TPS-MTSU will be presenting a session at the National Council for History Education Conference in Niagara Falls later this month. The session, “Crossing the Veil: A Young W.E.B. DuBois in Rural Tennessee,” was piloted at the TCSS conference last month. This session will be a joint presentation with teachers Barbara Marks (Watertown High School) and Taylor McDaniel (Whitwell Middle School), who co-wrote a new lesson plan on the topic. Be on the lookout for that lesson plan on our Web site in the next couple of weeks!

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NEWS

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“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

Catholic church, Manzanar Relocation Center / photograph by Ansel Adams, [1943]

Ansel Adams, famous for his black-and-white photographs of national parks, also created an extensive collection of pictures he took at the Manzanar Relocation Center for Japanese Americans during WWII.

THEME: TEACHING DIFFICULT TOPICS IN HISTORY

You already have to deal with the difficulty of covering so many topics as laid out by the standards, whether you teach Social Studies, English, Science, or any other subject. On top of that, however, some curricula ask you to teach topics that are difficult because they are controversial. The last thing you want is for students to misunderstand, and then convey their misperceptions to irate parents and administrators. And yet, sometimes the classroom is the safest and only environment in which students can ask questions about topics that are hot-button, controversial, and widely misunderstood. How do we help them while doing our jobs right?

Start off by checking out the “Important Links” on p. 2 for strategies on how to approach difficult subjects in class (most specifically, history class). Let the primary sources speak for themselves, provide historical context, and push students to base their conclusions on evidence. There is no need to achieve consensus or to pass judgments—just learning how to argue points politely and constructively can go a long way towards avoiding today’s presidential-debate-style bickering.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- April 15 (Memphis) - “Remembering the Memphis Massacre: Teaching Reconstruction's History with Primary Sources” in partnership with the University of Memphis History Department and the National Civil Rights Museum from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.

- June 9-10 (Knoxville) - “Excerpting Text Documents” workshop at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST. Attendance is mandatory for both days. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

- June 14-16 (Murfreesboro) - “Tennessee in the New South: Politics and Progressivism” Summer Institute at the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County. Attendance is mandatory for all three days. For more information or to register, email Kira Duke.
The Memphis Riots of 1866 were an important turning point in our nation’s history. Also referred to as the Memphis Massacre, the events that unfolded over the course of a couple of days in early May of that year helped to shape how the country would transition out of the Civil War and into Reconstruction. Memphis was a town deeply divided with four new groups residing within the city: Union soldiers, newly freed African Americans, former Confederates, and Irish immigrants. The riot started as word spread of a confrontation between black Union soldiers and the local police. The Union command ordered all soldiers back to Fort Pickering and disarmed them. Angry white mobs attacked the freedmen’s settlements. At the end of two days of violence, forty-six African Americans and two whites died and the congressional investigation reported seventy-five people injured, one hundred robbed, five women raped, ninety-one homes burned, and four churches and eight schools destroyed. Congress responded by pushing forward with a Radical Reconstruction plan which included passage of a Civil Rights bill and the Fourteenth Amendment to help protect African Americans in their status as newly freed citizens.

Often referred to as a “race riot” in some historical literature on the period, the events were referred to as a “massacre” immediately afterward in the Congressional investigations that took place. More recent historical accounts of the events have again used the term “massacre.” The vocabulary we use to describe and label events reflects how we look at them and how we approach their study. To begin, have your students define the terms “riot” and “massacre.” How do the definitions align? How do they differ? Can the two be used to describe the same event?

Next, ask your students what events had transpired to shape life in Memphis up to this point. Have students read this excerpt from Thirty Years a Slave. Ask students to share their initial thoughts after they complete the reading. As a class, have your students compile an assessment of conditions in Memphis in 1866. You might also have them analyze a map of the city to better understand geographic references within the text.

Then, have students read two accounts: “Riot in South Memphis” (middle of 2nd column) and “Second Day of the Fight” (top of 4th column) published in the Memphis Public Ledger, a daily newspaper. You may wish to divide these articles into smaller chunks and divide amongst your class. How are events depicted in these articles? Who is being blamed for causing the violence? Share with your students some background about the Public Ledger. What does this add to your analysis of the newspaper accounts?

Students will next be reading one of seven excerpts from the Congressional Select Committee (click here for the full report). Divide the class into seven groups and have each group complete an analysis of its text. Then ask students to summarize their excerpts for the class. How do their findings differ from the accounts presented in the newspaper? Why might these account differ? Who is presented as being at fault for the violence? How do the findings of the committee foreshadow the push for a Radical Reconstruction plan?

As a reflection exercise, remind your students of the earlier discussion on the definitions of “riot” and “massacre.” How would they term the events that took place on May 1 and 2, 1866? Does using one term over the other change how we look at the events today?

