



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
College of Arts and Sciences
Bloomington

Kalani Craig (teaching observation)

Kalani served as my Association Instructor (TA) for the first half of the U.S. History survey during the Spring 2009 semester. On March 3, 2009, it was my great pleasure to observe her teach a discussion section. I left impressed. Kalani has a terrific classroom presence. She exhibited a wonderful rapport with her class, but she also was clearly in charge. She managed the often difficult balance between friendliness and authority extremely well.

The subject of discussion was the chapter from William Bruce Wheeler's and Susan Becker's reader, *Discovering the American Past*, that examines the "Boston Massacre." Wheeler and Becker present students with a variety of sources—conflicting testimony from the trial of the presiding British officer, Paul Revere's famous engraving, and a diagram of the physical spaces in which the incident took place—and asks them to determine what "really" happened. Of course the exercise is really about teaching students to critically evaluate evidence in order to construct plausible interpretations. At this Kalani succeeded beautifully. She divided students into four groups, assigning each group testimony from a different set of "eye-witnesses." She asked the members of each group to determine from the basis of "their" evidence whether or not Captain Preston gave the order to fire, and where each participant stood at the time the shots were fired. She then projected an image of the scene, gave the members of each group color-coded sticky notes, and asked them to indicate the relative locations of the key actors—as best they could tell from the specific testimony they considered. By providing a visual representation that allowed students to literally "see" which witnesses were most likely to have actually observed the events unfold, Kalani rendered a confusing set of evidence much less confusing. By encouraging students to attend carefully to witnesses' statements and to consider their possible motivations, Kalani also enabled students to speculate intelligently about which witnesses were reliable and which were not.

Kalani circulated between groups to ensure that they stayed on task, she asked useful follow-up questions as each group reported its answers, and she provided her students with an outstanding lesson in historical interpretation. She also asked them to critically analyze Revere's engraving both in terms of accuracy and its representations of race. I was very impressed with what she was able to accomplish in the space of fifty minutes. Last but not least, given her ease and familiarity with the material, no one would have ever guessed she was a specialist in Medieval history rather than U.S. history.



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Since that time, Kalani has acquired a well-deserved reputation as one of our department's finest instructors—a reputation confirmed by her receipt of the Susan O'Kell Award for excellence in teaching. Kalani has served our department and our students very, very well. She will do the same for yours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. J. ...", is written in a cursive style.

Professor and Director of Graduate Studies

October 14, 2011