



清华大学
Tsinghua University

Final Project:

History Education in the Higher Education Systems of China and the United States

from Education Group

26/4/2025 (BTJ)



清华大学
Tsinghua University

contents

- 1 / Introduction
- 2 / Literature Review
- 3 / Brief Introduction of 11 historical events
- 4 / Data Analysis & Interpretation
- 5 / Conclusion



清华大学
Tsinghua University

1/ Introduction

Why we chose this topic?

Why is it important?

How did we develop our project idea?

A collective concern

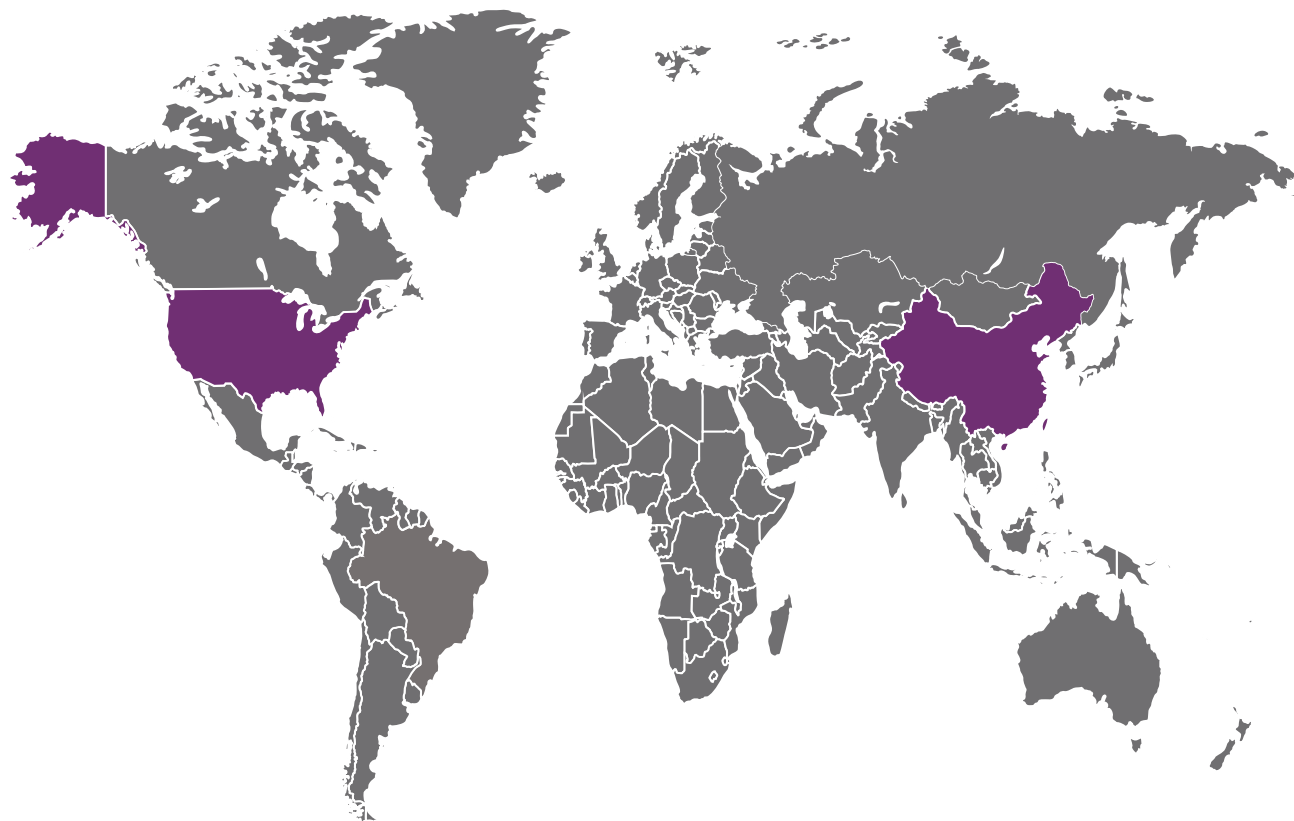
regarding historical education
in higher institutions across
China and the United States



Research Focus

1. The current status of historical education
2. Comparative differences
3. Potential areas for improvement





01

Facilitating Cross-Cultural
Understanding and Dialogue

02

Cultivating Global Citizenship

03

Enhancing Public Diplomacy



Introduction: How did we develop our project idea?



