

# Affordable Learning Georgia Textbook Transformation Grants

## Final Report

**Date:** December 13, 2017

**Grant Number:** 28274 (Round 8)

**Institution Name(s):** Clayton State University

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**Course Name and Course Number:** HIST 1111, Survey of Pre-Modern World History

**Semester Project Began:** Spring 2017

**Semester(s) of Implementation:** Summer 2017 and Fall 2017

**Average Number of Students Per Course Section:** 30

**Number of Course Sections Affected by Implementation:** 7

**Total Number of Students Affected by Implementation:** 214

### 1. Narrative

A no-cost textbook (published by the University System of Georgia) was introduced into 7 sections of HIST 1111 at Clayton State University. HIST is a course in Area E (Social Sciences) of the Core and is one of Affordable Learning Georgia's Top 100 Undergraduate Courses. The new book replaced the previously required textbooks with an average cost of \$125.00 each. The course redesigns began in Spring semester 2017 and were implemented in 3 face-to-face and 3 fully online courses in Summer and Fall semesters 2017.

The focus and structure of the new textbook is different from previously used materials, and so all courses had to be redesigned to correlate with the new format. This included the creation of entirely new lectures to reflect the topics in the new book and the creation of new learning tools for helping the students engage the material (e.g. lecture outlines and weekly learning objectives). This also required the creation of new tests and quizzes. New supplementary materials (videos, primary source documents and PowerPoint images) also had to be found.

The textbook itself presented many challenges, since the chapters are quite long and sometimes cover excessively long period of human history. Also, the amount of detail included was sometimes overwhelming for students in an introductory survey course. In the past, when students were required to buy the textbook, there was pressure to use all components of the textbook even when these were not useful. In this case, some sections of the book could be made optional without students feeling that they had wasted their money.

Above all, having a free book available eliminated the problem of students not having a textbook for the course. However, as is usually the case, getting students to read the book was still a challenge. Although there were many positive comments by students who completed the textbook surveys, some students needed additional motivation for regular utilization of the book. In the case of Dr. Gilbert, more direct connections to the textbook were made in the lectures as the semester progressed. In the future, he also plans to add additional exercises based on key sections of the textbook to encourage student engagement with the textbook.

## **2. Quotes**

- “love that it was free!”
- “This book made lessons easier. Learning with free books made it easier to focus on my education instead of student loans.”
- “I adore the use of open source textbooks and this particular text was really well written and put together.”

## **3. Quantitative and Qualitative Measures**

### **3a. Overall Measurements**

#### **Student Opinion of Materials**

**Was the overall student opinion about the materials used in the course positive, neutral, or negative?**

Total number of students affected in this project: 214

- Positive: 85.5 % of 77 respondents
- Neutral: 3.9 % of 77 respondents
- Negative: 10% of 77 number of respondents

## Student Learning Outcomes and Grades

**Was the overall comparative impact on student performance in terms of learning outcomes and grades in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?**

Choose One:

- Positive: Higher performance outcomes measured over previous semester(s)
- Neutral: Same performance outcomes over previous semester(s)
- Negative: Lower performance outcomes over previous semester(s)

## Student Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) Rates

**Was the overall comparative impact on Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) rates in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?**

**Drop/Fail/Withdraw Rate:**

26.31 % of students, out of a total 133 students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from the course in the final semester of implementation.

Choose One:

- Positive: This is a lower percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- Neutral: This is the same percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- Negative: This is a higher percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)

## 3b. Narrative

### 1. TEXTBOOK USE:

#### Textbook use before implementation (2016):

In 2016 (before implementation), 79.6% of HIST 1111 students completing the survey reported that they purchased the textbook. This means that 20.4% of students did not obtain a textbook for the course.

#### Textbook use before implementation (Spring 2017):

In spring semester 2017 (before implementation), 85.7% of HIST 1111 students completing the survey reported that they purchased the textbook. This means that 14.3% of students did not obtain a textbook for the course. Of those who purchased or rented a textbook, 28.6% reported that this was a financial burden to them.

### Textbook use after implementation (Summer 2017)

In summer semester 2017, 85.2% of the students completing the survey reported that they did not purchase the textbook because it was free of charge. Another 14.8% purchased or rented a hard copy of the textbook (even though it was available free of charge). 100% of students had access to the textbook.

### Textbook use after implementation (Fall 2017)

In fall semester 2017, 83.3% of students completing the survey reported that they did not purchase a textbook because it was free of charge. Another 16.7% purchased or rented a hard copy of the textbook (even though it was available free of charge). 100% of students had access to the textbook.

## 2. STUDENT REACTIONS:

### Student reactions to previously used textbooks (2016):

44.9% rated the assigned textbook “good” and 21.4% rated it “excellent.”

