

# **Student Assessment Plan**

## **History Department**

**Submitted by Todd Berryman, Chair**  
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History seeks to develop students' empathy with past values and peoples, as well as to promote a critical understanding of the past. Using a variety of methods, historians examine the dynamic interplay between text and context, looking at both change and continuity over time. History courses also enable us to study people's relations with others in order to help us understand our own world and ourselves today.

From lectures and writing, to using primary and secondary sources, we utilize a number of methods in order to teach students to think critically about the past. We strive to develop students' ability to use evidence to create and analyze historical narratives and arguments. We encourage students to view the making of history as both a creative process and an intellectually rigorous one. History courses teach students various forms of presentation, both written and oral, and complement study abroad and other experiences outside the classroom.

We offer courses on a wide array of geographic regions including North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, covering time periods from ancient history to the present. We represent a diverse range of historical subdisciplines, including social, cultural, intellectual, political, military, environmental, gender, and economic history. In addition, the History Department offers students many opportunities to use the knowledge and research techniques they have acquired to produce research papers on topics of their own choice.

### **Learning Goals:**

Although there exists a rich diversity of teaching styles within our department, we all believe in the following core learning goals, which inform the courses we have developed individually and the pedagogical practices we bring to our respective classrooms. Hendrix history majors will:

1. Learn a variety of approaches to the practice of historical analysis, and gain an understanding of why and how history is meaningful.
2. Develop broad empirical knowledge of multiple regions and time periods, and use this knowledge to practice the craft of historical analysis.
3. Develop critical thinking skills and intellectual depth by reading and analyzing primary and secondary sources.
4. Learn to present ideas persuasively in oral and in written form.
5. Attain skills and understanding they can utilize in their lives after college.

### Assessment Tools:

In order to assess the extent to which our department is achieving those goals, we employ a variety of direct and indirect assessment tools. These include:

Tools	Direct	Indirect
Appraising capstone projects and conference presentations for all seniors	X	
Grading sample student papers together and discussing the results	X	
Completing skills evaluation forms for graduating seniors	X	
Maintaining a curriculum skills map	X	
Assigning grades for class assignments and courses		X
Administering an annual senior survey		X
Collecting data ( <i>e.g.</i> , internships, study abroad, graduate school, <i>etc.</i> )		X
Exchanging and discussing course assignments		X
Hosting periodic department external reviews		X

### Assessment Plan:

The History Department completed its most recent external review during the 2013-14 academic year. During that process, we came to the collective realization that the development of a core set of skills among our students is something we are particularly interested in assessing since skills development has long been valued by our department. We specifically identify the development of research, critical thinking, written communication, and oral communication skills as central to our discipline. These, and the reason why we value them, are articulated in our department's 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> learning goals (p.1).

In order to assess the development of these skills, we have arrived at three-year plan that involves making use of the following three components:

- *The Senior Survey.* Since the 2011-12 academic year, our department has administered an extensive survey to our graduating seniors at the end of each spring semester. Part II, Section 6 asks students to evaluate the extent to which their experience in history courses contributed toward the development of their research, critical thinking, written communication, and oral communication skills. (See Appendix A.) The previous academic year's responses have been, and will continue to be, analyzed annually during the fall semester.
- *A Skills Evaluation Form for Seniors.* While the survey has served its purpose as an indirect assessment tool to gauge student perceptions about the skills they have developed through our curriculum, the department has now created a skills evaluation form that our faculty members will complete for each senior major who enrolls in one of their courses. (See Appendix B.) This will serve as a direct assessment tool of the same skills previously identified. This data will be collated by the department chair so that it can be presented and analyzed in conjunction with the survey data.

- *A Curriculum Skills Map.* The department has also created a curriculum map that focuses specifically on identifying which courses emphasize the development of which skills. The map lists the department's current courses, which are ordered sequentially by course number, starting at the 100-level and ending at the 400-level. For each of their courses, faculty members will identify the emphasis that course places on each corresponding skill. For the purposes of simplicity and clarity, the classification options are limited to "high," "medium," or "low." (See Appendix C.) We would like to stress that these categories in no way reflect a course's inherent value. All of our courses seek to accomplish multiple other tasks, such as the transmission of empirical knowledge, and skills development is one component of a much larger disciplinary project.

The goal of this three-year plan is to assess the extent to which our majors have developed those skills we have deemed to be most important to our discipline. In order to accomplish that goal, we seek to place students' perceptions of their own skills development, faculty's evaluation of students' skills development, and the department's curriculum in conversation with one another.

