1. Course Description

Analyzing primary source documents is a critical part of the process of interpreting the historical record. Historians have relied on primary sources in order to build their narratives and teachers of history need to be well versed in the various methods and types of questions that can be posed with primary source documents. The Common Core standards place an additional emphasis on students being able to read and analyze primary source documents as part of the accepted standards for college and career literacy.

This course helps teachers identify strategies for interpretation which they can then use with their students. Course content is based on actual student activities, so whatever participants learn in this course they can easily turn around and assign the same documents and scaffolding questions to their students.

This course was developed by Jonathan Burack, a Harvard-educated historian who has devoted the past 20 years to the development of accessible learning materials for students studying primary sources. His publications include the Mindsparks product line which feature series titles such as *History Unfolding: The Way We Saw it in Illustration and Art; Debating the Documents; The Historian’s Apprentice;* and *Common Core Assessments in History.*

2. Course Overview/Course Teaching Methods

Delivered over six weeks, each week features a different aspect of interpretive skill-building:

Week 1: Interpreting Meanings in Primary Sources
Week 2: Contextualizing: Setting Sources in Historical Context
Week 3: Source Reliability: Judging how dependable a source is as evidence
Week 4: Corroboration: Interpreting Multiple Sources
Week 5: Determining a Source’s Point of View
Week 6: The Special Challenges of Using Visual Sources

Each week includes a written introduction and narrated PowerPoint slideshow, a warm-up activity, a theoretical reading, discussion questions for the online forum, and a practical activity which asks participants to follow the procedures of a lesson as if they were one of their students going through the process of analyzing a primary source.

Course Teaching Methods
This course meets online for six weeks. There is not a designated meeting time, and work may be done at participants’ convenience; however, there are specific deadlines that must be met. Students will be evaluated primarily based on their participation in the discussion forum.
3. **Student Learning Objectives**

As a result of this course, the participant will be able to:

- Demonstrate effective strategies for helping students to interpret primary sources, understand point of view, the nature of visual sources, and how to use documents to corroborate a particular interpretation.
- Meet Common Core literacy standards for English/Language Arts and History/Social Studies by focusing on strategies and procedures to developing key student skills for textual and visual interpretation of documents.
- Know how to access a library of resources and practical activities that they can use with their students to deliver standards-based content.

4. **Units of Work/Text and Required Reading**

**Weeks 1-6**

Each week participants will:

- Review the introductory PowerPoint
- Participate in the warm-up activity
- Complete the assigned reading
- Complete the weekly assessment of primary sources and answer interpretive questions
- Participate in the online discussion forum and respond to the posts of their peers

**Text and Required Reading**

Each week includes assigned readings from the Web as well as practical activities taken from the Mindsparks product line for analyzing primary sources.

**Week One: Interpreting Primary Sources**


http://www.historyitt.org.uk/Unit%207_Final/TH%2097%20riley.pdf.

**Week Two: Context**


Week Three: Reliability


Week Four: Corroboration


Week Five: Point of View


Week Six: Visuals


5. Course Requirements and Assignments

1. Reading: Participants should complete weekly assignments in a timely manner and actively participate in discussion forums.
2. **Weekly Discussion Postings:** All questions must be answered completely. Responses should reflect critical thinking, creativity, and a deep grasp of the reading material. Initial discussion responses for course credit may not be posted after the due date. Conversations that develop as a result of a post may continue without credit.

3. **Responses to Other Learners’ Discussion Posts:** Each learner must respond with at least five sentences each to at least two other learners’ weekly discussion postings. Responses must be completed during the current week of the discussion posting.

4. **Post-Course Learning Reflection:** Following completion of the course, each participant will reflect on what was learned. This reflection will examine the impact of the course on classroom teaching practices in order to improve classroom learning.

6. **Evaluation and Grading Procedures (Rubrics Required)**

The course is graded according to the following rubric. Criteria focus on frequency and quality of postings and responses. No assignments, discussion board posts, or projects will be accepted after their due dates. Learners must earn a minimum of ten points on the following rubric to earn a “pass” for the course. Learners with nine points or fewer will earn a “fail” for the course. The grading scale is as follows:

- **15–14:** A
- **13–12:** B
- **11–10:** C
- **9–0:** F
## Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Maximum 3 points</th>
<th>Average 2 points</th>
<th>Minimum 1 point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logins</td>
<td>Three or more times per week</td>
<td>At least two times per week</td>
<td>One time per week or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postings</td>
<td>Responds to all prompts with clear and relevant comments</td>
<td>Responds clearly to all prompts but lacks detail or relevance</td>
<td>Fails to respond to required number of prompts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>Responds to two or more peers’ postings for each prompt with clear and relevant comments</td>
<td>Responds to at least one peer’s posting for each prompt but lacks detail or relevance</td>
<td>Fails to respond to the required number of peers’ postings for each prompt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netiquette</td>
<td>Consistently applies standards of courtesy and clarity in communication</td>
<td>Generally conforms to netiquette standards</td>
<td>Pays little attention to netiquette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry</td>
<td>Rich in critical thinking, content connections, unique perspectives, and language choices</td>
<td>Substantial and thoughtful content; effective language choices</td>
<td>Rather thin, with little supportive detail and/or weak language choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>Fully addresses each component of the final project in detail as outlined in the course; uses proper grammar and spelling</td>
<td>Addresses all components of the final project as outlined in the course but lacks some detail; contains a few grammar or spelling errors</td>
<td>Fails to address all components of the final project as outlined in the course; lacks detail; contains several grammar and spelling errors</td>
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7. **Attendance Policy**
This course meets online for six weeks. There is not a designated meeting time and work may be done at participants’ convenience.

8. **Final Examination**
The final project is an important component of the course. Participants write a two- or three-page reflection about how analyzing primary sources will be incorporated into their practice as an educator. They will include references to specific components of the framework and connections to levels of performance on the rubrics, along with specific ways they plan to utilize this learning in their own development as an educator.
9. Attendance Policy
There is no required attendance protocol, but participants are expected to participate in each week’s discussions in the Forum.

10. Academic Honesty and Integrity Statement
Students are expected to maintain academic honesty and integrity as by doing their own work to the best of their ability. Academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) will result in the student’s receiving a zero for that test, assignment, or paper.

11. Final Examination Policy
The final project must be completed prior to the conclusion of the course in order for the participant to earn full credit.

Bibliography

Week One: Interpreting Primary Sources
http://www.historyitt.org.uk/Unit%207%20Final/TH%2097%20riley.pdf.

Week Two: Context

Week Three: Reliability

Week Four: Corroboration

**Week Five: Point of View**

**Week Six: Visuals**