

## Assessment Report for Undergraduate Education 2013

The following assessment report is divided into five parts. The first consists of assessment reports by the instructors of History 2302, The Historians' Craft: Methodology. The second section assesses the work of students taking HIST 4484 Senior Seminar. The third section collects results from the four core survey assessments. The fourth section assesses HIST 3500 Junior Historiography. The final section offers recommendations.

### Part I: Methodology

Spring 2013 Dr. Carrie Pitzulo

#### Assessment Exam

I administered the mandatory assessment exam during the second class meeting of the semester. Student responses to each mandated question are analyzed below.

*1) Describe in a paragraph essay what work you have had to date in the field of history (give specific courses), and why you decided to major in history.*

Six out of seven total students had taken survey courses before taking the Methodology course. One student was also enrolled in three upper-division History courses while taking Methodology. Based on this group, most students are taking Methodology at the appropriate time – before they take many upper-division History courses.

In terms of deciding on the major, most students expressed a passion for “previous worlds,” or the desire to learn more about the present through study of the past. It seems like most of the students have a natural affinity or curiosity about the past, and thus choose the major, as opposed to having any particular interest in the work of History. For instance, no one said that they chose the major because they love to write. Significantly, two of seven total students were not History majors. They were Political Science majors, but had a general interest in History as well.

One recommendation I have is to limit Methodology to History majors. Students from outside the discipline have less exposure to History's standards of source formatting, for instance, and these students really struggled to understand *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The non-majors in particular expressed much anxiety over this issue. The non-majors had never used that method before, and at least one of them would not again, as he took Methodology in his last semester before graduating. As a class, we spent a lot of time on this process and I think that time would be better spent – on the part of the students and the instructor – if the effort was on behalf of students who absolutely need this particular skill for future courses. Additionally, the benefits for some students was minimal, as in the case of the senior Political Science major, since he would be taking no more History courses, and thus would not necessarily be using any of the methodological skills learned in future classes. While this class was particularly small, some classes fill up and if seats are taken by non-majors, that could leave History majors unable fill this requirement at an appropriate time.

*2) Looking back at your history course work to date, what have you learned about the nature of historical study? What themes or topics have been of most interest to you, and why? Try to support your general observations with specific illustrations drawn from specific courses.*

Students had little sense of the nature of historical study. Several mentioned learning the “facts” of history, which to at least one student means doing more than memorizing mere dates. There was little understanding of the interpretive, organic quality of historical study. Only one student

mentioned the significance of primary research and the multiplicity of historical views and approaches. Most students just described specific topics they found interesting, such as ancient Egypt or World War Two.

3) Each of the following is a term that history students should know. Define each of them as specifically as possible.

*Historiography:* There was virtually no understanding of this term.

*Plagiarism:* All students understood that this was the “stealing” or “taking” of someone’s ideas without giving proper credit. The definitions tended to be rather simplistic, though.

*Bias:* Most students understood this as a slanted point of view, or a dogmatic approach to history.

Specifically, the question of historiography was most unfamiliar to the class, so that needs more attention. This does not seem to be a term that students encounter before Methodology.

4) Write a brief essay on a historical question of your choosing. Some examples of questions are: *Why were the American colonists successful in their war of independence from Great Britain? How did the Qing conquest of 1644 change Chinese administration? What was the greatest contribution to Arabic culture made by Mohammed? Do not write on one of those questions; come up with one of your own and answer it. Once again, try to be as specific as possible in your essay.*

Most students understood the concept of asking a historical question and answering it in essay form. One student did not, and instead asked, “Why do young kids learn facts that are not facts at all about history?” Another student wrote a historical essay, but did not provide a question.

#### Primary Source Analysis Paper

Students turned in a mandated primary source analysis paper. They were required to turn in a 2-3 page analysis of a primary document that they found at the Library of Congress digital collection website. Several questions were provided as guidance for their analysis.

Two students did the assignment entirely incorrectly, so their performances are not factored in here. Out of an unusually small class, that left five student papers to be assessed.

The assessment was based on the following rubric:

1) Does the paper assert a thesis, making a historical claim worth arguing about?

NOT ASSESSIBLE

2) Does the student cite sources correctly?

Exemplary (90-100%)	20%
Proficient (80-89%)	40%
Developing (60-79%)	20%
Unacceptable (<60%)	20%

3) Does the student use evidence to back up claims?

Exemplary (90-100%)	20%
Proficient (80-89%)	60%
Developing (60-79%)	20%
Unacceptable (<60%)	0%

4) Does the student write clearly and persuasively?

Exemplary (90-100%)	20%
Proficient (80-89%)	20%
Developing (60-79%)	60%
Unacceptable (<60%)	0%

5) Does the student demonstrate an ability to think historically?

Exemplary (90-100%)	20%
Proficient (80-89%)	40%
Developing (60-79%)	40%
Unacceptable (<60%)	0%

Students were best able to use historical evidence to support their claims. They seemed to understand that they were required to tie their analysis and insights to facts presented in the primary document. They also had a good understanding that the creators/authors of the primary sources were trying to make specific points in the documents. The students understood that they needed to think critically about what information or point-of-view was being presented to them.