Identify twelve historical events

Time Frame: post-1945

Significance Criteria:

Profound impact on China's political, economic, or cultural development;
Critical role in U.S. domestic policy or global standing;
Directly shaped the trajectory of Sino-American relations

Data integration and interpretation

designed a structured questionnaire

four dimensions:

demographic profiles,
historical knowledge assessment,
experiential evaluation of pedagogical approaches,
comparative analysis of educational paradigms.

distribute the questionnaire through social media platform

95 valid responses from Chinese participants and 10 valid responses from American participants





清华大学
Tsinghua University

2/ Literature Review

[1] Narrative conventions and the reconstruction of historical events

[2] Politics and nation-building in history education

[3] How China/ U.S. is interpreted in different history books



Narrative conventions and the reconstruction of historical events

1. History is often rewritten for nationalist ideologies, which renders students unprepared for confronting the nations's reality (Foner, 2002).
2. Historical writing is inherently emplotted through tropes, undermining claims to objectivity (White, 2014).
3. By focusing on western impact and Chinese response, many western historians adopt a western-centric approach of constructing Chinese history (Cohen, 2010).

Politics and nation-building in history education

Textbooks:

1. official knowledge
2. politics and nation-building in history education
3. national formal school curricula

Effects:

In the book *History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia Divided Memories*, Gi-Wook Shin's cross-national study of Northeast Asian textbooks finds that mutually antagonistic portrayals of territorial disputes reinforce "competitive victimhood" among students



How China/ U.S. is interpreted in different history books

1. In the 1980s, Richard Gross from Stanford University conducted a project to explore how China and U.S. were depicted in each other's textbooks. He concluded that Chinese textbooks highlighted the anti-British America during the colonization era and also portrayed U.S. as a capitalist country subject to economic crisis, reflecting a socialist perspective.
2. Yeow (2013) uses the case of Ontario High School's history curriculum during 1947-1980s to illustrate how post Second World War Chinese history is presented with the emphasized description of China being static and isolated in contrast to the west portrayed as the side of modernity, reflecting a tradition-modernity approach and the stereotypical western-centric gaze.



清华大学
Tsinghua University

3/ Brief Introduction of 12 historical events



End of the Chinese Civil War (1949)

- The Chinese Civil War ended in 1949 after years of conflict between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).
- On October 1, Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic of China. The KMT retreated to Taiwan, reshaping China's political future.
- **Average understanding score: 3.81(1 for least familiar; 5 for most familiar; same applies below)**



Reform and Opening Up (1978–present)

- In 1978, China began major economic reforms to focus on growth and openness.
- In 1980, China created Special Economic Zones to bring in foreign investment. Deng Xiaoping's 1992 Southern Tour encouraged deeper reforms. These efforts lifted millions out of poverty and made China a major global economy.
- **Average understanding score: 4.04**



Hong Kong Handover (1997)

- Hong Kong returned to China on July 1, 1997, after over 150 years of British rule. In the 1980s, China and the UK agreed that Hong Kong would return to China under the principle of "one country, two systems."
- The handover ceremony was held in 1997, and President Jiang Zemin announced China's sovereignty over Hong Kong.
- **Average understanding score: 3.86**





Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1960s)

- The Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s fought for racial equality in the U.S., mainly led by African Americans. It aimed to end segregation, secure voting rights, and stop racial discrimination.
- In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. The Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965) followed, creating legal support for equality.
- **Average understanding score of this historical event: 2.29**



9/11 Attacks (2001)

- 9/11 Attacks On September 11, 2001, terrorists from al-Qaeda hijacked four planes in the U.S. Two hit the Twin Towers in New York, one hit the Pentagon, and one crashed in Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 people died, making it the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history.
- After the attacks, the U.S. launched the War on Terror, starting with the war in Afghanistan.
- **Average understanding score: 3.24**



2008 Financial Crisis

- The 2008 financial crisis was a major global economic disaster. It started in the U.S. when the housing market collapsed, causing big banks to fail and global stock markets to crash.
- Governments responded with emergency actions like stimulus plans and cutting interest rates. Still, the crisis caused a worldwide recession, job losses, and lasting economic changes.
- **Average understanding score of this historical event: 3.22**





The Cold War

- The Cold War (1947–1991) was a long global rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union after World War II. Though they didn't fight directly, they competed through proxy wars, spying, and nuclear threats.
- Key events included the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Cold War ended with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.
- **Average understanding score: 3.33**



