“We are given so many facts and specifics about periods in history, but we generally do not get to practice the way an historian practices their craft.” While grading final papers for Introduction to Historical Inquiry, a new course I taught in 2009, I encountered Daniel’s ubiquitous lament. His complaint echoes studies in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) that call on instructors at all levels to engage students in doing history. Yet those of us who have taken up that charge know there is much work to do. For example, among the fifteen second- and third-year students in Daniel’s section, few had read a historical monograph. Most reported that textbooks were the authoritative source of historical knowledge since they objectively presented facts. Only a few had heard the term historiography and an alarming number thought a primary source was the most helpful book that they used to write a paper. A number of studies suggest that my experience with Daniel’s class is not unusual: we continue to face fundamental challenges initiating history majors into the historical craft. Some of our difficulties reflect broader cultural skepticism about the value and relevance of intellectual work—particularly in the humanities. Some stem from students’ alienation from a college curriculum that seems overly disjointed and specialized and from their unease with argument and rhetorical style.

When we teach history as an interpretive discipline, we threaten a core belief fostered in elementary and high school: that history reveals a single, unified past. To novice history majors, historiographical debates seem puzzling and pointless, if not downright dangerous. Our students’ academic success and the direction of history education are at stake in our efforts to address these challenges.1

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1 I have changed the names of all students to whom I refer. Examples of works that encourage student engagement include Robert B. Bain, “Into the Breach: Using Research and Theory to Shape History Instruction,” in Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives, ed. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg (New York, 2000), 331–52; Alan Booth and Paul Hyland, eds., The Practice of University History Teaching (Manchester, Eng., 2000); Lendon Calder, “Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey,” Journal of American History, 92 (March 2006), 1358–70; M. Suzanne Donovan and John D. Bransford, eds., How Students Learn: History in the Classroom (Washington, 2005); Linda L. Levstik and Keith C. Barton, Doing History: Investigating with Children in Elementary and Middle Schools (Mahwah, 1997); Peter N. Stearns, “Getting Specific about Training in Historical Analysis: A Case Study in World History,” in Knowing, Teaching, and...
For many departments, my own included, the history methods course serves as an insurance policy guaranteeing that our students advance to upper-level courses with exposure to metahistorical understandings and a tool kit of disciplinary reading, writing, and thinking skills that will also serve them well beyond their college years. This is a crucial moment in the history major’s apprenticeship, when she not only peeks behind the curtain to see the historian at work but also rehearses that role herself, practicing the craft in more depth and with increasing sophistication. Because methods courses are designed for history majors and minors, they provide valuable insight into what it means to practice the historian’s craft at this juncture in the curriculum. What do we teach in the methods course? What challenges do our students confront? A survey of syllabi from departments around the country and my own experience illustrate that learning historiography is a major component of the methods course and that understanding its role in the context of a research project is key to students’ success in the course and beyond.

Suggesting that historiography is an important component of the methods course is not surprising. Despite historiography’s centrality to our craft, SoTL has yet to explore its role in historical thinking. Pioneering research charted historians’ reading strategies and metaconversations when they confronted material outside their specialty. While this line of inquiry proved useful in identifying heuristics for primary sources, historical interpretation at advanced levels requires something more: connecting primary and secondary source material dialogically to ask new historical questions and to build historical claims. Historians come to primary sources with a rich background knowledge gained from years of reading in our specialties. So “the works of other historians are not just second-best sources of information, but part of a common framework in terms of which historical questions, interpretations and evidence are given meaning.” We cannot fully articulate research questions or contextualize primary sources without referring to our historiographical knowledge. Indeed, we cannot produce historical research—and neither can our majors—without it. While some departments may expose students to the concept of historiography in introductory courses, the methods course is frequently the point at which we expect students to begin using it in the context of a research project. To do so requires a set of historical reading and reasoning skills essential to historical practice. I call these skills “historiographic mapping.”

