shortness of time has not allowed the scholar to develop "historical distance" in relation to events. The source base to study the event critically does not fully exist yet. The historian's own personal prejudices may be too easily apparent when discussing more contemporary events. I also have intellectual reservations against teaching the more recent past. Simply, I find most twentieth century history dull and unsatisfying. While I began graduate work studying the American New Left and continue to write on radical activism in Chicago during the 1960s and 1970s, I most enjoy researching Gilded Age history and teaching medieval history. In fact, most of my recent reading for personal enjoyment focused on the period from the rise of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the Renaissance. Despite such personal reservations, the present may still help me as a teacher interpret and present the past and vice versa. September 11, in particular, with its vivid visual pictures, allows historians to make students think deeply about not just history as content or a discipline but also as a way of thinking.

Memory remains a vital component of the historical process. College survey students, in particular, need exposure as to how memory functions and how historical writing relates to memory. Individual and collective conceptions of September 11 allow students to think about what they remember, why they remember certain elements and forget others, how they use and express those memories, and in what ways their memories differ from individuals who, for the most part, were in the same contemporary setting when "history was made." When students discover that their memories are part of a living history concerning "great events," then they can begin to comprehend that the lives, views, and language of ordinary people are very much the "stuff" of history, which is quite empowering. History becomes not names and dates but lives lived and recalled. When history transcends the textbook and becomes an intellectual tool utilized to order consciousness, then the next step may become the use of consciousness to begin reordering the existing social order. September 11—its events, consequences, and, most of all, remembrances—may transcend the horror of its fiery images if historians are able to guide students into comprehending that memory may serve as a powerful tool for not only understanding the past but reconstructing the present and constructing the future.

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Notes

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefild, 1998), 34-35.
2. While not intended to be, this essay reflects as much about my state of mind in comprehending and interpreting the events of September 11 as my mode of teaching such. However, I believe that as teaching is an intimately personal experience, especially in the crisis atmosphere of mid- to late-September 2001, it is appropriate to frame the discussion largely in the first person, reflecting the evolution of the teacher's thought processes in learning of, comprehending, and presenting the various themes related to monumental events in a contemporary situation. In that sense, many of the following notations are less scholarly citations than personal asides on the larger context of my pedagogical approach to a teaching September 11 historically in a contemporary crisis.
3. I am indebted to several of my Waubonsee Community College colleagues who offered their own perspectives on 911 as well as this paper. These include Dr. David Murphy and Heather LaCost (psychology), Teri Waters (English), and Kathy Westman (sociology).
4. For a simple cross-section of various disciplinary approaches to 911, see, for example, William E. Feinberg and Norris R. Johnson, "The Ties that Bind: A Macro-Level Approach to Panic," *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters, 19* (November 2001): 269-295; Walter R. Dombrowsky, "Do We Still Ask the Right Questions?: Comments on Societal Dynamics, Fallibility, and Disasters, *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters, 19* (November 2001): 323-328; Ian S. Markham and Ibrahim Abu-Rabi, *September 11: Religious Perspectives on the Causes and Consequences* (London: Oneworld, 2002); Steven J. Nider, "Bid Budget, Bad Choices," *Blueprint Magazine* (May 10, 2002) http:// www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?knlgAreaID=124&subsecID=159&contentID=2054; Ken Kyle and Angelique Holly, "Tragedy and Catharsis in the Wake of the 911 Attacks," *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 12* (Sep.-Oct. 2002): 369-374; Peter L. Bannon*, Standing Together: America Strong and Proud after 911* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002); *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, directed by Mark Ach bar and Peter Wintonick, Zeitgaist Video, DVD, April 2002.
5. See, for example, Family Education Network," The Art of Teaching: Bloom's Taxonomy: An Overview*," Family Education Network*, http://www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-2171.html, 2003.
6. Those were the topics for the week of September 10-13 for my classes, the third week of the semester. The European Civilization classes had just concluded a unit on creation myths of the ancient world with an abbreviated look at Darwinism and Big Bang Theory and the American history classes had finished a unit on the cultures of Amerindians, Africans, and Europeans just prior to Columbus' first voyage, whereas all four classes had been introduced to a brief unit on historiography and the philosophy of history during the first week of the semester. The events of September 11 proved especially valuable in reinforcing ideas of primary sources, social construction, narrative history, and ideological orientation that I had introduced the first week of the semester.
7. A leftist sociology instructor and I commented dryly to one another that the first news source sought to explain the events was a corporate one rather than a non-profit one such as PBS.
8. The Pearl Harbor metaphor, while largely fallacious in the context of September 11, may offer history teachers an excellent opportunity in examining the issues of terror, memory, and meaning. For example, was a pre-declaration of war surprise attack an act of terror or of war? FDR in his famous "Day of Infamy" speech seemed to suggest both. How did both Pearl Harbor and September 11 define respective generations? How did (or will) they respond to the events and consequences of the events? What meaning has been given both Pearl Harbor and September 11--particularly in the partisan gamesmanship of blame, which in the recent weeks of May 2002 appear so fecund? A look at Gordon Prague's *At Dawn*

