

# Program Overview and Rationale

## Overview

World History 3201 introduces students to the study of world history. The course is organized thematically and examines causes, course, and consequences of ideas, movements and events affecting people throughout the world since 1900.

The overall objective of the course is to encourage students to examine historical and current developments in society, and to make informed decisions as individuals and global citizens. A focus on developing and applying the processes of historical method is integrated throughout the course so that students can acquire some understanding and appreciation of history as well as the tools of historians. Students at the Senior High level can choose history as a separate area of study. They will have the opportunity to select (i) a two-credit course in Canadian History as part of the two credit requirement in Canadian Studies, and (ii) a two-credit course in World History to fulfil the two credit requirement in World Studies. Students may choose to take both history courses, or a combination of history, geography or issues courses in the Canadian and World Studies categories.

World History 3201 is organized around a number of themes. These themes, identified below, provide the basic structure for the course:

- World War I
- Post-War Challenges and Changes
- International Tensions During the 1930s and World War II
- The Cold War
- Regional Development in Post-World War II Africa, Asia and the Middle East
- Challenges of the Modern Era

Each theme is treated separately; however, for presentation and analysis they are interconnected. In order for students to see the 'big picture', links need to be drawn among the themes. The course themes are developed through a set of specific curriculum outcomes with each theme providing opportunities for students to engage in research and the analysis of primary and secondary source documents.

Section 1 of this curriculum guide examines the study of history and outlines various meanings, interpretations, types, aspects and concepts of history. Section 2 outlines the program organization

including linkage of the course to the Essential Graduation Learnings, general curriculum outcomes, course themes, and organization. Section 3 presents specific curriculum outcomes and delineations. Section 4 examines the instructional environment through resource-based learning, instructional strategies and writing a research paper. Section 5 outlines general approaches to the evaluation of student learning. Section 6 concludes the curriculum guide with a list of authorized and recommended print and audio visual resources and world wide web sites for Twentieth Century History.

## **The Study of History**

History has always been a major component of the social studies curriculum. The way history has been taught and the type of history taught in schools have changed to reflect societal issues of the time. History contributes to the total development of citizens (Dunn & McNeill, 1990; Ravitch & Finn, 1987). In our present challenging global society we need citizens who are reflective thinkers, who have developed an appreciation of the democratic process and who actively participate in it (Engle & Ochoa, 1989). Therefore, we need historical insights to help us accept other viewpoints and understand the global context in which we live. When this happens the study of history will become a life skill for our students and remain at the heart of the social studies curriculum.

History has two distinct meanings: it is everything that happened in the past and the study or record of human experience. Since not everything that happened in that past was recorded, it requires the study of evidence that something happened. It is the study of the records of things that happened in human society, from documents and books, that is the predominate meaning of history.

It is the role of the historian to record events of the human experience and interpret these events in a meaningful and orderly manner. Historians must also make generalizations, discover trends and patterns, and explain the behavior of peoples and societies in a given era. Also, they may seek underlying causes and relationships to explain the past. Garvionski (1975) noted that historians must philosophize about events and listen to the facts; if not, they would become nothing more than bookkeepers and the recorded history would read like an accountant's ledger. History is, therefore, more than a record of human experiences, it is an interpretation of human existence. The facts of human existence are the foundation-stone of history; interpretations of the past, firmly grounded in those facts, are the essence of history.

The interpretation of the past can be organized in a variety of ways:

- **History as Story.** This was the original character of history. Historic events were told in the form of a story in an appealing manner (for example, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*). The French word for history - *histoire* - also means story.
- **History as Biography.** This is a popular form of history recounting the life story of an individual, often a political leader, and how that individual shaped and was shaped by historical events.
- **History as Philosophy.** In most cases, the historian's interpretation of events teaches moral lessons. The Nazi persecution of the Jews and the Stalinist purges were not accidents of, but products of, history. It is, for example, the historian's task to understand the causes of oppression as well as human achievement.
- **History as Literature and Art.** Works of fiction (like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*) and cultural artifacts (like Inuit carvings) can reproduce the intimacy and feeling of an historical epoch. Music and paintings - from classical to pop art - can reveal much about culture and politics.
- **History as Social Science.** History can be classified as a science, but not in the sense of biology or chemistry. Events of the past cannot be controlled or recreated under laboratory conditions. However, events and processes can be examined in a scientific way - separating and dissecting component parts to look at the ingredients and interactions of the "substance" of history. The social science approach to history is currently the predominant approach.

History also comes in various guises and types. The three main types of history are:

- **Political history** which focuses on power, political leadership and nation-states. Before the twentieth century, political history was about the only form of history, emphasizing kings, queens, aristocratic power, laws, wars and international diplomacy. Today, political history emphasizes ideologies, forms of government (democracy/dictatorship), nationalism and the nation-state. Political history, which predominates today, is being challenged by social history. As political history is about elites, it is often characterized as "history from above".
- **Social history** is new to the twentieth century, and more especially since the World War II period. Social history encompasses two major components: the way people live (culture, religion, economic pursuits) and the way society is

structured (the relationship between classes, men and women, ethnic groups). Social history tends to emphasize the lower classes and marginalized groups, and is often called “history from below”.

- **Economic history**, which is still a minority type of history, is pursued more by economists than historians. Economic history looks at production, consumption and exchange, industrialization, agriculture and technology. Often, business history is included under economic history, whereas the economic livelihood of the poor is usually incorporated under social history.

None of the above categories are exclusive. Historians are the architects of these divisions. There is a strong overlap among these types. For example, the female struggle for the right to vote was a political struggle to extend democratic rights, but it was rooted in women’s social position which, in turn, derived from traditional women’s work.

Historians also try to understand three aspects of history: 1) **cause**, why things happened; 2) **course**, what happened; and 3) **consequence**, the short term and long term results of what happened. In other words, historians are concerned with **what happened** (history as story/facts) and **why things happened** (interpretation/social science/ philosophy). The “**what happened**” is called narrative or descriptive history. The “**why things happened**” is referred to as analytical history. Today, analytical history predominates.

World history attempts to understand (a) the similarities and differences in the political, economic and social structures of nation states, (b) how and why those similarities and differences evolved, and (c) the interrelationships between nation states (e.g., World War I and II, the Cold War, and European exploitation of the developing world)

There is no one model for every aspect of historical analysis. To prevent a narrow view of the past, each event should open up onto new events. According to Commager (1980) history embraces all aspects of life and thus to tackle any major issue in history, one must become involved in the analysis of all aspects of the issue. The study of history involves an understanding of many concepts, themes and generalizations. The following examples will form a conceptual framework for **World History 3201**:

- **Change**. Change can be short-term (revolutionary) or long-term (evolutionary), and is often the result of social and political struggle.

- **Continuity.** Many elements of the past live on in the present (e.g., democratic institutions, family structure, capitalism) but they may readjust. Continuity with change (especially incremental or evolutionary change) is the normal path of history.
- **Cause.** Historians, by trying to understand why things changed in the past, can understand why things are changing today.
- **Consequence.** Historians, by investigating the impact of change, can understand the features of our current world.
- **Cultural diffusion.** No nation state is isolated; history shows the spread of ideas, religions and cultures with contact and borrowing.
- **Progress.** History demonstrates that change is not necessarily progress.
- **Awareness.** The negative aspects of the modern world - poverty, racism, violence, environmental degradation - are not natural states but have been produced by history, yet have been ignorant of that history. History promotes awareness of these issues.
- **Values.** History helps us appreciate the values of different political, cultural and economic systems.