2 A few studies of preservice teachers and precollegiate students have explored how learning about historiography helped them grasp metahistorical issues. While useful for teacher education, these studies offer little help to history faculty seeking to initiate undergraduate majors into more advanced levels of reasoning and research where students use primary sources and historiography dialogically. See Thomas D. Fallace, “Historiography and Teacher Education: Reflections on an Experimental Course,” History Teacher, 42 (Feb. 2009), 205–22; Thomas D. Fallace and Johann N. Neem, “Historiographical Thinking: Towards a New Approach in Preparing History Teachers,” Theory and Research in Social Education, 35 (Summer 2005), 244–61; and D. Kevin O’Neill et al., “Understanding a Future with Multiple Pasts: Projects on Metahistorical Understanding,” in Learning in the Disciplines: Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference of the Learning Sciences, vol. II: Short Papers, Symposium, and Selected Abstracts, ed. Kimberly Gomez, Leilah Lyons, and Joshua Radinsky (Chicago, 2010), 77–84. On historians’ reading strategies and metacommunications, see, for example, Wineburg, Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts, 63–112. On the strategy of having historians read outside their expertise, see Sam Wineburg and Daisy Martin, “Seeing Thinking on
By historiographic mapping, I mean the reading and reasoning processes historians use to create a mental map of scholarship on a given topic and the ways we use historiographical knowledge to develop research questions and make meaning from primary sources. The complexity of reading and thinking that goes into historiographic mapping distinguishes it from other forms of historical thinking; indeed it requires proficiency in other historical reading skills such as sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading. When we open a book related to our research, we practice close reading, attending carefully to the author's claims, evidence, and language choices. We use sourcing heuristics to consider the author and audience, and we depend on our knowledge of relevant primary and secondary sources to corroborate the author's historical claims and evidence. We apply intertextual strategies to build historical context, develop historical questions, categorize, and make connections among multiple ideas and pieces of information from other sources. As we make notes in our research journals, draw concept webs, or use software programs, we look for patterns and relationships, disagreements, and gaps in the literature. We look for ways to reorganize the information to develop new questions and new understandings. Thus when we mentally plot historiographic maps, we are doing more than a close reading of single texts or contextualizing and corroborating several primary sources. Consider how one methods syllabus describes this process. The student must “determine how the various pieces [of secondary readings] relate to each other. Your ability to do so will demonstrate your understanding of the evolution of literature.” It explains that the student as researcher must delineate those relationships: “you might determine that the literature makes sense when divided by time period, by methodology, by sources, etc. You might also decide to subdivide categories based on other criteria. There is no ‘rule’ on divisions,” so the “key step is to FIGURE OUT the most logical, clarifying angle. Do not arbitrarily choose a categorization,” but let the literature be the guide.3

Each historian develops his or her own mental images of background knowledge. Research in cognitive science has explained that we develop some mental representations of knowledge—whether a map, schema, picture, or outline; we could not think without them. Reading historiography is a complex cognitive task and the mental maps of the historiographical terrain we build in the process are dynamic and dialogic. As both a concept and a tool, historiographic mapping is deeply embedded in our reading, reasoning, and writing about the past. Such mental gymnastics have become second nature to us through years of training and practice; we hardly notice what we do.

But our students have had limited, if any, practice in these reading and thinking skills. To the extent that students have mental maps of history, research suggests they are dotted sparsely with people and events, sometimes places, with perhaps a few causal connections drawn among them. But they are much less likely to have historiography mapped on the landscape of the past. If they have been exposed to the concept, they may have a few scholarly texts, names of historians, or arguments plotted, but as they reach advanced courses in the major, they must develop much more detailed mental maps of a given topic, delineating multiple relationships and connections in the historiography. And they must learn to use them in more sophisticated ways. As they work to chart their own path through accumulating knowledge of secondary sources, we want them to identify historiographic questions. As students practice the historical craft, they must learn to “see” and articulate relationships between their historical questions, primary-source evidence, and historiography. They use those historiographic maps dialogically as background knowledge to guide them in reading primary sources. And their deepening knowledge of primary sources may also help them “see” and arrange their historiographic maps differently. When they are ready, they pitch their tent on some unoccupied landscape, laying claim to an original historical argument and beginning a conversation with those historians around them. In the historical methods course, we accompany students on this journey; by the senior research seminar, we expect them to do this on their own. I learned in my experience with Daniel’s class how fundamental this aspect of historical thinking is to the historian and how difficult it is for students. Historiographic mapping offers us a useful heuristic for teaching the reading and thinking skills targeted in the methods course and serves as a signature pedagogy at the advanced levels of history instruction.4

