Spring 2017

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased that you will be joining us this summer at the Bellevue AP Institute. This is a long letter so in case you don’t make it to the bottom of it before June, please note there are a few things buried within it that I need you to do in preparation for our time together: there is a required text to read and consider the optional summer reading.

As you know the College Board is implementing further changes to the AP World History course in terms of content and assessment. The content changes have been in place since the 2012 AP exam but the assessment changes were just changed this past year. I have spent considerable time over the past several years thinking about how these changes affect our classrooms and have been working closely with College Board to provide the training all of us need to ensure that our students are properly prepared to write the new kinds of essays and short answers. In practical terms this means I think that we need to do more formative assessments in our classes and teach to the new essays. While I do not think that we need to radically change the way we have been teaching the content, it does require that we repackage some of what we have been doing. These changes are exciting and offer an opportunity for us to revisit the way we have been thinking about world history. Our week together will be in part preparation for these changes so participants both new and experienced will benefit from the institute.

Having worked with teachers across the country, as well as overseas, in preparing for the course, I am excited to be at Bellevue once again, especially now that my home is in China— I love coming back to Mt. Rainier views. I, along with hundreds of other teachers, introduced the course to my students 17 years ago. As a question leader and as a table leader for the AP reading in Nebraska, Colorado and Utah in
2002 -2017, I have gained valuable insight into the assessment process and feel that I have become a better AP instructor as a result. After completing my doctorate in world history on new approaches to teaching the survey course at high school and college levels. I currently teach humanities, AP world history, Big history, Debate, Shanghai Studies and AP CompGov for high school students.

World history is exciting. As teachers, we have the opportunity to integrate literature, art, music, anthropology, economics, politics, geography and more as we ask students to look at global primary and secondary sources from across time. But it can also be seen as overwhelming. My feeling is that if we can make the course interactive, and less teacher centered, than perhaps many other AP and/or history courses, students will both enjoy the course and do well on the exam. But this is all part of what we will be discussing in June! You can expect a more hands-on workshop experience versus a lecture dominated one.

In our four days together, I will help get you acquainted with the course, the content changes, and the format of the new test questions. We will also spend time on each of the six sections of the course exploring major content themes, select readings and sample activities. Please note that the format of the week will be largely interactive in order to provide an engaging session which is useful in terms of key content points, AP skills and pedagogy in world history. In addition, we will have opportunity to critique textbooks and materials for the course. An important part of the week will be looking at he new sample essays from the AP reading, especially the new DBQ, the LEQ, and the SAQs (yes, we will unravel the acronyms...) We will spend time developing specific formative assessments and test bank questions that will help students to practice important historical thinking skills that are key to the new exam. Participants taking the course for university credit will need to develop a draft syllabus as well. There will be some time set aside to work on this.
We are attempting to acquire extra copies of several sample texts for you to use and take with you at the end of the week. It is unclear at this point what will be available so if you are driving to the program, please bring any of the resources on the attached list that you might already have with you. Since you will be developing materials during the week, it is a good idea to bring your textbook, any favorite curriculum resources and a list of favorite websites with you.

The five books that are identified on a Getting Started short list on the attached page are ones I personally think are valuable additions to a teacher’s personal library. If you have time read David Christian’s, This Fleeting World, Robert Marks, Origins of the Modern World, or any of the Tom Standage books, Writing on the Wall: Social Media, the first 2000 years, History of the World in Six Glasses or Edible History of Humanity. They provide a wonderful overview for much of the course (I have used Fleeting World as summer reading and the Marks book as a review text). If your school has money in the budget for these types of materials, you may consider ordering some of the books on the list in advance of the institute. Sample copies will be available during the week, as well as a longer list of resources that you might add to your wish lists.

It will be very helpful to look over the most recent explanation of the changes for AP World History, Go to: https://advancesinap.collegeboard.org/english-history-and-social-science/world-history and peruse the new Curriculum Framework Guide. You might also consider perusing AP Central or joining the AP World History Community Group, Facebook group, or H-WORLD. Please email me if you need directions on doing any of these things. I look forward to meeting you in June and to spending an intense but exciting week with you this summer. Please feel free to email me with any questions.

Sincerely yours,

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