OER FAQ

What is the OER Project?

We are a coalition of educators and historians focused on boosting student engagement and achievement through transformational social studies programs. We offer teachers better curricula and a vibrant community—which helps them make better readers, writers, and thinkers out of the young historians in their classrooms.

Currently, the OER Project offers two full courses—Big History Project (BHP) and World History Project (WHP)—both of which are completely free, online, and adaptable to different standards and classroom needs.

We also offer two extension courses—Project X and Project Score—which allow you to enhance your existing curriculum with OER Project tools and methodologies.

Unlike textbooks, lesson websites, and other commercial products, everything has been purpose-built to empower teachers and leave traditional history courses in the past.

What does "OER" stand for?

"OER" stands for open educational resources. When you grab a free worksheet off of Pinterest for your tenth graders, that's an example of an OER resource. While there are great OER resources out there, they are generally in the form of one-off lesson plans, or content repositories that lack any kind of clear framework. The OER Project, on the other hand, offers two cohesive and coherent OER curricula: World History Project and Big History Project. OER Project courses provide more than just quality content—they also integrate the instructional and professional support necessary for quality teaching.

What is Big History (BHP)?

Spanning 13.8 *billion* years of history, Big History Project is a free, online social studies course for middle- and high-school students. It weaves insights from many disciplines to form a single story that helps students develop a framework to organize and connect what they're learning both in and out of school. For an overview, see David Christian's TED Talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/david_christian_big_ history.html.

What is World History Project (WHP)?

World History Project is the newest course from the OER Project. We offer three versions—Origins to the Present, 1200 to the Present, and 1750 to the Present. We built on the success of BHP to create WHP—a course specifically tailored with high-school world-history teachers in mind. Each version of WHP uses the same proven instructional approach but tackles a different timeframe, allowing teachers to choose the version that best fits their needs.

How are BHP and WHP similar?

Both BHP and WHP share a common DNA and a common approach; awesome content; and a vibrant community. Both OER Project courses are completely free, online, and adaptable to different standards and classroom needs.

What's the difference between WHP and BHP?

BHP teaches history at the largest possible scale, starting with the Big Bang and ending with the future. WHP is more specifically the story of humanity. The Origins to the Present version begins with early humans while the other two course—1200 to the Present and 1750 to the Present—kick off in 1200 CE and 1750 CE, respectively. Each version guides students through the Industrial Revolution, and onward into the twenty-first century. To learn more about the differences between the WHP courses, check out the WHP FAQ below.

BIG HISTORY PROJECT | **WORLD HISTORY PROJECT**

A STORY 13.8 BILLION YEARS IN THE MAKING.

- An introductory history course that establishes an interdisciplinary foundation of historical thinking practices
- Harness students' natural curiosity about our world to help them make sense of their place in it
- Ideal as a general history course for middle and high school

LEARN MORE >

A WORLD HISTORY COURSE FOR TODAY. FOR ALL.

- A standards-based world history course that builds upon foundational historical thinking skills in preparation for AP, college, and beyond
- Looking at the narratives large and small to create a coherent view of the world's past, present, and future
- Ideal for high school

LEARN MORE >

What is Project X?

Project X is a short, standalone extension course that helps students think critically about data—an essential skill in a time when almost everything is being measured but the ability to analyze, understand, and use this information is often lacking. Project X is designed to be completed in four weeks, and can be folded into your current curriculum.

Note that Project X materials are also integrated directly into the three versions of the WHP course.

What is Project Score?

Project Score is a free historical writing curriculum that includes writing prompts; scaffolded activities for pre- and post-writing; and tools proven to help students write better. Project Score can be taught as a two-week course, or folded into any curriculum you currently teach, including BHP and WHP.

This standalone course utilizes Score, our automated essay-scoring system, which provides students with feedback on writing fundamentals, thus freeing your time to engage more meaningfully with the ideas they are trying to get across in their essays. Score uses the Revision Assistant machine-scoring engine from Turnitin. It's been "trained" against the OER Project Writing Rubric. So, rather than waiting days or weeks for results, students get immediate feedback that helps them understand and implement the expectations of the rubric as they write.