Historiographic Mapping in the History Methods Course

My thinking about historiographic mapping grew out of practical challenges I confronted when I began teaching the historical methods course in 2009. My department had redesigned the major in 2008 to address the difficulties our students confronted in upper-level courses, especially the senior capstone seminar. In that course, students conduct research and produce an article-length paper based on their work in archival sources. Like many students elsewhere, our students struggle with metahistorical understanding and discipline-specific reading and writing skills; they struggle to grasp the dynamic relationship between argument, sources, and historiography, to apply historical standards of reason as they build their arguments. Addressing these problems required some creativity, since most of our students come to us with introductory survey courses from other institutions. Because they have varying levels of exposure to freshman- or sophomore-level surveys that uncover the discipline, we articulated our goals for the methods course with this in mind. Specifically, we sought to introduce students to the rhetoric of history, including framing historical questions and developing historical arguments. We expected them to find and analyze primary sources, and we required historical writing, including organizing papers around evidence, situating research within historiographic conversations, and properly using citations.5 To put my course at the University of

5 A book that makes a strong case for teaching students the structure, rhetoric, and discourse practices of the academic disciplines is Graff, Clueless in Academe.
Missouri–St. Louis, into broader context and to gain insight on historical thinking skills widely expected at this point in the history major, I turned to the Internet and surveyed a number of programs, looking at course descriptions and sample syllabi.

Not surprisingly, methods courses around the country share such goals. I looked at the history major requirements of thirty institutions (ten elite institutions, ten private and liberal arts colleges, and ten public universities) to gain a sense of the frequency and commonalities of such courses. (For information on these thirty schools, see tables A.1–A.3 on pages 1111–13 of this issue.) While I am cautious about drawing conclusions from this limited sample, some general patterns quickly emerged. The difference between state and elite institutions was noteworthy; state universities were much more likely to offer such courses (seven out of ten) than were elite institutions (four out of ten). Small private and liberal arts colleges were split down the middle.6 These findings beg obvious questions and more research, but the similarities among the required courses were of most interest.

Some similarities were primarily organizational. Most devoted several class meetings to discussions with history professionals from a variety of arenas, visits with library staff, and small-group and individual meetings with the instructor to pore over students’ research and writing. Typically instructors broke down these processes or skills into small steps: frequent—often weekly—assignments with students “doing” something with the tools of the discipline—using the library to find sources, or using sources to build nuanced arguments. While some courses embedded these skills into a content-focused class—on the Great Depression, the Grand Canyon, the American West, or Chile and the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship—others taught them more generally using different content for various assignments throughout the course. In either case, all instructors sought to uncover disciplinary skills by walking students through the steps of reading, researching, and building arguments prior to more advanced courses in the major where they would be expected to apply them in a more independent fashion.

The syllabi also revealed a very concrete and shared expectation that we have of students in the methods course: learning historiography. This objective divided into two related but slightly different approaches. Some instructors introduced historiography in its philosophical sense, as the study of the discipline of history over time, starting with the Greeks and moving through postmodernism. Students may have previously been introduced to the concept of historiography, but in the methods course they studied the discipline as a whole, learning about the Annales school, the progressive and consensus schools of thought, and Marxist history, among other topics. The second approach emphasized the role of historiography as a component of the research process. Assignments in these courses uncovered the interconnected relationships among reading historiography, developing historical questions, and finding and using primary sources. To novices, such skills may at first seem straightforward, but it is nuanced work. Students must learn to recognize what questions are worth asking and to determine what constitutes appropriate primary sources for a particular research question. Indeed, as one researcher put it, “deciding whether to ask legal and formal questions or to cast a wider net” has implications for evidence since “it is questions which turn mere detritus into evidence for the past.”7

By helping students understand the complex role of historiography in research, how historians in different fields ask different questions, use different kinds of evidence, and

