

CHAPTER 4

CHRISTY EVANS: BRINGING THE HISTORIAN TO THE CLASSROOM

Professor Evans faced her History class while showing them a picture of Louis XIV (see Appendix B). "We have been reading different documents about this period of time. Now, I want you to look at other kind of primary sources, portraits or pictures. Look at this picture of Louis XIV and tell me what can we learn from the picture?"

Silence

Christy: Come on, you can do this, tell me what you think. What can we learn from this picture about the king and the monarchy in France during this time period?

Student: Well, I think he looks "too decorated", too adorned...

Silence

Christy: Do you think so, do you agree with that? Why is he dressing in that way?

Student 2: He looks like a "sissy"

Laughs

Christy: Like a "sissy". Ok, why do you think that?

Student 3: I think he dresses in that way because he is the king, to show his position.

Christy: Heather is right when she says that this was the way for the king to dress and show his position... Look at the cape, although you can't see the color, this was the color used by the nobility . . .

Student 4: Yeah, but why is he posing in that way

Pause

Student 4: (continuing) . . . look at the way in which he is looking at you.

Student 2: Yeah, he is showing his legs like a woman.

Laughs

Christy: Do you share Kevin's perception? Is there someone who has something else to add? a different perception?

Student 5: Well, I guess they used to wear those clothes at that time but yes, he is showing his legs.

Christy: And you interpret that as not being masculine. Is that it?

Student 2: Well, I was kidding, but yeah.

Christy: Why do you think that? Is it not possible to have another interpretation?

Student: Maybe he was proud of his legs

Christy: Karen is right when she says the king was proud of his legs, he was also showing them to show strength. Look at the legs, they look young and strong. This was a way for Louis to show that he was still strong. Now, what about the king's face?

Student 4: The face looks older than the body, especially the legs.

Christy: Yes, it is true. When the portrait was made the king was suffering from gout. Why do you think the painting doesn't show that?

Student 6: Maybe he wanted to look powerful and young for his people.

Christy: Yes, the portrait is a representation of the king that adds to his glory. It contributes to the creation of positive public image for the king. Paintings like this are good sources to illustrate the relationship between power and the arts.

Student: I remember I saw another picture of him dressed as a Roman general, I guess that picture was also used to portray the strong image of the Sun-King.

Christy: Yes, we will look at that picture today too... that picture was also created to exalt the king's image... Luis XIV image-making was so powerful that it later became a model for other monarchs...

Using pictures as primary sources to illustrate relations of power, social or economical issues was common in Christy's class. She also encouraged her students to use other kinds of primary sources such as letters, novels and documents in their classroom presentations and papers. She usually spent time showing students how historians made sense of the sources and how they used evidence to support their interpretations.

Christy Evans

Christy Evans was a petite young woman with dark lively eyes in her fifth year as an assistant professor in the college of Arts and Sciences at Midwestern University. Only by looking closely, could you realize her diverse ancestry, part Japanese and part English Canadian. Professor Evans completed her Master and Doctoral degrees in History at Cornell University, which is ranked among the top programs in History in the US. Christy had a passion for French History and for women's issues during the seventeen and eighteen centuries.

I grew up in Canada. I learned French and I liked History from the beginning of my baccalaureate studies, so it was natural for me to focus on European History especially in French History.

After completing her Ph.D., Professor Evans became an assistant professor at Midwestern University. Prior to coming to Midwestern University, she was a teaching assistant for two years at Cornell University.

Teaching was not Professor Evans primary interest, indeed, at the beginning of her practice she saw teaching as something that she needed to do in order to be able to work in her research. Over time, however, she became more interested in teaching.

Christy said she wanted her students to be critical and to go beyond the intellectual lessons from the course. She wanted them be responsible and to be able to work with other students as in a community of scholars. As she mentioned,

I expect my students to understand the course, to make interpretations of primary sources, and to make informed arguments on their own. They have to be able to use and manipulate the information that they read and to go beyond the intellectual lessons covered by the course. I expect students to use critical thinking and their analytical abilities when reading texts and asking questions.