They had the most trouble with footnoting, the only area in which one of the assessed papers was unacceptable, and with basic writing. They also struggled, in several cases, to make larger historical connections. Two students especially struggled with spelling, grammar, style, organization and the like. Two students were not assessed because they did the assignment entirely wrong. They turned in analyses of secondary sources, not primary sources. One source was a website that gave an overview of a historical actor, and the other source was unclear as to whether the student consulted a scholarly book or article (or something else). This misunderstanding – what is a primary source versus a secondary source – was avoidable. We talked about this in class at the start of the semester, and it was covered during a session held in the library before the assignment was due. One improvement that I will make the next time I teach this course is to assign a specific primary document for the students to analyze. Several students ultimately chose primary sources that were particularly challenging or otherwise less than productive historical samples (to say nothing of the two students who failed to choose a primary source at all). If I choose the source next time, then I will be sure that they are working with material adequate to their level and expected ability. Additionally, I will cover proper footnoting earlier in the semester. This was a struggle for most of the class, and they expressed a lot of anxiety about doing it properly.

Spring 2013 Dr. Nadya Popov

In the Spring of 2013, I taught one section of HIST 2302, a required gateway course into the History major. This was my first time teaching the course, and I offered it as a hybrid course – meaning, students met in class for approximately two hours each week, and then had an online assignment to complete on CourseDen to complement the classroom activities. In addition, four class meetings were replaced by CourseDen activities.

My aim in teaching this course was two-fold. First, I wanted the students to improve their ability to think and communicate historically, both orally and in writing. Second, I wanted to familiarize the students with historical research methods and the importance of citing one's sources carefully and correctly in accordance with *The Chicago Manual of Style*/Turabian. The departmental assessment exam for Methodology, which I administered on the second class meeting of the semester revealed serious gaps in both of these areas.

## Assessment Exam

Fourteen students took the departmental Methodology Assessment exam.

*1. Describe in a paragraph essay what work you have had to date in the field of history (give specific courses), and why you decided to major in history.*

The exam revealed that the students are enthusiastic about history, and excited about a broad range of historical subjects.

*2. Looking back at your history course work to date, what have you learned about the nature of historical study? What themes or topics have been most interest to you, and why? Try and support your general observations with specific illustrations drawn from specific courses.*

*3. Each of the following is a term that history students should know. Define each of them as specifically as possible.*

Students' understanding of the historical profession, however, proved to be rather elementary. This featured most prominently in the students' definitions of the terms historiography and bias.

*historiography:* None of the students was able to define historiography correctly. The vast majority of the students defined it as "the study of the past" or "the study of history," two abstained from providing a definition, and one stated that he has never heard the term before.

*bias:* Definitions of bias were similarly poor, with a surprising number of students defining bias as "the opinion one holds about a certain subject."

*plagiarism:* Students did better, however, with defining plagiarism – a likely testament to the attention that all professors in the department pay to the issue in every class, including at the survey level.

*4. Write a brief essay on a historical question of your choosing. Some examples of historical questions are: Why were the American colonists successful in their war of independence from Great Britain? How did the Qing conquest of 1644 change Chinese administration? What was the greatest contribution to Arabic culture made by Mohammed? Do not write on one of those questions; come up with one on your own and answer it. Once again, try and be as specific as possible in your essay.*

Students showed a uniform preference for very broad questions with significant implications. Topics included the influence of the introduction of gunpowder on European warfare, the reasons for Europeans' decolonization of Africa, the causes of the Cold War, policy differences between Trotsky and Stalin, the reasons for the Industrial Revolution, the causes of the English Reformation, and the significance of the Battle of Gettysburg. Unfortunately, most students did not make any references to either primary or secondary sources in order to support their argument.

The assignments I selected for the course aimed to remedy the typical deficiencies with which students typically come into Methodology, thus preparing them for upper-level coursework in

history and, ultimately, the Senior Seminar. Since it is imperative for the students to learn to work with primary sources, I assigned a paper in which the students used a novel as a historical source. That paper served as a second assessment assignment for the course, and fourteen students took this assessment as well. While professors teaching this course in the past have frequently allowed the students to select their own novel, I decided to make the selection for the class myself, thus averting the potential problem of some students selecting a novel that is not suitable for the exercise. The novel that I selected was Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, the best extant primary source for the study of everyday life in the provinces of the Roman Empire.

The assessment showed that the greatest strength of the students is their ability to analyze the primary source critically. This ability does not always translate, however, into equally solid abilities to think historically and to use the primary source to construct a persuasive historical argument. Furthermore, only one student received a score of 4 (Exemplary) for the ability to write clearly. To my delight, five students received a 4 for proper citation of sources in Chicago/Turabian, although the rest of the class only scored 1 or 2.

Other major writing assignments in the course were a book review and a final research paper on a topic of the student's choosing. In addition, in order to provide the students with a better understanding of how one can think and write historically, I assigned a textbook on historical theory and methodology, *Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*. The book introduced the students to twelve different schools of historical thought, including oral history, Marxist history, historical sociology, gender and history, and quantitative history. Each student in the course had to present a chapter and lead a discussion of it with the class. Reading through this textbook and discussing the different approaches presented in it allowed the class to see the variety of approaches to the study of history, and acquire a basic understanding of historiography. With a similar goal in mind, I also assigned two monographs – one relying on the evidence of papyri for the study of the history of Roman Egypt, and one (by the department's own Steve Goodson) on popular entertainment in Atlanta. The students thus were able to see the variety of primary sources available to historians (ranging from papyri and archaeological evidence to newspapers), and the broad variety of topics that historians examine.

