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"The past is never dead. It's not even past."

— W. Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951), p. 92

Wherever it takes place the pursuit of history involves making the unfamiliar familiar, fashioning order from chaos, the study of a subject which is no longer even present. In Hong Kong, a byword for breakneck modernization, a 'place of transit' or 'space of disappearance' the pursuit of history is doubly challenging. For here, in a city defined by not being part of the nation that it has recently joined, and where 'the sense of the temporary is very strong' an ambivalence toward the practice of professional history, with its deep roots in nation-building, lingers on. However, while making history appear relevant and interesting may be daunting, these conditions augment the cathartic potential of learning about the past and make teaching history especially rewarding and invigorating. The transformative breakthroughs which come from studying history make the pursuit of the past potentially more powerful here.

As a teacher I see myself as being engaged in a collaborative process of learning together with my students. I have worked to improve the quality of our learning experiences by reorienting our thinking through exposure to the traces which past societies have left behind. To do this effectively I use activities which bridge the familiar and unfamiliar. Instead of swathes of dates and names I expose students to lively arguments, debates, experiences and new ways of thinking, judging, critiquing, and understanding difference. I seek to relate what I am teaching to the world that they know. I also show them how thinking historically can help them to become better learners, and encourage them to see themselves as agents, actively shaping their own learning histories. Students who take my courses learn how to listen to voices from the past, as well as each others' arguments. They, and I, make connections between the things that we think we know and historical contexts that are unfamiliar. These experiences allow us to reorient our understandings of ourselves and the world.

In my courses students begin to perceive that through studying the past they may accede to new levels of creative, independent thinking. Through the assessment methods that I have devised they begin to see the ability to reflect and connect their own lives with past lives as a learning target. Students describe the success of these methods in powerful, cathartic terms. All of these strategies form part of an overall approach through which I hope students can overcome negative stereotypes of 'History' and encounter new perspectives that will enhance their learning potential.