

# The Last Word

Richard Hume Werking

At the annual conference this past June in Madison, the SHAFR Teaching Committee presented its sixth program in as many years: "Using Digitized Documents in Teaching: The University of Wisconsin's *Foreign Relations of the United States Series*." The presentations at that program will appear in the next issue of *Passport*.

Under the leadership first of Mark Gilderhus, Texas Christian University, and currently that of Mark Stoler, University of Vermont, the Teaching Committee has made good progress in its efforts to promote and facilitate the teaching of the history of U.S. foreign relations. It seeks to do so through such means as creating and sponsoring conference programs, assisting the publication of teaching-related articles in *Passport*, and developing and maintaining on the SHAFR website an array of the most useful resources for SHAFR members and others to draw upon for their teaching. Our group was established as a task force by SHAFR President Stoler in 2004 and subsequently converted by Council to a committee in 2005. Several aspects of its ongoing work may be found on the SHAFR website ([www.shaftr.org](http://www.shaftr.org)), under "Teaching" and then "Higher Education", including the following:

Documents Project. A documents subcommittee has been identifying and arranging for the digitization of a number of documents that we consider among the most useful for teaching the history of American foreign relations. Those few posted on the "Teaching" portion of the SHAFR website ([www.shaftr.org](http://www.shaftr.org)) so far include the usual suspects (George Washington's "farewell address" in 1796, Woodrow Wilson's war message in April 1917, George Kennan's "Sources of Soviet Conduct" in 1947, etc.) as well as a facsimile of the document probably handled most frequently by the American public – a dollar bill. More are on the way.

Although simply the digitizing and posting of the documents will be useful for teachers, the committee believes that a significant enhancement will be short introductions and brief bibliographies accompanying the documents. Members of the committee have provided these for some of the documents, but in addition we invite all members of SHAFR, and even non-members as well, to submit their own suggestions for introductions and bibliographies – even for documents which already have them. In this manner we can learn more from one another about not only which documents we use, but to some extent why we want our students to confront them, whether within or beyond the classroom. Hence the committee encourages those of you who would like either to suggest additional documents or to submit introductions and bibliographies for documents already posted to contact Matt Loayza, Minnesota State University, Mankato ([matt.loayza@mnsu.edu](mailto:matt.loayza@mnsu.edu)), who will be heading up the documents subcommittee beginning in January 2011.

Syllabi & Assignments Initiative. The number of contributions to the Syllabi Initiative on the SHAFR



website has grown to 49. Containing syllabi for both graduate and undergraduate courses, the list is further organized by time periods covered. All SHAFR members and other teachers of our subject are cordially invited to add their contributions, especially (though not only) if they feature additional readings, viewings, pedagogical approaches, or other material that will usefully complement what is already there. Moreover, the committee is planning to enlarge the scope to include digitizing and posting assignments from teachers as well. This new Syllabus

& Assignments Initiative will allow SHAFR members to share the intellectual structure of their courses and their reading lists, as well as practical tips for classroom management. A subcommittee headed by Nicole Phelps, University of Vermont ([nphelps@uvm.edu](mailto:nphelps@uvm.edu)) will be updating and expanding this portion of the website in 2011, and it will also be inviting contributors to update their syllabi if they would like to do so.

Director of Secondary Education. Another relatively recent initiative, approved by the SHAFR Council in 2008, established the position of Director of Secondary Education and subsequently allied it with the Teaching Committee. The incumbent of this position, John Tully of Central Connecticut State University, is in the process of soliciting, editing, and posting on the website 15-20 lesson plans for secondary school teachers. SHAFR members interested in contributing lesson plans or suggestions to this undertaking are invited to contact him at [tullyj@mail.ccsu.edu](mailto:tullyj@mail.ccsu.edu).

Teaching-Related Articles in *Passport*. During the past few years, these have become much more frequent, thanks to the efforts of editor Mitch Lerner. Not including articles in this December issue, and also not counting "Last Word" pieces, sixteen such articles have been published since December 2004 and are available on the website.

SHAFR Survey of Teaching. Several years ago our committee conducted this survey among the SHAFR membership (and one or two non-members), receiving 154 responses that provided information about 323 courses. Both a detailed description of the survey results and an article in *Passport* analyzing those results are available on the website. Among the findings that especially interested me was the one which showed that at least 79% of the identified courses required student research in materials beyond those specified by the professor, with three-quarters of these requiring research in primary sources.

Last Word of a Last Word. Suggestions to the SHAFR Teaching Committee are always welcome. I hope you will share yours with any member of the Teaching Committee; our names and affiliations are on the SHAFR website.

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