

INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Preparing Young Americans for Democracy and Civic Engagement

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In the just-completed presidential debates, President Bush emphasized on several occasions the role of the United States as a nation spreading liberty and democracy across the world. He has spoken recently of his belief that every human being is born with a God-given yearning for liberty. It is clearly his understanding that peoples all across the world will, if the shackles are once thrown off, give expression to that inner sense of liberty and work to create democratic institutions that promote and defend freedom. Yet his first experimental steps in this direction, in Afghanistan and Iraq, have been only partially successful, at best. His vision has a compelling simplicity and alluring directness, but the circumstances on the ground seem to belie such facile thinking. Is this because he is wrong about the human spirit, or too optimistic about the human ability to build the ramparts of freedom, or because other peoples in other parts of the world define the very idea of freedom in ways different from his?

Such beliefs in the human desire for freedom, God-given or otherwise, are hardly new. They were widely held by the leaders of the Enlightenment and by many of those who created the American Revolution. The idea of Christian liberty was espoused a century earlier by John Milton, who, in his thundering defense of freedom of the press, the *Areopagitica*, spoke of the need to find truth through the free exchange of opinions and ideas, suggesting that virtue is not “fugitive and cloistered.” “He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian” – or, in modern and more secular terms, he is the true critical thinker.

Milton wrote not only about freedom of expression but also about education, which he viewed as the principal means of freeing the human spirit from the burdens of ignorance and allowing it full expression. Without knowledge and understanding, freedom and liberty are empty vessels. The pursuit of truth, and the tools of that pursuit, are a necessary prerequisite to building the institutions of liberty. Later, Thomas Jefferson

echoed Milton's views. Jefferson's vision of democracy united personal freedom and education: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." Jefferson's idea of education embraced four principles:

- that democracy cannot long exist without enlightenment
- that it cannot function without wise and honest officials
- that talent and virtue, needed in a free society, should be educated regardless of wealth, birth or other accidental condition
- that the children of the poor must be thus educated at common expense.

In sum, without an educated public the ballot-box has little value.

Am I alone in believing that the present round of presidential debates, indeed the campaign in general, has been distinguished by a deplorable lack of attention to the great issues of the day – issues like climate change, like nuclear proliferation (touched on in connection with North Korea and Iran, but mostly for the purpose of scoring debating points), like the growing gap between the rich and poor not just in the United States but across the world, like the deteriorating reputation of America in the world? In September 2000, the leaders of 189 member-states of the United Nations held a Millennium Summit in New York, at which they agreed to commit themselves to the fulfillment of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015. The Millennium Declaration that came out of the summit conference described these eight goals as follows:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

These goals are not empty commitments: targets have been set for each goal allowing for measurement of progress along the way, and it is the firm intention of the United Nations to give public expression to these targets and to indicate how much progress each state is making in this effort. The United States was among those who pledged their support. A few weeks ago, Britain announced that it was offering to pay off ten percent of the total debt owed by poor countries to international agencies and it challenged other nations to follow suit, but there is little indication that Americans understand that their country has made a solemn pledge, or that, if it has, they wish to hold their politicians accountable.

And neither candidate seems inclined to discuss America's role in the world in anything other than what might be described as militant anti-terrorism.

The candidates do not talk about issues of substance because their attention is directed primarily at persuading those who have not thought deeply about the issues – the waverers, the relatively uninformed. Because of the nature of our political system (which incidentally does not correspond to the notion of one person one vote that we seek to persuade the rest of the world to adopt), all their attention is directed at a tiny sliver of the electorate – the undecided voter in a handful of so-called swing states. Advances in modern technology have made it far easier to identify this formerly elusive creature the undecided voter, and the rest of us are mere bystanders in the battle for the presidency. In an odd way, the closer the election the lower the level of debate. No one is concerned with how we committed voters will respond to the candidate after he is elected, how our political behavior a year or two years from now will be influenced by what he says at the moment of election. And neither candidate is seeking a better informed electorate: neither candidate is seeing the election as an opportunity to educate the voter, to create a true climate of dialogue. The low level of debate suggests a low level of expectation: the voter does not expect politicians to make much sense, nor even to have much understanding of the issues, and the politician does not expect the voter to respond to fact, but rather to impressions and labels. Our politicians must be teachers, because the alternatives are too monstrous to contemplate. Regrettably, some of those alternatives are already making themselves visible in our political culture.

