

# Assessment Report

## Department of History

### 2014-15

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During the previous four year assessment cycle (Fall 2010-Spring 2014), the Department of History assessed all of the courses offered in the major and minor at least once. We drew upon these findings when designing new courses and revising existing ones, and we are proud of the successes our curriculum and our teaching are producing. One of our key findings from this assessment cycle is that we needed to revise our learning outcomes and enhance our assessment mechanisms. We completed the revision of learning outcomes and assessment rubrics in Spring 2014, and implemented these new standards for the 2014-15 academic year.<sup>1</sup> In addition, we are continuing to develop new methods of assessment that we believe will increase our understanding of student learning and progress through our programs.

During the 2014-15 academic year, we assessed our core Global History sequence (HIS 203-204-205). We examined a sample of writing assignments taken from several different sections to investigate how effectively they met the two new outcomes for the sequence. We also assessed the oral presentations delivered by students in our senior seminar (HIS 425). These presentations reflect students' independent research undertaken during the semester and are an integral part of the capstone project.

#### **Assessment Process and Results (HIS 203-204-205)**

We evaluated a sample of student work selected from ten different sections of the Global History sequence (4 Fall Semester, 6 Spring Semester) based on their success at meeting the two learning outcomes:

1. Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern history.
2. Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.

The faculty assessment tem evaluated the degree of success at meeting each individual learning outcome by grading student writing assignments according to the following rubric:

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for a copy of the complete curriculum maps for the History major and minor.

	<b>4- Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>3- Meets expectations</b>	<b>2- Approaches expectations</b>	<b>1- Does not meet expectations</b>
<b>Learning Outcome</b> Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern history.	Student demonstrates outstanding understanding of the event(s) and their historical significance.	Student demonstrates a good understanding of the historical event(s).	Student demonstrates some understanding of the historical event(s).	Student demonstrates no understanding of the historical event(s).
<b>Learning Outcome</b> Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.	Student is able to use detailed information to engage with a historical topic with precision and nuance.	Student is able to use information effectively to engage with a historical topic.	Student is able to engage with a historical topic, but evidence is sparse, overly-general, or flawed.	Student fails to use evidence when discussing a historical topic.

## **Results**

	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>4- Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>3- Meets expectations</b>	<b>2- Approaches expectations</b>	<b>1- Does not meet expectations</b>
<b>Learning Outcome</b> Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern history.	93	18 (19%)	50 (54%)	23 (25%)	2 (2%)
<b>Learning Outcome</b> Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.	93	14 (15%)	45 (48%)	33 (36%)	1 (1%)

## **Discussion**

We were happy to see that the majority of students either met or exceeded the learning standards for the sequence. The biggest problem for students approaching expectations was a lack of sufficient detail and/or evidence. The students in this category overwhelming demonstrated a basic understanding of both historical methodology and the specific subject under consideration—but lacked the requisite evidence.

Given the very small number of students failing to meet expectations, our assessment team believes that the courses themselves are well-designed for achieving these outcomes. We will continue to stress the precepts of proper historical methodology with our students in order to improve student understanding of key skills.

### **Assessment Process and Results (HIS 425)**

Every semester we assess the 10 minute oral research presentations in which seniors explain the findings of their capstone research projects. The students introduce their research before an audience of faculty and peers, and respond to questions at the end of their presentations. We allow—but do not require—students to prepare PowerPoint slides that outline key points and

display relevant maps, images, and charts. There are five learning outcomes for the senior seminar; we assess the oral presentations as evidence for outcomes 1, 2, and 5.<sup>2</sup>

1. Explain the historical significance of a critical event, trend, or theme in an independent research project.
2. Locate a primary source archive and analyze the evidence in order to answer an independent research question.
3. Read and summarize a body of scholarly literature related to an independent research question.
4. Write an independent research paper that evaluates existing scholarly approaches to a particular topic and analyzes primary source evidence using appropriate historical theories and methods.
5. Use primary and secondary sources to answer an independent research question in an oral presentation and written paper.