Finally, I assigned fifteen CourseDen exercises that were intended to hone students' skills in a variety of areas related to thinking and writing historically. One exercise was a quiz on commonly misspelled and misused words. In another exercise, I provided the students with a paper with parenthetical citations, and asked them to convert the citations into Turabian format. Yet another exercise, very early in the semester, was a discussion of P. C. Hoffer's article for the *Perspectives* on plagiarism and the historical profession (<http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/Issues/2004/0402/0402vie1.cfm>).

Overall, the students seemed to grow over the course of the semester as historical thinkers and writers, and were extremely appreciative of feedback on paper drafts and graded assignments. It was wonderful to see an almost uniform desire to improve, and I hope that they will carry it with them in their subsequent coursework.

Primary Source Analysis (note these results use the scale formerly used in the department, which was changed after this course)

1. Does the paper analyze the primary source critically?  
Exemplary (90-100 percent) 43 percent

Proficient (70-89 percent)	36 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	21 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

2. Does the paper cite its sources correctly?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	36 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	7 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	36 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

3. Is the paper written clearly?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	7 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	57 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	36 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

4. Does the paper construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence from the source?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	43 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	29 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	29 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

5. Does the paper demonstrate an ability to think historically?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	43 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	36 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	14 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	7 percent

Planned improvement:

I think that it might be a good idea to require students to revise the papers that are assessed, and then assess them again. Making drafts a requirement, and grading both the draft and the revised paper, as we do in DSW courses will provide students with the additional motivation for improving during the course of Methodology. I gave my class the option of revising, but only a few students took me up on it, since it was not a requirement, and some of them appeared much too satisfied with the gentleman's C. Also, given the low scores that the students received for their writing skills, it may be a good idea for us to consider whether Methodology ought to be a DSW course as well and/or whether we should increase the number of the DSW courses required for the major in History.

Summer 2013 Dr. Tim Schroer

One section of Methodology was taught in summer 2013, completed by eight students.

### Assessment Exam

I administered the mandatory assessment exam for Methodology during the first week of the semester. Student responses to each question are analyzed below.

*1. Describe in a paragraph essay what work you have had to date in the field of history (give specific courses), and why you decided to major in history.*

Most of the students took the course just after completing their survey courses, which is the appropriate point. It seems that the department has remedied the shortage of seats in Methodology that we had in the past. One student wrote that he had always enjoyed history but he majored in Economics because he “did not want to be a teacher.”

*2. Looking back at your history course work to date, what have you learned about the nature of historical study? What themes or topics have been most interest to you, and why? Try and support your general observations with specific illustrations drawn from specific courses.*

One student particularly praised a course she took in ancient history, crediting Dr. Popov’s “passion for teaching and the subject” with awakening the student’s interest in history.

*3. Each of the following is a term that history students should know. Define each of them as specifically as possible.*

*historiography:* None of the students demonstrated a good understanding of this term.

*plagiarism:* All of the students demonstrated a good understanding of this term.

*bias:* All of the students demonstrated an understanding of this term.

*4. Write a brief essay on a historical question of your choosing. Some examples of historical questions are: Why were the American colonists successful in their war of independence from Great Britain? How did the Qing conquest of 1644 change Chinese administration? What was the greatest contribution to Arabic culture made by Mohammed? Do not write on one of those questions; come up with one on your own and answer it. Once again, try and be as specific as possible in your essay.*

Did the student construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	11 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	22 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	66 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

The majority of the students did a fairly poor job of posing and answering a question. Most of the essays were about a paragraph long. I suspect that the students did not fully apply themselves in answering this question, mainly because there was little incentive to do so, given that the examination is ungraded. This question does not seem to be very useful to the department.

Planned improvement:

The department should consider drop or substantially revise the assessment examination in Methodology, since it does not provide much useful information. At a minimum, the department should consider dropping from the Methodology assessment examination the final question, which

asks students to pose and answer a historical question. The problem with this assessment examination is that is not graded and so many students do not apply themselves.

### Primary Source Analysis Papers

Students were required to write a paper using a novel as a primary source to understand the period in which it was written and set.

1. Does the paper analyze the primary source critically?	
Exemplary (90-100 percent)	25 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	25 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	50 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:

Require students to revise and resubmit for a grade the primary source analysis paper.

2. Does the paper cite its sources correctly?	
Exemplary (90-100 percent)	100 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	0 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

This term, as recommended in the 2012 assessment report, all students were required to revise their papers until they cited the source correctly with proper formatting. All of the students had to revise and resubmit. All corrected their errors on the second try.

Planned improvement: None, results acceptable.

3. Is the paper written in standard English?	
Exemplary (90-100 percent)	12 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	63 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	25 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement: None, results acceptable.

4. Does the paper construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence from the source?	
Exemplary (90-100 percent)	0 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	63percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	37 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

None of the students did an exemplary job of constructing a persuasive historical argument. The students generally struggled to read the literary source as evidence for historical claims about the period in which it was written.

