

Undergraduate Degree Program Assessment Progress Report Cover Sheet:

Degree: BA History

For Calendar Year: 2009

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(1) Student learning goal(s) addressed this year:

1. Students will develop a general knowledge of human history (Historical Consciousness, International Awareness, Social and Cultural Awareness, Ethical and Moral Consciousness);
2. Students will understand historical interpretation and analysis of primary and secondary sources (Historical Consciousness, Critical Thinking, International Awareness, Social and Cultural Awareness, Ethical and Moral Consciousness);
3. Students will develop historical research skills (Critical Thinking, Verbal Literacy);
4. Students will be able to communicate historical knowledge in written and oral forms (Critical Thinking, Verbal Literacy).

(2) Learning outcomes/objectives for those goals addressed this year:

In pursuing an undergraduate degree in History students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a significant degree of knowledge about both United States and World history through completion of a broad selection of courses in history. (Goal 1)
2. Ask appropriate historical questions that demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of history and distinguish it from those of other disciplines. (Goals 1, 2)
3. Distinguish between primary sources and secondary sources used in the writing of history and know how to use and analyze each appropriately. Students will thus be able to:
 - a. Analyze a primary source as a product of a particular historical context; (Goals 1, 2)
 - b. Respond critically to a secondary source, taking into account the primary sources used by the historian, the historian's methodology, the logic of the argument, and other major interpretations in the field. (Goals 1, 2, 3)
4. Present historical analysis and arguments in a clear written and oral form, including the ability to construct an argument by marshalling evidence in an appropriate and logical fashion. (Goals 1, 2, 4)
5. Write a research paper that asks a significant historical question, answers it with a clear thesis and a logical argument, supports it with both primary and secondary sources documented according to the standards of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and written in clear and artful prose with the grammar and spelling associated with formal composition. (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4)

Given the nature of our student learning goals and learning outcomes/objectives, it is impossible to isolate just one or two to assess in any given year. Therefore, all learning outcomes/objectives were assessed this year.

(3) Courses & activities where assessed:

In 2007 the History Department moved to a portfolio approach to assessment. (Previously only capstone papers from the US and World History seminars were used to assess our program.) The portfolio facilitates a more holistic approach to assessment, and it enables us to spot gaps or weaknesses in our program and to remedy them so that students are fully prepared for the

capstone experience. This is the third year that we have evaluated portfolios and compiled data for the purposes of assessment.

An innovation this year, which grew out of conversations generated by last year's assessment report, was the formation of a Curriculum Committee, tasked in part with undertaking assessment of the BA. The committee is comprised of four history faculty members, with the chair serving as a fifth *ex officio* member. All members of the Curriculum Committee read the portfolios gathered this year.

Assessment was conducted in six upper level history classes as well as the US History seminar (one section) and the World History seminar (two sections). The seminar course is a capstone course, and the research papers written in this course bring together all of the department's goals, outcomes, and objectives. The following upper level history courses were assessed in the Fall 2009 semester:

History 3313: Renaissance History
History 3322: England since 1714
History 3342: Modern China
History 3371: Colonial Latin America
History 4368: Black History
History 4391: Eastern Europe
History 4391: Seminar in US History (The Sixties)
History 4393: Seminar in World History (Disease and Society)
History 4393: Seminar in World History (The French Revolution)

(4) Methods used:

Portfolios, consisting of all assignments completed over the course of the Fall 2009 semester, were collected from five randomly selected students in each of the above classes (the classes themselves were selected to ensure that a balance of US and non-US courses, and of classroom and online classes, were included in assessment). Additionally, all capstone papers were collected from the US (16 papers) and World History seminars (9 + 7 papers). The kinds of assignments collected included response pieces; journal entries; examinations; book reviews; major research papers; and senior capstone papers. These assignments are standard in the discipline of History. The portfolio approach allows us to assess skills and knowledge-bases at various points in our program (and not only at the end of the program, as was the case previously). It also allows us to see how well we are preparing students in our various upper-level classes for the capstone experience.