Faculty members graded each oral presentation according to the following rubric:

	<b>4- Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>3- Meets expectations</b>	<b>2- Approaches expectations</b>	<b>1- Does not meet expectations</b>
<b>Learning Outcome 1</b> Explain the historical significance of a critical event, trend, or theme in an independent research project.	Student not only provides detailed information about a topic, but also explains the larger significance of his/her research.	Student provides detailed information about a topic that speaks to its historical importance.	Student provides sufficient information about a particular topic.	Student provides insufficient detail in his/her research paper.
<b>Learning Outcome 2</b> Locate a primary source archive and analyze the evidence in order to answer an independent research question.	More than sufficient amount of primary source evidence; analysis of evidence is accurate, thoughtful, and nuanced.	Sufficient amount of primary source evidence; analysis of evidence is accurate and in-depth.	Not enough primary source evidence is used; analysis is superficial and/or inaccurate.	Little to no primary source evidence.
<b>Learning Outcome 5</b> Use primary and secondary sources to answer an independent research question in an oral presentation and written paper.	Historical argument is precisely stated, appropriately repeated, and memorable. Excellent use of a variety of evidence to support the argument.	Argument is clear and consistent with the supporting evidence.	There is a central message (but not necessarily an argument) and some supporting materials.	Central message cannot be deduced or lacks sufficient supporting materials.

### Results<sup>3</sup>

	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>4- Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>3- Meets expectations</b>	<b>2- Approaches expectations</b>	<b>1- Does not meet expectations</b>
<b>Learning Outcome 1</b> Explain the historical significance of a critical event, trend, or theme in an independent research project.	25	6 (24%)	15 (60%)	4 (16%)	0 (0%)
<b>Learning Outcome 2</b> Locate a primary source archive and analyze the evidence in order	25	2 (8%)	14 (56%)	9 (36%)	0 (0%)

<sup>2</sup> We perform a complete assessment of student work in the senior seminar at least once during each assessment cycle. The annual assessment of oral presentations allows us a quick snapshot of student/program success.

<sup>3</sup> Scores were obtained by averaging the marks of three faculty assessors, and rounding to the nearest integer.

to answer an independent research question.					
<b>Learning Outcome 5</b> Use primary and secondary sources to answer an independent research question in an oral presentation and written paper.	25	3 (12%)	13 (52%)	9 (36%)	0 (0%)

### **Discussion**

This semester, the students presented their work in an engaging and professional manner; most were quite comfortable and engaged with their audience. The students were largely successful at delivering compelling and polished presentations.

Over the past four years, we have focused on encouraging students to carefully present evidence in support of their arguments. We will continue to clarify how important evidentiary analysis is for successful research projects, and give students more opportunities to practice and improve their efforts. We believe that we have had good success having our seniors present their research findings orally, and we will continue to work toward even greater success in this area.

### **Conclusions and Actions to be Taken**

Our primary goal for the future is to continue strengthening our assessment process and improving the value of our data. To this end, we have two primary objectives for the upcoming academic year. The first is to incorporate a new student knowledge survey in our four core classes (HIS 150, 250, 300, and 425). This mode of indirect assessment will allow us to collect more information about students' own understanding of the core skills that they are learning as Global History majors, and how these skills intersect with the program learning outcomes. We believe that these surveys will provide a useful complement to our continuing practice of direct assessment of student work. Our assessment team has nearly completed the survey, and we plan to implement them in the fall semester.

Second, we hope to get a better sense of how History majors and minors are learning and growing as they progress through their coursework. We are going to begin coding student work collected for direct assessment during the 2015-16 academic year and tracking student progress through the core major classes. We made slight revisions to our five year plan in order to prioritize assessment of the core courses.