Planned improvement:



Require students to revise and resubmit for a grade the primary source analysis paper.

5. Does the paper demonstrate an ability to think historically?	
Exemplary (90-100 percent)	12 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	38 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	50 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:

Require students to revise and resubmit for a grade the primary source analysis paper.

Fall 2013

Two sections of Methodology were taught during the fall semester of 2013, one by Dr. Schroer and one by Dr. Pacholl. The two sections are assessed separately below:

Dr. Tim Schroer

#### Assessment Exam

The mandatory assessment exam for Methodology was administered during the first week of the semester. Nineteen students took the exam, and their responses to each question are analyzed below.

*1. Describe in a paragraph essay what work you have had to date in the field of history (give specific courses), and why you decided to major in history.*

One student reported having switched from majoring in Physics to History after his experience in the survey courses, including a survey course with Dr. Van Valen that led the student to take two further upper-level courses with him. Most students had not had any upper-level history courses, so they were taking the course at the appropriate point in their studies.

*2. Looking back at your history course work to date, what have you learned about the nature of historical study? What themes or topics have been most interest to you, and why? Try and support your general observations with specific illustrations drawn from specific courses.*

Several students reported that they had learned at West Georgia that history involves interpretation of the past, rather than a straightforward recounting of facts. These students generally emphasized the salience of disagreements among historians' interpretations.

Students seem most interested in military and U.S. history, with a smaller group expressing interest in ancient history.

*3. Each of the following is a term that history students should know. Define each of them as specifically as possible.*

*historiography:* No student demonstrated a good understanding of this term.

*plagiarism:* All of the students demonstrated clear understanding of this term.

*bias:* The students generally demonstrated a good understanding of this term.

4. Write a brief essay on a historical question of your choosing. Some examples of historical questions are: Why were the American colonists successful in their war of independence from Great Britain? How did the Qing conquest of 1644 change Chinese administration? What was the greatest contribution to Arabic culture made by Mohammed? Do not write on one of those questions; come up with one on your own and answer it. Once again, try and be as specific as possible in your essay.

Did the student construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	0 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent)	26 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent)	74 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

The majority of the students did a fairly poor job of posing and answering a question. Most of the essays were about a paragraph long. I suspect that the students did not fully apply themselves in answering this question, mainly because there was little incentive to do so, given that the examination is ungraded. This question does not seem to be very useful to the department.

Planned improvement:

The department should consider drop or substantially revise the assessment examination in Methodology, since it does not provide much useful information. At a minimum, the department should consider dropping from the Methodology assessment examination the final question, which asks students to pose and answer a historical question. The problem with this assessment examination is that is not graded and so many students do not apply themselves.

### Primary Source Analysis Papers

In one section of the course, students used a novel as a primary source to make claims about the period in which it was written and set. The papers were assessed on five of the department's learning outcomes as follows

1. Does the paper analyze the primary source critically?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	23 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	46 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	31 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:

Require students to revise and resubmit for a grade the primary source analysis paper.

2. Does the paper cite its sources correctly?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	77 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	8 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	15 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement: None, results acceptable.

Even though students were required to resubmit papers that failed to cite sources correctly, three students failed to master the mechanics of citation despite multiple revisions.

3. Is the paper written in standard English?	
Exemplary (90-100 percent)	8 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	46 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	46 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:

Require students to revise and resubmit for a grade the primary source analysis paper.

4. Does the paper construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence from the source?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	31 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	31 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	38 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:

Require students to revise and resubmit for a grade the primary source analysis paper.

5. Does the paper demonstrate an ability to think historically?

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	31 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	38 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	31 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:

Require students to revise and resubmit for a grade the primary source analysis paper.

Dr. Keith Pacholl

### Assessment Exam

The mandatory assessment exam for Methodology was administered during the first week of the semester. Student responses to each question are analyzed below.

*1. Describe in a paragraph essay what work you have had to date in the field of history (give specific courses), and why you decided to major in history.*

Most students (63%, or 12 out of 19) had taken only survey courses upon enrolling in Methodology. Of the remaining 7, five students (26%) had taken one upper-division course in history and two (11%) had taken more than three. The majority of history majors are taking the course when they should, which is at the beginning of the upper-division coursework in their field.

While most of the students (84%) in the course are history majors, three are non-history majors (Political Science, Anthropology, Psychology). This seems to be the norm for the course, where it is not uncommon for 15-20% of the class to be comprised of non-history majors. The department needs to consider the ramifications of having non-history majors enrolled in the course and the impact this might have on assessment, if any.

Students who are history majors generally find the subject interesting and would like to pursue it as a career, whether that be as a teacher or a public historian. Most expressed a desire to learn the basic essentials of historical methodology by taking this course.

*2. Looking back at your history course work to date, what have you learned about the nature of historical study? What themes or topics have been most interest to you, and why? Try and support your general observations with specific illustrations drawn from specific courses.*

Students offered several key points about the nature of historical study. The largest number of students (42%) commented on how they have learned that history emphasizes interpretation and how many historians are often biased in their treatment of a particular subject. One student stated that “the nature of historical study is its rigorous basis in fact. However, it allows argument because omniscience is impossible. Opinions must be formed but also must be defended.” Others pointed out the complexity of history and how historians must understand the context of the past. These students emphasize that people in the past often had different values from the present and how important it is to understand their perspectives. Yet others emphasized the traditional assertion on how the past influences the future. According to one student, “Every person that lives on this planet can connect to something that has happened in the past because the past determines the future.”