Two members of the History department Curriculum Committee evaluated each portfolio according to four criteria that correspond to the student learning objectives/outcomes outlined above:

Information (assesses Outcomes/Objectives 1 and 2)
Interpretation/Analysis (assesses Outcomes/Objectives 3 and 4)
Research (assesses Outcomes/Objectives 4 and 5)
Literacy (assesses Outcomes/Objectives 4 and 5)

The scores used to evaluate assignments in the portfolio ranged from 1 to 5, according to the following scale:

5 = Excellent/Greatly exceeds expectations
4 = Good/Exceeds expectations
3 = Adequate/Meets expectations
2 = Poor/Does not meet expectations

1 = Not evident
 0 = Not required

Our Assessment Plan calls for an Exit Survey of graduating History students that consists of two parts. Part I will be a Student Self-Assessment in which students answer a series of questions that evaluate their own achievements in the History program. The purpose of the Student Self-Assessment is to assess how effective students perceive our course offerings to be in preparing them to fulfill the our outcomes/objectives.

Part II will consist of a Student Assessment of the History Major. It will ask the student to answer a series of questions related to his/her experience as a History major and to offer suggestions about how the program might more effectively and efficiently meet our stated outcomes and objectives. The purpose of the Student Assessment of the Major is to provide the department with material to both re-evaluate the program on a regular basis, and recommend ideas for its improvement.

The Exit Survey has not yet been administered because we have not devised a survey that is reliable and that will fulfill all of the purposes outlined above. We are committed to drafting a survey that will be completed by our May 2010 graduates.

(5) What are the assessment findings? How did you analyze them?

The scores in the following tables are based on the evaluations described above; the numbers represent an average of the five assignments in each category (or, in the case of the seminars, an average of eight capstone papers).

Class A

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	3.3	3.1
Interpretation/Analysis	2.7	2.8
Research	2.2	3.0
Literacy	3.3	3.2

Class B

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	2.7	3.7
Interpretation/Analysis	2.5	2.9
Research	2.7	2.3
Literacy	3.2	3.6

Class C

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	3.8	4.0
Interpretation/Analysis	3.4	3.4
Research	3.1	2.8
Literacy	3.5	3.6

Class D

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	3.5	3.5
Interpretation/Analysis	3.6	4.1
Research	3.9	3.2
Literacy	4.1	4.1

Class E

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	3.9	2.6
Interpretation/Analysis	3.9	1.8
Research	3.8	2.1
Literacy	4.1	1.8

Class F

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	4.0	4.0
Interpretation/Analysis	4.0	4.0
Research	4.1	4.2
Literacy	3.9	3.8

Class G

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	4.0	4.0
Interpretation/Analysis	4.0	4.0
Research	4.1	4.2
Literacy	3.9	3.8

Seminar 1

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	4.7	4.1
Interpretation/Analysis	3.6	3.4
Research	3.9	3.9
Literacy	4.0	3.6

Seminar 2

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	3.6	3.3
Interpretation/Analysis	3.6	3.4
Research	3.4	3.4
Literacy	3.6	3.4

Seminar 3

Category	Evaluator A	Evaluator B
Information	4.0	4.3
Interpretation/Analysis	3.5	4.1
Research	3.4	4.0
Literacy	3.9	4.2

NOTE: Not all assignments in upper-level classes are expected to meet all of our student learning outcomes/objectives. For example, an examination might require a student to demonstrate specific knowledge and written literacy but not necessarily research or interpretative/analytical abilities. The portfolio method of assessment helps us to be more reflective about the kinds of assignments we give, and the extent to which we give assignments that specifically seek to meet our student learning outcomes/objectives.

Five faculty members evaluated portfolios this year, with each portfolio read by two evaluators. After portfolio readings were completed, all evaluators met to discuss the results. Overall, our findings suggest that our History majors consistently meet expectations in all of our upper-level classes. In several cases there were noticeable discrepancies between the two evaluators. As a result the Curriculum Committee agreed that it would be advisable to prepare before next year's assessment readings a set of rubrics for assigning ratings in each of the four areas of Information, Interpretation/Analysis, Research, and Literacy. To prepare these rubrics will entail a discussion involving the entire department about exactly what we mean by each of these rating categories.