### **Assessment Schedule**

2015-16: HIS 150 (Doing History), 240 (Historiography), and HIS 425 (Senior Seminar)  
2016-17: HIS 300 (Research Methods) and HIS 425 (Senior Seminar)  
2017-18: Global History Electives and HIS 425 (Senior Seminar)  
2018-19: HIS 150 (Doing History), 240 (Historiography), and HIS 425 (Senior Seminar)  
2019-20: Research Methods (HIS 300) and Senior Seminar (HIS 425)

## **Appendix A: Learning Outcomes and Assessment Rubrics**

### **Global History Major Learning Outcomes**

1. Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern world history.
2. Identify, locate, contextualize, and evaluate the usefulness of different forms of historical evidence (primary sources).
3. Effectively read historical scholarship (secondary sources) by accurately identifying the thesis, source base, organizational structure, and conclusions of academic texts.
4. Identify different theories and methods used in the historical profession.
5. Construct a historical argument grounded in evidence from primary and secondary sources and be able to provide a coherent defense of this thesis orally and in writing.

### **History Minor Learning Outcomes**

1. Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern world history.
2. Identify, locate, contextualize, and evaluate the usefulness of different forms of historical evidence (primary sources).
3. Effectively read historical scholarship (secondary sources) by accurately identifying the thesis, source base, organizational structure, and conclusions of academic texts.
4. Construct a historical argument grounded in evidence from primary and secondary sources and be able to provide a coherent defense of this thesis orally and in writing.

## Curriculum Map- Global History B.A.

	<b>Program Learning Outcomes</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern world history.	Identify, locate, contextualize, and evaluate the usefulness of different forms of historical evidence (primary sources).	Effectively read historical scholarship (secondary sources) by accurately identifying the thesis, source base, organizational structure, and conclusions of academic texts.	Identify different theories and methods used in the historical profession.	Construct a historical argument grounded in evidence from primary and secondary sources and be able to provide a coherent defense of this thesis orally and in writing.
<b>Courses</b>	<b>Course Learning Outcomes</b>				
<b>HIS 150 Doing History</b>		Identify and analyze primary source documents.	Read works of historical scholarship and identify the thesis, source base, organizational structure, and conclusions.	Identify basic categories of historical theory and methodology.	Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.
<b>HIS 203-204-205 Global History Survey</b>	Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern history.				Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.
<b>HIS 2xx 200-level Electives</b>	Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern history.	Identify and analyze primary source documents.			Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.
<b>HIS 240 Historiography</b>			Read and compare diverse works of scholarly literature.	Identify differences among theoretical and methodological processes used in the historical profession.	
<b>HIS 300 Research Methods</b>		Locate a primary source archive and analyze the evidence in order to answer an independent research question.		Apply appropriate historical theories and methods when analyzing primary source evidence.	Use a primary source archive to construct and answer a historical research question in an oral presentation and written paper.
<b>HIS 3xx 300-level Electives</b>	Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern history.	Identify and analyze primary source documents.	Read and compare diverse works of scholarly literature.		Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.
<b>HIS 425 Senior Seminar in History</b>	Explain the historical significance of a critical event, trend, or theme in an independent research project.	Locate a primary source archive and analyze the evidence in order to answer an independent research question.	Read and summarize a body of scholarly literature related to an independent research question.	Write an independent research paper that evaluates existing scholarly approaches to a particular topic and analyzes primary source evidence using appropriate historical theories and methods.	Use primary and secondary sources to answer an independent research question in an oral presentation and written paper.