Student answers to this question also reflected a wide degree of interest in historical topics. 58% indicated an interest in American history, 21% in European history, and 21% in World history. It is important to note that two students commented on their interest in Asian history, and it will be crucial for the department to replace Jonathan Goldstein – at the moment, we do not have a faculty member whose field of expertise is Asia and this is a glaring need in the department.

*3. Each of the following is a term that history students should know. Define each of them as specifically as possible.*

*historiography:*

This term continues to perplex students early in their history career. Out of 19 who took the Methodology assessment exam, 13 (68%) had no idea what the term meant. Guesses ranged from “the study of past events” to honest confessions of “I admit that I am not entirely sure what that means.” 6 students (32%) offered a slightly more complex definition of the term, including one student who defined historiography as “a writing, usually a book, that covers secondary sources that have been written on a particular subject.” It is important that Methodology continues to explain this term and offer concrete examples of historiography during the semester. I would also suggest that students be asked to define historiography when they take Senior Seminar to compare results with Methodology and assess if students have a better grasp of the term when they are about to graduate.

*plagiarism:*

Most students (95%) understood the basic concept of plagiarism, and responses generally emphasized that plagiarism included the borrowing of words and ideas without giving proper credit. According to one student, plagiarism is “adopting the intellectual property of another person, whether done so directly or by paraphrasing, without giving that person credit and calling it your own.” Methodology should continue defining and addressing the parameters of plagiarism, and in my course, I spend an entire class period discussing the issues of plagiarism and cheating.

*bias:*

If most students understood the basics of plagiarism, and most had no clue about historiography, then the definitions of bias offered the most eclectic range of responses. Two students (11%) offered insightful definitions of bias, including one who defined it as “a particular persuasion of opinion a person has about a given topic that influences how he/she thinks about the

topic, researches the topic, and presents the topic.” Nine students (47%) held a basic understanding of bias, while six students (32%) held a very limited view on the subject as typified by the comment “Bias means being more for one thing than for others.” Methodology addresses the issue of bias in some depth, so students should leave the course with a more sophisticated understanding of the subject.

*4. Write a brief essay on a historical question of your choosing. Some examples of historical questions are: Why were the American colonists successful in their war of independence from Great Britain? How did the Qing conquest of 1644 change Chinese administration? What was the greatest contribution to Arabic culture made by Mohammed? Do not write on one of those questions; come up with one on your own and answer it. Once again, try and be as specific as possible in your essay.*

Most students (89%) posed an actual question per the instructions. The questions ranged the spectrum of history, with 11 students (58%) choosing an American topic, 4 (21%) choosing a European topic, and 4 (21%) choosing a World topic. For example, one essay queried “Why is Mary Tudor nicknamed ‘Bloody Mary’” and another asked “Why did it take Brazil so long to defeat Paraguay in the Paraguayan War?”

While most students understood how to pose a historical question, their ability to answer it proved more limited. Three students (16%) wrote excellent essays, three more (16%) wrote proficient essays, and the majority (63%) wrote average essays. One student made no real effort to answer the essay, writing a 1-sentence answer to the question “Why did the United States and the Allied Powers win WWII?” The least sophisticated responses generally answered their questions in very broad terms with limited details, whereas the better essays tended to ask very specific questions and offer detailed answers with several examples. These essays are a very important part of the assessment process because it allows the instructor to see the various levels of student ability and emphasize key aspects of researching and writing during the semester. Based on the results of this exam, I plan to spend more time with my next class reviewing examples of effective essay writing and what separates the very good essays from average ones.

### **Primary Source Analysis Papers**

*1. Does the paper analyze the primary source critically?*

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	37%
Proficient (80-89 percent)	47%
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	16%
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

*Planned improvement:*

None. There are an unusually high number of A’s on the assignment: 7 out of 19. While most of the high marks were in the 90-91 range, it still is a very good showing. Students submitted their assignment six weeks into the course, and time was spent before analyzing readings and discerning key points of the various sources. I think this helped the students when it came to applying this experience to the primary source paper.

*2. Does the paper cite its sources correctly?*

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	84%
Proficient (80-89 percent)	0
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	0
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	16%

*Planned improvement:*

The assignment mandates that any papers with incorrect citations will be handed back without a grade. Initially, 63% of the students submitted a paper that was formatted incorrectly. By the end of the semester, all but three students submitted papers that were correctly cited, and the three who didn't submit a paper with correct citations continued to make mistakes in spite of submitting several drafts. Goal: continue to work towards a 100% success rate for citations.

3. *Is the paper written in standard English?*

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	16%
Proficient (80-89 percent)	53%
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	31%
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

*Planned improvement:*

This is the area where student performance is at its lowest – students tend to struggle with their writing in most history courses. Few students have much experience in writing papers at this point in their college career and this limited experience is reflected in their use of standard English. Methodology should continue to include multiple written assignments, and perhaps one of the best ways to gauge improvement would be to compare a paper written early in the course to one written at the end of the semester.

