H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Ross E. Dunn, ed. *The New World History: A Teacher's Companion.* Boston and New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. xi + 596 pp. $52.55 (paper), ISBN 978-0-312-18327-1.

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Published on H-World (September, 2001)

The Continuing Discussion: What must we do to teach world history effectively?

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Although Ross Dunn has always been generous with his knowledge and time, with this book he has given us a substantial gift, which will be particularly noted by those who have engaged in a long struggle to grasp world history and find ways of communicating the subject. Perhaps a personal note will place in perspective the opinions I express in this review.

In his preface, Dunn presents his book as, in part, a personal "silver anniversary celebration" (iii) of his introduction, with two colleagues, of a course on world history to 1500 C.E. That struck a chord with me because one of his collaborators, William Phillips, wrote to me to ask for suggestions. Phillips knew that in 1972 at New York University I had developed a course entitled something like "Comparative Mediterranean Civilizations," dealing with the period 500-1700 C.E., which I was then teaching at another institution as a two-semester course breaking about 1200. To help develop their San Diego State course, he wanted to know how my course was going, what books I assigned, and which themes I stressed. I do not recall what I wrote, but the letter probably contained more complaints and doubts than enlightenment. I hated the course title, with its suggestion that I would compare the internal histories of discreet civilizations; but I had few models of how to teach a course that focused on a major sea as its core while trying to understand this "local" history on the basis of interactions with other regions that had reached almost global proportions well before my concluding date. Even plowing through Fernand Braudel's classic *La Mediterranee* [1] during my first semester of graduate study at the University of Wisconsin had not prepared me for the questions about periodization, selection, and organization that I would confront. although I did receive useful guidance from Domenico Sella's courses and advice [2] and a conviction, derived from reading the just- deceased Joseph Levenson's *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* [3], that something like a real world history was emerging. I arrived in Idaho in 1975 to work in a department organizing its curriculum on principles that provided no space for my "Mediterranean" course, but I continued to follow the debates about what world history might be and how it could best be taught. Because he has been much more connected to these issues, Dunn pulls from his experiences the enthusiasm for preparing this reader that is evident throughout his lucid introductions to each section. There are many world historians who will have often expressed (during their struggles since the 1970s to develop courses that break with nation-state and western civilization models) their need for something like the orientation Dunn provides and will, therefore, join me in expressing appreciation for the book.

I do not believe that I have ever before invented a course in order to use a particular book, but I have done so now. In the spring semester, with Ross Dunn's splendid reader in hand, I will teach an upper-division course entitled "World History and Geography for Teachers."[4] Although Dunn prepared his book primarily to meet the needs of those designing and teaching world history courses at the college and university level, I will direct my course toward working and pre-service K-12 teachers because this group also needs, as he recognizes, the grounding in the premises, concepts, organizational decisions, and major scholarly contributions on which their textbooks, curriculum materials and standards, state-mandated examinations, and educational policy debates are based. World history lacks a fixed place in Idaho's public school curriculum, and when the subject is taught or proposed as an elective secondary course, controversy may surface. In those cases where some sort of civil debate on this "contested terrain" (p. 551) is possible, public school teachers must possess the confidence that only comes from a solid grasp of the subject and how it might be taught. I believe that a frank discussion of the fifty-six

selections that Dunn includes will provide teachers with an understanding that they perhaps do not develop in their courses about particular historical themes and periods, even though the core of our undergraduate program is supposed to be comparative and world history.

Of course, I cannot review a work such as this one the way I would a monograph. Therefore, I will concentrate on the overall organization and the appropriateness of the selections for each of the eleven parts, providing attention to the small number of previously unpublished contributions. Dunn states clearly that the distribution of the readings among the sections is somewhat arbitrary because a number of them could have done duty elsewhere, and I have no intention of quibbling with those difficult choices because anyone reading the book to help think about course preparation or any instructor using it for a course will recognize when it might serve his or her purpose to alter the editor's scheme. However, readers should not skip Dunn's introduction because it provides the finest brief discussion I have seen of the development of world history during the past half century and, therefore, explains effectively his editorial decisions. Moreover, readers will thereby appreciate how well Dunn has achieved his goal of resisting "…the temptations to try to organize the selections in a way that traces a single genealogy of thought" (p. 110). At the end of each part, he has added a selected bibliography of articles, collections, and monographs with helpful comments about each. I would have liked an index.