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6 Interestingly, I also found that in instances where I could identify instructors, most were women.
7 Dickinson, Gard, and Lee, “Evidence in History and the Classroom,” 5.
sometimes come to different conclusions, the methods course seeks to accomplish two difficult goals—one procedural, the other epistemological. Novices often struggle at the outset of their research due perhaps to their impatience with or their misunderstanding of the tentative nature of the early stages of any research process. As students struggle to learn the fluid dance between framing and reframing questions and exploring and reconsidering evidence at the beginning of research, they also justifiably worry about deadlines, fearing that a dead end in the course of research may mean failure to complete an assignment on time. Furthermore, they lack the advantages of the professional historian who “knows what questions have been already asked and what evidence has been employed in answering them.” In other words, we are steeped in historiographical conversations that provide “a range of accepted knowledge, standards and procedures based on the work of [our] colleagues down the years;” historical claims, we understand, must be publicly accessible and verifiable. Our historical method and epistemology cannot be separated, and historiography is the arena in which we wrestle with such issues. In the methods course, we encourage students to see that the work of other historians not only serves as a body of scholarship to mine for information but also as a historiographic map necessary for advanced levels of historical thinking.8

Learning to Read Historiography

The discipline-specific reading strategies we employ are not always obvious to our students. Typically, students read both primary and secondary sources for information. If they do not know to look for the historiographical debates, historical claims, and sources and methods embedded in the text, they may fail to include these critical sections in their own research and writing. Since students frequently have not yet developed discipline-specific reading habits, we can help them learn these historiographic reading skills. One way to do this is through teaching them to recognize authors’ “signposts” and language usage that signal argument, sources, and strategic concessions in articles and books. When we sit down to read, we usually have a serviceable, if initially generic, mental map of historical writing. We begin purposefully, on the lookout for and prepared to encounter argument, acknowledgement of other scholarly positions, the researcher’s methods and evidence. We attend to these signposts closely because as researchers we need to understand an author’s interpretive lens, to help us assess how the work is useful for us. Well-written and smartly read signposts help us navigate quickly to the most relevant passages and remind us to pause and pay close attention once we get there. In particular we know that the structure and language of introductions and conclusions constitute a kind of rhetorical code, which our training helps us decipher; it helps us plot our historiographic map in more detail.9

Deciphering this code is not second nature to the new history major; neither is employing it to make new historical claims. In the syllabi I examined, I found a variety of assignments aimed at helping students read and use historiography as a useful tool to help draw

8 Ibid., 6–7, 10. The authors discuss the difficulties students face when coming to terms with evidence in the classroom, but they also make the case that instructors must continue to use both primary and secondary sources to build students’ capacity for historical inquiry.

meaning from primary sources and use it as a backdrop to their own research. Molly Todd’s assignment for a historical research methods gateway seminar at Augustana College offers a way to teach such skills. Todd asks students to do a close reading of the introductions and conclusions of four articles. Her syllabus explains the purpose and process:

Part of the assignment is to determine what constitute the intro/conclusion for each; they will vary in style and length. As you read, take note (both figuratively and literally) of the author’s methods and strategies for their intro and conclusion. Each author has a different style for “hooking” the reader, presenting their thesis and outlining the article’s argument, explaining their methods and the importance of their contribution to the historical debate, wrapping up their study, etc. How do you determine where the intro/conclusion begin/end? What are the authors’ strategies in these sections? What do you like/dislike about each author’s strategies? And, of course, in the back of your mind, consider how you might adopt some of these methods in your own writing.

Given the difficulties many students face when they read academic writing, such an assignment makes sense. It directs students toward language that identifies the historian’s methods, sources, and writing strategies, as well as the author’s use of historiography to make original claims and build arguments. Attention to such signposts provides valuable information to plot on a historiographic map and helps students “see” the historical thinking behind the text. Well-written introductions and conclusions can show the historian at work—using sources and historiography to construct historical meaning—if we know how to look.\(^\text{10}\)

Not only must students learn to read in such a fashion, but they must also be able to turn around and do the research and writing themselves. In a historical research and writing course, Martha Hildreth and her colleagues at the University of Nevada, Reno, assign a source study that asks students to perform exactly those tasks. The Source Study Project, an eight-to-ten-page research prospectus, has several purposes described in the syllabus:

To plan and to understand the elements of a research project in history
To find and analyze appropriate primary sources that can form an argument for your project
To find and analyze relevant secondary sources that will set the context for your argument
To ask a historical question and then formulate a thesis from available evidence that proposes an answer to your question

The project has four parts that connect the essential ingredients of historical research—argument, primary source evidence, historiographical debate, and bibliography. The course walks students through each of these steps with assignments that build on one another and require revision over the course of the semester. The structure of the project, particularly the questions for each part, guides students through the process:\(^\text{11}\)

1. The subject and argument: topic, thesis, and argument
   - What is the topic?
   - What is the thesis?
   - Why does your subject matter (“so what”)?