I also want them to understand the nature of an historic event and to look at how historic events could relate to current events in our time. I want them to understand how historians work. Historians work on the nature of debates, as a community of scholars, not independently, I want my students to work in this way and to use and develop their oral and written skills.

Christy's approach to teaching history had a scholarly orientation that fit well with the characteristics of Midwestern University. Her teaching style seemed appropriate for students with a similar orientation, and was consistent with the way in which other historians taught history at other universities (Cuban, 1999).

At the beginning of her teaching, Christy felt frustrated when her students were demanding additional time from her. Over time, however, she came to realize that they might need help,

At the beginning of my teaching, I felt resentful for the time that teaching was taking from my research. I also had a more negative attitude towards students, I thought they were just whining. Now, I understand them

better. Think that students are taking more than one course, and that they are sometimes overburden, tired and frustrated.

Evans was a good teacher partly because she had developed a considerable interest in her students' learning and intellectual development as well as a deeper regard of them as persons. She was also willing to make an effort to help her students to learn. Evans', black and bright hair contrasted with her porcelain skin and lively eyes. That day she was wearing a blue blouse with black pants and a soft smile.

Specification and Courses Taught

Like other faculty members in her department, Christy usually taught different undergraduate and graduate courses each year. There was a non-written policy in the department that instructors should teach a variety of courses including those that can fulfill a general education requirement for graduation. Graduate courses and seminars had a class size of around 15 to 20 students, while most undergraduate courses have a class size of 35 - 40 students. Beyond this, were the first and second year introductory survey courses for first and second year undergraduate students who can use these courses to fulfill a general education requirement. These courses have a class size between 400 to 600 students.

During the spring of 2000, Christy taught a 300 level course and a 200 level seminar for students in her department. Christy' s students were mostly history majors, although that semester she had some students majoring in political science, education, and one majoring in art history.

The 300 Level Course

This course focused on "the social, political and cultural history of early modern Europe between 1648 to 1789. The main goals of the course as described in the syllabus (2000) were to assess the evolving relationship between politics and ideas... and to examine aspects of ordinary people's daily lives including popular culture, family, gender, sexuality and work" (p.1).

The course addressed undergraduate students who were in their junior, sophomore and senior years. Graduate students occasionally registered for this course. During spring 2000, thirty students registered in Christy' s course, mostly history majors. The majority of the students, as was common in all courses taught by Christy, were white American males, only three students were from a diverse ethnic background (two Asian Americans and one African American). Women comprised 28 percent of the group. All students but one were undergraduates.

The class met twice a week in a classroom located in the heart of the campus. The room had two large windows and good illumination. There was a blackboard in front of the room and 45 wooden chairs in the rectangular shaped classroom. Students were usually on time, and most of them arrived in the classroom five to ten minutes before the beginning of the session. Most students participated actively in class discussions, although some were more active in the small group discussions than in the large group discussions.

Student grades were said to be determined by the following criteria:

1. an oral presentation and a 2-3 pages paper on the presentation (15%)
2. a paper on a topic related to the themes discussed in the course (15%)
3. a mid-term exam (20%)

4. a final exam (35%)
5. class participation (15%)

The short paper and presentation were based on assigned readings. Papers turned in late (after three days from the due date) were penalized. Student participation in classroom discussions was encouraged. Indeed, the syllabus made clear to students that participation in classroom discussions and being prepared for classes were essential for the course. Christy reminded her students of this during the beginning part of the course.

During spring 2000, Christy decreased the amount of readings required from students based on her experience teaching the course during the prior year. A year before she had included additional readings to provide her students with some background knowledge for her course. Because students did not like this and complained that the amount of reading was overburdening, Christy decided to eliminate the additional readings.

The 200 Level Seminar on the Enlightenment

The course was one of the nine undergraduate research-and-writing seminars offered by the department during spring 2000. The department offered a variety of seminar options within which students could choose one that fit their interest. All undergraduate students in the department were required to take one of these seminars as a requirement for graduation.

