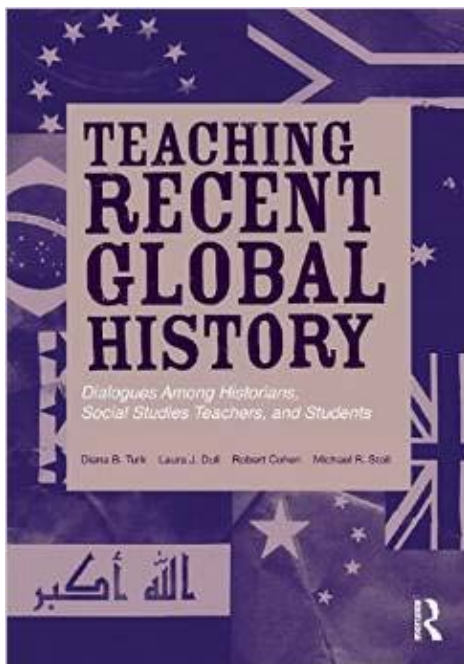


Book Review

Dialogues among Historians, Social Studies Teachers, and Students

“Teaching Recent Global History” by Diana B. Turk, Laura J. Dull, Robert Cohen, and Michael R. Stoll

By David D. Dry



Teaching world history is a difficult task. The vast amount of material covered in the limited timeframe of one or two semesters makes engaging in deep analysis of different regions while crafting a coherent structure to discuss the world as a whole challenging. The situation is complicated further by the fact that students often enter the course with little relevant background knowledge, and that teachers, often narrowly trained in particular historical fields, must tackle material in which they have received little formal training. The authors of *Teaching Recent Global History* have

crafted a useful text aimed at enabling middle and high school educators to surmount these difficulties so they can help students “connect with and deeply understand key events and trends in recent global history” (ix).

With one thematic chapter and the remainder focusing on the twentieth century history of a world area/topic, the book is divided into seven chapters focusing on Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, war crimes in the twentieth century, and the US and the world. While most chapters focus on a world region, core themes are identified within each chapter which transcend the regional level and tie the developments in one area into a framework of events happening around the world.

As the book’s subtitle—Dialogues among Historians, Social Studies Teachers, and Students—indicates, the book sparks discussion between historians, who provide an overview of integral themes for each region based on recent scholarly work, and teachers, who develop and implement innovative lesson plans to convey those core concepts. Each chapter starts with an interview with one or more prominent historians or journalists. The interview format is similar for all chapters and begins with dispelling “common misconceptions” and generally proceeds with a discussion of central historical themes, the most useful chronological structure, and sources or figures instructors might look to in developing

an understanding of the region in question. The interviews are the most compelling portion of book and distill complicated changes in the historical understanding of a region's place in world history into a set of coherent themes and trends.

The heart of the book is the essay section following each of the interviews. Groups of secondary school instructors from different schools, most located in New York State, worked in concert to craft teaching units consisting of a number of individual lessons on the basis of the "enduring understandings" and "essential questions" elicited from the interviews. The essay provides a start-to-finish teaching narrative describing the planning, implementation, and results of the teaching units developed. In these essays, the secondary school educators describe any problems they encountered and the successes and shortcomings of the lessons they developed. Innovative teaching strategies employed include a material culture comparison of kitchens in the Cold War era USSR and US, a debate on who is to blame for current problems in Africa, and an examination of US war crimes at No Gun Ri during the Korean War using recently disclosed primary source documents.

Teaching Recent Global History is not a stand-alone guide for teaching twentieth-century history, nor does it purport to be. To teach a world history class, much more than the unit lessons outlined in this book will be required. However, the interviews and unit plans contained in the book are a useful treasure trove of lesson ideas, connecting themes, and possible frameworks through which to navigate teaching the expansive topic of world history. The scholars interviewed, and the lesson plans derived from those interviews, provide a possible approach to understanding these regions and their place in the world. Although many different approaches are conceivable, the

assortment of themes highlighted in the interviews preference political, economic, and military activities as the guiding themes at the expense of discussions of gender, the environment, technological change, and culture, which are conspicuously marginal.

Middle and secondary school educators will find the lesson ideas included practical and directly applicable to the classroom, and world history instructors at all levels, including college and university professors, will find illuminating insights contained within the interviews. The book is geared toward instructors in the United States, and the book is at its best when bringing forth themes that challenge notions of American exceptionalism, common American stereotypes of Muslims and the Arab world, and America's mixed track record with regard to war crimes and spreading democracy around the globe. Thus, US history is placed in the context of world events, instead of being positioned as the exception or separate from the rest of the world.

Overall, *Teaching Recent Global History* provides practical and engaging approaches to teaching this difficult to navigate field of historical study. The interviews, unit lessons, primary and secondary resources, and synthesis of regional studies with comparative analysis provided in each chapter make the book an excellent companion text for seasoned instructors and those new to teaching world history.

"Teaching Recent Global History: Dialogues among Historians, Social Studies Teachers, and Students."

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