The Korean War

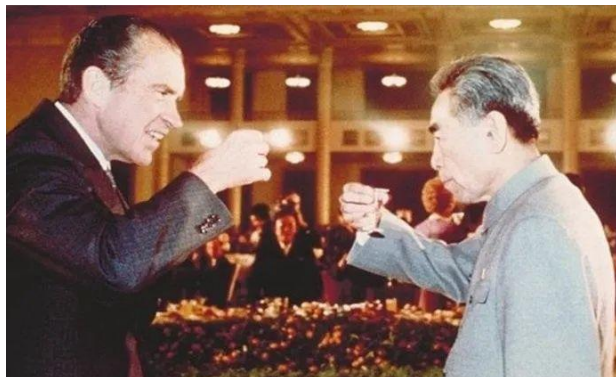
- The Korean War began in June 1950 when North Korea, led by Kim Il-sung, attacked South Korea to unify the country. The UN, mainly with U.S. forces, stepped in to help South Korea.
- The war lasted three years. In 1953, an armistice was signed, but no peace treaty, so Korea remains divided today.
- **Average understanding score: 3.65**



The Vietnam War (1955–1975)

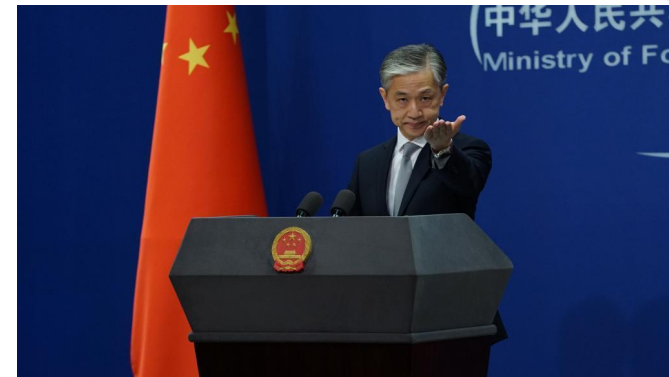
- The Vietnam War was fought between North Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh, and South Vietnam, which was supported by the U.S. and other Western countries. North Vietnam wanted to unify the country, while South Vietnam aimed to stay separate.
- In 1975, North Vietnam won, and Vietnam was reunited. The war had a big impact on the U.S., causing strong public opposition.
- **Average understanding score: 2.74**





Nixon's Visit to China

- In February 1972, U.S. President Richard Nixon made a historic visit to China, marking a turning point in Cold War-era Sino-American relations. This visit led to the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China, ending decades of hostility and isolation between the two countries.
- Nixon's visit paved the way for economic, cultural, and strategic exchanges between China and the U.S., creating conditions for China's reform and opening-up, as well as its international economic cooperation. This visit not only improved bilateral relations but also had a significant impact on the global Cold War dynamics.
- **Average understanding score of this historical event: 3.17**



The "One China" Policy

- The "One China Policy" is the core diplomatic principle of the People's Republic of China regarding the Taiwan issue, which asserts that there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China. This policy has been the cornerstone of China's foreign policy since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.
- The policy has been widely recognized internationally, especially after the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in 1971 restoring the seat of the People's Republic of China. The Taiwan issue remains a focal point in relations between China, the U.S., Taiwan, and the international community.
- **Average understanding score of this historical event: 4.25**



清华大学

Tsinghua University

4/ Data Analysis & Interpretation

Report on the Current State and Differences in History Education between China and the US



