



Kevin Quigley

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Europe and Eurovision may well be the only high-school Eurovision class in the world, and has been taught in urban and rural New England schools for the past four years. The Eurovision Song Contest is the perfect lens through which to study modern European history and cultural trends. The course is designed to make complex issues, such as Brexit and the break-up of Yugoslavia, accessible for high-school students in the United States, who often have limited knowledge of geography and geopolitics.

The course was created with these lacunae in mind. Most students I've encountered possess only a scant understanding of Europe, while awareness of Eurovision is non-existent. In the presentation, I will discuss how the course was developed from a realisation that the song contest could be a vehicle not just for entertainment but also for education.

The contents of the course and my teaching methods will be discussed, along with specific examples of how I use Eurovision songs to tell European stories. Additionally, I'll explore how I use the contest to encourage reflection of our own culture, with examples of student artwork in response to this prompt. For their final assessment, students were asked to critique the course itself, and answer the question 'Is Eurovision worthy of academic study?'. Some of their responses will be shared.

Despite dealing with complex concepts such as Brexit, soft power, and post-colonialism, the class has been successful, particularly for struggling students. The class unites individuals from diverse backgrounds, and in that way, it is a microcosm of the contest itself. And in an echo of the aspirations of the very first contest's organisers, it is my hope that these bonds will last long into the future.

Biography:

Kevin Quigley - Creator of (possibly) the world's only high-school Eurovision class at Harwood Union High School, Vermont, USA.

While life in Northern Ireland in the 90s wasn't without its challenges, it did allow Kevin to celebrate five Eurovision victories, igniting a long-lasting passion for the competition. Sojourns in France, Switzerland, Slovenia and Spain - and travels throughout the continent - cemented his love for Europe and the ideals of the European project.

His appreciation for both Europe and Eurovision has only increased since living in the United States and as a result, he wrote a course about the contest and the continent.