Christy's 2000 course focused on the Enlightenment era, especially on different problems of the society during the eighteenth century, such as government, individual rights and liberties, education and slavery. The course also examined notions of masculinity and femininity, exoticism and human sexuality during this period of time (course syllabus, p.1)

Student grades were said to be determined by the following criteria:

1. Paper proposal (5%)
2. Reviewed paper proposal and bibliography (10%)
3. First draft of paper and presentation of research (20%)
4. Final Paper (40%)
5. In-class presentations (10%)
6. Final paper presentation (15%)

Classroom assignments involved two in-class presentations of the readings during the semester; an initial one-page proposal for a term paper; a revised proposal and bibliography (with relevant notes from primary sources); the first draft of the paper and its presentation to the class, and the final draft of the paper. As in the 300 level course, papers turned three days after the due date were to be penalized. (All students turned in their papers on time). Class attendance and participation were stressed as important elements for obtaining a passing grade.

The class met once a week in a small classroom with capacity for 20 students. Students sat around a large table in the middle of the room while Christy sat in a corner and only occasionally in front of the classroom. The room had no windows but good illumination. A green chalkboard was located in front of the table and was used for both students and Christy to emphasize the main points of the discussion and for announcements.

There were 14 students in their senior and junior years registered for this course, male students (8) slightly outnumbered females (6) in the class. All students but two were Americans, the other two students were Asian Americans. Students were mostly history majors with the exception of two who were majoring in education. All students were very

actively involved in the course and prepared for class. Christy was very pleased with the work done by her students in this course.

Course Organization and Class Format

Christy tries to convey the diversity and complexity of people's historical experience, and help students analyze and understand the way historical change takes place. This is reflected in the way she has designed and organized her courses and the way in which her courses are taught. The two courses taught during spring 2000 were designed around themes that reflect the experiences of different groups of people. The 300 level course included among other themes: women and gender in early modern Europe, crime and poverty, high and popular culture, and political change. The 200 level seminar was developed around the Enlightenment and included among other themes: views on race, natural utopias, men's and women's place in society and politics, arts and politics, and women's rights. Christy taught each theme in a way that allowed different perspectives and interpretations.

Christy's 300 level course followed a lecture-discussion format. For example, at the beginning of a new theme, she usually started by providing the class with a brief introduction about the theme to be covered in class. This was followed by a student presentation. The presenters, who usually had met with her to plan the presentation, relied on class materials and other sources provided by Christy or identified by the students and discussed with Christy prior to the session.

During the presentation, students were expected to identify issues to guide their own presentation and to help their peers in focusing the small group discussions that followed their presentation. Christy encouraged her students to rely mostly on primary sources and to

provide evidence for supporting their interpretations of the materials as well as alternative explanations for their assertions. She monitored students while they worked in small groups and usually encouraged them to work as a team. She said to them:

"Historians do not work independently, they work with others to provide them with feedback about their work and to find different interpretations about their work. I want you to work in this way, think of our team as a community of learners working together while trying to understand the issues."

After students worked in teams, they shared their findings with the class. Then, Christy presented additional material not covered during the presentation, and she emphasized important points that she wanted her students to keep in mind. She usually concluded the session by asking students to reflect on how the historical events they studied that day had influenced historical changes and how current societal views had been influenced by theoretical beliefs from the past.

The 200 level course was a seminar that required an even more active role from Christy's students. Students selected a research topic at the beginning and also had class presentations and discussions. Unlike the 300 level course, class discussions were as a whole class, not in small groups. Christy also encouraged her students to share and discuss with their classmates the materials and documents related to the topic they selected for their class presentations and paper.

Teaching History as a Research Discipline

Christy used an approach in teaching history that reflects the work of the historian. Instead of focusing on learning facts and memorization of historic events, the emphasis was

on acquiring scholarly skills while learning about history. She made a strong effort to have her students focus on issues or problems rather than on the description of historic events over a period of time.