And we are gathered here today to talk about international education. Never has such an assignment been more important; never have the consequences of failure to teach about the world, failure to understand the world, been so threatening. Ten, or even five, years ago, we might have viewed the subject very differently. Since the events of 9/11, and since the war in Iraq, there has been a seismic shift in international relations, brought about above all by the American government's response to the disaster. This response has turned on end much of the received wisdom of the past fifty or sixty years. We are today engaged in dismantling much of the consensus on the conduct of international affairs that was developed in the aftermath, and the shock, of World War II. That war left half of Europe shattered, it cut the heart out of European Jewry, it claimed millions of lives, more than any war before or since. Out of the ruins arose the United Nations, with its grand vision of nations united in the pursuit of freedom from tyranny, of individual freedom, and of the rule of international law. Thanks to the work of Americans and others, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written and promulgated in 1948 and was to form the basis of numerous international agreements and understandings that have come into being since that time. While many of them, most notoriously the Genocide Convention, remained unratified by the United States for many years, and while others are still in this condition – for example the Declaration on the Rights of the Child – successive American administrations have supported the spirit of these international instruments, indeed used them as the basis for the battle against communism and for the promotion of human rights across the world.

Recent years have been characterized by a growing lack of confidence in the old international order created by the victors of World War II. That international order was based on a vision of agreement among equals for the well-being of the world as a whole, on the peaceful resolution of disputes, on the extension of the rule of law, and on a belief in fundamental human rights. For a long time now, the United States, even with the safety valve of a permanent seat on the Security Council and its accompanying veto, has been fretting under the constraints of the myth of the international equality of states. Complaints about inefficiency at the United Nations, first voiced in earnest under President Reagan, may in reality have been complaints about the entire system. Indeed, as the United Nations has become more efficient in its use of resources it has not re-emerged as a serious element in US foreign policy: it is untidy, cumbersome, and, to American eyes, frequently an obstacle to moral action. Why seek consensus, the argument goes, with those whose political goals and philosophies one does not espouse? The only possible reason can be expediency, and for the most part we do not really need the support of other governments. But there will be a new international order, of some shape and of some kind, and our students of today will have to build and manage it tomorrow. Have we equipped them, are we equipping them, to do so?

There has always been a gap between the conduct of foreign policy in the United States and the understanding of the affairs of the world by ordinary Americans. The United Nations Charter or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not much known or understood by ordinary Americans. Indeed, there is a certain fear of such foreign entanglements and a suspicion that they somehow abridge American freedom of action in the world, in other words that their constraints are constraints on freedom itself. Americans have always harbored a certain ambivalence to law and to conformity. It is one of our more characteristic qualities, and it is a quality that has its effect on our attitudes to education, and particularly international education. So the UN Charter or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, even though both are based on principles that we hold dear, such as freedom from tyranny and persecution, have not become part of our political definition of ourselves.

Compounding the problem is American ambivalence about education. We all know that education serves two purposes: to socialize young people into the society of which they are a part, and to encourage them to examine and question the assumptions behind it. We have had more success of late with the former than with the latter. Recent emphasis on educational basics has pushed inquiry to the outer limits of educational priorities. Furthermore, recent legislation has put educational failure firmly on the shoulders of teachers, as though social pressures, in a society where forty percent of the population has no health insurance and a sizable percentage of the population lives in poverty, have no influence on success or failure. As far as international education is concerned, it is not widely regarded as important, because it is not seen as one of the basics.

The effort to take the world as our province is the task of global education. It is global education's particular concern to question received opinions, to take a curriculum driven by national imperatives and turn it inside out – not in isolation from the other, socializing function of education, but as a complement to it. The global educator looks at the world

and asks questions about how it works as a system. The global educator examines how the world manages its affairs, how its resources are distributed, how its inhabitants communicate with one another, how its various peoples, ethnicities, languages, and customs interact and intersect. The global educator asks how these relationships have changed over time, and how they are likely to change in the future. The global educator examines differences and similarities, and the positive and negative effects of each. While taking into consideration the particular situation of the United States, the global educator aims not at justifying one country or one people in relation to another, but in looking dispassionately at their views of one another and their relationship to one another. The purpose behind such an exercise is not to supply answers, but to help the student formulate questions. Indeed, it is my firm belief that educated listening is the key to global consciousness: we must equip ourselves to listen to the voices of the various communities and interest groups across the world (in all their various languages), and to respond not with a narrowly conceived immediacy but with a broad-based understanding derived from sound knowledge and tempered empathy.

