

“Reinventing Galleons: Researching Global Connections”

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1. Project Title

“Reinventing Galleons: Researching Global Connections”

2. Keywords and disciplines

Global history, material culture, maps, timelines (History and History of Art, literary studies, History and Culture)

3. Summary

In 2004, three members of the Warwick History Department (Maxine Berg, Luca Mola, Anne Gerritsen) began teaching a new module, entitled ‘Galleons and Caravans: Global Connections, 1300 to 1800.’ The module not only channelled to the students the excitement of a new direction in the academy, focused on early modern intercultural encounters and interactions, but allowed the three members of the teaching team to develop and showcase their own new research ideas. The students benefited from being introduced to the cutting edge of exciting developments in historical research and from being closely connected with the research we present to the students in lectures and seminars. This project, funded by the Reinvention Centre, aimed to take the next step: to involve the students in the actual research process. As the Boyer Commission proposed for US research institutions, we intended to ‘reinvent’ this module, so that the student learning experience became more based on collaborative research and inquiry.

The project was intended to have the following main outcomes:

1. Enhanced learning experiences for the students participating in the project
2. The development of an online database of learning materials relevant for the different seminars and discussion themes, presented to the History Department in the summer of 2007.
3. The development of an interactive timeline to support the learning
4. The development of individual research projects presented in the summer of 2008.

4. Activities

who?

The main people involved were the module leaders: Anne Gerritsen primarily, but also Maxine Berg and Luca Mola, who jointly taught the module during the first year of the Reinvention Centre Fellowship. From the second year, the team was reinforced by a new appointment in Global History, Dr Giorgio Riello. When Anne Gerritsen went on academic research leave during 2007-8, Giorgio Riello took charge of the fellowship.

The students of one seminar group were all involved in the project during both years of the fellowship. They were all second year students taking modules in History and various related

disciplines, but they were all enrolled in the module Galleons and Caravans. Out of these seminar students, two students were selected to act as research assistants during the first year, and one student was selected for the second year. Their tasks included liaising with their fellow students, co-ordinating the individual student gatherings of research materials and making them available (online, on data projectors) for discussion in seminars, and the maintenance and updating of the 'student research' pages. During the first year, they liaised with Anne Gerritsen, during the second year they liaised with Giorgio Riello.

where?

The context for this module was the History department, although the various disciplines used in seminar discussions and readings draw also on literature, economics, art, art history, material culture, anthropology, science and technology and politics.

The actual physical meeting spaces of the seminars were mostly in the History Department. This caused considerable problems. During the first year, I was interested in using the Reinvention Space for teaching, but there were no slots available in a suitable time. Also, History seminars are 1 1/2 hours in length, which means scheduling causes conflicts. So we opted for the History seminar rooms. However, the main problem there was that these are not centrally timetabled rooms, and not equipped with projectors and computer sockets. I had to borrow a laptop with data projector from AV, to be collected from their offices, and, as AV services do not come out to locally timetabled rooms, I had to struggle independently with equipment that did not work well. It was most unfortunate that the technical difficulties threw a shadow over most of the early seminars, and much seminar time was wasted attempting to achieve adequate means of projecting the visual elements of the seminar. Although Warwick encourages the integration of new technologies in the teaching, the teaching rooms many of us use in the Humanities building do not match this standard at all.

We finally opted, on the initiative of the students, for meetings in the Learning Grid. This worked well, so long as the students remembered to reserve a room, although it was also made clear to us that we were misinterpreting the guidelines for the use of the Learning Grid by using it for formal teaching. Again, the Learning Grid is a splendid resource, which the students enjoyed using, and they were keen to make the most of it, but they were less enthusiastic when the organization of the seminar devolved entirely to them (which it has to, because staff cannot reserve rooms there). The issue remains, it seems, that the standards of space resources are greatly varied across the university, and the facilities available in the limited space of the Humanities building, without any computer equipment in the teaching room, is not adequate for the kind of teaching we envisage in other segments of the university.

why?

As outlined in my original application, the motivations for the 'reinvention' of Galleons stem from my sense that students in the History department are taught by tutors who are active researchers, but that few of the students become active participants in this research process. History modules have in recent years become more resource-based, allowing students to learn by actively engaging with a wide range of primary sources. We seek to offer students access not just to traditional documents, but also to material culture, visual materials, or literary sources. The process of preparing for resource-based learning, however, is part of this research process, and this is where the students can help. The students themselves have decided which they consider the most suitable resources for the transmission of the ideas they gained through research. This way the students are involved in the 'knowledge creation process' (Freire, 1996:20). Staff and students are working on the 'reinvention of Galleons' by working together

on the creation of knowledge, thereby not only integrating teaching and research, but also encouraging 'deep learning' in the students (Hattie and Marsh, 1996:533-4).

what?