This scholarly view of teaching required from students the production of different pieces of writing such as papers, essays and seminar critiques that included new analyses of historical events. During the process of writing, students were to (a) identify research problems or issues; (b) conduct bibliographic research; (c) examine different sources, especially primary sources, such as manuscripts, picture, maps, etc.; (d) analyze the veracity of evidence, and (e) make inferences and arguments about the research problems or issues being studied.

During the class sessions, Christy also focused on history issues and encouraged students to spend more time on analysis and making inferences on the materials they read, filling the gaps that were missing from the sources they analyzed.

Focusing on Research Questions or Issues

Christy's interest in having her students identify and discuss important research issues was reflected in this excerpt where she made comments to her students about how to write their critiques on each other presentations:

When writing your critique, you need to work as a scholar: analyze the sources (ask yourself, are they primary or secondary sources?), add in-depth comments about some aspects that need to be included, go back to the argument at the end.

When doing your critique, pay attention to the questions being asked. Is this a new approach to an old idea? For example, are we inventing the notion of race? Are there many ways of conceiving it? How does the idea change over time?

Don't describe the topic of your paper, instead of doing this illustrate the issues. For example if you are writing about education, you can discuss the paradox about socializing behavior in the schools: should we educate for liberating children or should we educate to promote conformity? Another example: if talking about liberating the masses, you can talk about the real ambivalence about masses, especially if talking about Locke.

Show how ideas were used in the society and the social results of using them. Think about how reality informed theory.

Bring in also the context. Your critique needs to have an overview of the paper you read and your analysis.

Han (student): I am going to write my critique about the interpretation of Rousseau's work by women writers...

Christy: You can look at Mary Wollstonecraft and two other women writers but rather than describing them, you need to look at how these women applied these ideas to their lives... You can also look at Wollstonecraft and think how she uses Rousseau even though she criticizes him. Why did women find Rousseau so compelling?

Start with a problem, answer the problem with your paper. The critique should not be longer than 2 pages. You need to provide evidence to support your arguments.

Preferring Primary Sources to Secondary Sources

Christy encourages her students to use primary sources¹ rather than extracting conclusions from secondary sources. She told students that they could include secondary sources, but primary sources had priority. Here is an excerpt of a session where a student used a secondary source to present the class topic on witchcraft:

Heather has just finished her presentation about witchcraft between 1450 to 1700. She used overhead transparencies that summarize the characteristics of the people being accused of witchcraft, and how the

¹ "Primary sources are texts nearest to any subject of investigation. Primary sources can be documents, letters, photographs, paintings, sculpture, architecture, oral interviews, statistical tables, and even photography" (Marius, 1999, p. 14-15).

church justified the executions of witches. She also commented how the scientific revolution affected witchcraft trials. In doing her presentation she has relied on a secondary source, Barbara Shapiro's, *Witchcraft: from probability and certainty in Seventeenth Century England*. Shapiro focused her book on the beginning of the scientific revolution.

During the presentation Heather described the legal process against the accused. She has also commented that according to Shapiro the attitudes towards witchcraft changed among the different classes during this period of time, and that this influenced the changes in the process.

Heather: On page 903 of her book, Shapiro says, "Bernard more than once suggested that the responsibility lay with the more educated and discriminating grand-jurymen and magistrates, and noted that the fear and superstition frequently found among the common people often resulted in unjust conviction." (Shapiro, 1983). So, the availability of education for the higher classes may have influenced different views on witchcraft.

Christy: Then, how did the changing thought of the process affect judgment of the accused?

Heather: The more educated adopted a different position about witchcraft...

Christy: What about science, how science brought in ideas of natural and physical proof? What about the end of myths and the use of reason?

Student 1: It creates the need for true evidence...

Silence

Student 2: The process changes. First there was a tougher review of the accusations...then, there was a second decision set forth a grand jury, and then, if it made it so far, evidence was presented to a trial jury, and the accused was put on trial.

Christy: Yes, that is true... but how did this affect the poor?

Student: The process is taken to the courts

Pause

Christy: Yes, the changes in the process may have taken power from the poor because poor people used to make decisions that now are taken from them and given to the courts... Is this a victory from those on power and a loss for the poor? Haven't poor people lost when their techniques for justice have become deligitimized? Are you convinced by Shapiro's argument that education made a difference and that the higher classes changed the process because of this?