4. *Does the paper construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence from the source?*

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	42%
Proficient (80-89 percent)	42%
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	16%
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

*Planned improvement:*

None at this time. Students generally performed well in this area and most (84%) were able write persuasive arguments based on the primary source.

5. *Does the paper demonstrate an ability to think historically?*

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	47%
Proficient (80-89 percent)	42%
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	11%
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

*Planned improvement:*

None at this time. One of the questions for the assignment asked them to consider the context of the primary source, which was George Washington's *Farewell Address*. A vast majority of the students (90%) were able to contextualize the document and explain to some extent why Washington wrote the Address and how his concerns reflected significant issues of the time.

**PART II: Senior Seminar**

Spring 2013 Dr. Michael de Nie

All 14 Senior Seminar papers from the spring 2013 semester were assessed for all of the departmental learning outcomes. The results appear below:

The papers from this semester were strongest in terms of the quality of the questions being asked and in the adherence to standards of academic honesty. Four of the papers failed to adequately state a thesis, whereas seven papers offered clearly stated theses. The other papers were adequate. Four papers were considered outstanding in both the quality of research and the clarity of the writing and organization. Several others asked original and substantive questions, but failed to follow through in either the research or writing. On the whole, I was pleased by the general quality of the papers in this class, all of which incorporated the required number of primary and secondary sources, and several of which utilized an impressive depth and breadth of sources. As in past semesters, many students struggled with the historiography section of their paper, although several did offer a sophisticated analysis of relevant secondary works and made a clear case for their own contribution.

As in the past, the weakest area was in the quality of the writing and in the ability to construct an historical argument based upon concrete evidence. Below are qualitative comments regarding our learning outcomes based upon the papers written in both semesters.

**Ability to recognize and to pose significant historical questions**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	40 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	50 percent
Developing (60-79 percent)	10 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

On balance the students were very strong in this semester. I was impressed with a number of the questions, and was only disappointed in the efforts made to answer them. Students still tend to be too general with their questions and it takes a lot of working with them to help them narrow the question down to a topic that can be addressed in a single semester and with the sources available to them. One student required significant guidance in crafting their question and ended up with a topic that did not particularly interest the student.

**Ability to find useful primary and secondary sources**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	73 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	27 percent
Developing (60-79 percent)	0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

I was quite pleased with the students' diligence in gathering relevant secondary and primary resources. I believe that my requirement to identify a minimum number of sources (ten secondary and six primary) and to have a professor sign off on their preliminary bibliography were both helpful in this regard. Five of the students made very good use of the library's newspaper databases and several made impressive efforts to gather regional resources by a variety of means, including contacting state and newspaper archives in Alabama, Florida, and North Carolina. While the students demonstrated considerable proficiency in locating these sources, their utilization of them was more uneven. Some students did not adequately integrate the sources into their paper or simply failed to analyze them critically and use them to substantiate their argument.

**Ability to analyze sources critically**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	40 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	60 percent
Developing (60-79 percent)	0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Students continue to show weakness in their ability to critically analyze sources. On the whole, the papers were somewhat weaker than I would like to see in the students' ability to use primary sources as the basis for their analysis of key points. Some did not show skill in presenting primary sources as an evidentiary base for their arguments, but rather seemed to be trying simply to get them into the paper because it is a requirement, in one case simply summarizing a string of sources over the course of three or four pages. Others proved quite adept at weaving the primary sources into their argument and their paper. One paper thoroughly interrogated their sources to determine their credibility and potential bias, but the majority of papers failed to consider the limitations of the source and provide evidence to corroborate their use of it.

**Ability to cite sources properly**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	26 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	60 percent
Developing (60-79 percent)	14 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

All papers in the course adhered to the principles of academic honesty. But students continue to struggle with proper footnote and endnote citation style. Students continue to struggle with citing internet sources properly, and with punctuating properly book and article titles. Students still seem oblivious to the rules involving sources cited more than once. Having said this, the citations were in perfect order in at least three of the papers, which suggests some improvement in this category.

**Ability to write and to speak clearly**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	36 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	28 percent
Developing (60-79 percent)	36 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

The writing of the papers continues to be the greatest weakness of the students. The papers' writing ranged in quality from excellent to dreadful. I continue to be disappointed to see how many grammatical errors there were in the final drafts. Many of the papers did not articulate points clearly or were not cohesive in the construction of the argument. Several were clearly not the product of multiple revisions and drafts. Five of the papers were well-organized, clearly written, and well-argued.

I found this class of students to be strong to adequate in their oral presentations, at least in terms of their clarity, organization, and ease with public speaking. Four of the final oral presentations were quite strong, while three were very poorly organized. Several students were clearly just winging it, with no prepared presentation. The primary source presentations went rather better, with the majority of students offering clear presentations with well-chosen sources. Perhaps the brightest spot of the presentations was the number and quality of questions asked by the class.



**Ability to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	43 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	36 percent
Developing (60-79 percent)	21 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

I would say that most of the students this semester attempted to construct a thesis in the form of an answer to their research question, and most then tried to substantiate it, although with mixed success. Several of the papers offered little in the way of an argument, while some others lacked focus. Many papers were weak in the presentation and analysis of evidence for the argument. Three of the papers failed to provide a satisfactory conclusion, even if they had provided solid analysis of sources.

