

**REVIEW: EDWARD A. ALPERS AND THOMAS F. MCDOW, *A PRIMER FOR TEACHING INDIAN OCEAN WORLD HISTORY: TEN DESIGN PRINCIPLES*. DURHAM: DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2024**

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*A Primer for Teaching Indian Ocean World History* is the seventh book published in Duke University Press' 'Design Principles for Teaching History' series. The book and the wider series aim to provide inspiration for educators in North American institutions who teach students at high school and university levels. Like other books in the series, *A Primer for Teaching Indian Ocean World History* divides the topic into 10 design principles, each of which has a substantive chapter dedicated to it, in addition to an introduction and a short conclusion.

Alpers and McDow break their 10 design principles into three parts, respectively entitled 'Foundations and Sources,' 'Global Themes,' and 'Teaching Strategies.' Part I, comprising chapters 1-3, provides resources for introducing Indian Ocean World history to North American students, paying particular attention to geography and countering Eurocentrism. Part II, comprising chapters 4-8, provides strategies for teaching five major themes in Indian Ocean World historiography, namely, commerce, mobility, slavery, empire, and environment and disease. Part III, which comprises the final two substantive chapters, suggests ideas for course organisation, skills development, and practical assignment design.

The book's main strength is its breadth. Although the occasional case study receives a paragraph-or-so of analysis on its own, the authors mostly draw on a range of sources to present big ideas. These ideas are appropriate and well-explained to the reader. But, given this structure, educators could not hope to cover all the bases that the authors have presented here. Thus, they should use the book as a launch-point for designing their courses, perhaps with one or two of the resources mentioned as a basis for presenting longer threads. The endnotes, which provide links to many of these resources, will be especially useful. In the future, the publisher and series editor might think about adding select bibliographies and links to online resources at the end of each chapter to enhance their accessibility.

The book also responds to current pedagogical trends in the humanities and social sciences. The authors note the rise of online learning (especially during and since the Covid-19 pandemic) and the importance of critical reading in the current era of ‘fake news.’ Their emphasis is on student-led activities, and they provide several ideas for engaging students in classroom/online assignments and semester-long projects, drawing on both their own experiences and those of their colleagues. Some of these ideas have wider applicability. For example, PechaKucha presentations (pp. 142-6) could be used in almost any university-level course. But a major strength of the book is that it shows how certain resources and historiographical trends in Indian Ocean World history can be disseminated to students using such more universal pedagogical strategies.

One absence from the book, however, is a significant reflection on the current social moment, and its effects on how Indian Ocean World history could be taught on North American campuses. The Black Lives Matter and related movements may largely focus on the Atlantic World, but some of the wider discourses they are rooted in, such as decolonisation, are clearly relevant to Indian Ocean World history. Thus, the reader might wonder what strategies the authors use to address their positionality and that of their institutions in their course design and as they try to foster accessible classroom environments. For example, in 2018’s *Primer for Teaching African History*, Trevor R. Getz alluded to exploring the ethics of teaching African history in North American classrooms.<sup>1</sup> A similar effort could have been made here, albeit with an update based on the events of the last 6 years.

Overall, though, this is an accessible and very well-thought-out book. The authors have trawled through an inordinate number of recently digitised primary and secondary sources, and they have become acquainted with various digital software (much of which is open access) for pedagogical ends. One wonders how ongoing digitisation and software development projects might add to Alpers and McDow’s ideas in the relatively near future. But, their cataloguing of what is available now with appropriate suggestions for the dissemination of Indian Ocean World history to high school and university students still represents a landmark achievement. Educators in North America will find that *A Primer for Teaching Indian Ocean World History* is a valuable resource for developing innovative syllabi in Indian Ocean World history moving forwards.

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<sup>1</sup> Trevor R. Getz, *A Primer for Teaching African History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 103-12.