Silence

Heather: She does not say more about... she does not explain...

Christy: Shapiro doesn't explain how witchcraft appeared. She focused only on the beginning of the scientific revolution, on the effects of the scientific revolution, but witchcraft may have lasted later... There were changes in the society and the legal system that may have taken place such as the methods at arriving to the truth, the change in need of evidence versus the change in the beliefs about witchcraft...

Heather: Her work is also a secondary source.

Christy: Yes, it is. Shapiro's book is a secondary source. We need to pay attention to how she is using and interpreting primary sources. Shapiro stresses the influence of education among the higher classes as a strong factor influencing the trials. But her writings are a secondary source. She needs to draw a connection between the number of published books at that time and who read them... She needs to prove that there is a connection between who read what, and this is very difficult to do. It is very difficult to prove that there is a connection between the number of books read by the high classes and their influence on the trial process.

Student: There is also the question that if the upper-classes did not believe in witchcraft, why did they rule the courts that accused people of committing witchcraft?

Christy: Yes, very good comment. When working with secondary sources, you need to look at how the author uses evidence, and analyze different sources... When you use primary sources, you are the one making the interpretations, when you use secondary sources someone else has done it for you. Looking at the original source helps you to test the evidence provided in secondary sources.

Christy's emphasis on the use of primary sources is also reflected in the following comments that she made to her class before the mid-term exam:

When writing the mid-term exam, don't repeat things said before. Do not write more than 10 pages. You should discuss the historical significance of the events. You need to discuss the significance of the quotations. Check on primary sources. You can use secondary sources, but prefer primary sources. You also need to pay attention to the language when reading the sources. Looking at the quotations will help you to make your arguments. Respond by focusing on how things happened rather than what happened. The more information to support your argument, the better. Provide examples of what you are talking about. Use as many sources as you want.

Like other professors in her department, Christy stressed the importance of using primary sources over secondary sources. It can be argued, however, that some effort could be made for making students aware that primary sources aren't free from interpretation either because they carry prejudices too. There were also other aspects that Christy didn't stress in the class about witchcraft, such as the differences between the upper and lower classes. She also did not raise the possibility that the upper classes resented the commercial (and other) power of the Church and sought ways of undercutting that power. That day, Christy students were so engaged in the class, that she did not have enough time to discuss the role of education and miseducation in the change of the trials. She was hoping to discuss those aspects further but sometimes, time wasn't enough to accomplish what she wanted. She tried to provide opportunities for participation without sacrificing complexity and analysis.

Finding Alternative Interpretations

Christy also reminded her students that there are multiple ways of looking at a historic event as well as multiple interpretations of what happened. She encouraged her students to include contrary evidence for their interpretations and to study events in context.

The topic was colonialism. Students had studied about Spanish, French and English colonialism during the last sessions. Now, Christy asked the students to work in small groups and discuss the differences among the different nations' "justification" for colonization.

After the teams presented their conclusions to the class, Christy asked them, Are these justifications convincing for you? Why?

Student: No, I don't find them convincing but I think it had to be that way

Christy: Why do you think that?

Student: Well, once the new continent was discovered

Student 2: It has to be colonized. There was a need for land.

Christy: So, the need for land justifies invading and taking the land from the natives... What is the justification for this?

Student 3: Well, the Spanish justified the conquest because of religion but the English did it because they needed the land

Student 4: If they didn't do it, someone else will do it

Christy: So, what you are saying is that if you were the King and knew that this new continent was discovered, then you needed to go there, because if you don't do it someone else will take the land.

Student: Yes

Student: I know, it is not fair, but it is unavoidable

Christy: Ok, but is this justifiable? What about the rights of the people who were living in the continent?

Student: They did not use the land

Christy: Why do you say that?

Student 2: They did not have private property

Christy: So, if they do not have private property, or laws about property, they don't own the land. Is that what you are saying?

Student: Yes, the land was there and no one was using it

Christy: Is there another way of looking at this, does someone have a different opinion?