## Curriculum Map- History Minor

	<b>Program Learning Outcomes</b>			
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern world history.	Identify, locate, contextualize, and evaluate the usefulness of different forms of historical evidence (primary sources).	Effectively read historical scholarship (secondary sources) by accurately identifying the thesis, source base, organizational structure, and conclusions of academic texts.	Construct a historical argument grounded in evidence from primary and secondary sources and be able to provide a coherent defense of this thesis orally and in writing.
<b>Courses</b>	<b>Course Learning Outcomes</b>			
<b>HIS 150 Doing History</b>		Identify and analyze primary source documents.	Read works of historical scholarship and identify the thesis, source base, organizational structure, and conclusions.	Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.
<b>HIS 2xx 200-level Electives</b>	Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern history.	Identify and analyze primary source documents.		Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.
<b>HIS 3xx 300-level Electives</b>	Identify and explain the historical significance of critical events, trends, and themes in ancient, medieval, or modern history.	Identify and analyze primary source documents.	Read and compare diverse works of scholarly literature.	Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.

## Assessment Rubric- HIS 150 (Doing History)

		<b>4- Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>3- Meets expectations</b>	<b>2- Approaches expectations</b>	<b>1- Does not meet expectations</b>
<b>Learning Outcome 2</b> Identify and analyze primary source documents.		Student is able to identify, contextualize, interpret, and explain the historical significance of a primary source document.	Student is able to identify, contextualize, and fully explain the content of a primary source document.	Student is able to identify a primary source document (as distinct from a secondary source document) and has some grasp of the content.	Student cannot identify a primary source document and/or does not recognize the difference between primary and secondary sources.
<b>Learning Outcome 3</b> Read works of historical scholarship and identify the thesis, source base, organizational structure, and conclusions.		Student is able to read an academic text, and explain the historical significance of the author's arguments.	Student is able to read an academic text, and identify the thesis, source base, and conclusions.	Student has some understanding of the main ideas expressed in an academic text.	Student cannot identify the main points of an academic text.
<b>Learning Outcome 4</b> Identify basic categories of historical theory and methodology.		Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of the assumptions and goals underlying different modes of historical theory and methodology.	Student is able to classify an academic text according to basic categories of historical methodology; student is able to analyze a primary source document in light of one or more basic categories of historical methodology.	Student demonstrates some understanding of the existence of different modes of historical theory and methodology.	Student demonstrates no awareness of the existence of different modes of historical theory and methodology.
<b>Learning Outcome 5</b> Write an argumentative essay grounded in evidence.		Student is to write an essay with a nuanced and insightful argument.	Student is able to write an essay that establishes and proves an argument.	Student's writing demonstrates some form of authorial voice.	Student's writing is purely descriptive with no authorial voice.

## Assessment Rubric- HIS 240 (Historiography)

		<b>4- Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>3- Meets expectations</b>	<b>2- Approaches expectations</b>	<b>1- Does not meet expectations</b>
<b>Learning Outcome 3</b> Read and compare diverse works of scholarly literature.		Student is able to make nuanced comparison of scholarly texts that address the same topic and speak to the existing academic "dialogue."	Student is able to comprehend and compare the arguments of academic texts.	Student is able to comprehend the topic of academic texts and recognizes the existence of differences in content of the texts.	Student is unable to comprehend and/or fully distinguish between academic texts.
<b>Learning Outcome 4</b> Identify differences among theoretical and methodological processes used in the historical profession.		Student is able to compare theoretical and methodological differences in academic texts, and explain how these differences shape authors' conclusions.	Student is able to identify the existence of theoretical and/or methodological differences in academic texts.	Student is able to identify some distinctions in how different authors approach a particular topic.	Student demonstrates little or no awareness of the author's role in crafting history.

