



# NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL WORLD HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Theodore Von Laue  
Professor Emeritus of History, Clark University  
President, NERWHA

Let me simply greet you as a fellow human being and a student of world history who, like you, follows the news from the US and around the world and who wonders where to find the sources of strength for tackling such a difficult subject. I think especially of the teachers offering world history in our troubled schools. Thanks to their enthusiasm, perceptiveness, and insights they have become valued members of the World History Association. I also gratefully appreciate the contribution of academics in the newly founded New England branch of the WILA. All of us share the responsibility for constructively teaching world history to troubled young people who, like us, face an uncertain world. What advice can I offer from my own limited experience?

First I would say: let us teach world history as a personal challenge to be shared with our students. Teachers and students alike are vulnerable creatures trying to come to grips with the world in which we live. Sharing our concerns and uneasiness--and even our sources of strength--with our students might create valuable human fellowship and open their minds. Next, I would begin each class with a reference to the latest news; creating a better understanding of the world in which we live is the target of world history. What is the use of the past if it does not help us cope more constructively with the present and foreseeable future? Then, in view of the limited time available, I would carefully select from the available historical data what is needed for living more effectively in the present. We cannot get lost in the cavernous infinitudes of the world's past. Relating the past to the present calls for simplification and abstraction, for making meaningful choices. In our textbooks I see no universally applicable prescription: all teachers should feel free to make their own creative selection of what is essential.

What then is essential? Here I would insist on complete coverage of the human experience. We have to introduce our students to the full range of past human ingenuity, at least by examples. In this context I would emphasize the human skills for self-reliance come what may, pointing to the importance of religion (whatever its theologies) as a technique of constructively disciplining human behavior at the subconscious core of motivation. This essence of religion, alas, is overlooked in all world history texts I know: yet it still is a key factor in the evolution of civilized life (would you dare to get into this controversial subject?).

## HISTORY AT BELGOROD STATE

by Prof. Wilfred Bissen, Keene State College

During the past Spring semester, I lived in Russia as an exchange professor at Belgorod State Pedagogical Institute (now Belgorod State University).

At Belgorod Pedagogical Institute, as in all other Soviet institutions of higher education, a required course for all students was the History of the Communist Party. This was the only History course required. The students didn't have to take the History of Russia or of any of the other republics. After the failed 1991 coup, the students at Belgorod Pedagogical, in common with students at other Russian colleges and universities protested against the requirement. Instead, students are now required to study Russian History. I suspect that a similar thing happened in the non-Russian republics in favor of their national histories.

This move led to a problem: now all the professors in the former Department of the History of the Communist Party are now zealously teaching national history in the Department of Russian History. But many of these newly fledged Russian Historians are weak in their knowledge of Russian History and the historian's craft. Nor do they have many resources. The Ministry of Education has not yet produced an official text of Russian History. For several years the Ministry said it was commissioning the writing of the new Russian History. Now they say a shortage of paper is holding the project up. Because the professors have no new texts, they continue to use the old communist era texts. These are with other balanced additional materials, some of them given by missionary organizations, or Russian émigré groups. One widely used text is the Illustrated History of the USSR. This text is, at Belgorod Pedagogical, supplemented by a history of the Romanov dynasty.

One of the very nice things about teaching History in Russia is the maps. At all levels of education, the Russians make lavish use of maps. There are numerous historical atlases produced and they seem to be quite popular. Under Communism, each year had a separate historical atlas. For example, I have brought home an Historical Atlas of the USSR for the eighth class, and an Historical Atlas of the USSR for the 10th and 11th classes.

At Belgorod Pedagogical Institute, there are two faculties (departments) of history: the Faculty of Russian History and the Faculty of World History. In the Faculty of World History, Ancient, Medieval, and Modern World History is taught, as well as special courses in the history of Germany, France,

## WORLD HISTORY AND THE ADVANCED DEGREE

by Patrick Preston  
of NERWHA newsletter

As the realization spread that world history was emerging as a dynamic, fast growing sub-field of History, several universities responded to the challenge by designing graduate level programs of study with a global, or world perspective. The following is a brief look at four programs, with hopefully more to follow in subsequent newsletters.

The initial attempts were undertaken, on the doctoral level, by the University of Wisconsin-Madison from the mid-1960's to the mid-1970's; and on the M.A. level, by the University of California-Santa Cruz, in the early 1980's. These efforts inspired other universities to define and create a World History curriculum for advanced study, even while the model programs of Madison and Santa Cruz departed from their original world history mandates.

One of the earliest success stories of the world history Ph. D. came from the University of Hawaii. Starting in 1985, U. Hawaii began offering world history as a field for doctoral examinations in history. This course begins with Jerry Bentley's Seminar in World History. In this course, the candidates are introduced, firstly, to the historiographical traditions of world history. From there they move on to the modernization and world-systems arguments for world history. Lastly, they consider the new models for understanding the global past, based on ecology, geography, biology, anthropology, etc. This seminar is combined with another seminar which treats a sole issue, topic, or theme in a global, world-embracing context. In addition to the world history focus of this Ph. D., the U. Hawaii program requires its candidates to prepare a concentration in a traditional sub-field of History.

The Villanova M.A. program, under the leadership of Prof. Maghan Keita, is designed so that it directly serves the secondary school teachers who are daily faced with the need to enlarge the number of voices who speak in history for the growing diversity of America's classrooms. The majority of courses on world history subjects are offered in the summer, maximizing the participation of those engaged in teaching full-time during the academic year.

