Many history departments are seeing falling enrolment. Making courses attractive to those studying other disciplines might be one way to encourage students to continue engaging in historical study.

History Matters is a course designed to get students at the University of Iowa, who do not major in history, to take a class. Many of the students were first or second years majoring in a range of disciplines: business; psychology; chemistry; neuroscience; computer science; sports; nursing; and more.

History Matters – The Russian Revolution of 1917 ran in the centenary year of the Revolution. As a result of this, as well as modern-day events in Russia, interest from the students in gaining a better understanding the topic was high.

Dr Michael Zmolek, the lecturer running the course, had not previously taught using films from an archive as primary source materials. However, the films in Socialism on Film provided an opportunity for integration into the class programme in a way that introduced primary sources to students unfamiliar with historical study. Using these sources, the students developed critical thinking skills and an appreciation of the long-view of Russian history.

- History Matters was a popular course and fully-subscribed
- Primary sources encourage critical thinking and empowers students to take responsibility for their own research
- The clips in Socialism on Film gave context to wider events and made both the topic and primary sources accessible to students from a range of academic backgrounds.

"Teaching history students from such a wide range of disciplines is a challenge but important in developing critical thinking and analysis skills. Using Socialism on Film was an easily accessible way of giving context and understanding to how these huge events were experienced by real people."