26.5% “strongly agreed” that the textbook was effective in helping them succeed in the course.

24.5% “agreed” and 21.4% “somewhat agreed.” This means that 72.4% of the students found the previous textbooks helpful.

### Student reactions to previously used textbooks (Spring 2017):

50% rated the assigned textbook “good” and 10.7% rated it “excellent.”

17.9% “strongly agreed” that the textbook was effective in helping them succeed in the course.

14.3% “agreed” and 21.4% “somewhat agreed.” This means that only 53.6% of the students found the previous textbooks helpful.

### Student reactions to Creative Commons textbook (Summer 2017):

48% rated the textbook good and 48% rated it excellent.

48% “strongly agreed” that the textbook was effective in helping them succeed in the course.

37% “agreed” and 11% “somewhat agreed.” This means 96% of the students found the textbook helpful.

### Student reactions to Creative Commons textbook (Fall 2017):

33.3% rated the textbook good and 52.1% rated it excellent.

45.8% “strongly agreed” that the textbook was effective in helping them succeed in the course.

22.9% “agreed” and 10.4% “somewhat agreed.” This means 79% of the students found the textbook helpful.

### 3. Student Outcomes/Grades:

The two instructors involved in the textbook transformation taught five sections of HIST 1111 in Spring semester 2017 using the old textbook. The average grades for these sections were:

A: 13%, B: 28% and C: 23% (= 64% of students earned A,B or C in the course.)

After implementing the new textbook in six sections in Summer and Spring semesters 2017, the average grades for these sections were:

A: 29%, B: 22% and C: 11% (= 62% of students earned A,B or C in the course.)

### 4. HIST 1111 DFW Rates:

DFW rates for HIST 1111 averaged 32.4% in the two semesters prior to the adoption of the new textbook. In Summer and Fall semesters 2017, the average was 29.8% for the HIST 1111 sections that adopted the new book. However, in the three sections that did not adopt the new book, the DFW rate for Fall 2017 was 27.8%.

## SUMMARY

In summary, before implementation of the new textbook, an average of 17.4% of students did not obtain a textbook for their HIST 1111 class. Of those who did purchase or rent the required textbook, almost 29% reported that this was a financial burden to them. After implementation, all students in the affected sections had free access to the required textbook for HIST 1111. Although a free book was available online, 15.8% of students still chose to buy or rent a hard copy.

An average of 85.5% of students surveyed found the new Creative Commons textbook to be effective in helping them succeed in the course. In contrast, an average of 63% of students reported that the previously used textbooks were effective in helping them succeed in the course. However, in neither case is it possible to determine how many students actually utilized the old or new textbook on a regular basis. Obviously, reading the textbook will always improve student success. Having a free book ensures that every student has access to the required course material and that no one suffers additional financial hardship for participating in the course.

The grade distribution for the instructors using the new textbook shows a comparable percentage of students passing the class with A, B or C with the old or new textbooks. However, the number of students earning A more than doubled over the previous semester before the

new book was used. This is a significant difference and indicates that students who might have passed the class with a B or C using traditional textbooks, were more likely to earn an A using the new book. It is not clear if this reflects more student engagement with the textbook (perhaps due to its online format) or another positive impact from the overall course redesigns.

In general, the change in DFW rates was not significant. This suggests that while textbook accessibility or affordability may be very important to student motivation and satisfaction, this may not be a key factor in failure and withdrawal rates. In fact, analysis of reasons given for withdrawing from all HIST courses at Clayton State University in 2017 indicates that 46% of withdrawals were unrelated to course content or instruction. Only 27% were linked to issues like the difficulty of the course or problems with the instructor or method of delivery. In fact, most withdrawals were attributed to personal, work and family issues. (No reason was given for withdrawal in 26% of the cases.)

#### **4. Sustainability Plan**

The two instructors who took part in this project will continue to use the new textbook for all future online and face-to-face classes. Other full-time faculty are being encouraged to adopt the new textbook as well. In the future, adjunct faculty will be required to use this textbook to reduce student costs.

#### **5. Future Plans**

The use of a free textbook for HIST 1111 ensured that everyone had access to required course material and seemed to have a positive impact on student perceptions of the course. Because of this, we are hopeful that in the future a similar textbook for HIST 1112 might also become available. We are also hopeful that any future editions of the book for HIST 1111 might address some of its current problems and become even more student-friendly

#### **6. Description of Photograph:**

Class: HIST 1111 (Fall 2017)

Professor Christopher Ward (*ninth from left*)

Students: *S. Barrett, C. Chaney, J. Gonzalez, J. Dupree, B. Hudson, K. Jallow, V. Lopez, S. Louangoudom, Z. Madison, K. Meads, D. Nguyen, V. Onyiorah, D. Parks, A. Persad, K. Ramirez, W. Shonfelt*