

Authors of Geo4 & Geo5:

Prof. Shlomo Lambroza

Associate Professor of History

lambroza@oyster.smcm.edu

(301) 862-0359

&

Sunil J. Punnoose

Director of Academic Computing

sunil@oyster.smcm.edu

(301) 862-0414

St. Mary's College of MD

St. Mary's City, MD 20686

Category: HISTORY

Both software packages were compiled under and requires NeXTStep 2.0. It has worked reliably with both pre-release versions of NeXTStep 3.0.

Please note that this is a preliminary version of the software. We expect to enhance it in the months to come. Feel free to send in any comments or suggestions to us at the above addresses.

You are welcome to use this software for your courses or for other purposes only at

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Teaching Historical Geography in the Introductory History Course

Sam Lambroza, Associate Professor of History, St. Mary's College of Maryland

Sunil Punnoose, Director of Academic Computing, St. Mary's College of Maryland

If a crusader knight departed from London to fight the Moslems in Jerusalem -- how would he get there and what obstacles would he face in his journey from England to the Holy Land? How did Marco Polo make his journey from the fishing villages of Italy to the court of Kublai Khan? What was it like for Napoleon's army to do battle with the tsar's army in the vastness of the Russian steppe? How did the Nazis transport Jews from all corners of Europe to the death camps of Poland?

At St. Mary's College of Maryland, the history faculty was faced with teaching the development of the Western legacy and relating the role geography played in shaping that legacy. The problem was that many of our students were not geographically

literate. How could we teach basic historical concepts when students did not understand the fundamental principles of latitude and longitude, the elementary skills needed to read a map or the difference between Mercator and Orthographic projections? We found that students not only lacked site location knowledge (In what hemisphere is Australia? Where is the International Date Line?), but also had no idea of spatial relationships (Which is further north Moscow or New York? Which is further from Washington D.C., London, England or Lima, Peru?)

The problem faced by the faculty had two tiers. First, teaching basic geography skills and reducing map anxiety. Second, assuming students could get comfortable with the idea of reading and using maps, how do we get them to apply their knowledge to actual historical events.

GEO: Teaching Historical Geography, is a multi-module program that teaches students basic geography skills and then has them apply those skills to their understanding of geo-historical issues.

The introductory module is an interactive program in which students learn through the manipulation of images. Through texts, graphics and animation students actually apply lines of latitude and longitude to a globe. They learn about the rotation of the earth, primary lines of demarcation (Equator, International Date Line, Prime Meridian) and the difference between globes and projections. As students read through the program, they must complete tasks that enhance their knowledge of geography. Students learn about the rotation of the earth, how to construct a latitude and longitude grid, and how to read map coordinates. Nearly 200 students in our Legacy: Introduction to History have successfully used the introductory module.

The long term goal of the project is to establish a set of modules which might include such topics as:

- 1) the development of the polis in Ancient Greece,
- 2) the explorations that opened the Atlantic and found the New World.
- 3) the spread of Islam from Spain to India,
- 4) colonization in the Americas;
- 5) the alliance system and World War I;
- 6) the rise of Naziism and the Holocaust;

The last module, now in use in Legacy and some upper division courses, helps students understand the rise and spread of Naziism and the geography of the Holocaust.

The program incorporates text, audio, map graphics and photographs. It is designed to help students better understand the scope and magnitude of the Nazi Era and the Holocaust. As students read through the narrative, they select maps and photos that help them better understand the rise of Naziism and the Holocaust. The information is presented to students in three boxes, text, maps and photos. Each box is controlled by the reader.

After considering several platforms to base our software on, we chose the NeXT workstation for the following reasons: a) easy to use graphical user interface b) exceptionally good software development tools and toolkits and c) multimedia

capabilities. Our goal was to choose to a platform where system limitations would not inhibit our ability to design the modules and create it in a short time frame. With the NeXT systems, we have clearly achieved that goal. In addition, the object oriented environment offered the opportunity to share classes and objects with developers from other educational institutions, thereby significantly reducing development time for future modules.

There are many clear advantages to using NeXT for our GEO program. First, it is an environment that invites students to become comfortable with the basic concepts of geography. GEO is an entertaining, educational and interesting program. The program solves the fear that many students have about reading and using maps. Once students are comfortable with maps, it becomes easier and more pedagogically effective to introduce geographical issues during lectures and discussion. Second the program unburdens the history faculty from teaching basic geography skills, thus allowing more time to develop historical issues and concepts. Third, since students learn on their own, they can go through the modules at a pace that is most comfortable for them. Fourth, the program is transferable. While specifically designed for St. Mary's College, the modules are sufficiently broad so that they can be used in introductory history course taught at any college or university.

For more information on Teaching Historical Geography in the Introductory History Course, please contact:

Sam Lambroza Associate Professor of History

lambroza@oyster.smcm.edu
Sunil Punnoose Director of Academic Computing sunil@oyster.smcm.edu.

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Professor Lambroza and Sunil Punnoose created the second of the modules, Naziism and the Holocaust in less than 4 weeks. Lambroza was responsible for the course design and Punnoose for its implementation on the NeXT. Did we succeed in designing course modules that has had an impact? Early reviews have been very positive and hopefully this will provide the impetus to develop creative instructional modules for the liberal arts curriculum.