During the first year, the students worked towards the development of an online exhibition of materials. Each of the seminars was designed around the selection of illustrative items (images mostly, but also material objects and documents) that engage with what the students determine to be the most pertinent research question for that specific subtopic. This required group-based research, seminar discussions, and discussions of the best presentation of the materials. Throughout the first year, the website was designed and developed by the students. The end result was presented in an online exhibition of materials, presented formally by the students to the entire History Department and all its students during an open morning in one of the seminar rooms.

Also at the end of the first year, one of the students appointed as student research assistant worked with me on a presentation of the project at the 'The Student as Producer' conference at Warwick in September 2007. The student took part in the conference, attended other panels, and presented some of the work he and others had been involved in. I was pleased to see his enthusiasm, and he mentioned afterwards that he had found the experience rewarding.

During the second year, the idea was to continue along the same lines as the first year. The students were encouraged to bring visual materials to the seminars and students were given the opportunity to take part in the selection of resources for discussion. The students also took the initiative to organise a trip to London, to attend the 'First Emperor' exhibition, and the funding from the Reinvention Centre contributed to their travel costs. At the end of the second year, as the students prepared for their long essay research projects, they were given the opportunity to request funding for their research travel, and a number of students used this funding to travel to libraries and museums in London.

Finally, we were able to secure a grant for one of our students through the Undergraduate Research Scholarship Fund (URSS). For details, see <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/funding/urss>. This funding and the execution of this project fall outside the remit of this Reinvention fellowship, nonetheless, the URSS project came out of the research activities behind Galleons and Caravans, and thus deserves mention as one of the related outcomes of this fellowship. The student, Grace Allen, was an active participant in Giorgio Riello's seminar group in Galleons and Caravans. The URSS project was entitled 'Global Commodities: the Material Culture of Early Modern Connections', and details can be found here: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/funding/urss/projects200708/>. Grace was invited to take part in the preparations for a workshop Giorgio Riello and I organised at Warwick University in July 2008. We asked Grace to take notes during the workshop, and to write a full report of the workshop at the end. Her report can be found in the appendix of this report.

with what result?

During the last weeks of the term in summer 2007, the students were able to show their work to their fellow students, to the staff of the History Department, and to other interested parties within the University. During the summer term of 2008, the Galleons and Caravans students used their long essay projects to show the results of their research-intensive training.

5. Outcomes

The outcomes of the academic fellowship are rather varied across different areas. I discuss them here separately, and will give a more general evaluation of these outcomes below.

My own teaching.

I found the Academic Fellowship extremely valuable in addressing issues in my own teaching. My own teaching has changed through my thinking about the element of research and its impact on modes of teaching and the experience of student learning. I have tried to incorporate these aspects throughout my teaching. I have, for example, integrated research elements into my third-year (Advanced option) module on China, entitled 'China Encounters the Wider World'. I found from my experience of making Galleons and Caravans based on student-research, that students feel a greater commitment and ownership of the module if its design reflects their own research input. I have also found that students enjoy the sense of becoming expert through research on a subject that they pursue as part of larger shared themes. To give a specific example: this third year module explores the ways in which China approached and was approached by the outside world between 1550 and 1850. That broad question is explored through a series of themes, including diasporas and migration, trade, intellectual encounters, material culture, and foodstuffs. The students selected a specific site from the list of places with which China had contacts in the early modern period (such as Malacca, Batavia, Siam or Manila), and research each of the themes in relation to that specific site. This research allowed them not only to enhance their understanding through the use of a case study, but also gave each student the opportunity to have expert knowledge that differed from the rest of the class. Both the ability to collaborate with each other and their in-class presentations enhanced their experience of undergraduate research. The style of teaching I envisaged when I first wrote the proposal for a Reinvention Fellowship has become part and parcel of my normal mode of teaching.

Enhanced learning experiences for the students participating in the project

From the comments, it was clear that the students felt proud in their work. Their comments in the module evaluation forms also backs this up:

- 'Student-led seminars make them more enjoyable and easier participation as it feels less intimidating to participate'
- 'Discussion in seminars has helped to get to grips with the course and its aims. Always interesting and thought-provoking. Student-led and well focussed—less intimidating.'
- Seminars helped understand the course material and brought excitement into the material. Helped me grasp the material.'
- The seminars being led by different people—variety. Different perspectives, relaxed and open atmosphere easy to contribute. Lots of images!'
- 'Brief presentation of images provokes discussion and personal involvement in the seminar.'

Embedding student research in the History Department

Other members of staff within the History Department have embarked on innovative research-intensive teaching models that integrate student research into undergraduate teaching. One of our most active teachers, Dr Selina Todd, has unfortunately recently relocated to the History Department of the University of Manchester. Her teaching also assigned a central space to student-led research, resulting in the early summer of 2007 in a student-led exhibition of research materials gathered for her module entitled 'Britain in the Twentieth Century'.