## Assessment Rubric- HIS 300 (Research Methods)

		<b>4- Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>3- Meets expectations</b>	<b>2- Approaches expectations</b>	<b>1- Does not meet expectations</b>
<p><b><u>Learning Outcome 2</u></b> Locate a primary source archive and analyze the evidence in order to answer an independent research question.</p>		Student effectively analyzes an appropriate primary source archive and successfully integrates individual documents into a holistic assessment of a particular topic.	Student is able to locate an appropriate primary source archive and effectively analyze the contents.	Student is able to locate primary sources connected to his/her research question and refers to sources when answering his/her research question.	Student's use of primary source evidence is cursory and/or limited.
<p><b><u>Learning Outcome 4</u></b> Apply appropriate historical theories and methods when analyzing primary source evidence.</p>		Student is able to use historical theories and methods to produce a deep and nuanced analysis of primary source evidence.	Student is able to apply appropriate historical theories and methods when analyzing primary source evidence.	Student demonstrates some understanding of the existence of different modes of historical theory and methodology when analyzing primary source evidence.	Student demonstrates no awareness of the existence of different modes of historical theory and methodology.
<p><b><u>Learning Outcome 5</u></b> Use a primary source archive to construct and answer a historical research question in an oral presentation and written paper.</p>	<i>Written Research Paper</i>	Student provides a nuanced and elegant answer to an appropriate research question.	Student is able to use detailed information to answer a historical research question.	Student provides detailed information drawn from primary source evidence, but argumentation is limited and/or flawed.	Student writing is purely description and lacks an appropriate research question.
	<i>Oral Presentation</i>	Research question is precisely stated and appropriately answered. Excellent analysis of extensive primary source evidence to support the argument.	Student provides an answer to a research question that is consistent with the supporting primary source evidence.	Student provides some analysis of primary source evidence connected to a particular topic.	Presentation lacks sufficient analysis of primary source evidence.

## Assessment Rubric- HIS 425 (Senior Seminar)

		<b>4- Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>3- Meets expectations</b>	<b>2- Approaches expectations</b>	<b>1- Does not meet expectations</b>
<b><u>Learning Outcome 1</u></b> Explain the historical significance of a critical event, trend, or theme in an independent research project.		Student not only provides detailed information about a topic, but also explains the larger significance of his/her research.	Student provides detailed information about a topic that speaks to its historical importance.	Student provides sufficient information about a particular topic.	Student provides insufficient detail in his/her research paper.
<b><u>Learning Outcome 2</u></b> Locate a primary source archive and analyze the evidence in order to answer an independent research question.		More than sufficient amount of primary source evidence; analysis of evidence is accurate, thoughtful, and nuanced.	Sufficient amount of primary source evidence; analysis of evidence is accurate and in-depth.	Not enough primary source evidence is used; analysis is superficial and/or inaccurate.	Little to no primary source evidence.
<b><u>Learning Outcome 3</u></b> Read and summarize a body of scholarly literature related to an independent research question.		More than sufficient amount of secondary source material; accurately summarizes authors' arguments and conclusions; draws connections between secondary sources.	Sufficient amount of secondary source material; accurately summarizes authors' arguments.	Sufficient amount of secondary source material; demonstrates some understanding of content.	Insufficient amount of secondary source material; limited understanding of content.
<b><u>Learning Outcome 4</u></b> Write an independent research paper that evaluates existing scholarly approaches to a particular topic and analyzes primary source evidence using appropriate historical theories and methods.		Student is able to use historical theories and methods to produce a deep and nuanced analysis of academic texts and primary source evidence.	Student is able to apply appropriate historical theories and methods when analyzing primary and secondary sources.	Student demonstrates some understanding of the existence of different modes of historical theory and methodology when analyzing evidence.	Student writing is largely descriptive, with limited awareness of historical theory and methodology.
<b><u>Learning Outcome 5</u></b> Use primary and secondary sources to answer an independent research question in an oral presentation and written paper.	<i>Written Research Paper</i>	Research paper includes detailed information and makes a nuanced and sophisticated historical argument.	Research paper includes detailed information and makes a historical argument.	Research paper includes detailed information, but lacks a historical argument.	Research paper lacks sufficient information.
	<i>Oral Research Presentation</i>	Historical argument is precisely stated, appropriately repeated, and memorable. Excellent use of a variety of evidence to support the argument.	Argument is clear and consistent with the supporting evidence.	There is a central message (but not necessarily an argument) and some supporting materials.	Central message cannot be deduced or lacks sufficient supporting materials.