Silence

Student: I don't think taking over the land was avoidable... it was needed for immigrants that needed land...

Christy: Ok, I understand. We are all descendants from immigrants. But there is another way of looking at it. You can do it . . . What about the native's perspective? What about another interpretation about the conquest?

Student: I just think it was going to happen no matter what. The land was needed.

Christy: (Without discussing the claim that the nations needed the land). Come on, you can come with another interpretation. Can you make an argument from the native's perspective. You argue that the natives did not own the land because there was not private property but are you considering their perspective within their context? They did have a different kind of property system. They shared the land, there was communal property rather than individual. So, you can't say there was no property. It was a different way of conceptualizing property. It is the same with religion. It is not that they did not believe in God. They believed in other Gods What about taking over other people's land and destroying another culture? If the natives did not realize that it was in their best interest to embrace Christianity, do you have the right to impose this religion? When thinking about present times, what about the justification of the Vietnam War?

Christy's efforts to make her students think about different interpretations also took place during her seminar when students were discussing about views of race during the Enlightenment. This is an excerpt from that discussion:

Christy: What comments do you have about the readings on race and the Enlightenment?

Arthur: I have a question before we start: Is the Immanuel Kant referred in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's book² the same Kant that we studied in philosophy?

Christy: Yes, he is the same.

Arthur: I was surprised because the writings are so racist. I had never heard this about Kant.

Tom: Maybe there were two Kants, the good one that we know in philosophy and the bad one that wrote this.

Christy: What do you all think about this? Do you all think that Kant was like Jekyll and Hyde, good and bad, or were they just facets of the same man? Kant spent a significant part of his life devoted to study and writing about racial issues.

Arthur: I think there is another way of looking at it. Reading Kant's writings on race made me think about how much of his views on race may be imbedded in his philosophy writings. In other words, I am thinking about underlying assumptions. We usually do not think about this when we read scientific work...

Christy: Yes, that it is a very good point. Is scientific knowledge "objective"? Knowing the context and other things about the author make us better understand not only where they come from but also raises questions about their real intentions behind their work. This is important for us to think about when analyzing someone's work. Do you have any other comments about this, any other perceptions about the author? What about the arguments that support the views of superiority of one race over another?

Alice: I did not buy into them. They are well structured and very logical, but I can't believe people will believe those arguments...

Anthony: Me neither, I found it interesting how people use reason and logic to justify their beliefs.

² The student was referring to the chapter "This fellow was quite black... a clear proof that what he said was stupid" by Immanuel Kant. This was a chapter on Emmanuel Chuckwudi Eze's book "Race and the Enlightenment: A reader."

Christy: So, you did not buy into the arguments... What about the notion of race? Is this a "scientific" definition of race? Is the Enlightenment definition of "race," an invented definition?

Mike: I have a comment about the readings by Cugoano.

Christy: Please, continue.

Mike: I think that the definition of race superiority is invented, but I found it disappointing that the only non-white author who refutes Kant, Hume and others views on race decided to use the Bible to support his arguments.

Christy: So, you found disappointing that Quobna Ottobah Cugoano used the Bible. Why?

Mike: Because he did not address the fallacies of the other authors directly. Instead he focused on the Bible.

Christy: And, you see this as a weak argument? Does someone have another perception on this, another interpretation?

Karen: I think, I agree with Mike that he did not use similar arguments to question the validity of Kant's and others views but the arguments of those authors are not strong when you look at them, they are only justifications for the authors biases. It is just the misuse of reason.

Arthur: I think the Bible was an important document. The conquest and colonization of the new continent were justified partly because of religion.

Christy: Yes, that is a good point. Using the Bible can be seen as a powerful argument when it is used to argue against race superiority. Cugoano is responding to the authors with their own arguments reflected in the book that they revere. Remember that in many occasions some of authors referred to God to justify their arguments on race superiority. Think about Von Linne for example. He argues that slavery is part of God-given order of nature.

The discussion continued.