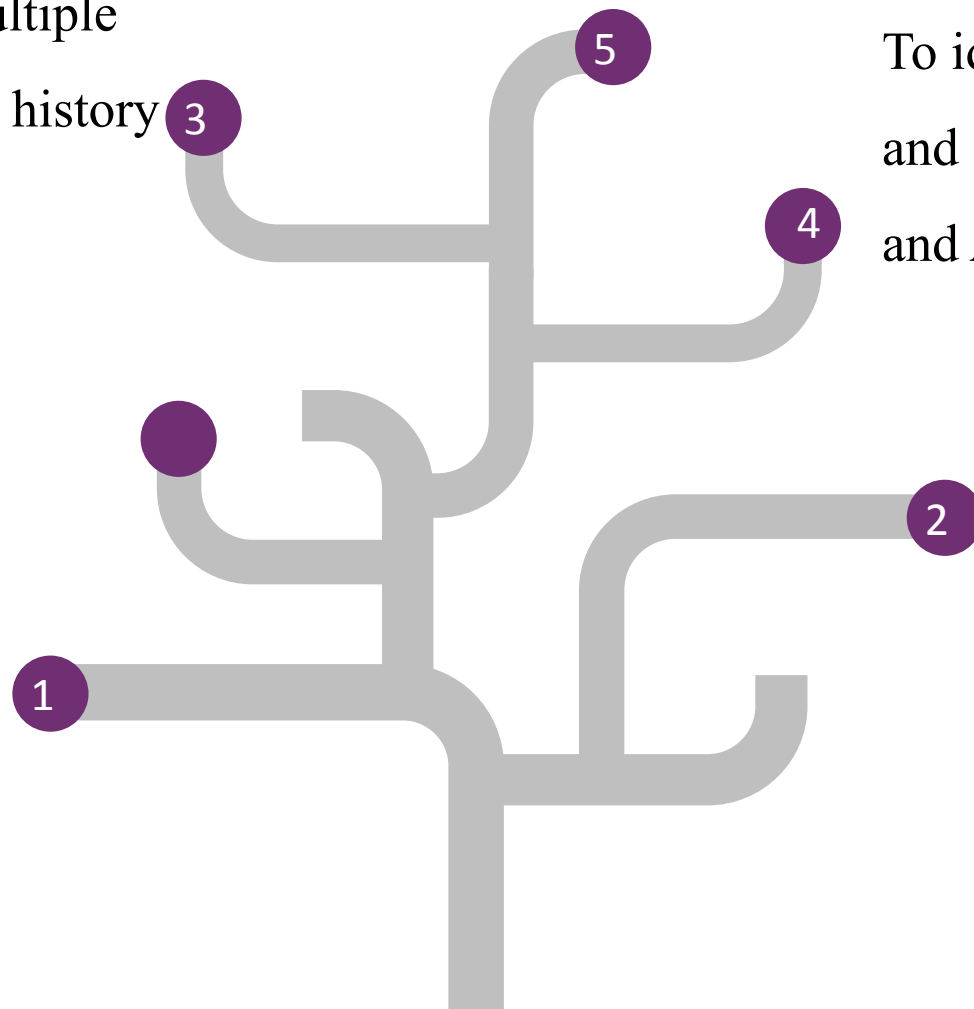
To gather suggestions for improving history education to foster cross-cultural understanding.

To explore the extent to which multiple perspectives are incorporated into history teaching.

To assess students' familiarity with major historical events in China, the US, and those of common significance.

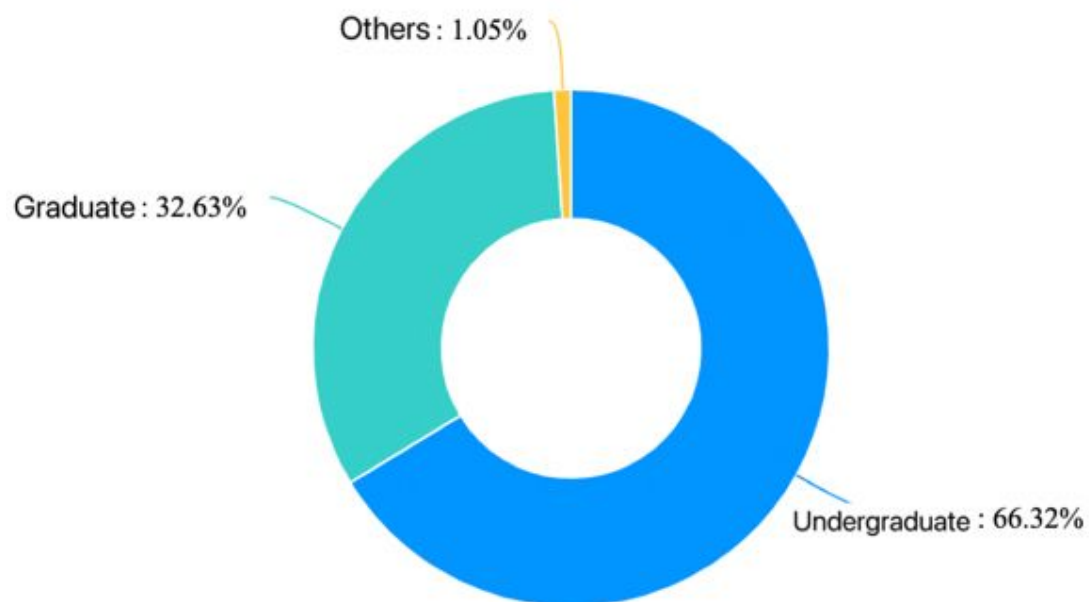
To identify areas of difference and similarity between Chinese and American history education.

To understand the teaching methods and resources commonly used in history education.

