

Assessment of Student Goals and Learning Outcomes: Department of History

In the Spring of 2005 the Department of History stated the broad goals it held in terms of student learning outcomes. They are as follows:

- Students will acquire knowledge and skills in the three major historical fields: World, European, and American (United States).
- Students will gain essential research, writing, and analytical skills to be utilized in their future professional and academic endeavors.
- Students will be able to defend and critique the ideas of social unity and global diversity.
- Students will be able to describe large thematic historical concepts.
- Students will develop into informed and effective citizens, and demonstrate this by becoming active community members and future leaders.

The department developed these outcomes as a result of significant programmatic changes over past few years. These programmatic changes reflected NCATE accreditation process requirements. As a result, the major now requires twenty-one credits instead of nine in its history core and emphasizes more broadly based fields of upper-division elective historical study.

In the Spring of 2005, the department determined that student progress toward these outcomes would be assessed through the use of “examinations, written assignments, including research papers, book reviews, oral presentations, and for those in the teacher certification program, the practicum.”

Since 2005, the department has refined and increased these assessment techniques to reflect the academic expertise of its current members and to more accurately determine whether its majors are, in fact, achieving the above stated outcomes. These techniques also reflect expanded and more sophisticated learning outcomes which include:

- Students will describe the important historical consequences of gender and class division. They will explain these, as well as violence and colonialism as they are related to Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America.
- Students will explain the historical attempts to secure peace in an increasingly complex world community.

- Students will analyze the importance of urbanization, industrialization, immigration and the struggle for labor and women's rights as they pertain to the American historical experience.
- Students will explain the historical impact of religion, persecution, liberalism, anti-Semitism, and artistic expression and relate them in writing to the evolution of Western Civilization.
- In accordance with the college CORE's course objectives for United States History, students in Hist. 0131 and Hist 0132 will "acquire a number of interpretive perspectives on United States history and government in order to critically analyze political events past and present." They will be asked to apply these perspectives by analyzing selected political events.
- In accordance with the college CORE's course objectives for Global Diversity, students in His 0215 will "acquire a number of interpretive perspectives on Middle East, Africa, and Asian history in order to critically analyze political, social, economic, and cultural events past and present." They will be asked to apply these perspectives by analyzing selected political, social, economic, and cultural events.
- In accordance with the college CORE's course objectives for Social Understanding students in Hist 0101 and Hist 0102 will "acquire a number of interpretive perspectives on the History of Western Civilization in order to critically analyze political, social, and economic events past and present." They will be asked to apply these perspectives by analyzing selected political, social, economic, and cultural events.

These subsequent techniques designed to measure student outcomes include:

- During their program of study, history major students will prepare interpretive historical essays. These essays will respond to specific primary source readings provided by the professor. As a result of this assignment, students will be able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources. They will also be able to list and describe advantages and disadvantages of primary and secondary sources as well as being able to construct a thematic narrative for an historical episode.
- Students will prepare book reports on a variety of important and broadly-based thematic historical topics. The student will learn to summarize the salient features of the assigned texts and produce a report paper that is clearly written and carefully proofread.
- All history major students will enroll in Hist. 0302 Historical Research and Analysis. This course requires students to prepare a major research paper using primary, as well, as secondary sources. In order to complete the paper, students must navigate through a number of important research, analysis, organizational,

and writing procedures. They must review the steps involved in the scientific method. They must clearly and concisely state and historical problem. They must review the related historical literature and define how they will proceed to investigate their problem. The paper will be organized with appropriate chapter headings and include a results or conclusion section which adequately explains the importance and the implications of their paper.