The new Northeastern Ph.D. programs, approved in 1993, focuses on world history as a major field of study. Though candidates may also concentrate in United States and European history. Students take courses and seminars in global history and on various world regions. In addition, the program requires that candidates take courses to develop a formal methodological specialization; for instance, in social, political, or cultural history. Director of the graduate program is Patrick Manning.

Also new is the Tufts University concentration on East Asian History in World Perspective. This program, directed by Lynda Shaffer, relies on East Asia as a point of departure for studying world history. Candidates in the program also designate a second geographic region for study. (The Asian emphasis of the Tufts program and the Atlantic strength of the nearby Northeastern program may balance each other out nicely.)

**World History panel at the annual meeting of the New England Historical Association, University of Hartford, 11:15 a.m. Saturday, October 22, 1994**

**Topic:** "Southernization as a Framework in Early World History. A session reviewing Lynda Shaffer's recent major article "Southernization" in the *Journal of World History*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 1-21.

**John Voll, University of New Hampshire**  
*"The South" as a Construct in Post-Civilizational Narrative*

*The concept of "civilization" has been helpful in organizing the materials of world history, but increasingly its weakness as an analytical tool have become apparent. Analytical units and concepts which are more hemispheric or global in scale may provide a better basis for understanding important developments in world history. This is not just obvious in examinations of the modern era, but it is also evident in studies of pre-modern developments. The "post-classical" history of complex societies in the eastern narrative reflects the importance of going beyond historical narratives based on the division of the world into "civilizations." Shaffer's concept of "southernization" provides an important vehicle for going beyond civilization-based narratives, although "The South" may not be the most effective unit for analysis in post-civilizational narratives.*

**Participants**

Chair: Gerold Herman, Northeastern University  
Speaker: John O. Voll, U. New Hampshire  
Speaker: David Northrup, Boston College  
Comment: Lynda Shaffer, Tufts University

**David Northrup, Boston College**

*"Deconstructing Southernization"*

*The paper asks three questions of Lynda Shaffer's article on "Southernization":*

- 1. How effective is the model of "westernization" it is emulating?*
- 2. What is the historical process underlying "southernization"?*
- 3. What are the causal explanations for that process?*

Location: University of Hartford, West Hartford, CT

Date: October 22, 1994

Time: 11:15 a.m.

**Directions: From Boston and points northeast.** Follow Route 90 West, (Massachusetts Turnpike) to I-34 (exit 3). Travel I-84 West to exit 44. Take a right at the end of the ramp to a traffic light, take a left onto Prospect Avenue. Follow Prospect Avenue to its downhill end at the junction of Route 44. Take a right onto Albany Avenue (Route 44), followed by a quick, sharp left onto Bloomfield Avenue (Route 189). The campus is a half mile on the right.

**From Springfield, MA and Vermont.** Travel I-91 South to exit 36B. Turn right at the end of the ramp onto Route 218 West and travel four miles to the intersection of Routes 218 and 189. Take a left onto Bloomfield Avenue (Route 189) and proceed to the University of Hartford entrance two miles on the left.

**A MESSAGE... (con't)**

Finally, I would stress the importance of geography. As a factor beyond human control it has shaped the cultural diversity among the world's peoples. It has favored some, like the western Europeans in the uniquely stimulating competitive local diversity, and by comparison handicapping others, like sub-Saharan Africans or native Americans. Each people have made the best possible adjustment to their natural environment. Everywhere they were competing for domination, but geography determined the winners and the losers. In trying to understand the dynamics of world history this geography-bound approach may help the diffuse the "bure" reason over the ancient inequalities around the world; it was Mother Earth who created them. But now the peoples whom she favored are also obliged to pay for their privileges by helping to overcome the differences, whatever the obstacles of climate, location, and resources.

In short, my advice would be not to teach the conventional historical facts, but aim at constructive awareness of the totality of factors at work in the course of human evolution past, present, and future. It is an awesome challenge. But don't we live in a challenging times? From my current position as president of the New England branch of the WHA, and from my foibles as a world-travelling academic, I cheer all fellow travellers exploring the vastness of a present-and-future-oriented world history.

**BELGOROD STATE... (con't)**

and England. There is no course in American or Latin American History at Belgorod Pedagogical. The classes in World History are small, as it is by no means required for all. In World History, there also is a crisis looming: under Communism, the framework for World History had been the Marxist synthesis. This has now become unfashionable, but there are not any new syntheses or new textbooks to replace it.

World History is taught in classrooms specially arranged and decorated for World History. The walls are covered with maps, pictures, sculptures and artifacts of previous civilizations. When I saw these classrooms, I was envious. I wish we had classrooms specially arranged and decorated for World History.

### NOTE TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Because the NERWHA newsletter is still finding its way, your input is crucial for developing and maintaining features of interest. If there is a subject you would like to see addressed, please feel free to submit any articles, or ideas for articles you may have. Hopefully, the newsletter can become a forum for discussing informally issues relevant to world history on all levels. In the current issue, Fred Bisson, the driving force behind the foundation of NERWHA, writes on teaching in the former Soviet Union. In development, David Burzillo of the Rivers School is conducting an informal survey among fellow secondary school teachers on world history in the classroom. For subsequent newsletters, we will look at some of the text books available to instructors, looking specifically for signs of balance between western and world history treatments. **Please join us. Your submissions of articles, observations, or letters, are encouraged.**

### STEERING COMMITTEE

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