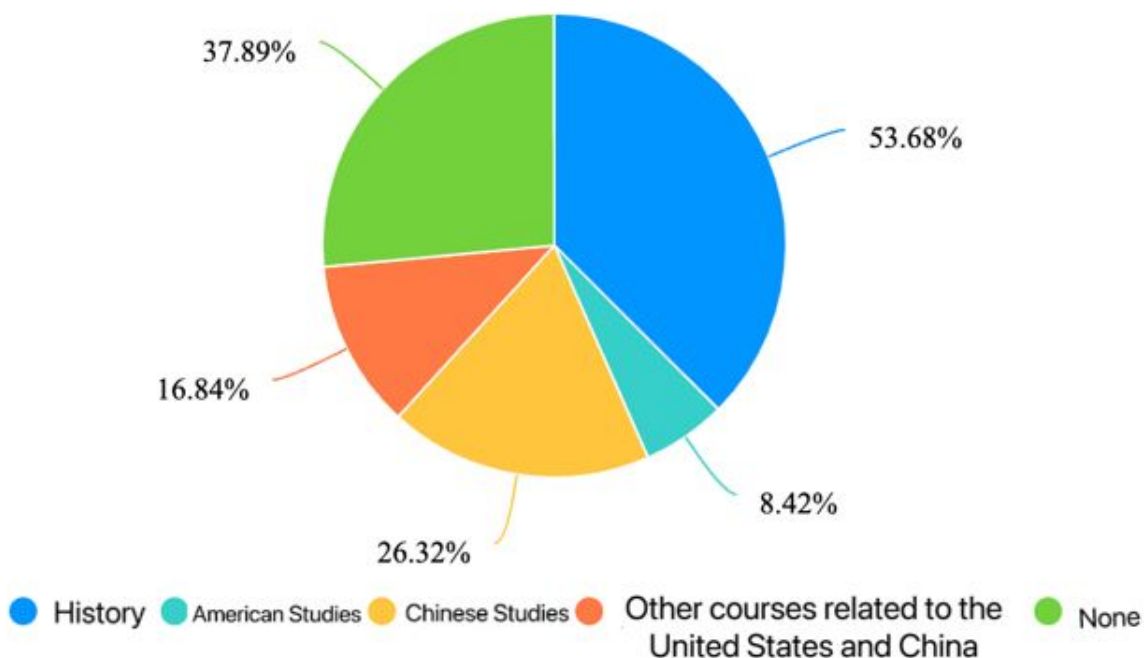




Current Educational Level

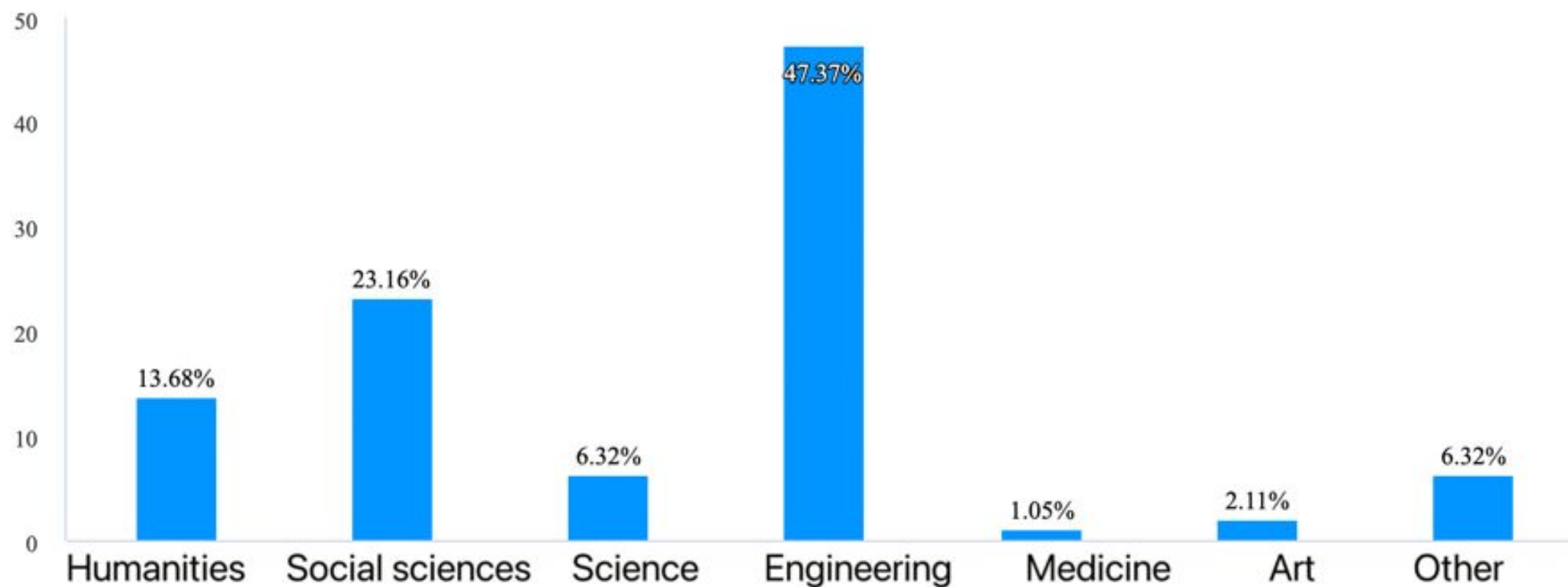


Have you studied any of the following majors





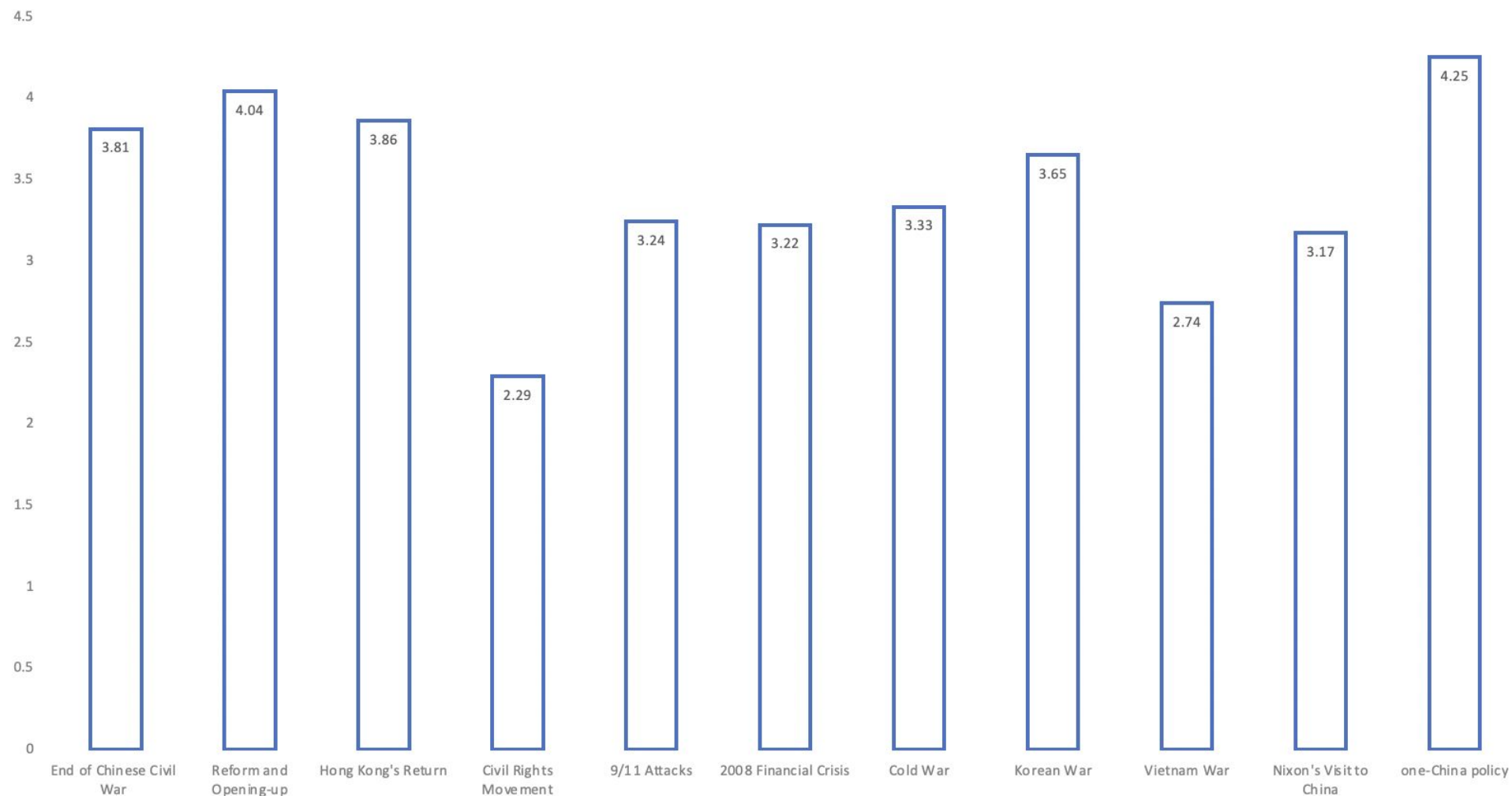
Academic Focus





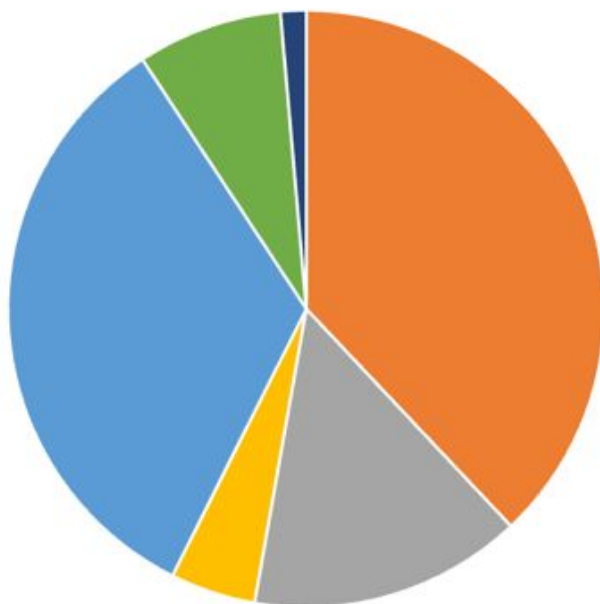
End of Chinese Civil
Reform and Opening up
Hong Kong's Return
Civil Rights Movement
9/11 Attacks
Financial Crisis