- Students will prepare article abstracts on important historical topics in which they will delineate and critique the author's thesis and conclusions. In addition, they will provide a personal evaluation of the article in regards to its strengths and weakness.
- During their program of study, history major students will discuss important historical questions and demonstrate that they are able to relate them to current national and international circumstances and events. They will also show that they can relate these historical questions and principals to the circumstances and events of their own lives.
- In regards to assessing student outcomes in Hist. 0131 and Hist. 0132 (United States History CORE Survey), students will demonstrate that they are adept at critically analyzing both primary and secondary source documents; students will be able to recognize, identify, and articulate the varied and often conflicting interpretations in United States history; students will identify broad historical themes and discern significant transformative events in United States history; and students will be able to describe and analyze the evolving nature of American citizenship along with their own role in the American democracy. Students will demonstrate their grasp, achievement, and command of these important learning goals through both written and verbal based assessments that will evaluate students' critical-thinking skills, analytical skills, synthesis skills, and their general level of comprehension of United States history and government.
- In regards to assessing student outcomes in Hist 0215 (Introduction to the Middle East, Africa, and Asia), students will demonstrate that they adept at critically analyzing both primary and secondary source documents; students will be able to recognize, identify, and articulate the varied and often conflicting interpretations in Middle East, African and Asian history; students will identify and describe broad historical themes and discern significant transformative events in these regions of the world. Students will demonstrate their grasp, achievement, and command of these important learning goals through both written and verbal based assessments that will evaluate students' critical-thinking skills, analytical skills, synthesis skills, and their general level of comprehension of Middle East, African, and Asian history.
- In regards to assessing student outcomes Hist 0101 and Hist 0102 (Western Civilization I & II) students will demonstrate their skills at critically analyzing both primary and secondary source documents; students will be able to recognize,

- identify, and articulate the varied and often conflicting interpretations in the history of Western Civilization; students will identify and enumerate broad historical themes and describe significant transformative events in this region of the world. Students will demonstrate their grasp, achievement, and command of these important learning goals through both written and verbal based assessments that will evaluate students' critical-thinking skills, analytical skills, synthesis skills, and their general level of comprehension Western Civilization history.
- Students will be given the opportunity to participate in the Department of History Internship Program. This program enables students to work at important historical institutions (museums, historical societies and sites, and libraries) within the Commonwealth. These institutions include, Storowtown Museum, the Springfield Armory Museum Library, Historic Deerfield, Old Sturbridge Village, The John F. Kennedy Library, the Bidwell House, the Springfield Quadrangle, Shaker Village of Pittsfield, and the Basketball Hall of Fame. Internship programs are tailored to the individual, and all are different and unique, so specific outcomes cannot be stated per se; however, a letter provided by the historical site director to the Internship Program Director summarizes the activities and projects performed and completed by the student intern. The letter also provides an assessment of the quality of the student's work. The Internship Program Director bases the student's grade on that assessment. History majors can also receive intern/major credit by participating in The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars. This program, located in Washington, D.C., enables students to work for U.S. Congressmen elected from Massachusetts or in programs such as Interpol, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, or Drug Enforcement. This program requires interns to attend seminars and compile a portfolio of their work. The Internship Program Director bases the student's grade upon the quality of this portfolio.

NCATE Initial Review Program Report

This fall, the Department of History submitted the *Initial Review of the Program Report for the Preparation of Social Studies Teachers* for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. NCATE requires that the Department of History develop assessment criteria as evidence for meeting its standards for Licensure Accreditation. These assessment criteria are presented in the Section IV of the *Program Report* entitled, "Evidence Meeting Standards." They include:

- **Assessment of Current Knowledge:** Data from Licensure Tests. This assessment involves student's scores on the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure. These scores assess student's knowledge in United States History, World History, Geography, Government, and Economics.
- **Assessment of Content Knowledge:** Assessment of Content Knowledge in Social Studies. This assessment involves grades earned by students in courses which fulfill nine of ten NCATE thematic standards. These standards include:

- Culture and Cultural Diversity
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environment
- Individual Development and Identity
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Science, Technology, and Society
- Global Connections
- Civic Ideals and Practices

The Course/Segment Assessment Matrix for each of these standards can be found in Section IV of the “Evidence Meetings Standards” section of the *Program Report*.