Which course is right for me?

- The Big History Project provides foundational skills and concepts for middle- and high-school students that position them well for future studies in history and the social sciences.
- The World History Project develops essential skills and concepts that prepare high-school students for AP courses. (Please note that a new course—WHP AP—is coming soon, too!)
- Project X teaches key data literacy and critical thinking skills in a compact four-week module. It is most suitable for high-school students.
- Project Score fosters writing proficiency in middle- and high-school students. It can be used as part of your existing curriculum, and includes automated essay-scoring assistance.

We encourage you to explore our website to learn more about our courses to decide which one is best suited for your use. If you have any specific questions, please email us at help@oerproject.com.

Can I use materials from Big History Project (BHP) and World History Project (WHP) at the same time?

BHP and WHP are two distinct courses (with a tiny bit of overlap!), each with distinct skills progressions. Although you may occasionally find supplemental materials you would like to incorporate in other OER Project courses, we recommend that you stick to the materials in the course you are teaching.

Could districts/teachers teach both courses consecutively?

A very popular pedagogical approach we've seen with our partnering districts is to use the Big History Project in middle-school social studies classes, with the World History Project following in high school. WHP extends the skills development of BHP, providing a strong starting point for high-school history students.

How do BHP and WHP fit with my state's standards?

BHP and WHP are designed to align with many existing standards. Check out our Planning Resources hub to see how BHP and WHP fit with your state's standards. If you don't see your state listed, choose a state that you know shares similar standards with your own. We're rapidly adding new states, so check back soon.

How is OER Project content delivered?

All OER Project course content is available online. A web-based model ensures that content is up to date, relieves the need for costly textbooks, and helps teachers engage students by providing media-rich materials that can be downloaded and viewed or printed anywhere. At the discretion of teachers and schools, OER Project courses can also be integrated with a variety of LMS platforms and Google Classroom (see our guide). You can also sign in to OER Project using Clever! Find out more here.

Who is involved in the OER Project?

Our course designers have played and continue to play an integral role in the conception, design, and development of BHP and WHP:

- **Pilot schools:** Our courses are codeveloped with pilot-school teachers and administrators. All aspects of the course—from the core curriculum and content to the assessment strategy—are authored with our pilot-school partners.
- **David Christian:** Professor of history at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. David, who built a widely taught college-level course, is the "father" of Big History. David helped create the strategy for BHP and appears in several course videos.
- **Bob Bain:** Associate professor of history and education at the University of Michigan. Bob played an integral role in the course design and delivery of both BHP and WHP, as well as in the outlining of the course assessment plans and alignment to standards.
- **Trevor Getz:** Professor of African history at San Francisco University. Trevor worked closely with Bob Bain to design WHP, and continues to serve as the lead academic adviser for all elements of WHP.

Our OER Project Advisory Board represents a diverse array of academics and historians.

- Laura Mitchell—UC Irvine
- Molly Warsh—University of Pittsburgh
- Lauren Harris—Arizona State University
- Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks—University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
- Urmi Enginee —Pitzer College
- Tim Keirn—CSU Long Beach
- Rita Verma—Adelphi University
- Ross Dunn—San Diego State University
- Yohuru Williams—University of St. Thomas
- Tony Maccarella—Saddle River Day School
- Pete Lapré—Park East High School
- Heather Streets-Salter Northeastern University

- Audra Diptee—Carleton University
- Rob Collins—San Francisco State University
- Nick Dennis—St. Francis' College
- Craig Benjamin—Grand Valley State University
- Elaine Carey—Purdue University Northwest
- Alejandro Quintana—St. John's University
- Bekisizwe Ndimande—University of Texas at San Antonio
- Tony Yeboah—Yale University
- Judith Jeremie—Brooklyn Tech High School
- Sousan Arafeh—Southern Connecticut State University
- Jane Kamensky–Harvard University