Common Historical Events
Cold War
Korean
Vietnam
Nixon's Visit to China
One China Policy

Understanding Level



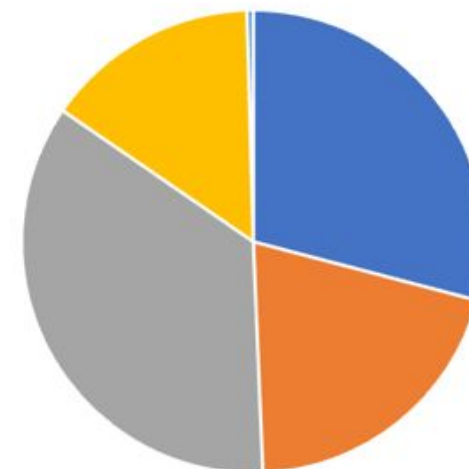


the teaching methods you most frequently experience when learning about the historical events



■ Traditional classroom lecture ■ Group discussion ■ Role-playing/simulation ■ Watching video materials ■ Field trips to historical sites ■ Other

the teaching resources you find most helpful in understanding Chinese and American history



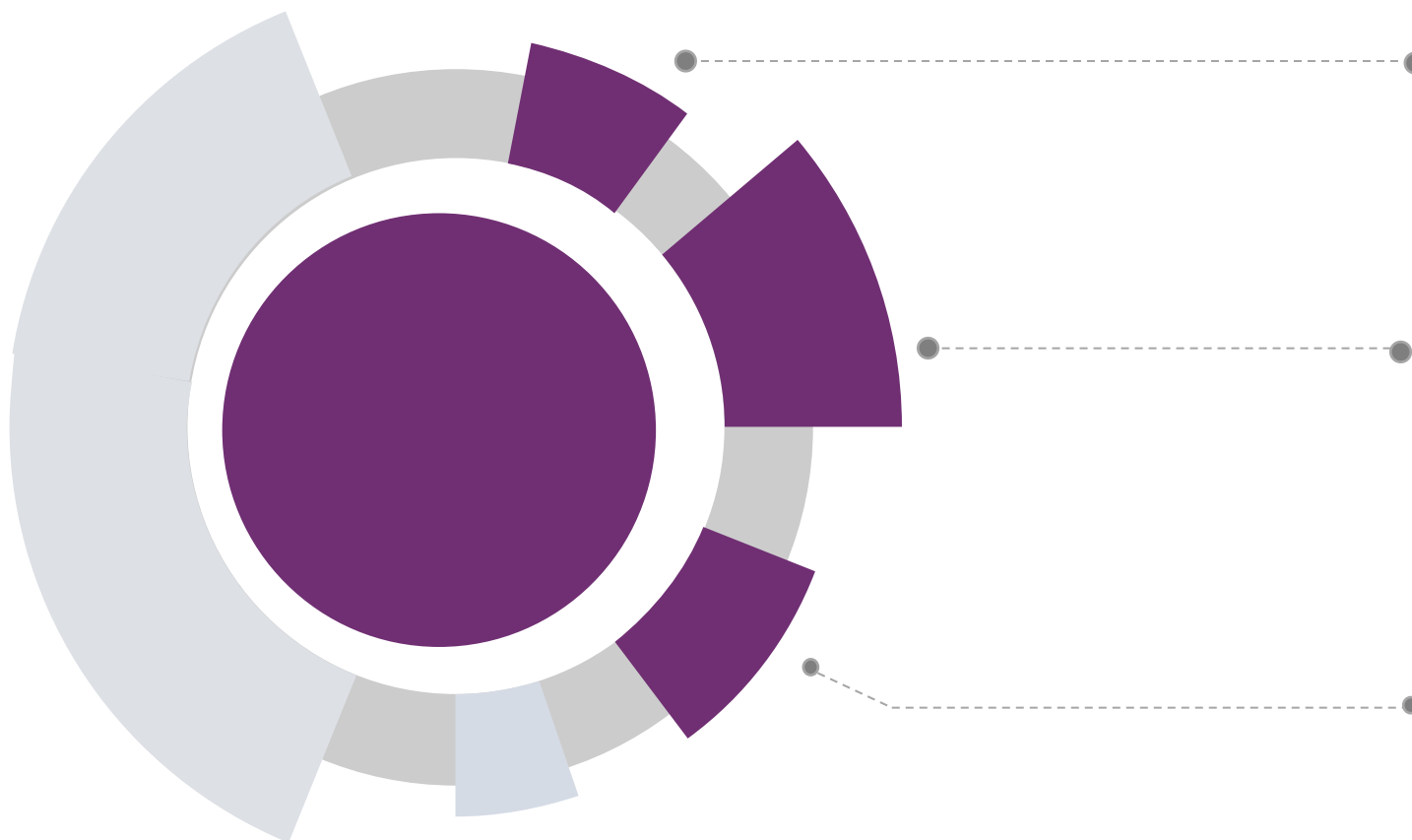
■ Official textbooks
■ Primary historical documents (such as diaries, letters, historian works, academic papers)
■ Multimedia resources (such as documentaries, movies, online resources)
■ Interactive software or online courses
■ Other