The School of Comparative American Studies has also received funding for research-related activities, and specifically for the integration of visual material for the use of research and teaching. Their project, entitled 'Online Visual Archive of the Americas' is an online image database for use in teaching and research. Details can be found here:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/cas/links/ovaa/>.

Others who have begun to include student research of various kinds in their teaching include Giorgio Riello and Penny Roberts. In Riello's module, entitled 'Fashion in History, A Global Look, 1300-2000' (see <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/undergraduate/modules/fashion/>), the students are given their own web-page, which they can develop with research and teaching materials as they see fit. The students also collaborate in the production of a 'Fashion Archive', which is preserved for future years for consultation and development:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/undergraduate/modules/fashion/studentresearch/catwalk/> The module taught by Penny Roberts, entitled 'Deviance and Non-Conformity in Pre-modern Europe' (see

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/undergraduate/modules/deviance/>) has developed a lecture-free model, and relies heavily on presentations of student research on the module forum. It would seem, then, that in the History Department at Warwick, there is an increasing trend to use innovative styles of teaching and to bring in wherever possible the active involvement of students in research.

The development of online tools and the development of a textbook for Galleons and Caravans

A number of useful tools were created by the students for the use of other students during the course of the Reinvention Centre Fellowship. These include the following:

- Visual resources online. The students uploaded the visual materials they brought to the seminars on a regular basis online, with the help of the student appointed for this task. Here they could not only be consulted by the other students in the seminar group, but also by the students in the other groups taking the module. They served as a useful tool for examination revision and essay preparation.
- Timeline. One student was appointed for a short and specific project in itself: the development of an interactive timeline. This was the student's own initiative: he felt there was a lack of chronological specificity, and it was unclear how certain events fit together chronologically. With the help of Rob O'Toole, the student developed a specific timeline for the module.
- Student research pages archive. The student research work has now been archived, and the archive has been embedded in the module page. From here, it can be accessed by all students attending the module in later years if they so wish.

As part of the original application for funding from the Reinvention Centre, I mentioned the need for a textbook to accompany the module Galleons and Caravans. This is mostly because of the time-span of the module (from 1300 to 1800) and the geographical reach of the module (spanning the entire Afro-Eurasian continent, and including some of the Americas). Much of this material is entirely new to the students, and in terms of content, they would benefit from access to basic narratives as well as a wide range of visual sources. The methodology, taken from the new field of Global History, is also largely new to the students. The plan to develop a module-related textbook has existed for some time now, and we have been in touch with a number of different publishers to discuss the matter in detail, but thus far we have not been able to find the time to develop this plan in any sort of detail. It would now seem that we will move ahead with this plan during 2009-10, and in our development, we will be able to draw on the

research work done by our own students in terms of selecting images and developing threads. The students have developed, perhaps unwittingly, the foundations for this textbook.

Sharing knowledge

We have had the opportunity on a number of occasions to present this work to a wider audience: at the end of year one, when the students presented their work to the History Department; at the start of year two, when one student represented the entire class at the conference 'The Student as Producer'; at the workshop entitled 'Global Commodities' held at the end of year two, where Grace Allen worked as student-research assistant; and finally at the URSS presentation in October, when the poster representing her project was on display at Warwick University.

Evaluations

A number of the outcomes of this project were extremely valuable, and I would evaluate those positively. A number of issues posed limitations to these outcomes, however, and these are worthy of further consideration.

Things that went well

Things that went well included the enhancement of the student experience, the embeddedness in teaching methods across the History Department, and the circulation of ideas between research and teaching.

There is no doubt that the student experience was enhanced by the Reinvention Fellowship. All of the students who participated in galleons and Caravans between September 2006 and July 2008 benefited from the enhanced emphasis on student-led research. Their learning experience was enriched by their active involvement in the search, gathering, collation and analysis of various types of resources, the development of their own research projects, and their understanding of the global connections of the early modern period was deepened by their active engagement. A smaller number of students gained valuable research experience through their appointment as student researchers, and some of them have indicated their interest in continuing their research at the level of postgraduate studies.

It is also clear from the discussion above that a significant and increasing number of colleagues are working on the ongoing engagement with student research in undergraduate teaching. It has been noted throughout the Arts Faculty and beyond, for example by Rob O'Toole, E-Learning adviser of the Arts faculty, that History has initiated a number of developments in this area, and is at the forefront of teaching and learning innovations especially where these include e-learning. The success of this Reinvention Fellowship must be seen as part of the innovative ways in which students and staff engage with History-based learning throughout the History Department.

