

Chapter 11

The Flipped Model in an Advanced Placement United States History Course

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ABSTRACT

The flipped classroom model can transform the traditional lecture-discussion approach to teaching history and give teachers and students the opportunity to explore more student-centered critical thinking activities. This chapter explores how an Advanced Placement United States History course was transformed through the flipped model. First, the teacher shares his frustrations with trying to “cover” a tremendous amount of content in a short amount of time, which often led to the course being dominated by a lecture-discussion format. Second, the teacher details the methods and tools used to flip this course and the enrichment activities that ensued. Finally, there is an exploration of student reaction to this experience followed by a comprehensive discussion of the emerging technology tools currently available to achieve success with the flipped model.

INTRODUCTION

Passion for working with students and passion for one’s subject matter is the best motivation for becoming a teacher. The joy of exposing students, in this case to history, and watching them become excited about that subject makes each day very special. However, many of us lose that passion when other aspects take the forefront in

our classroom. The recent push for teacher evaluation based upon standardized tests has forced many teachers to step away from the activities and projects that brought real critical thinking skills to their students and now focus more on test preparation in an environment of high stakes testing. It is common to hear colleagues express their frustration over the current situation and bemoan that fact that they are teaching more about a test rather than the real intricacies of their particular subject. This frustration continues when many

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teachers feel that they are only “skimming the surface” in terms of content because there is never enough time to “cover” what is going to be on the test. The debate over high stakes testing and teacher evaluation is not the focus of this chapter. However, the problems and frustrations created by this situation can be mitigated through the use of educational technologies, in particular, a flipped classroom design which transforms a classroom, “into a workshop where students can inquire about lecture content, test their skills in applying knowledge, and interact with one another in hands-on activities” (“7 Things You Should,” 2012). Therefore, the flipped classroom model gives teachers the time they need to incorporate creative critical writing and critical thinking projects and activities while still allowing enough classroom time for critical test preparation for various state and national standardized tests.

This chapter will highlight an Advanced Placement United States History teacher’s quest to overcome some of the challenges mentioned above by “flipping” a course to give that teacher and his students more time for creative critical writing and thinking projects. Following a brief overview of the Advance Placement United History course, this chapter will investigate the following aspects of the flipped model. First, the chapter will explore the decision to flip this particular history course to add more critical thinking and critical student centered activities. Second, the chapter will provide a detailed overview of the actual methods used to transform many aspects of a lecture-discussion based course into an innovative classroom based on the flipped model. Third, the chapter will highlight some of the extended learning activities, especially those that are encouraged by the Common Core Learning Standards, which become feasible through the flipped model. Fourth, the chapter will present findings based upon a survey of the students involved in this flipped AP United States History course revealing both student excitement and frustration with various aspects of the flipped model implemented during

the year. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an overview of the specific technologies used to flip this particular course and suggestions for the use of other emerging educational technologies.

THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT UNITED STATES HISTORY COURSE

In many respects Advanced Placement United States History is a perfect course to explore the outcomes of a flipped classroom. According to Sams & Bergmann, “courses that are more didactic, that consist of large quantities of content on the low end of Bloom’s taxonomy—in the categories of remembering or understanding—will likely undergo a greater transformation in the flipped classroom model” (2013). The AP US History course is highly rigorous, requiring students to master detailed content of history over a 300 year period while acquiring the skills to read and write in a highly critical and analytical style. At the conclusion of the course, students are required to take a very challenging exam administered by the College Board (“AP United States History,” 2013). Students must answer 80 multiple choice questions in 55 minutes. These questions are very difficult because they require students to remember very precise and exact details from United States History while differentiating between answer choices that provide a very small difference between correct and incorrect responses. Following this part of the exam, students must answer three essay questions. The first question is a document based question (DBQ) where students are given an initial 15 minutes to read and analyze up to 10 different historical documents (letters, speeches, court decisions, laws, etc.). Following this reading period, students must compose an essay within 45 minutes based upon an analytical question where they must incorporate the use of most of the documents and their own knowledge of the time period as further evidence to answer the question. After this DBQ, students must answer

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