Least/Best Well Known Historical Events

- Nixon's Visit to China (1972):34%
- The Belt Road Initiative (2013):40%
- Cold War(1947-91):72%
- the 9/11 attack(2001):82%





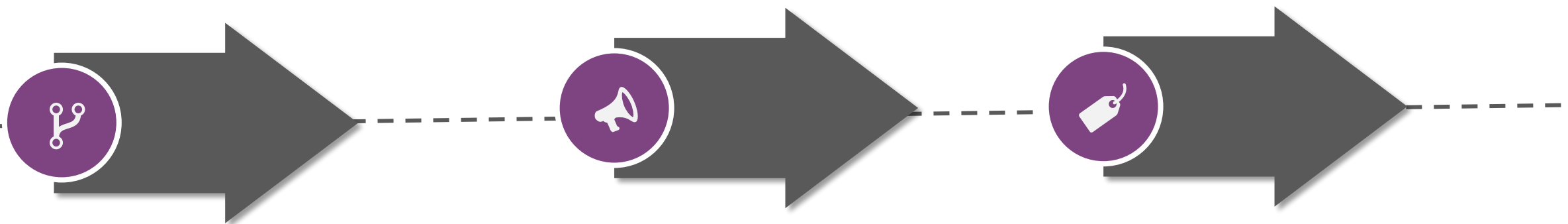
Majority of responses from **History/Chinese majors**

Wars involving the USA seem to be the most familiar

Most familiar with classroom lecture style of teaching. History is best understood through **multimedia**, causal analysis of event

Movies, travel, museums.





Different
perspectives/focuses

Heroism or tragedy

“Chinese history is focused on glorifying specific people, American history is focused on global events and American success.”





清华大学
Tsinghua University

5/ Conclusion

Feasible Methods to Promote Sino-American History Education and Foster Bilateral Friendship



Advocating for systematic integration of American historical studies into Chinese higher education systems

Given escalating risks of strategic decoupling, these educational interventions serve dual purposes:

mitigating perceptual asymmetries through objective knowledge dissemination

;

cultivating youth populations equipped for nuanced cross-cultural engagement.





Institutional collaboration between Chinese and American universities could prioritize establishing transnational "Parallel Historiography Lectures".

This initiative would involve synchronized curriculum development focusing on identical historical phenomena, and taught reciprocally by specialists from both nations.

This kind of parallel seminars/lectures can help cultivate a generation of youth capable of transcending ethnocentric narratives to advance bilateral epistemic reconciliation.





The integration of interactive and diversified pedagogical approaches can significantly enhance students' engagement and motivation.

Model Diplomatic Negotiations

This multi-layered negotiation framework enables students to comprehend the operational logic of foreign political systems, thereby fostering analytical capabilities to contextualize real-world policy decisions made by counterpart governments.





Social media platforms hold substantial potential to cultivate mutual trust between Chinese and American youth.

micro-history approach

"third-party perspective" historical narratives





清华大学
Tsinghua University

Thank you!