RaeAnn Swanson

Active Learning Workshop:
Teaching a Disciplinary Skill (TDS)

Overview:
This activity will build off the “Reading Primary Sources” learning activity I have scheduled for the first week of my class. This activity would take place during the week of the Cold War coverage and will help students learn to contextualize sources and further help them understand how to read historical sources. Prior to class, students will have read the American YAWP chapter on the Cold War, http://www.americanyawp.com/text/25-the-cold-war/, as well as the introduction on the homepage and one oral history from the Nevada Test Site Oral History Project, http://digital.library.unlv.edu/ntsohp/. They will have brought with them a 250 word response paper over the interview they chose to read.

Activity:
In class, after a short Cold War lecture (this class is modeled after a Tuesday/Thursday class that is 80 minutes long), students will gather into prearranged groups of 3-5 students (the class is designed for 20-50 students). In the small groups students will draw from their oral histories to make connections between what the people experienced during this time and what was happening in the world according to the texts they have read previously and the reading from the American YAWP’s “Cold War” section. They will also discuss how the interviews they read were similar or different. To show students what particular things they can be looking for, I can post this excerpt from the “Teaching Disciplinary Skills (TDS)” outline on the screen:

1. **Reading Historical Sources** – sourcing (author, audience, bias and credibility), main idea (meaning, central questions), language (repetition, variation, syntax, positive and negative words), form (elements, design), silences
2. **Contextualizing** – contemporary events, demographic, cultural (religion, race, gender, popular culture), political (local, national, global), corroboration (contemporary sources, development of sources)

Students will have about 15-20 minutes to talk with their small group and craft a paragraph about what they discovered to turn in at the end of class. During the second half of the learning activity one student from each group will present what they learned by either reading their paragraph or summarizing what their group talked about. Each group will have between 2-3 minutes to share. At the end of the presentations I will lead a reflection on the sources and repeat how we can draw connections between the secondary and primary texts and how the primary sources can inform secondary literature.