And this may be the right place to start – by listening and recording. Why was it, for example, that world opinion moved so rapidly against us in the months following 9/11? Why, we asked, as we had asked at the time of the Iran hostage crisis, do people hate us with such a passion? People like William Bennett (2002), in his book *Why We Fight*, seemed to regard the very question as a sign of weakness, but it is a question worth asking, and using our international contacts to ask it. Perhaps it is because the postwar consensus that I referred to earlier is still regarded as valid by people in those parts of the world which suffered in the war. Perhaps it is because the freedom and liberty for which Americans yearn seems to imply also free markets and the free flow of American capital regardless of consequences, trends of which many foreigners are deeply suspicious. Perhaps it is because American cultural products, which we regard as benign or at the very least as neutral, are regarded by many as assaults on their way of life. Some Americans see foreign hatred of the United States as nothing more than envy of our way of life, but we should not mistake the desire for material prosperity as ready acceptance of American values. Nor should we automatically assume that what we call the war on terrorism is accepted for what it is in other parts of the world. Even at home there are those who doubt whether it is a war at all, and who wonder whether terrorism is not so much an enemy as a form of globalized crime, a virus that has attached itself to those advances in technology that allow an individual to influence events over vast distances and to own and control firepower or weaponry that can paralyze entire communities, perhaps entire nations.

Consider 9/11. While the attack was sudden, the assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were not isolated, but part of a larger pattern, and our reactions to these events are based on prior experience, on our long-term assessment of our own institutions, and on our sense of American values. One can examine the significance of September 11 indirectly, through other elements in the curriculum, particularly if the purpose is to help students think effectively rather than supply them with new sets of facts. The triumph of capitalism at the Berlin Wall, the onward march of globalism, the growing economic strength of the United States and the economic sluggishness of much of the rest of the

world, the growing dominance of the English language on the world scene – these are not unrelated to the events of September 11 and studying them will throw light on what happened.

The point, of course, is not that we look at any incident in isolation – not that we stop everything that we are doing in the classroom to delve into the world’s latest crisis, but that our students come to such contemporary events equipped with the right skills and knowledge to address and analyze them. While it would be a mistake to see the events of September 11 and our response to them as purely and simply a manifestation of the process of globalization gone awry, the deleterious effects of the capitalist enterprise in some developing countries are clearly related to it. “The increasingly vehement worldwide reaction against the policies that drive globalization is a significant change,” writes Joseph Stiglitz in his critique of the policies of the IMF, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (2002: 8-9). “For decades the cries of the poor in Africa and in developing countries in other parts of the world have been largely unheard in the West.” Our cult of success leave us little sympathy for those who are condemned to a life that we choose to define as failure.

Furthermore, we do tend to see our own institutions as inherently superior to those of other countries, and to conclude, often erroneously, that simply reproducing such institutions in other parts of the world will bring instant and enduring democracy and prosperity. One of the classic studies of China, by Fox Butterfield, argues that understanding today’s Chinese society requires that we comprehend China’s imperial past, whose history it mirrors. The same is surely true for American society, which has inherited the mantle of an imperial Europe: it may be a global village out there, but America is in the process of appointing itself mayor. The myth of American uniqueness, of America as the chosen people, America the savior, is never far away from our thinking – and our students need to understand its history and implications. Fergal Keane, writing in the *Independent* (London) a couple of year ago, remarked that “People on this side of the pond ... are generally better informed about the world. The Europeans live with the not at all distant memory of cities and towns devastated by war; they have experienced the outer limits of insanity, and so prefer to move cautiously through the world; they fear the blunt power of America and its potential for being misused; they chafe at ... assumptions of cultural, political superiority.” Equate this, if you must, with late Greek laments at the brash dominance of the Romans, but read into it also an imperative that we know and understand the opinions of our friends.

Keane’s observation that Europeans “are generally better informed about the world” echoes a sentiment that is widely held by Europeans and has often formed a basis for arguing for more curricular attention to international and global affairs.