We Slept (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) might be an appropriate tool in a modern United States history survey to examine the way individuals remember and attribute meaning to history as an exercise to understand the complicated political and cultural ramifications of memorable events. For a psychological perspective see, R.S. Feldman, *Development Across the Lifespan* 3d ed. (Upple Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2003); Broufenhenner, *Chronosystem; Normative History Guarded Influences*, "environmental influences associated with particular historical moment."

9. In Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, the philosopher describes the problem of memory for historical study: "The case of memory, however, raises a difficulty, for it is notoriously fallacious, and thus throws doubt on the trustworthiness of intuitive judgments in general. This difficulty is no light one. But let us first narrow its scope as far as possible. Broadly speaking, memory is trustworthy in proportion to the vividness of the experience and to its nearness in time" (New York: Oxford University Press/ Galaxy Books, 1959), 115.

10. Margaret Strobel, "Getting to the Source: Becoming a Historian, Being an Activist, and Thinking Archivally: Documents and Memory as Sources," *Journal of Women's History 1* (1999): 191.

11. In literary studies, one colleague suggested that such reminded her of Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, which functions not only as a drama involving sexual identity and family but memory, especially from the perspective of the protagonist/narrator.

12. See, for example, the following, Edward T. Linenthal, "Struggling with History and Memory," *Journal of American History 82* (1995): 1094-1101; Edward T. Linenthal, "Can Museums Achieve a Balance between Memory and History?" *Chronicle of Higher Education 41* (1995): B1-B2; Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review 102* (1997): 1386-1403; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'You Must Remember This': Autobiography as Social Critique,"*Journal of American History 85* (1998): 439-465; Emily Honig, Getting to the Source: Striking Lives: Oral History and the Politics of Memory," *Journal of Women's History 9* (1997): 139-157.

13. Patrick H. Hutton, "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History," *The History Teacher 33* (2000): 533-548.

14. Of course, most students assumed that Islamic extremists were behind the attacks, although I was surprised that several first thought of American terrorists along the lines of Timothy McVeigh of perpetrating the attacks. One of my English colleagues also used this topic to engage students in creating primary sources through research papers and argumentation papers.

15. The question was inspired in part by my recollection of the Michael Bay film *Pearl Harbor* (Touchstone Pictures, 2001), which I had seen that summer. In fact, the whole spate of recent hagiography on World War Two, including the Steven Spielberg picture *Saving Private Ryan* (Dreamworks SKG/Paramount, 1998), Tom Brokaw's *An Album of Memories: Personal Histories from the Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 2001), and the flawed Stephen Ambrose pop histories *D-Day, June 6, 1944, The Climactic Battle of the World War II.* (New York: / Hall, G. K. & Company, 1999) and *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), offers a stimulating opportunity to frame questions of recent history in generational terms since mass media, in particular, make historical images and their dramatization so accessible to younger students of history who may have relatives or acquaintances who lived through those events. I have found that for the second half of the American survey, oral histories, especially those on war-related topics, are very popular with students. For information on oral history, see Oral History Association, "Oral History Association," Dickinson University, http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/, 2003.

16. See the psychological phenomena known as "flashback memory," such as Mauricio Berrios, "Flashbulb and Flashback Memories," in E. German, ed., *Memory Disorders in Psychiatric Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Pres, 2000), 369-383, especially in regards to post-traumatic memory.

17. Ana Marie Cox, "The Changed Classroom, Post-September 11: Professors Add to Their Courses and Report that Students Are More Engaged," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2001): A16-17.

