

←— *How to Make Use of This Book* —→

TO THE HUNDREDS and hundreds of teachers who've thought about and taught world history much longer than I, I salute you. And I offer this primer humbly, in the knowledge that the more world history you know, the more you realize the less you know. I suppose that is true of all histories, but the challenges of any world history project seem infinitely — nay, impossibly — magnified. I don't pretend to be anything like an expert in the field, or to have the most comprehensive view of the many possibilities of how best to teach global pasts in all their complexity. Nor am I equipped to provide examples that span all places and times, or engage every single method or genre in the field. Like most everyone who approaches the task of designing and teaching entry-level world history, I have specific training as a historian that has been supplemented over the years, mainly piecemeal, by new knowledge bases and competencies. And my experiences and convictions have been shaped by the fact that in the public university where I teach I am locked into a large, 150- to 225-student lecture course version of world history, which places constraints on all kinds of things, not least the textbooks I use and the forms of one-to-one proactive learning I can undertake in the space of the classroom itself.

My limits are, in fact, legion. I draw mainly on post-1300 events and processes. As a British-empire historian, I have ex-

expertise in South Asian history and some knowledge of African history; as a feminist historian, I have expertise in women, gender, and sexuality, which, with the body, I use as a method for getting at a variety of histories. I am a cultural historian by intellectual and political disposition, but I am also interested in grand narrative, its power and limitations. And last but not least, I recognize that I imagine world history from a very particular locative position, that of the United States, and that the imprint of that location is profound and likely inescapable despite my attempts to unsettle it. I hope you will read this book not as a declaration of what world history teaching ought to be, but as a version of what it might be, or at least as a catalyst for thinking about what your version — or versions — could be.

I've laid out ten design principles, but they are emphatically *not* *the* ten design principles by which one could construct and execute a world history syllabus. Each chapter is written to be self-contained, so you need not read in order. This is not a textbook; it's a workbook, an aid to figuring out how to design your syllabus around key principles and implement that syllabus in a classroom setting. The emphasis on design is to encourage you to think about how to plan your course when faced with such a vast array of possible subjects, methods, themes, timeframes, and evidence. The design emphasis will also, I hope, encourage you to think about your syllabus as an argument for the urgency of sedimenting protocols of historical thinking and analysis at the heart of discussions about the global. My approach is necessarily schematic, and I fully expect each reader to argue with my choice of principle or example every step of the way. The book itself is the product of just such arguments with colleagues and students and friends. Though I have included some suggestions — for reading, for evidence, for method — from readers that I have not myself used, my examples are mainly ones that I have worked with. I am sure they look narrow and naïve to people who have expertise in the specific arenas I've chosen or who have taught for so long that they have a far deeper bench of reference materials than I. I've been frank about what I do and don't do in the classroom, but only suggestively, not prescriptively, I hope. What works for me may not for you; and, as is often the case, what works in one semester for me may

not even work as well the next. As I've confessed at various places in the text, I have not worked out everything in my own syllabus or lectures to my satisfaction, not by any means. I still struggle with how best to address certain questions, engage the empirical and the conceptual, and help students acquire both short-term knowledge and long-term skills. For better or worse, the struggle is the thing—that dynamic, contingent thing that keeps historians thinking, arguing, writing, and revising stories large and small. And for better or worse, it's never done. So please accept what follows as principled but provisional—like all critically engaged history, in short.