The works in part one, "World History Teaching over Time," do a nice job of delineating the curricular and ideological roots of challenges to much that constitutes the "new world history," which is characterized by the explicit use of comparison and approaches drawn from the social sciences as well as by raising historical questions of sufficient spatial scale that responses move questioners beyond the framing categories of nation-state and civilization. William Swinton published the earliest of these selections in 1874, and I am struck by how many public comments on the Eleventh of September events express perspectives reinforced or drawn from earlier approaches to history teaching. By contrast, Gilbert Allardyce's 1990 piece on the emergence of the world history course and Craig Lockard's 1994 article on Philip Curtin and the "Wisconsin School" help us understand the ways in which these more recent initiatives in teaching and research were frequently conscious reactions to unfortunate consequences, in public policy and social interaction, of the earlier perspectives.

Having identified differences, Dunn then puts flesh on them in his section "Three Arguments for Teaching World History and Two Remonstrations." Given the pivotal early leadership of L. S. Stavrianos that Allardyce describes, it is appropriate that this part begins with his statement, while including the more familiar views of J. H. Hexter and William McNeill. Readers will be pleased to find here an intellectually entertaining, previously unpublished 1988 lecture given at Ohio State University by the late Marilyn Robinson Waldman, a student of Marshall Hodgson and collaborator of William McNeill. These five selections effectively throw onto the table many of the issues with which world historians must grapple with as they organize courses, especially if this must be done in the face of institutionalized opposition. The dynamism of debate among world historians themselves is then highlighted in the next part by five selections grouped together as "Redefining World History: Some Key Statements," which includes important essays by Curtin, Hodgson, and McNeill, as well as the incisive statement by Eric Wolf about the necessity to focus on "Connections in History." I believe that those primarily familiar with Geoffrey Barraclough's works on European, and particularly on German history, will appreciate his comments in this part.

The following five parts (parts 4 through 8) explore in more detail the problems, opportunities, and approaches already exposed, while adding additional insights, cautions, and concrete suggestions about how a coherent world history might be written and taught: "Interregional and Superregional History"; "World Systems and World History"; "Teaching Regions and Civilizations in World Context"; "Periodizing World History"; and "Comparisons and Themes". Anyone who must organize a world history course will find the sequence of these sections to be pretty effective since the contributors force the "syllabus writer" to confront all of the main difficulties of conception and vocabulary in a complex but enriching way. Along the route, the struggling instructor will hear major voices.

Part four includes David Christian's delineation of Inner Eurasia, Patrick Manning's emphasis on the African diaspora as a major integrating topic for what is increasingly called "Atlantic History," and Edmund Burke's essay on Hodgson's "hemispheric interregional approach." Dunn has added Lynda Shaffer's well-known and stimulating article on "Southernization" but also an unpublished appraisal by John Voll of the concept's value and dangers. In many ways, the examination of world systems approaches that follows in part five raises the discussion of interconnections potentially to a global level, and here the editor pulls in the necessary formulations of

world systems history by Immanuel Wallerstein, Fernand Braudel, and Andre Gunder Frank, but he brackets them with a valuable critique by Craig Lockard and an innovative use by Voll of Islam as a world system. In terms of using this book to stimulate student thinking about regional connections in world history, teachers will be able to mine these two sections for weeks.

Because it deals with how to handle the histories of particular regions and because the major attention is given to India, the "Middle East," and Latin America, part six, on teaching regions and civilizations, possesses less coherence, but Dunn does an excellent job in his introduction of contrasting the concepts of these authors that serve as the foundations for their emphases on particular, distinctive aspects of the places on which they work. Moreover, in this regard it is useful that the selections on India by John Richards and Tara Sethia are so strikingly different in terms of what they think should be emphasized when one "inserts" South Asia into world history. While Sethia seeks to define what makes India a distinctive civilization, Richards assesses the degree to which what happened there in the first global age, from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth century, corresponded to historical processes evident elsewhere. Julia Clancy-Smith and William Sater largely share Richards' goal in their treatments of the "Middle East" and Latin America, respectively. The authors of the other two selections do a terrific job of clarifying what is crucial about decisions made regarding the presentation of particular regions. In his article "The American Educational Tradition: Hostile to a Humanistic World History?," with which I was previously unfamiliar, Donald Johnson presents one of the most precise and carefully argued cases for a civilizational approach that I have read, probably because for a long time, those before who focused on civilizations felt the reasons for doing so were largely self-evident. To close this part, historical geographers Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen air their concerns about those whose stories are suppressed in a civilizational approach and about the frequent reification of civilizations, however defined.