\(^{11}\) Martha Hildreth, “Historical Research and Writing,” syllabus, Spring 2011, University of Nevada, Reno (ibid.); Martha Hildreth, “Source Study Project” (ibid.).
What questions will you need to answer to provide a persuasive argument?

2. Analysis of three to five primary sources
   - Explain how these sources contribute to your argument.
   - What kinds of support do you find in the historical record?
   - How does each specific source contribute to the answer to your topic and thesis?

3. Historiography of at least three secondary sources
   - Describe how these relate to your argument.
   - What have other historians said about your subject or question?
   - Explain why you have chosen these particular sources among those available to you. In other words, include in your historiography some indication of why these are the best secondary sources to use in answering your question. Compare and contrast.

4. Bibliography
   - List separately the primary and secondary sources that were analyzed above in parts two and three above
   - A list of primary sources you have found but not analyzed
   - A discussion of what other kinds of sources you should look for

Several important lessons stand out. The assignment emphasizes the interpretive and argument-driven nature of the discipline, requiring the student to make connections actively and consciously between each part of the research project. In parts 1 and 2 the student develops a thesis and selects evidence, rationalizing choices. This process pushes him to articulate the connections between evidence and argument. Furthermore, the prompt “What questions will you need to answer to provide a persuasive argument?” invites reflection about historical and logical problems he must confront to support his historical claim. The question “How does each specific source contribute to the answer to your topic and thesis?” helps the student consider whether the evidence can bear the burden of the argument and consider the challenges the argument must overcome. This step encourages deeper awareness of what the researcher has to do to be successful. The primary source analysis helps students to select sources wisely and consider the concrete relationship between sources and argument. The historiographical essay helps students grasp the idea that research is part of an ongoing conversation. Asking students to describe how historical works relate to the argument pushes them to identify a historiographical conversation and enter it.

These steps, in turn, help students build a bibliography of relevant primary and secondary sources. Including primary sources they have not yet analyzed helps student remember that three to five sources are not enough for a final paper; they need to ensure they will have enough primary-source evidence related to the various questions they must answer. And they must give some thought to the kinds of sources they need to answer their questions. Since all steps are revised, the assignment sends the important message that research requires revision as the scholar moves back and forth among sources, argument, and historiography. This process ideally moves students away from the idea that historical research begins with an argument, or that historians primarily search for evidence that supports the argument while ignoring contradictory evidence. The structure of the methods course allows the instructor to guide and support students as they map the historiographic terrain of their topic. Putting together the source study, students manipulate, rearrange, and make connections of plot points on their maps.

These assignments immerse students in the task of historiographic mapping, asking them to read purposefully to see the structure of historical argument, its relationship to
evidence and method, and historiographical conversations. Todd’s assignment helps students become active, expert, and efficient readers who recognize historians’ rhetorical practices and epistemological positions. Hildreth’s assignment helps students develop their historiographic maps and use them dialogically to lay claim to new historical territory.

Similarly, one of my assignments illustrates the importance of a historiographic map in making sense of primary sources and articulating historical claims. When I first taught the methods course, I assigned a footnoting project designed as an entrée into more sophisticated practices of historical interpretation. This project required students to use historical research and thinking skills to footnote an article from a local popular history magazine where footnotes are not published. In an accompanying paper they were to discuss examples of the historian’s interpretive moves in the article. The exercise met departmental goals of practicing the mechanics of finding primary sources and footnoting. It gave them practice reading sources and uncovering the ways that historians go about selecting and interpreting sources and building arguments.

