

Should the Study of World History Be Compulsory for All University Students?

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Abstract—History was originally highly valued in public education, but it has gradually slipped to the periphery of the curriculum throughout time. Most students simply study “history” as a general education or liberal arts elective, and many institutions have struggled to attract and keep students interested in history majors. Students should study history for various reasons, including knowledge acquisition and developing critical thinking abilities, citizenship reinforcement, and giving “lessons” for the present globalized world. This essay will first analyze the stalemate of history as a subject and why some people believe that learning world history is useless. Secondly, it will explain why studying world history should be mandatory for all university students, and successful cases will be included. Finally, existing and potential problems that history subject faces will be discussed, and suggestions to solve them will be provided.

Keywords—world history, college students, mandatory course, cultural understanding

I. INTRODUCTION

The controversy about the value of history is not a new debate. Stepping into the 21st century, rapid technological development makes people further question the utility of world history as a subject. Specifically for college students, some believe that today’s undergraduate student body is diverse in terms of age, national origin, socioeconomic status, and cultural background but also in terms of their preparation for higher education and their goals in pursuing advanced study [1]. It is difficult to examine the effect of listing world history into compulsory courses compatible with actively involving students in learning that prepares them for real-world and real-world situations. Also, there’s a certain argument between history and social studies reaching the political arena and the court of public opinion. They argued that history’s purpose and substance are no longer a purely academic question of classroom studies; instead, a firm understanding of history is deemed essential for deciphering political discourse on the misappropriation of history by private interests, the redefining of history for political purposes, and the threat they pose to public education [2]. We’re in science fiction now.”—Allen Ginsberg, qtd. in *After the Wake* (1980). Also, some

people claim that technology can answer all questions, and thus, the out-of-date history is useless.

“Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history.”

—Abraham Lincoln, Annual Message to Congress, Dec. 1, 1862

In the postmodern era, historical issues are of the utmost importance as they permeate every aspect of public and private life [3]. However, the issue is that history has gradually moved to the curriculum’s periphery and, in many instances, is no longer a college general education requirement. History is occasionally listed as an elective, and a history course is frequently not required for a college degree [4].

So, for college students, “Why study world history?”

II. DISCUSSION

A. Developing Critical Thinking Skills

The study of world history helps students develop critical thinking skills. History provides a wealth of information that can be analyzed, evaluated, and used to make informed decisions. Through the study of world history, students learn how to assess the credibility of sources, evaluate different perspectives, and analyze cause-and-effect relationships. These critical thinking skills are essential for success in both academic and professional contexts.

In today’s era of “fake news” and misinformation, it is more important than ever for individuals to be able to evaluate sources critically. Studying world history provides students with the skills necessary to identify biases and evaluate the credibility of sources. For example, a student studying the American Revolution might evaluate different sources to understand the perspectives of the British, American Patriots, and Loyalists. By doing so, they can develop a more nuanced understanding of the events and motivations of the different groups involved. According to a report published by the National Center for Education Statistics, students who take history courses in college perform better on critical thinking assessments than those who do not [5]. Studying world history can help students develop the skills necessary to succeed in college and beyond.

B. Promoting Citizenship and Global Understanding

Learning about past events and the people who shaped them provides valuable insights into the cultural, social,

Manuscript received September 6, 2023; revised October 20, 2023; accepted October 30, 2023.

and political developments that have shaped the world we live in today is important. Another reason to study history is to cultivate and promote an ethical and moral system, whether as an individual or as a corporate member of society [6]. The ability of history to teach students lessons [7], studying world history allows students to understand better the diversity of people and cultures around the world. It allows us to appreciate and respect different beliefs, customs, and traditions. By learning about the struggles and achievements of people from different backgrounds, we can develop empathy and compassion for others, which is essential for responsible citizenship. For instance, learning about the civil rights movement in the United States, where African Americans fought for their rights, can inspire people to stand up against discrimination and support equal rights for all citizens.

World history also analogies to “illuminate the present and guide the future” [6] and was emphasized in a significant amount of literature [8]. It will help the student appreciate the importance of democracy and its principles, such as freedom, justice, and equality. We can learn about the struggles of people throughout history who have fought for democracy and against tyranny, dictatorship, and oppression. Understanding the evolution of democratic principles and institutions can help us appreciate the value of democratic governance and the importance of being an informed and engaged citizen. Studying the French and American revolutions can inspire people to participate in the democratic process and exercise their right to vote. History is a powerful tool for fostering individual and collective/national identity [9].