Perhaps because it is so fundamental to historical understanding, periodization drives me nuts whenever I have to organize a course, whatever its spatial and temporal boundaries. Probably that is why I often escape into a thematic focus (creativity, religious reform and conflict, attempts to create countries on the basis of written constitutions), in the hope, no doubt vain, that this flight will reduce the problems of periodization. The selections in part seven at least expose the reasons for my anxieties, even if they have left me unsatisfied. Dunn has included the well-known and influential views of Jerry Bentley and Peter Stearns, as well as William Green's intelligent review of the possible approaches. What I really like, especially for purposes of the course I want to teach, is that the editor has provided the world history standards developed under the leadership of the National Center for History in the Schools. Because Dunn was so deeply involved in the standard development process and the subsequent debates about the results, both his introductory comments regarding that process and the rationales in the standards for the periods included add a valuable component to this section.

Although not all of mine are designed as world history courses, the writers included in part eight on comparisons and themes do a lot to convince me that my tendencies in this direction might be justified by more than simple escapism from periodization anguish. Of course, Dunn starts with substantial statements about comparative history from Michael Adas and Curtin. Given that the historical interests of many of my students are shaped by the region where we live, I was delighted to see that the editor included Helen Wheatley's previously unpublished paper on the fur trade, a version of which she read in 1998 when Philip Curtin was honored by the World History Association. The other two selections, on cross-cultural trade by Steve Gosch and David Smith's on teaching religions, are nicely anticipated by selections in earlier parts (for example Sethia's on India and Bentley's on periodization) and effectively enrich this discussion.

For many who are trying to create effective world history courses, the next three parts provide a lot of disturbing reading and, in some cases, reveal just how little support might be out there. The authors included in part nine, "Gender in World History," do an outstanding job of elucidating the fundamental distortions in any world history course that stem from the outright or relative exclusion of women. However, I fear that those motivated by these calls to do a better job of "gendering" their presentations will become quickly frustrated by the still too limited availability of information and case studies for many periods in the history of most world regions. Bibliographic searches draw one into a disproportionate emphasis on women in Europe and the United States, and even when escaping such regional concentration, into an emphasis on women as victims rather than as actors. Although the essays in part ten, "Constructing World History Programs and Curricula," provide several wonderful models for undergraduate and graduate study, they draw along a current of anxiety about continuing political difficulties. The selections in the final part, "The Future of World History," do a good job of constructing an agenda,

especially in terms of how the presentation of human developments ought to be rooted better within their natural and physical environments, which perhaps would include a very long temporal dimension as advocated by proponents of "Big History." None, however, provides any hint that those interested in understanding complex environmental issues within a holistic context have developed a striking tool (Geographic Information Systems [GIS]) that offers still largely unexplored possibilities for interdisciplinary and collaborative work in historical studies, for organizing all types of information, for the analysis of the interactions of different–often quite diverse types of data–and for the effective presentation of results.[5] Concerns such as these can only be discussed in reference to the nature of the tools available, but once they are pulled into the debate, instructors become more acutely aware that they lack adequate graphic, and especially cartographic representations of the interactions and comparisons about which they want to teach, digitalized instructional materials, effective Internet search techniques, and collaborative schemes for research and teaching. These schemes in particular should be built into world history graduate programs, much as they are in disciplines where collaboration has been crucial for decades. As has often been the case, it may be the need for more effective world history teaching, in this case for the techniques and materials that would make instruction more effective, which will drive part of the discipline's research agenda.

With these reflections on the future of world history, I have demonstrated how well Dunn has met a goal of this book (p. 8). He hopes that the collection would encourage us to take stock of where we are as researchers and teachers. Dunn feels we are arriving at some consensus about "...world history as a mode of analysis involving comparison, formulation of larger-scale questions, and use of various tools of the social sciences" (p. 484). From this perspective, I want to conclude with some generalizations about what the most recent of this anthology's selections reveal.