The article in question, Michael Lerner’s “Hoping for a Splendid Summer,” argues that African Americans in St. Louis and around the nation had high hopes that the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition would offer a way to “voice their aspirations for a more egalitarian society and to challenge the ‘color line’ of segregation that had come to dominate much of the United States.” While scholarly literature on racial interactions at the St. Louis World’s Fair has focused primarily on anthropological exhibits, Lerner directs our attention elsewhere as he explores the aspirations of African Americans in the St. Louis community. Compared to materials in the official Louisiana Purchase Exposition Collection at the Missouri Historical Society that told of whites’ experiences at the Fair, there were far fewer sources in the exposition papers on African Americans (perhaps an indication of the priorities of fair officials, several students noted). Instead, Lerner draws from local and national black newspapers, oral histories, a few items in the official papers, and other primary sources about African Americans’ reform goals at the turn of the century. He considers the commercialization of popular culture, specifically ragtime, as a political and economic force. He argues that African Americans believed the fair provided an important opportunity to display their community’s achievements and their own respectability; and they would also reap the economic rewards the fair promised to St. Louis businesses.12

Without footnotes, Lerner’s research and interpretation and his decisions in constructing the account are especially invisible. As students peeled back layers of his claims, I wanted them to attend to his “cognitive moves”—how he used or interpreted primary and secondary source evidence to develop his argument, how he situated his work within

12 Michael Lerner, “Hoping for a Splendid Summer: African American St. Louis, Ragtime, and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition” Gateway Heritage, 19 (Winter 1998–1999), 28–41, esp. 29. I am grateful to the Missouri Historical Society librarian Emily Jaycox for first suggesting this article would suit my purposes and for her expertise in helping students during the footnote project. Eric Breitbart, A World on Display: Photographs from the St. Louis World’s Fair, 1904 (Albuquerque, 1997); Robert W. Rydell, All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916 (Chicago, 1984). James Gilbert problematizes the sources historians have used in their study of the St. Louis World’s Fair. He points out in particular problems with the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Company archives, which were collected by the fair president David Francis and reflect his early twentieth-century biases. See James Gilbert, Whose Fair? Experience, Memory, and the History of the Great St. Louis Exposition (Chicago, 2009) 37–68. This book was not yet available to my students in 2009, but with its emphasis on collective memory, experience, and historical interpretation, it will be useful for this project.
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historiography, and how he employed habits of mind of the discipline, such as continuity and change or agency. I prompted them to look for how he handled contradictory evidence, and to pay close attention to the “hedging” language the author uses for moments of inconclusive but informed interpretation. I wanted them to work backwards to better see how the creation of a historical text requires the historian to weave a number of historical skills together. I also wanted to highlight the historian’s presence as an active interpreter and the midst of the text, to encourage them to think about how Lerner configured his historiographic map. Of course they might misjudge his historical thinking, but their effort to make visible the author’s interpretations was primarily a means to make their thinking more visible to me. As the instructor, I wanted to see my students’ thinking at this point in their practice of history, and where necessary, intervene to put it back on course.

Lerner’s research and writing lend themselves well to the task. He left many clues in the text, so students believed that the sources would be fairly forthcoming, especially since they had spent many weeks discussing issues related to interpretation of sources, visiting archives, using databases, and reading historiography on the fair. They set out to find those sources full of expectation of easy success. This was not the case, however—to their surprise. The sources were not packaged neatly for them, full of the information they find in the document readers and course Web sites they use in their classes. In some cases students never found a source referenced in the article, a frustrating first lesson on the value of footnotes. Most importantly, they learned that finding the sources did not necessarily simplify the task of deciphering Lerner’s interpretations. Indeed, several students noted during our debriefing session that connecting seemingly disconnected or contradictory documents to build claims is part of the nuance of the historical craft. What I learned from my students’ efforts is the important role a good historiographic map plays in historical thinking, especially contextualization.

Contextualized Thinking and Historiographic Mapping

Lerner’s account depended on contextualized thinking—“piecing together the temporal and spatial context: the exigencies of the moment that might explain” motivation or intention, as well as “the climate of opinion, mentalite, or Zeitgeist,” or the linguistic practices of another era. In previous studies of contextualized thinking in SoTL, readers did not have background knowledge and used only primary source documents for contextualization. But Lerner drew on his knowledge of relevant historiography to help interpret primary sources and support his historical claims. To develop his historiographic map he needed broad knowledge of the time period, purposeful reading of historiography, and a flexible, creative intellect to draw the connections. This type of process, in which the historian interweaves primary sources and historiography to build contextualization, more closely aligns to historical practice at advanced levels.