Although the statistical data are useful in providing a rough gauge of student achievement, the portfolios themselves provide a firm foundation for a re-evaluation of our objectives/outcomes, and how we strive to meet them. The scores provide a general marker of how well our students meet specific objectives and outcomes; for example, a score of 3.5 in research suggests that students are meeting the research outcome to an adequate or acceptable standard. However, when we look at the assignments themselves we can pinpoint exactly what problems students may encounter in meeting the research requirement (for example an over-reliance on internet sources, or an under-reliance in primary sources, or inadequate citation of sources). This evaluation of a collection of assignments is, therefore, much more useful than the mere statistical data might indicate. (In other words, it is the portfolios themselves, rather than the numbers assigned to each objective/outcome, that provide the basis from which to evaluate our program.) Furthermore, we were able to identify specific assignments that helped students hone skills in each of the four outcomes measured.

(6) What conclusions were drawn and what decisions were made as a result? How were stakeholder groups involved?

Overall the History Department's upper-level history courses meet, and in most cases exceed, expectations with regard to our student learning outcomes/objectives. Faculty use a wide range of assignments to meet our outcomes/objectives and to help build the kinds of skills, such as writing and verbal literacy, critical thinking, and research, that will be widely valued in almost any professional environment. But there is also plenty of room for improvement, and the results of our Program Assessment activities will provide the foundation of discussions about what we do and how we do it. For example, the Curriculum Committee discussed the need to strengthen student performance in the categories of Research and Interpretation/Analysis.

Although we talked as a department about our assessment findings last year, we did not propose or implement changes to either our curriculum or to the kinds of assignments we give in upper level classes. However, as a result of our discussions, the Curriculum Committee was formed and empowered, on the basis of assessment data, to begin to suggest such changes. Now that we have three years of data, and three years' worth of portfolios, we have sufficient basis on which to evaluate our expectations of students, and how well we prepare students to meet those expectations. We will meet as a department in the coming months to talk about our assessment findings and re-evaluate our outcomes/objectives, and how we expect to meet them.

The Curriculum Committee discussed several possible changes to help the department better meet the goals and objectives for our history majors. These changes, which the Committee will suggest to the department, include: preparing a list of exemplary assignments that are particularly effective in addressing individual goals and objectives for our students; discussion of the advisability of requiring the methods class that was piloted in 2008 and 2009; putting together rubrics for the scoring of assessment portfolios in each of the areas assessed; requiring instructors to include a list of goals and objectives on individual assignments; considering setting pre-requisites for certain upper-level courses; considering mandating certain goals to be addressed in certain level courses (3000, 4000); requiring more research-based assignments in upper-level course other than the capstone seminars. As we gather more data in the coming year, the Curriculum Committee will begin discussion the possibility of a revision of the entire History department BA curriculum

Stakeholder Involvement

The portfolio approach to Program Assessment enhances faculty involvement in assessment because all faculty will at some point have their upper-level courses assessed. Previously, only capstone papers were assessed, meaning that only those faculty who regularly taught the World and US History seminars were directly involved in assessment. Furthermore, with the formation of the Curriculum Committee, more faculty are involved in evaluating the portfolios than in previous years, in which two faculty members read all portfolios. As membership on the Curriculum Committee rotates, eventually all Department faculty will have a turn at reading the assessment portfolios and writing the assessment report. Faculty will also have a greater stake in the outcome of the Assessment process because the portfolio approach gives us a better measure than the previous approach of how well we are meeting our goals, outcomes, and objectives in specific classes.

One aspect of our Program Assessment plan that was not implemented last year was the Exit Survey. We plan to administer this survey when students apply to graduate; since the majority of our students apply for graduation in the Spring semester, we decided to implement this part of our Assessment Plan for the first time in the Spring '08 semester. We did not meet that goal, and now plan to implement the Exit Survey with our May 2010 graduates. The Exit Survey will involve students more extensively than previous plans and will give them a personal stake in assessment because it allows them to reflect on their achievements throughout their undergraduate career and also to evaluate the History program as a whole.

History is not a “job-specific” field, and there is not a clearly defined stakeholder in the employment sector. We do not believe it would be possible to include external stakeholders in our Assessment Plan given the wide variety of jobs that History graduates eventually hold.

BA History/Social Studies Education

The History Major with a social studies education minor (HISTS) is assessed according to the guidelines of the NCSS and NCATE, in a separate report submitted to the NCSS and NCATE assessment teams.