The book brings out nicely an epistemological issue fundamental to the importance of world history as a way to develop understanding. In historical writing, and in the social sciences in general, one often detects the reification of self-contained entities such as the nation-state, civilization, culture, and society, which are then considered as expressions of reality, much as Isaac Newton felt that if one could define an atom (in other words its essence), one had thereby described the reality of nature. This tendency embodies two related problems. First, we never produce a complete description of the reality of any historical subject. Instead, we offer "abstractions" or approximations best judged in terms of how much they enhance our understanding of the real world.[6] But no abstraction worthwhile as an aid to understanding can emerge from the definition of discreet entities, such as civilizations or societies, because these cannot exist apart from their interactive connections within the real world, which change, eliminating "essence" as a proper subject for study. This difficulty is even coming to be recognized in that bastion of nation-state history in the United States, research and teaching about U.S. history.[7] We must, therefore, retain as a central question when organizing world history courses how we can aggregate human groups in ways that promote understanding rather than obscure reality, and as many of these anthologized authors show, the answer will vary depending on the historical questions, the themes, and the comparisons with which we chose to deal.

We still do not do an adequate job of handling agency in the midst of grand narratives, especially that of women. Most frequently, we concentrate on the agency of members, especially the male ones, of tiny groups who enjoyed disproportionate shares of the economic and political resources of their location. We do not agree about the impact of individual human agency in world history or about what roles and locations within economic organization, political institutions (including religious ones), or solidarity groups are most likely to provide opportunities to individuals for change-producing agency. We should make this issue more of a focus for our discussions, in World History Association meetings or in specific H-World forums for example, because our students and fellow world citizens struggle to understand what they might do to shape rapid change on a global scale.

Despite the exciting debates over concepts and vocabulary, in a word, *ideas*, found in these selections, I am struck by how relatively little attention world historians pay to the issue of how ideas shape human action, or even to whether they do so. When the question is asked at all, the response is sometimes encapsulated in a reification of a reductionist version of "culture" as an actor. The partial exceptions to this observation are the articles (those of Sethia, Smith, and Voll for example) that discuss religion, but even from these, I do not get any clear sense of how ideas, as such, might have an impact.[8]

Every reader will have suggestions about selections that Dunn should have included. In light of my observations about the lack of adequate attention among world historians to human agency and ideas, I miss one voice

in particular: that of Joseph R. Levenson. Even though his accidental death in 1969 prevented him from defending his master work, finally published as a single volume only the year before, Levenson has not been without influence in world history circles. One need only point to the many contributions to the World History Association of Ralph Croizier of the University of Victoria, who has among his published works one of the best appraisals of Levenson's legacy.[9]

In conclusion, Ross Dunn has done an outstanding job of assembling a group of texts that will define, for world history teachers, the complex problems of vocabulary, spatial and temporal organization, and thematic focus, which they will face as they develop their courses, and these same essays can often be mined for solutions. Furthermore, this "teacher's companion" is sufficiently inclusive of the major voices among world historians to serve as a platform for any discussion of where we are as a discipline and what our future work should be. In spite of its price, I hope that my students next semester enjoy reading it as much as I have.

[1]. Fernand Braudel. *La Mediterranee et le monde Mediterraneen a l'epoque de Philippe II* (1st French ed., Paris: Colin, 1949). The second French edition (1966) was not yet available for my use. The English translation, based on the second French edition, was only published in 1972-73.

[2]. Domenico Sella's best-known book in English is *Crisis and Continuity: The Economy of Spanish Lombardy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[3]. Joseph R. Levenson. *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968). The three component volumes appeared between 1958 and 1965.

[4]. Another book, which Dunn calls "[e]ssential reading for world history teachers" (p. 223), serves as my course's second pillar: Martin W. Lewis and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997).

[5]. One can obtain an excellent introduction to GIS from a recent, hour-long video entitled "The World in a Box," which, although its case studies offer little reference to typical historical questions, I have used successfully to stimulate discussion with colleagues and students. It is available from the Geospatial Information and Technology Association (GITA) at the following URL: http://www.gita.org

[6]. For an interesting explanation of the nature of such "abstractions," see David J. Staley, "Designing and Displaying Historical Information in the Electronic Age," *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 36,9 (December, 1998): 40-44.

[7]. See the "LaPietra Report" of the Organization of American Historians at the URL: http://www.oah.org/activities/lapietra/final.html

[8]. There are useful reflections on this topic in some of selections in Stuart B. Schwartz, ed. *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

[9]. Ralph C. Croizier, "China's Worlds: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and the 'Problem of Chinese Identity'." In Maurice Meisner and Rhoads Murphey, eds., *The Mozartian Historian: Essays on the Works of Joseph R. Levenson* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1976): 157-174.

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Citation: J. B. Owens. Review of Dunn, Ross E., ed., *The New World History: A Teacher's Companion.* H-World, H-Net Reviews. September, 2001.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=5495

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