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet TN curriculum standards for 5th and 8th grade social studies (Reconstruction) and English Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).
LESSON IDEA– THE EUGENICS MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

The eugenics movement in America was believed to be a scientific movement that would better the human race. This movement led to the passage of many harmful laws regarding race, marriage, and forced sterilization. Proponents of the eugenics movement believed that governments should have the ability to control who may get married and have children based on medical history and social standing in order to breed better humans.

This complicated and intricate topic, including how it came to popularity and how it fell out of fashion, can be further explored through the Facing History and Ourselves Web site. This website offers not only video of the history of eugenics, but also lesson plans and readings that help to contextualize the eugenics movement. You may also want to show students this poster advocating for the end of forced sterilization in 1977. After exploring this contextual information, use the Library of Congress’s Chronicling America collection and have each student find one to three newspaper articles that illustrate just how prevalent the belief in eugenics was in the early twentieth century. Search terms to use include “eugenic,” “sterilization,” and “sex hygiene.” Have students give a brief presentation on their article(s), including when and where their articles were published, summaries of the articles, and the conclusions they were able to draw from the article(s). After all students have presented, encourage the class to discuss what they have learned about eugenics, how it came about, why it became popular, and when and how it became unpopular. What ethical dilemmas are part of this movement? How might eugenics be tied to ideas about Darwinism?

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for High School Contemporary Issues (7, 14, and 15) and English Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text and Speaking and Listening).

LESSON IDEA– INDENTURED SERVITUDE & CHATTEL SLAVERY

Indentured servitude was a common practice in the 17th and 18th centuries in America, existing side-by-side with chattel slavery. Indentured servitude was a contract under which an individual agreed to undertake servitude for a specific length of time—usually 4-7 years—in exchange for passage to the New World or other financial sponsorship. The servant would work for the sponsor, often in harsh conditions, and gain his or her freedom upon the fulfillment of the contract, usually along with land and freedom dues. A person’s servitude could even be passed from one sponsor to an heir. Chattel slavery, by contrast, presented no guarantee of freedom and was passed down from the slave to her children. Before the expansion of the slave trade in the 17th century, the line between servitude and slavery was less clear. Many indentured servants were African Americans, though most were whites, often from Ireland, England, or other Old World countries. Some were even kidnapped from abroad and sold in America, such as the subject of Robert Louis Stevenson’s famous novel Kidnapped (based on a true story). However, during the course of the 17th century, some American colonies passed laws that began the process of making chattel slavery a race-based phenomenon.

First, ask your students if they can name any differences between indentured servitude and chattel slavery. This PBS video clip is a good way to provide the historic context for these two different statuses in society. You can either show the clip in its entirety (it’s fourteen minutes long), or have students read a summary at this Web page. After watching, discuss with the class: How did indentured servitude and chattel slavery differ in colonial America? How did colonial leaders’ attitudes towards servitude and slavery change over the course of the 17th century? Next, divide students into seven groups and give each group one of these primary sources to paraphrase and analyze. (Be sure to preview the texts and contexts in this teacher’s guide.) Then, groups should line up in chronological order and report to the class about their primary sources. Afterwards, lead a group discussion about how and why our country shifted from indentured servitude to race-based slavery.

This lesson idea meets TN curriculum standards for 8th grade Social Studies (8.2, 8.12, 8.14) and English Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).
**Chinatowns**

Chinese immigrants would live in these Chinese-only neighborhoods as a result of public and legal hostilities. How did ethnic clusters like San Francisco's Chinatown provide immigrants ways to assimilate into a new culture? How did they impact their local communities and society? How did local citizens respond? To learn more, check out this presentation on Immigration.

**Socialism in America**

The rise of the labor movement in America led many workers to look at alternative political ideologies that they believed would better meet their needs. This lithograph of 1904 Socialist Party candidates Eugene V. Debs and Ben Hanford provides imagery essential to understanding whom the Socialist Party appealed to. And this video offers a "crash course" in understanding the differences between socialism and capitalism that may be useful in a discussion of socialism. Who is included in this image? Why might they vote socialist? Why would they not want to vote for the other parties?

**Indian Assimilation Schools**

In the late 19th through the early 20th century, the American government removed many Native American children from their homes and put them in boarding schools that were meant to assimilate them into "civilized" culture. Native American children took classes in tin working, shoe making and repair, and ironing for girls. These schools are still relevant today, as illustrated by this Billings Gazette article on efforts to bring home children who died and were buried at assimilation schools. The Library of Congress has an entire primary source set on Indian assimilation schools that will help facilitate discussions on U.S. policy toward Native Americans. Why did the U.S. start these schools? When and why was this discontinued?

**Freedom of Speech**

Freedom of expression, of religion, from want, from fear everywhere in the world [1936-1941]

Freedom of Speech is one of the most important rights we have in this country. But what happens when someone's freedom of speech violates another person's rights? How can speech violate another person's rights? What criteria should be used to determine if something is protected speech? Use these court cases as examples for class discussion.