Making Inferences and Reasonable Arguments

Christy encouraged her students to make reasonable inferences when writing assignments and exams. She also did this in active learning activities during the class:

Christy divided students into five groups to discuss the execution of Charles I of England. During former classes, students have been learning about different groups and social classes, during the Eighteenth-Century. The groups were divided to represent the nobility, the parliament, masses, and the clergy in England during this period of time. Group five represented the French ambassadors.

Christy: By reading the evidence provided in the excerpts from the King's trial, make an argument about the legitimacy of the trial. You must also decide, "Was Charles I a dictator, a quasi-monarch or something else, according to the sources available to you?" Make your argument after doing a careful analysis of the primary sources and your knowledge of the group that you are representing and consider the period of the time in which they lived.

Students worked in teams. Later they shared their arguments with other teams to start a discussion on the evidence provided.

Christy also encouraged her students to make reasonable interpretations and conclusions when writing the final exam:

In making your arguments, take the material that you know, show that you mastered it, and demonstrate what you can do with the materials. Synthesize them to make your arguments.

Be creative. Try to express your own ideas. I will overlook minor deficiencies, but I want to see your thoughts and your reasoning. You can also use your classmates for group thinking, but do your writing individually. Act as a historian. You have to make your arguments. Pay attention to primary sources. It is important to make arguments based on your analysis of the evidence. Be sure you provide evidence to justify your interpretations and assertions.

Working in a Collaborative Manner as a Community of Scholars

Christy's interest in having her students work collaboratively was reflected in her comments about the take home exams:

When you are working on the take home (exam), please feel free to contact each other and discuss the questions. Use your peers to look at the questions from different angles; then go home and respond to the exam on your own. I want the class to be a community of learners. I want you to learn how to work with others. I want you to learn from each other. I think these are the conditions for student success.

Christy's attitude towards collaborative work was also present when she gave students directions about how to write a critique of their peer's papers:

Criticizing someone's work is a very important part of a historian's work. You can learn from the experience and help your classmates. Historians don't work alone. We work as a community and the feedback from peers is very important. When criticizing your peers' papers, you can practice this.

When your classmates present their papers, I want you to share your critiques with them. I want you to help each other, share information and suggestions. If you are working in a similar topic, meet and share materials, discuss issues, you can help each other to improve your papers.

When I asked Christy about where she learned how to teach in this manner, she said she did not have any prior teaching training before she started teaching history. She added that maybe she learned to teach from observing the instructors that she had while studying history. She added that she had used some tips that she learned from the instructional support services on campus, but that what helped her the most it was her contact with some instructors from a writing center created by another department. Christy had attended a workshop organized to teach faculty how to use active learning

activities to engage students in scholarly writing. She also had been learning from her peers.

The better teachers that I had as a student did not use active techniques or a lot of media. What they all had in common was a drive for their research. Their enthusiasm about their work was inspiring. The way they talked about how they went into learning about the issues that puzzled them. That was stimulating.

I haven't had teaching training. When my ratings were not very high I went to the instructional office on campus. They videotaped me in a microteaching session and gave me feedback about my teaching, I took some of the tips they gave me, but what helped me the most has been the workshop I took last year. It was organized by another department and helped us to think about how to actively engage students in scholarly writing. As a historian I am member of various scholarly groups. I have been using our meetings to ask my peers who are teaching history courses like mine about ideas for improving my teaching. I have received very good suggestions that I have used in my exams and other activities.

Student Perceptions of Christy's Teaching

The undergraduate students who attended Christy's courses during Spring 2000 had very positive perceptions of her teaching. Most of her students liked the way she lectured and presented the material. As one of her students said:

I have always enjoyed Professor Evans's courses and the way in which she teaches them. She seems to have the ability to bring out the life of the course material when she lectures. The subject may not always be interesting to me, but the way in which we studied or approached the class has always been of interest to me.

Another student agreed:

When lecturing or describing an event or process, Dr. Evans often uses a story-telling format which makes the material much more interesting and vivid. She is a clear and excellent lecturer, always well prepared, always organized.

