



Reasoning with Ethics

OCTOBER 26, 2020

A Project of The School for Ethical Education | www.ethicsed.org

Ethics in action creates character.

Use this blog to:

1. Lead class discussions in social studies, civics, ethics or advisory classes.
2. Teach students skills to analyze cases with core ethical values.
3. Recognize skills in support of SEE's Tri-Factor Model of ethical functioning.

[Visit the online Ethics Blog.](#)



Historian's Responsibilities

History is said to be written by the winners. Ethical historians seek to objectively and accurately record the events of the past regardless of ideology or any desire to create heroic narratives. One responsibility of historians has been to provide an accurate record of the past to guide our actions in the present. The difficulty in keeping ideology out of history is challenging, thus historians debate the narrative of colleagues. With the development of online media, the ideological divides of interpreting history can now be amplified quickly by small cadres of historians or people claiming to be historians.



The New York Times (NYT) 1619 Project has come under criticism where scholars have claimed it has distorted US history about the topic of slavery. The details of this criticism are beyond the scope of this essay, but links summarizing scholars' concerns such as the NYT's claim that the US revolution was fought to support slavery are included in the citations found on this Blog's website.

The NYT's 1619 Project has impacted the national dialogue on race, and it is gaining momentum as a curricular guide for history instruction in US schools. This, while the author of the 1619 project recast her narrative in an Orwellian tweet, "The fight over the 1619 Project is not about history. It is about memory. I've always said that the *1619 Project* is not a history."

Students are asked to review the scholars concerns about the 1619 Project and consider what is the ethical responsibility of someone claiming to be a historian? What core values should guide historians in studying and documenting history? In addition, how might historians recognize and resist the pull of ideology as they write their version of history?

Supplemental Links

The New York Times, Brett Stephens (10/12/20) Points out meaningful flaws in 1619 Project--
<https://www.baltimoresun.com/featured/sns-nyt-op-criticisms-nyt-history-project-20201012-i6m2ad42fjb4fcv6qxoilawukq-story.html>

From: Politico (9/17/20)- President Trump Criticizes 1919 project and Critical Race Theory (3:59)--
<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/17/devos-black-history-1776-unites-417186>

From the Washington Examiner (July 28, 2020): 1619 Project author claims project is not history--
<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/1619-project-founder-claims-her-project-is-simply-an-origin-story-not-history>

Washington Examiner, (5/ 5/20) – Not the way to do history, criticism of 1619 Project--
<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/not-the-way-to-do-history-princeton-university-historian-blasts-1619-project-as-historical-sloppiness-unworthy-of-pulitzer>

From American Institute for Economic Research (12/23/19)—Fact Checking the 1619 Project--
<https://www.aier.org/article/fact-checking-the-1619-project-and-its-critics/>

From the Atlantic (12/23/19)— Fight over the 1619 Project--
<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/12/historians-clash-1619-project/604093/>