This widely lamented American global illiteracy has many causes – and may not be as absolute as some people imagine: there are plenty of ignorant Europeans, and many knowledgeable Americans. As Andrew Smith, President of the American Forum for Global Education, points out, “For most of our history, our nation has been isolated behind oceans and was not threatened by its neighbors. Until the second half of the 20th

century, the United States was economically self-sufficient and there was little political will to involve ourselves in the affairs of other nations outside the Americas.”

The past thirty years have seen significant changes. It was during the 1970s that American educators first began agitating for greater attention to international elements in the curriculum, largely in reaction to the relative lack of preparedness that catapulted us into lamentable entanglements in Southeast Asia. The field of global education began to take shape during these years. The Iran hostage crisis accelerated the process, and caused the teachers of foreign languages to join forces with those in social studies to demand that greater attention be paid to understanding the larger world. In 1980, the report of President Carter's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies gave a new boost to global education and helped set in motion a series of events that changed the curriculum of secondary schools.

Andrew Smith singles out four major curriculum shifts that have occurred in pre-collegiate global education. The first was the improvement of foreign language instruction. “The Commission report estimated that 8 percent of secondary students were enrolled in foreign language courses in 1979. Today this is estimated to be about 50 percent.” While these statistics are quite soft (enrolling in a course is not at all the same thing as mastering a language, and for every success the field has its failures), they do suggest a gradual shift in attitude toward foreign language. Most of the increase has occurred in Spanish, the most immediately useful language for the English speaker in America, and such languages as Russian and even German continue to suffer from reduced and declining enrollments. French is also slipping, at least in percentage terms. Nor is anything like enough attention accorded in the curriculum to the institutional role of foreign languages, and to the complexity of the international linguistic ecosystem – a concern not just for language teachers, but for social studies teachers as well. In fact, it is a serious omission that many social studies teachers give no attention at all to the role of language as a builder and divider of communities, and as a mode of behavior that serves to stratify and unite societies. But at least there is now a good chance that an American student will complete his or her education with at least some understanding of a foreign language, and aware that foreign languages exist.

Smith also points out that “A small but important shift has occurred in the teaching of commonly-spoken but uncommonly taught languages, such as Chinese and Japanese. Even more significant is that the importance of elementary school foreign language programs has gone from almost nonexistent in 1980 to thousands of programs today.” However, the United States remains behind other industrialized countries in the attention it devotes to language, primarily because of the apparent dominance of the English language in the world. As for that dominance, it is still important to bear in mind that the majority of the world’s population speaks little or no English, and that, even among those capable of expressing themselves in English, we cannot hope to hear other voices across the world if we do not listen to, or understand, foreign languages. We are now struggling with the foreign language demands put on us by the war on terrorism: we have still not learned to stockpile and make accessible the language learning capacity that our society possesses and the language knowledge that is hidden among our immigrants. According

to David Edwards, Executive Director of the Washington-based Joint National Committee on Languages, foreign language education has moved during the last 20 years from "scandalous to mediocre." Perhaps we will see a more significant change in the year ahead: the year 2005 has been declared the Year of Languages in the United States, in which special attention will be given to language learning and to the importance of knowledge of foreign languages. I need hardly add that the news out of the Middle East only reinforces the extreme importance of foreign-language readiness. There are far more interpreters and translators employed in Iraq than there are qualified translators recognized by the American Translators Association. Not all of them are doing a good job. Here at home, the New York Times reports that three years after the September 11 attacks, more than 120,000 hours of potentially valuable terrorism-related recordings gathered from wiretaps and other surveillance have not yet been translated by FBI linguists.

The second curriculum shift that Smith singles out is the reestablishment of education in geography: "When the President's Commission made its report in 1980, geography was all but excluded from the pre-collegiate curriculum. In 1988 the National Geographic Society established an education foundation to promote the teaching of geography. Since then, the Society has expended \$110 million mainly to support geography coalitions, which now exist in every state, and to support the Geographic Bee, which involved five million students this year alone. In addition, national geographic standards were developed and state standards on geography are now common throughout the United States." Just in the past few days, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has released a report on progress toward meeting the geography standards. It indicates significant advances. "A higher percentage of 8th-grade students reported studying maps and globes at least once or twice a week," states the press release issued by the U.S. Department of Education. "There were also increases in the percentages of 8th- and 12th-graders who studied countries and cultures, natural resources, and environmental issues once or twice a week."