**Ability to think historically**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	79 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	21 percent
Developing (60-79 percent)	0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

A clear majority of the papers were reasonably good and demonstrated a strong ability to think historically. All of the papers attempted to place their arguments in historiographical context. The students' understanding of what historiography is and of the need to place their own work in the proper context continues to improve. However, some still used the historiography section to summarize the secondary literature they then used in the paper. As in past semesters, the discussions of historiography were sometimes overly general and not focused on the precise question at hand.

The Reflective Essay

Students in the course were required to write a reflective essay of 2-3 pages in length addressing the following question: What have you learned during your time as a student at West Georgia? The papers were graded and counted for 5 percent of the course grade. I did not coach the students on what to write about. I explained that it was meant to be broad so that students would reflect for themselves on what they regarded as the most important things they had learned. I also explained that the Department was very interested in what they had to say and that the essays would be used in our assessment process.

These papers generally fell into two groups, those that focused on what the student had learned as a History major, and those that discussed their university experience more generally. Those that fell in the first category were complimentary of the History Department, remarking favorably on the relationships they had developed with the professors and their willingness to assist and guide students. Students discussed the various skills they had learned as History majors, such as critical thinking, writing, and time management. A few were particularly thoughtful in regard to the purpose of studying History, such as the student who wrote, "History decontextualized is not history at all, but a series of mildly entertaining anecdotes without any real meaning and therefore without any implications for life." All of the students expressed a deep interest in the subject of History, even those who intended to pursue careers in other fields.

The papers that tended to focus more on the general university experience were on the whole somewhat pessimistic, expressing some degree of disillusionment. Many of the students seemed to have no idea what they would do after graduation, and several had experienced various financial, health, and family crises during their tenure at the University of West Georgia. Others were more hopeful and rightfully proud of themselves for having overcome various obstacles to their degree.

Aside from the one student who failed to turn in a paper, I felt that the class took the assignment seriously and offered sincere and uncensored evaluations of their time at the University. In general, as in past semesters, the writing was clearer and freer of errors than in the research papers. Students appear very comfortable when they are writing more personally and in their own voice.

Fall 2013

## **PART II: Senior Seminar**

Fall 2013 (Dr. Williams)

All of the Senior Seminar papers were assessed as described below.

### **Ability to cite sources properly**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	44 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	45 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	11 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:

I would suggest including a short, basic review of Chicago style citation methods at the beginning of this course. A short quiz or take-home assignment on Chicago-style footnoting near the beginning of the semester might be helpful for many students.

Additional comments:

Twenty-five percent of students who took this class did not complete their senior seminar papers, but the data that I present in this report assesses only the 75 percent of students in the class who did complete their assignments. I would like to figure out a way to get a higher percentage of students to complete their papers. One way that I intend to do that is to require a complete first draft of the paper – and to make it a graded assignment – at an earlier point in the semester. I also intend to implement additional graded checkpoints on the project at earlier stages of the semester, because I think that there is strong evidence that those midterm assignments have a positive effect on students' completion rates. For instance, all of the students who gave a research presentation also produced a finished paper.

Most of the students who completed their papers demonstrated basic knowledge of Chicago-style citation. All of the papers contained footnotes. However, most of the student papers also included at least a few citation errors. Some of the papers lacked a sufficient number of citations, and a number of others contained citations with formatting errors. All of the students should have learned how to footnote in their Methodology course, but I think that some of them never fully

mastered the technique. For that reason, I think that I'll give the students a citation review quiz when I teach the Senior Seminar class again.

### **Ability to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of a particular historical question**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	23 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	33 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	44 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:  
None.

Additional comments:

A few of the students demonstrated the ability to research a topic in detail, but many others did not consult as many sources on their topic as I had hoped. Some of the students who did not research their topic sufficiently may have chosen too broad of a topic or may have lacked the ability to consult the necessary primary sources, but for most, their failure to research a topic in detail resulted from time constraints or time management issues. When I teach this class again, I'll devote more attention at the beginning of the semester to a discussion of time management, and I'll create a detailed timeline suggesting various deadlines for completing some of the different stages of research. I'll also require students to meet with me for individual consultation at a midpoint during the semester so that I can assess their progress and give them additional help in completing their projects.

### **Ability to recognize and to pose significant historical questions**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	39 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	28 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	33 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:  
None.

Additional comments:

We spent a lot of time in the early weeks of the semester discussing how to formulate good historical questions, and I'm pleased with the results of those discussions. More than one-third of the students who completed their papers demonstrated exemplary skills in this area. There is certainly some room for improvement in this area, so when I teach this class again, I may meet individually with students who seem unable to pose significant historical questions to see if I can help them to work through the process and improve their skills in this area. But on the whole, I think that a substantial number of students in the Senior Seminar have demonstrated the ability to recognize what a good historical question is.

### **Ability to find useful primary and secondary sources**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	17 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	39 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	39 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	5 percent

Planned improvement:

I believe that all students should be required to meet with a faculty advisor in their relevant field of study during the first month of the semester, and that they should be required to seek the faculty advisor's approval for their source list. Perhaps we can create a uniform set of guidelines that faculty advisors can use to assess these source lists and offer feedback. I think that it is important for students to know at an early stage of their research projects whether they have selected appropriate sources for their topics. This is often a question that faculty whose research areas lie well outside of a particular subject area cannot answer, so for that reason, I think that it is important to create a system that will allow instructors for this course to call upon the expertise of colleagues who may be better acquainted than they are with the particular subject areas that students in this class select for their research papers.