These students' perception was compatible with the graduate students who had taken her class before, and who also referred to her as a very good teacher. Although they recognized that Christy's teaching style demanded more work from her students, a student said:

I believe that Dr. Evans' teaching approach worked well in our advanced seminar class, especially... since the course dealt with much research. I was uncomfortable at first in approaching historical documents the way she suggested, but after reading so much about my topic and writing the paper... I believe that was the only way I could have successfully written my paper the way I wanted it to come out. The approach in a sense made me thirst for more knowledge since I never really knew how to put everything together until I started to learn more...

Another student taking the same course commented:

I have to say that she is a professor that always challenged me to give my best and to think about things very thoroughly. At time though it is unclear what we are graded on. Several fellow students from our seminar class have questioned what was being looked for. Part of that I think helps the student not cater to what the instructor wants and makes them more responsible, but it also throws a great load on students who already are giving their best. She is very intelligent and demands a great deal from her students, but at times it seems unclear what is needed to meet these expectations.

Only one student taking Christy's 300 level course complained about the grading of the course. This student did not like Christy's decision to give her students a take-home exam. He especially disliked the essay questions included in the exam:

Student: Why do we have a take-home exam? It is the end of the semester. I have five exams next week. I don't have time for writing a take-home exam. The essay questions will take a lot of time.

Christy: I gave you the take-home exam some time ago. You had enough time to respond to the questions. I choose this kind of test because I believe it is more appropriate for the kind of learning that we have in the class.

Student: In my Department, most professors don't give us essay questions. Why can't we have a multiple choice or a short answer test. It is a lot of writing. You also expect us to be critical and to use sources to support our responses. It is going to take an awful lot of time.

Christy: But, why did you wait until the end? Are you telling me that you would prefer to cram a lot of knowledge at the end and then take a multiple-choice test. The assessment is supposed to help us see what you are learning, and I don't believe a multiple-choice exam is appropriate for our course. But, I want to know what others of you feel about the time that you have for completing the exam. Am I giving you enough time? Did any of you start working on the exam?

Tom: I finished the exam. It took me five hours to do it because I still have some problems with English, but I am done. I was planning to turn it in this Friday. For me, the exam was fine.

Heather: I already started the exam, but I am still writing. I think the exam is fine. It takes time but what I like is that I am using what I learned in the course.

Christy: Did others start working on the exam like Heather or Tom?

Student 4: Yes, but I still have a lot to do.

Student 5: Yes, I am almost done with the first part.

Three more students said they had already started.

Christy: Do you also have other exams next week, like Erick?

Heather: I have an exam and a paper.

Five more students said they had exams.

Student 3: Me too.

Christy: Someone else?

Silence

Christy: Ok, I will give you one more week to turn the exam in to me. So, those of you who have other exams or papers next week won't have so much pressure. For those who haven't started to work on the exam, next time plan your time better.

Aside from that student who did not want to have a take-home exam and for that particular incident about grading, Christy's students made only very positive comments about her teaching. It was not surprising that at the end of that semester her ratings increased and that she was included in the campus list of effective instructors based on her ratings in the advanced History seminar. However, as described in Chapter Seven, some of the students taking her required undergraduate course, with a class size of 400 students, were not positive about her teaching, having problems with her teaching style.

Summary

Christy Evans was a young instructor who brought her scholarly orientation to the classroom. Her teaching approach focused on helping students learn about research methodology while learning history. She was described by her former Department Head as "a good instructor working very hard to improve her teaching" and by the instructional specialist who observed her microteaching session as someone who "has all the makings of a sound classroom teacher." She was an excellent communicator and avid learner. As described in Chapter Seven, the feedback that she received from different sources had helped her become more aware of the complexities of teaching and to think about ways to improve her teaching. In some cases, the feedback she received became a new source of concern. For example, the feedback from the instructional division made her focus more on technical things such as not

spending too much time in setting the equipment, and in paying attention to the number of lines written on an overhead transparency. However, as discussed with more detail in Chapter Seven, over time she learned how to use the different sources of feedback while remaining faithful to her own teaching priorities.