Smith's third shift occurred in what he calls "the re-conceptualization and revitalization of world history." In 1980 few states required world history and in any case most world history courses were really courses in western civilization. But, says Smith, "in the 1990s World History standards were developed with solid global content. The creation of the World History Association (WHA) and its support of improved instruction of world history in the pre-collegiate curriculum has assisted schools to re-establish world history courses." Four years ago the WHA, along with the Educational Testing Service, began summer training programs for the World History Advanced Placement Course, which was offered for the first time in 2002. More than 20,000 students took the exam, an all-time high for any new AP subject.

The fourth change, according to Smith, was "the creation of public magnet schools with international foci." One of the first such schools was the Bodine High School for International Affairs in Philadelphia, an outgrowth of the work of the World Affairs Council in Philadelphia following its 1976 "Declaration of Interdependence." Today over a hundred American public schools have an international focus. "These schools

typically require four years of instruction in foreign languages and one or two years of world history. Many specialize in extracurricular international experiences for students and teachers. The International Baccalaureate, rarely offered in United States schools twenty years ago, is now offered in 420 schools – the largest number of participating schools in any country.”

Side by side with these formal curriculum shifts, many extracurricular efforts have also strengthened our youth's understanding of global matters. Smith singles out student and teacher exchange programs, educational travel programs (such as those run by the American Forum for Global Education), model United Nations, and the Great Decisions programs of the Foreign Policy Association.

Many of these programs, and many others, generate good teaching materials, such as the series *Issues in Global Education* put out by the American Forum for Global Education (www.globaled.com). Recent issues have dealt with oceans, with “food, a fundamental human right,” with terrorism, with human rights and corporate responsibility, and with languages. The National Peace Corps Association runs a Global Education project that publishes a newsletter called *TeachNet*, which is full of good ideas for global educators. Choices, operating out of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, publishes good curricular materials on such issues as terrorism, immigration, and foreign aid. And of course there are numerous websites worth consulting.

An important new dimension scarcely conceivable twenty years ago is the rapid advance in technology. The organization iEARN, for example, has created a vast network of communication to facilitate contacts between schools and individual classes, and also among teachers, in a hundred countries across the world. Much of this dialogue is carried on in foreign languages, so there is a link also with foreign language instruction. Participating units range from elementary schools to universities. While iEARN is pointing the way, we still have a lot to learn about how to apply the resources of the Web effectively in global education.

And meanwhile there is an intensified effort at the college level to persuade students to study abroad – led by such institutions as Harvard and Columbia. They are going not just to the usual countries, but fanning out across the world. The International Partnership for Service-Learning, sends undergraduates and gap-year students to engage in study combined with community-service in fifteen locations across the world. Students are eager to take these opportunities. Despite the obstacles, study abroad at the college level is rising. Even at the secondary level, it is held back primarily by parent fear of foreign countries.

While parent fear, and lack of understanding about the world, is a great obstacle to the integration of international and global studies into the curriculum, the most serious problem faced by global education programs is inadequate knowledge and understanding about the world on the part of teachers. Many teachers of geography and world history have had few or no courses in their subject area. Many states license teachers in social studies or in history, but they may have no preparation in geography or world history.

Similar inadequacies are evident among many foreign-language teachers. The problem is especially acute at the level of elementary education: teacher education institutions stress basic skills and future elementary school teachers have little opportunity to gather the knowledge and skills needed to teach a global perspective to their students. All elementary teachers should have, at a minimum, a course in world geography or world history, and preferably an acquaintance with foreign language. Many people involved in global education have given up on changing the curricula in teacher education and are concentrating their energies on in-service preparation. While such approaches can compensate for inadequate training in some measure, they still imply that global education and an international perspective are add-ons, somehow less important than the basics, however the latter are defined.

Yet another challenge facing the field of global education is lack of research. A couple of years ago the American Council on Education released a major report on collegiate international education, but no similar effort is underway at the pre-collegiate level. A few dissertations have been completed on global education topics, and some researchers have tried to continue efforts without adequate resources. We have no national report card on global education to evaluate our successes and failures. The American Forum is contemplating the development of such a report card. One hopeful development is that Sage Publications launched a new journal, the *Journal of Research in International Education*, in September 2002.