Finally, it has been gratifying to see the ways in which research and teaching have fed off each other in the context of this module. The module was developed out of the research interests of the members of staff, who drew heavily on their research in their teaching. The Reinvention Fellowship made it possible to engage the students in the ongoing research that supports this module, enhancing the visual and material culture element of the module. Out of this research-led teaching developed a new research project, entitled 'Global Commodities: The Material Culture of Early Modern Connections, 1400-1800'. This research project was funded by Warwick's Research development Fund in the autumn of 2007, and engaged Riello and Gerritsen in travel and research, which in turn fed into our teaching for 2008-9. In the summer, the conference funded by the RDF grant was supported by the research activities of a Galleons student, who received a URSS grant for her work. Riello and Gerritsen are currently engaged in

the submission of an external research grant to fund an International Network grant to work on Global Commodities of early modern connections. Finally, as part of this research, Riello and Gerritsen, in conjunction with Berg and Mola, will develop a textbook that once again brings research and teaching together.

Limitations to the outcomes

A number of issues must be raised here that merit further consideration. They fall broadly speaking into the categories of time, space, assessment, and IT.

Time

I would like to draw attention to the ongoing struggle teachers face of balancing the methodological aspects of teaching and learning with the content. The content in our case is complex, as it deals with a wide and diverse range of connections spread over vast geographical spaces over a long period of time. Teaching the global connections of the early modern period takes up a certain amount of the allotted time students and tutors can devote to this module, and invading that time too much leads to a rather too superficial learning experience. On the other hand, it takes a great deal of time to teach students how to do research, and it takes a great deal of time to supervise their engagement with the material as researchers. There is a conflict between the two, because it is not possible to sacrifice all the content to the teaching of techniques and methods alone. A compromise needs to be found, and there is no simple answer to this problem. I merely raise here this issue, flagging up that it may be possible to enhance the outcomes, but only by adding more time to the module (impossible in the larger context of the department), or by sacrificing content (not likely to be an acceptable option either).

Space

I already raised the issue of space in my interim report, and touched upon it again above under 'where'. While Warwick now has a number of teaching space available of a superb quality, many of us in Humanities teach in spaces that do not match our ambitions and ideals. This is very disappointing. So long as our teaching spaces in Humanities are without any IT facilities, integrating student research into our teaching will remain extremely limited. Access to centrally-timetabled spaces in the timeslots we use for our teaching is extremely limited, because of the general pressure on space and because of the structure of our teaching over 1½ hour slots. We have to make do, thus, with teaching in rooms without IT and network facilities. This is a matter for University administration planning, and not a matter for the individuals in these departments, but it is important to raise awareness of the implications of this situation, not least for the success of Humanities-based reinvention Fellowships.

Assessment

The matter of assessment was raised at various moments during the lifetime of this project. Although there would perhaps have been the option of including some of the work done by the students in the students' assessment, giving proper value to their work, we decided not to pursue this for a number of reasons: it would have been highly complex taking into consideration that in both years, not all the students taking Galleons were involved with the research-active programme. It would not have been fair to institute new assessment methods that did not apply to all the students. We also refrained from developing in this direction because of the time this would have cost is. Such changes are time-costly at Warwick and require a great deal of paperwork, and this prevented us from pursuing this.

IT

Two brief matters are worth flagging up here. The outcomes of our work are available and visible to all Warwick students, but to preserve the integrity of their work, we decided to limit

access to Warwick-based individuals. In future, we might have considered making it more widely visible. This would have required a great deal more time in quality control and in the search for copy-right free images and resources. Again, due to limitations of time, we did not pursue this further. The other issue concerns the technology behind the development of a visual archive. To make this material easily accessible with a highly user-friendly interface, we would have needed to spend more time on the technological aspect, and we would have required a great deal more technological support. Again, time constraints compelled us to work within the technology we had readily available within the department.

6. Implications

- To what extent should form take priority over content in teaching innovations?
- To what extent should research activity on the part of the students be part of their assessment? Are there other ways to value to development of their research skills?

7. Resources

The website for the module as a whole can be found here:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/undergraduate/modules/hi163/>

The list of resources compiled in conjunction with the students can be found here:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/undergraduate/modules/hi163/usefulresources/>

The archive of student research compiled during 2006/7 can be found here:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/undergraduate/modules/hi163/seminars/>

The archive of student research compiled during 2007/8 can be found here:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/undergraduate/modules/hi163/studentresearch/>

The interactive timeline can be found here:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/undergraduate/modules/hi163/seminars/interactivetimeline/>

8. References

n/a

9. Contact details

The following people can be contacted in the History Department, Warwick University, Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK

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10. Supplementary information

The following documents have been attached.

1. The module booklet for Galleons and Caravans in 2007-8
2. The report written by Grace Allen as part of the URSS scheme.