18. The Center for History and New Media/American Social History Project, "Stories of September 11," *The September 11 Digital Archive*, http://911digitalarchive.org, 2002. I first uploaded my own recollections to this site and then devised an extra credit option for my students. While allowing them to post their story anonymously, which most did, I did require them to allow their stories to be publicly available, explaining that the use of such documents is enhanced through accessibility to scholars, while at the same time lamenting recent presidential administration's efforts to deny scholars access to White House and other government documents, again relating the narrative of the past to contemporary public issues. My own posted story (Timothy Dean Draper, Story #368, The Center for History and New Media/American Social History Project, "Stories of September 11," *The September 11 Digital Archive* http://911digitalarchive.org/stories/details/368, 2002, which is essentially similar to my account provided earlier in this essay, will continue to work as an illustrative piece of historical memory and meaning. For example, in the digitized story I make the comment "much of the planned lessons on colonial America and ancient Greece were displaced by energetic discussions of terror and its consequences, American hegemony and the world, personal experiences of loss and suffering..." Actually, we had not quite gotten to ancient Greece in European Civilization and were dealing more with the aspects of exploration and conquest in the colonial process in American history. Thus, I may use my own story as an example of the untrustworthiness of personal memory of someone recalling events of the top of his head even if only seven months later! This works well in the classroom since, obviously, it allows the instructor to personalize the topic and, at the same time, reflect on his/her own lapses, something that effectively "humanizes" the "sage on the stage" for students and allows them to regard learning as something that need not be mistake-proof. I have continued to offer students the opportunity to earn extra credit by posting to the website, believing that the very act of "creating" their own historical interpretations presses home a fundamental notion of how history is "made" that will stay with them longer than any memorization of date or name.

19. See Elizabeth Lofton, on eyewitness testimony.

20. Van Gosse, "What Is To Be Done?", *H-RADHIS,* http:h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-radhist&month=0109&week=b&rr..., September 11, 2001.

21. Tim Draper, "What Is To Be Done?", *H-RADHIS*, http:h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-radhist&month=0109&week=b&rr..., September 12, 2001. Other instructors, particularly in the humanities, used the occasion to probe the topics raised from the perspective of religious rhetoric, which, in history, was especially *apropos* in the first half of Western Civilization courses.

22. Ibid.

23. Human Resources, "Diversity Chats," *Waubonsee Diversity Chats*, http://216.125.152.27/diversitychats/index.html, Waubonsee Community College, 2002, states, " The Diversity Chats are sponsored by the Diversity Council and are designed for sharing in discussions of race, gender, age, ability, ethnicity, and cultural differences."

24. Timothy Dean Draper, "The Study of History," HIS 121.920--History of the United States to 1877, http://www2.wcc.cc.il.us/SCRIPT/hi121/scripts/serve_home, Waubonsee Community College, 2001. Some of the examples I used that the student possibly found problematic may have included a section entitled "'It' Does NOT 'Just Happen'!", where I argue: "Today, many of us seem to be quite fatalistic, feeling we have little control over the events that influence our lives. People appear indifferent, believing that just one person cannot make a difference or that no group of "just ordinary" people can bring about change. This type of powerlessness lies at the heart of a socialization process that most clearly values individuals not as vibrant human beings but as mere cogs in an economic machine, producing wealth and consuming commodities." And, in a section on "Historical Context," I make the following comments on Pearl Harbor 1941: "From the Japanese point of view, the Americans had 'forced' Japan to act preemptively due to increasingly draconian measures crippling the former's war machine in China. In addition, by late-1941, nearly all observers understood that the United States appeared inching closer and closer to a shooting war with Germany, which was formally allied with Japan. From the American point of view, however, the scenario played differently, touching on issues of 'honor' and 'law,' even though Americans, who were at peace, were already planning for joint action with the Allies." I

debated about rewriting the material to fit more effectively the current political milieu but resisted largely out of antipathy of giving in to red-baiting and the fact that the vast majority of students find the material refreshing and perspective, establishing college history as a field distinctly different from many of their high school experiences.

25. For the difficulties inherent in confronting traditionalist student notions, see Nancy Davis, "Teaching about Inequality: Student Resistance, Paralysis, and Rage,"*Teaching Sociology 20* (1992): 232-238. More specifically, in regards to student reactions to 911, see S. Solomon, *et al,* "Terror Management Theory of Self-Esteem," in C. R. Snyder and D. Forsythe, eds*., Handbook of Social and Clinical Psychology: The Health Perspective* (New York: Pergamon, 1991), 21-40.

26. Cox, A17.

27. Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

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