Through the senior survey, we have already begun the process of collecting data on student perceptions. Over the course of the next three years, we will gather data on our faculty's perception of students' skills development. And, in the meantime, we will have a curriculum map that charts the emphases we place on skills development in all of our courses and at all levels of our curriculum.

We will devote two department meetings annually to the presentation and analysis of student and faculty data collected from the previous year, and on an on-going basis we will evaluate the need, should it exist, for curricular adjustments where we deem them to be appropriate.

Finally, the data collected by these tools will be used for programmatic assessment only and will not be used for the purpose of evaluating individual faculty members by the department or other entities.

## Appendix A

### Senior History Major Survey (Portion) History Department

*Part II, Section 6. Skills: My experience in history courses contributed toward the development of the following kinds of skills*

Specific Skills	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
<b>Research skills:</b> my ability to identify, locate, and access relevant historical sources for research purposes						
<b>Critical thinking skills:</b> my ability to evaluate evidence, see problems from multiple points of view, and apply theories to my analysis						
<b>Written communication skills:</b> my ability to express an argument based upon the presentation of evidence and analysis						
<b>Oral communication skills:</b> my ability to express myself and my ideas in the presence of others						

## Appendix B

# Senior History Major Skills Evaluation Form

## History Department

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester (Fall or Spring): \_\_\_\_\_

*For each skill listed below, please mark the corresponding box that best characterizes your perception of this student's demonstration of that specific skill in this particular course.*

Specific Skills	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
<b>Research skills:</b> This student was able to identify, locate, and access relevant historical sources for research purposes.						
<b>Critical thinking skills:</b> This student was able to evaluate evidence, see problems from multiple points of view, and apply theories to analysis.						
<b>Written communication skills:</b> This student was able to express an argument based upon the presentation of evidence and analysis.						
<b>Oral communication skills:</b> This student was able to express ideas in the presence of others.						

## Appendix C

# Curriculum Skills Map

## History Department

*For each of your courses listed below, please identify the emphasis that course places on each corresponding skill as either high, medium, or low.*

<b>HIST Code</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Research skills:</b> The ability to identify, locate, and access relevant historical sources for research purposes.	<b>Critical thinking skills:</b> The ability to evaluate evidence, see problems from multiple points of view, and apply theories to analysis.	<b>Written communication skills:</b> The ability to express an argument based upon the presentation of evidence and analysis.	<b>Oral communication skills:</b> The ability to express ideas in the presence of others.
110	North America to 1865				
111	U.S. History since 1865				
130	Colonial African History				
135	U.S. History: Uses & Abuses				
140	Leisure, Work, & Consumption in U.S.				
150	Great Wars, Depression, & Gatsby				
151	The Era of the American Revolution				
160	East Asia to 1600				
169	Modern Europe, 1789-1945				
190	History & Film				
212	American Environmental History				
214	Poverty & Welfare in America				
217	The American West				
218	The Gilded Age & Progressive Era				
221	England to 1688				
224	German History & the Jewish Question				
225	Medieval Europe				
226	Renaissance & Reformation Europe				
227	Medicine & Disease in Pre-Modern Eur				
228	The Medieval Islamic World				
230	Native North America				
243	The Modern Middle East				
244	Modern China				
246	Modern Japan				
250	History of Southern Africa				
251	History of Central Africa				
256	The American Century, 1945-Present				
270	Arkansas History				
280	Contemporary Africa				
281	Aid & Development in Africa				
285	20 <sup>th</sup> -century East Asian-Am Relations				
290	African American History to 1865				
291	Japan's Pacific War, 1932-1945				
292	The Two Koreas				
293	Korea: The Forgotten War				
294	Topics in Classical History				
295	African American History since 1865				

300	Historiography				
301	Greek Civilization				
302	Roman Civilization				
306	Crime & Punishment in East Asia				
307	Gender & Society in East Asia				
308	Ecology in Native American History				
310	The Iraq War				
317	Crusades & Contact				
318	Magic & Witchcraft in Europe				
325	Africa & the Americas				
330	Culture & Colonialism				
334	Comparative Genocides				
336	From Reason to Revolution				
338	Crime & Punishment in Medieval Eur				
339	Epidemics and Society				
341	The Arab-Israeli Conflict				
342	Revival, Revolt, & Nation-Making				
345	Issues in Archives & Public History				
353	American Civil War & Reconstruction				
360	Vietnam & the 1960s				
420	Topics in American History				
425	Topics in European History				
430	Topics in Global History				
480	Senior Capstone Seminar				
497	Advanced Research & Writing				