Global or world citizenship is in some respects quite different from national citizenship because it tries to balance national affiliations with membership in a complex and interconnected world community [8]. Compelling arguments regarding the significance of world history and the liberal arts in fostering a new type of global citizenship in the twenty-first century should serve as a reminder that world history is interconnected with significant educational and intellectual issues. “As the field of study that deals most directly with the entire record of human achievements, world history is essential as the endeavor that enables humans to understand themselves and their place in the world,” argued Bentley (2007). In addition to the arguments made about global citizenship in the preceding paragraphs, Bentley argues that world history fosters the good judgment, wisdom, and intellectual flexibility necessary to comprehend the plurality and complexity of the world today — and to address the world’s significant human and environmental challenges creatively.

C. Promoting Cultural Understanding

Nowadays, a global economy and information technology combine to form a borderless world. In such a world, multicultural abilities — the ability to communicate across differences in language, culture, race, and religion — will be of the utmost importance. In this context, liberal arts education has become essential for

everyone in a global, technology-driven society. The study of world history is an essential tool for promoting cultural understanding. Understanding other cultures and their past is critical in today’s globalized world. By learning about different cultures, students can develop empathy and a deeper understanding of the perspectives of people from different backgrounds. World history provides a broader perspective of human experience that transcends national boundaries, enabling individuals to understand the complexities of the world and the role of different cultures in shaping the human story.

“Civil wars and racist persecutions thrive on selective memory and collective forgetting” [10]. What makes Jews “Jews” is their insistence, through millennia of diaspora, on telling their history, generation after generation, reaffirming their historical experience of the possibility of persecution and discrimination.

One example of the importance of cultural understanding can be found in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Following these events, the US government launched a series of military operations in the Middle East. Many Americans were surprised by the hostile reaction from people in the region, and some were even confused about why the US was being targeted. However, those who had a deeper understanding of Middle Eastern history and culture understood the longstanding conflicts between the US and countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. By studying world history, students can better understand the political, social, and cultural forces that shape our world.

According to a study published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, students who study world history have a more positive attitude toward cultural diversity than those who do not [11]. Furthermore, students who have a deeper understanding of world history are better equipped to navigate cross-cultural interactions and can contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive society.

Learning world history could also help students to have a new perspective on viewing today’s gender issues. Women’s history, for example. Women’s experiences and perspectives have often been overlooked in historical narratives. Studying women’s history fills the gaps and fundamentally transforms our understanding of the past. Specific issues such as reproductive rights, pay equity, and gender-based violence have long histories that are important to understand if we want to address them effectively.

D. Problem History Subject Faced

Johnson’s introduction to the history of the social sciences in schools (1970), asserted that teaching history in our schools now revolves around current problems in much the same way that history in the eighteenth century revolved around examples of conduct. He suggested that the principle in both cases was to take out of the past only what is directly helpful in the present. History could be taught more innovatively in university, collaborating with other fields, such as economics, politics, and sociology, to provide college students with a comprehensive liberal arts education. History majors have no clear career

orientation and direction, confusing students, and employers. The history profession has not kept pace with the changing times and the needs of society and lacks innovation and diversity. The history profession does not demonstrate and communicate its values and contributions effectively, allowing the public to misunderstand and prejudice it. Perhaps the history profession needs to become more culturally diverse and globalized to re-examine its values and redefine its mission. History should teach the events and focus on cultivating students' critical and creative thinking abilities. A history curriculum involves knowledge and analysis of historical events and exploring and understanding human experience, values, and expressions. By learning about history and culture, students can understand human emotions and thoughts and develop critical thinking and creativity.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, studying world history should be compulsory for all university students. Learning world history promotes cultural understanding, helps students develop critical thinking skills, and prepares them for a globalized world. By gaining a deeper understanding of different cultures and historical events, students can become more empathetic, knowledgeable, and skilled individuals who can navigate the complexities of our world. History is a matter of studying the past and actively engaging with it. She argues that historical knowledge can be a powerful tool for political activism and social change and that historians are responsible for using their knowledge to impact the world positively. Therefore, universities should make world history a mandatory course for all students.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has claimed that no conflict of interest exists.

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