For the past four years the US State Department has sponsored an International Education Week and the White House a Global Science and Technology Week, both of which have involved thousands of students. Further steps could include the funding of model global education projects and assistance to states and local school districts to expand their teaching about the world. Educators have yet to develop the sense of urgency that led, forty years ago, following the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik, to a major upgrade of our educational programs in mathematics, science, and area studies. Several participants in a conference on US language policy organized by the Department of Defense this past June described the present moment as a "Sputnik moment," in which the growing sense of urgency about American readiness could be converted into significant legislation and the accompanying funding.

But more important than all these specifics is the need to advance and maintain a particular attitude to the world, not as something unknown and unfriendly, not as something incomprehensible and antagonistic, but as a place of many voices, many opportunities, many challenges. It might seem merely sentimental to celebrate the world's diversity, but I, for one, believe that it is something worth celebrating – and not as a curricular add-on, but as something that informs and infuses an entire curriculum. Yes, it is difficult to give adequate attention to the new knowledge amid demands, often fully justified, that we teach the old. But there are many ways of teaching the old knowledge, and some can embrace our new troubles and throw light on them.

Let me give one example. We expect our students to have an understanding of the United States Constitution and always have done. A fundamental problem of the moment

is linked to the origins and intentions of the Constitution. Did the framers carry with them an image of American exceptionalism, defining a government, and principles of government, intended for the exclusive benefit of the citizens of the new United States, or were these principles derived by extension from fundamental beliefs about human freedom for all, born perhaps in those ideas of Christian liberty that I have already mentioned, which are rooted in concepts of natural law? Was the U.S. Constitution, in other words, built on a vision of the rights of Americans or the rights of man? Are we dealing with an ad hoc arrangement designed to define the aspirations of a break-away state, or principles based on a vision of natural law? The point has a direct bearing on the question of constitutional safeguards for non-citizens, for example on the situation of the prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay. No foreign government claims most of these captives, yet they are regarded as prisoners of war; no constitution covers them, yet they are in the custody of a democratic government based on the rule of law.

And what do we know about American attitudes to the Geneva Convention, governing the rules of war? Have such rules of war always existed? How do they relate to that “law of arms” mentioned by Fluellen in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*? And what is the relationship between the current stance of the United States and the origins of international law in Hugo Grotius’s great treatise of 1625, *On the Law of War and Peace*? What does it mean that the United States, a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and its subsequent conventions, espoused the right to a fair trial not just for its own citizens but for all? How does this relate, in turn, to Philip Bobbitt’s recent argument, in *The Shield of Achilles*, that “states are organized to protect rights. They do that by violence”? (My quotation is from Billen 2002.) In other words, there are occasions, according to Bobbitt, when we must abridge rights in order to defend them against still greater attacks. What are these occasions and how do we define them? What constitutional constraints should limit such targeted and strategic abridgments of constitutional law? And do such abridgments render unalienable rights conditional?

What are the lessons that the geography of natural resources teaches us about the availability of natural resources and the struggle to control them? What do foreigners say about us when they do not want us to hear them or think that they can be understood, and what does literature have to teach us about such matters? What does the great encounter between America and Europe in the nineteenth century have to tell us about cultural attitudes and assumptions? What are we to make of the now hotly disputed theory of Samuel Huntington about the clash of civilizations and struggles along the fault-lines of human society (the 1993 essay is reprinted O’Meara, Mehlinger and Krain 2000)? These are not add-ons to the existing curriculum in schools, but new ways of posing questions about old knowledge that can tie these old issues to the new. They are relevant, in the extreme, to the events of today: “Let me recite what history teaches,” declared Gertrude Stein in one of her more oracular poems.

A little before 400 BC, an exile newly returned to Athens wrote a history of the Peloponnesian War that had driven him from his city. “It will be enough for me,” he wrote, “if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events that happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at

some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future.” Thucydides produced a text that remains a model of objectivity even for our own postmodernist world. Such unflinching concern with recoverable fact will protect us from the rhetorical excesses and the political opportunism that so frequently beset us today. If anything will never be the same again, let it be our new-found conviction never to be caught ignorant again, never to be caught deaf to the messages, dumb in our response, blind to the consequences of the human affairs that it is our task to explain to our student charges.