14 Wineburg, Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts, 90.
Developing and using a historiographic map in this manner is a pivotal historical skill necessary for building more sophisticated historical claims. Lerner used such a “map” to help him interpret several primary sources, especially advertisements for the Rosebud Café, a notorious St. Louis ragtime saloon owned by the businessman Tom Turpin. Lerner posits that respectable middle-class blacks consciously avoided such establishments. Finding numerous ads for such venues in the African American newspaper *St. Louis Palladium*, he argues that black saloon keepers strategically sought to advertise their establishments as respectable to attract the potentially large market of middle-class African American visitors to the fair. In one ad, Turpin described the Rosebud Café as the “headquarters for colored professionals.” Lerner characterized this and other ads as evidence of “a desire to use the Fair to establish the respectability of his saloon and the ragtime played in it.” To help readers understand the social context of ragtime, saloons, and African American concern for respectability, he also drew from W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Philadelphia Negro* where Du Bois equated “cakewalk” dances with drinking and gambling, calling them the “chief amusements” of the lowest classes of blacks. He noted that closer to home, the Fair’s Board of Lady Managers “passed a resolution in October 1902 banning ‘indecent dances or improper exhibits’ from the Fair’s amusement zone.” Representatives from the Bureau of Music also told the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* that “ragtime melodies . . . will form no part of the programs for the official band concerts at the World’s Fair.”

Connecting these pieces of evidence, Lerner contextualized Turpin’s ad. Together these sources paint the cultural and racial landscape that African American business owners and middle-class consumers navigated in 1900. Historians knowledgeable about African American reform history during the Progressive Era would recognize in Turpin’s ad a familiar language of respectability that permeates the primary sources and historiography with which they regularly work; they would easily integrate Lerner’s primary sources and claims into their existing map of the subject. Respectability was a powerful social and political strategy for middle-class African Americans, but popular culture threatened the boundaries that respectability tried to enforce. Even historians unfamiliar with this literature but skilled in sourcing and contextualizing documents might pause on the key words in Turpin’s ads to ask a range of questions: Why does Turpin choose this language to draw customers? Why target professionals? Why cast his saloon this way? What else do I need to know to understand how these documents work together or to judge the validity of Lerner’s interpretation? Familiar with the concept, if not the particular body of historiography, they could easily produce a task list to direct their next steps to learn more.

Lerner’s contextualization is important for his lay audience, including most of my students, who understand ragtime as a source of St. Louis pride and do not see an evening at the bar as particularly threatening to their reputations. Derived from the intersection of primary sources and a historiographic map, this context helps support Lerner’s interpretation of the efforts of black saloon owners to legitimize their business. Without this context, the possibility of deeper interrogation of the language and motives behind Turpin’s ad is diminished. Ideally, students learning how to read historically would stop

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16 Two important works that would have been available to Michael Lerner are Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993); and Kevin Kelly Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, 1996).
and ask questions when they did not see the connection among the documents. As they pause to ask questions about author, audience, text, comparisons, change over time, and context, we can recognize their progress toward more sophisticated integration of historical skills. My students did in fact exhibit some of the steps of an expert history reader: they recognized an example of the historian’s interpretive move and stopped to acknowledge it. But they did not take the next step to consider how historiography helped Lerner build the contextual knowledge necessary to interpret primary sources and make historical claims. As students struggled to see the connections among the documents, the absence of a historiographic map became starker. As Mark wrote, Lerner’s interpretation was “problematic because Turpin is never quoted saying something exactly to that effect.” Other students agreed. In their papers and during a debriefing after the assignment, several noted that Lerner used other evidence to bolster his claims. In other words, they recognized his efforts to corroborate his interpretation, but they tended to agree with another student, Terry, that W. E. B. Du Bois was “talking about different things from Lerner.” Tom noted that “Du Bois never actually mentions ragtime” and that Lerner’s writing appears as if he “was trying to push what Du Bois was writing into his article to make it work.” They concluded that Turpin was a businessman trying to make money, which was true enough. But a historiographic map of African American middle-class reform, and of popular culture more generally, would help them understand that Turpin first had to convince black professionals that his was a respectable venue. Lerner’s interpretation makes sense in light of such a historiographic map.

