

Unit Reflection

As any student teacher quickly discovers, a plan is necessary but often needs to be amended as the realities of the classroom dictate. Due to the nature of AP European History, this unit was cut down from five lessons to about two and a half lessons. My cooperating teacher wanted to leave more time for review before the AP test than he usually does because we had some challenging classes this year. World War II was cut down because the military campaigns and the Holocaust will not typically be included in the essays on the AP test (since they know everyone will cover it anyway). I would consider using this unit in the future in its entirety to see how it turns out as planned.

I converted lesson one from a full inquiry lesson to an inquiry lesson that took less time. I did this by using more images than quotations and less documents overall. Including the debrief portion, this took about half of the first block. Lesson two was broken up. I lectured while the students took notes for the rest of the first block. I used a PowerPoint with maps and images. During the first half of the second block students made a timeline of events and a Venn diagram comparing World War I to World War II. For the rest of the block I lectured while they took notes. For the first half of the third block, I did the Socratic seminar lesson. The reading time and discussion time were shorter than indicated in the lesson plan to fit this into half a block. The major change I made to this lesson was to replace the Declaration of Human Rights with Kennan's X Article. I made this change at the suggestion of my cooperating teacher. It worked out really well because it is an interesting reading that tied the end of this unit in with the beginning of the Cold War. Also, it is much more likely to show up on the AP test than the Declaration of Human Rights. The lessons on the Holocaust were cut completely, due to my cooperating teacher's wishes. We discussed the Holocaust for about five minutes during one of the lectures. Students had a few questions that I was able to answer.

Despite the tight constraints, I was able to include a fair amount of what I had intended. One of the main issues in the implementation of this unit (other than time) was the variation between classes. One class was very talkative and unfocused while another was very quiet and focused. Each class had its challenges, depending on the activity. I was very nervous about the quiet class for the seminar. There was one student in that class who is very knowledgeable on 20th century history. Typically, the students wait for him to answer. However, there was more participation than I had anticipated. The talkative class was respectful of their peers who were

speaking. I was unsure that they would be able to quiet down, but they did. The students did struggle a bit with the inquiry lesson, and I think this was due to the shortened lesson. There were less documents to interpret, giving them a possibly incomplete picture of the causes. They also struggled because a number of them had not heard of isolationism or appeasement prior to this lesson. They understood by the time we were done debriefing though.

The other major issue in two of the three sections was lack of focus. Students complained when they had to take a lot of notes. They complained when they had to read. They complained when I asked them to make the Venn diagram and timeline. I was able to get them all to do the work, but only with a fair amount of prodding. They do understand that it is important, and that I ask them to do these activities for a reason and for their benefit. However, the complaining and subsequent convincing by me takes up a lot of time. I realize that there will be classes and students like this. As student teaching went on, I became better at handling this.

As the final part of my reflection, I am using the PASS standards to evaluate this unit. This unit was designed with the PASS standards in mind. Despite changes, the implementation of this unit holds up fairly well to those standards.

Higher Order Thinking: 3.5

I put this standard between three and four because students were engaged in higher order thinking at least once during each lesson. This consisted of a good portion of each lesson, but I could not make the case that higher order thinking took place during the majority of each lesson because students had to take a lot of notes. I still engaged students with questions and asked them to think and participate during the lectures.

Deep Knowledge: 4.5

This may just be the nature of an AP class, but most students sustained a focus on the topics most of the time. Although, I did not put this at a five because there are many students that lose focus in these sections. This has been a consistent issue throughout the year for my cooperating teacher as well. Several students demonstrated a complex understanding of a topic by asking pertinent and well-thought out questions. They also had to express their reasoning through speaking and writing.

Substantive Conversation: 4

For the most part, students talked about the subject matter and build dialogue upon one another as they attempt to understand a concept. This especially happened during the seminar lesson. Many students participate in class discussions.

Connections to the World beyond the Classroom: 2

I attempted to make connections to the world beyond the classroom, but there was not a substantial amount of this happening. Students in these sections regularly attempt to connect the topics in class to their lives, but they are usually short diversions.

Ethical Valuing: 2

With the Holocaust section of this unit cut out, the ethical valuing standard was not much of a factor during this unit. We briefly discussed the Holocaust, and students attempted to understanding the horror and complexity. Even with the Holocaust, this standard is tricky because it's not as though students would really take opposing positions on it. We did discuss the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan. I presented the two viewpoints on dropping the bomb, and several students weighed in on the issue.