There are many possible reasons students did not discern this map. Perhaps they left themselves too little time to consider the sources more carefully or lacked enough familiarity with search engines and research strategies to complete a thorough investigation of additional primary and secondary sources. Or maybe they lacked the “habit of mind” so important to history—appreciating the role of agency when attributing historical motivation. Indeed, one student, Michael, suggested that it was extraordinarily unlikely that African Americans even had such aspirations of challenging Jim Crow or strategies of building respectability for the fair since racism was so pervasive. Failing to recognize human agency in the face of oppressive racism, he and others may have simply rejected Lerner’s entire claim as implausible and thus declined to pursue deeper analysis. I wondered whether his assumption of African American victimization is emblematic of a failure of historical imagination in which students do not consider the various ways historical actors might act on their own behalf.

My students’ larger challenge—only three of them added footnotes for secondary works or historiographical conversations anywhere in the article, even though we had read some relevant scholarly works—suggests a more significant bottleneck at this stage in the history major: students struggle with using historiography as a dialogic tool in the research process. To inform teaching and learning in our advanced history classes, we must explore how students read and use historiography, and whether their ability to wed historiography with other historical thinking and reading skills helps deepen their practice. Indeed, the integration of primary-source reading strategies and historiographical conversations lies at the heart of what it means to practice the historical craft. Primary-source reading skills are foundational to the discipline, the blocks on which all historical accounts are built. But a rich map of the historiographic terrain helps scholars interpret sources and expands their ability to make historical claims. Historiography also represents
a landscape on which historians collaborate to build accounts of the past. The debates and disagreements may not look like collaboration to our students, who, as Gerald Graff observes, are largely clueless about the “rules,” rhetorical practices, and disciplinary conversations that shape academic discourse. Their cluelessness about this aspect of historical practice hints at their cluelessness about other metahistorical issues—the subtlety of reading primary sources, the habits of mind that consider human agency and causality, the standards of evidence we apply to sources as we build historical claims. Inviting our history majors to learn the reading strategies, draw relationships, practice formulating arguments and employing rhetoric, and engage in historiographical conversation—to build historiographic maps—is key to helping them practice historical skills at a more advanced level.

As the examples here suggest, students need much more practice learning to read and map the historiographical terrain to interpret primary sources and to build historical claims. Too often, students write reports instead of research papers. For many of them, doing history means reading and reporting all sources equally. Indeed, confronted with conflicting sources, students were unable to see how historians prioritize them and how historiography was a necessary tool in building arguments. They assumed historians simply use the evidence that supports preformulated argument. The relationship between evidence and historical claims and the role of historiography in making meaning remained obscure, as did the idea that historians revise hypotheses over and over as we work with evidence and converse with one another.

But by the end of class they had made strides in their metahistorical understanding. First, the footnoting project taught students a very basic lesson about knowledge claims. As Paulette put it: “it is difficult to determine fact and opinion when there are no citations to prove the evidence in an argument. [Historians] must establish what they believe to be ethical in their research, writing, and passing on of knowledge. Through citing sources, the process of peer review, and a non forced interpretation of the materials, one is able to set some standards for the discipline of history.” Michael reported that “I got the moral of the story. The fact remains that research is something that historians must do, and do correctly.” Daniel echoed his sentiment: “I never understood how to research properly or why the standards of research were important in coming to a decision about the past. When first reading the article by Lerner, I thought his entire argument was based on all opinion with few facts sprinkled throughout his work. After doing research, and finding letters, newspaper articles, and works done by other authors about the time period I had a better understanding of why Lerner came to the conclusions he did.” As my students learned that “discoveries and interpretations asserted as fact must be justified in publicly accessible ways,” they learned that history is a form of knowledge shaped by discipline-specific standards of reasoning and ethical responsibilities. I hope they will hold themselves and one another accountable to these standards as they move on in their studies and out into other endeavors. In this way the history methods course offers valuable lessons beyond the particular demands of the major; it offers students a model for careful research, dialogue, and public participation in the wider civic community.

17 Graff, Clueless in Academe.