Additional comments:

A few of our students are excellent researchers, but most did not do as much research for their papers as they probably should have, and several of them seemed to be unaware of some of the most important primary or secondary sources in their field of study. I think that additional consultations with their faculty advisors would be helpful in making improvements in this area. Although I can certainly give students guidance in the areas of history that relate closely to my own research fields, I'm at a disadvantage when it comes to paper topics that are well outside of my own areas of study. I think that the same is probably true for all faculty who teach this class. If we study twentieth-century history instead of Renaissance Florence, for instance, we probably won't be able to determine whether a student has consulted all available primary sources on the Medici family. That's why it's important to encourage (and probably require) students to meet with faculty advisors in their field to discuss sources for their papers.

**Ability to analyze sources critically**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	17 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	34 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	49 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:

None.

Additional comments:

A few students demonstrated the ability to analyze sources critically and consider their point of view, but most students seemed a little naïve in their willingness to accept sources' claims at face value without discussing the point of view of those sources. Frankly, I was a little surprised to find this, because I think that all of our upper-level classes – and certainly, the Methodology course – train students in the critical analysis of primary source documents. Indeed, many of our survey classes do that as well. The Senior Seminar class incorporates this training as well, since all students must give primary source presentations during the first six weeks of the semester. Those

presentations include discussions of how to analyze those sources critically and use them as source material for a research project.

In my view, students are already getting a great deal of training in this area, but as I contemplate ways to expand on this training, I think that it may be useful to talk about critical analysis of sources when students submit the first drafts of their paper. That may be a point when students can talk with each other about their use of primary sources, and can discuss their interpretations of those sources with the class.

**Ability to write standard English**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	22 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	39 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	39 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:  
None.

Additional comments:

A few of our students are very talented writers, while others are still struggling to master the basics of standard written English. Most are somewhere in between; they're capable of communicating an idea in an understandable way, but their papers nevertheless contain a number of grammatical errors and awkward syntactical constructions.

I noticed that for the peer-reviewed written assignments in this course, students were quite proficient at catching grammatical errors in other students' papers, so I think that perhaps encouraging students to proof-read their paper more carefully and suggesting that they ask a friend to review their papers might be helpful. Given the time constraints of this class, there is a limit to what I can do in this course to teach students how to write, but perhaps some additional discussions of writing technique would be a good idea.

**Ability to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	28 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	17 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	55 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:  
None.

Additional comments:

Many of the students demonstrated an excellent understanding of what makes a good historical argument. Some of them failed to marshal enough evidence to make their argument sufficiently *persuasive*, but I nevertheless think that a large number of the students at least know how to recognize a good historical argument when they see one. The class workshops that focused on analyzing and critiquing students' papers helped students improve their skills in this area a great deal, I think. I plan to run those workshops again the next time that I teach this course.

Given the fact that many students seem to have learned how to recognize a good historical argument – yet still have trouble making a persuasive argument themselves – I will probably try to spend more time talking with the students about the sort of evidence they might need to make their arguments more convincing.

**Ability to think historically**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	17 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	39 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	44 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:  
None.

Additional comments:

Despite the instruction that they have received in this area, I think that many of our students still have trouble imagining the historical context of the documents and other sources that they consult and approaching those sources from a historical perspective. Historical thinking is not a skill that one can develop instantaneously, so it's difficult for a single class to correct deficiencies in this area, but I think that if I include more discussion about the questions that historians ask when they do research, I might be able to help students strengthen their abilities to think like historians.

**Ability to make an effective ten-minute oral presentation**

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	44 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	45 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	11 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Planned improvement:  
None.

Additional comments:

In general, I was very pleased with the students' ability to present their work in the form of an oral presentation. Most of the students created well organized PowerPoint presentations, and many of them demonstrated good oral delivery skills. They generally did a good job of fielding questions. The strong oral presentation skills that our students demonstrated will serve them well in their future careers. Approximately 50 percent or more of the students plan to become high school history teachers shortly after graduation, so the fact that they have mastered the skill of conveying information through well organized, succinct PowerPoint presentations bodes well for their future teaching prospects.

**The Reflective Essay**

Students in the course were required to write a reflective essay of 2-3 pages in length addressing the following question: What have you learned during your time as a student at West Georgia? The papers were graded and counted for 5 percent of the course grade. Salient points from the essays include the following:

*On the need for better career training for students:*

"The Anthropology department has a class that Juniors and Seniors are required to take that I think the History department should look into creating. It's a class that teaches students how to write resumes, cover letters, and Curriculum Vitae. It also shows how to search for jobs and graduate schools. I know that the university offers workshops about things like that, but I think that it should be a required class that students have to take starting their Sophomore year."

*Similarly, another student wrote:*

"A course on understanding how a history major can advance into graduate studies would have been appreciated."

*On the need for a class designed for students preparing to be high school teachers:*

"Although I find myself grateful for my experience at UWG, I do have a few changes that I believe would be beneficial to the program in the future. As an education student, I feel that the history department could benefit from offering upper level classes on how to teach history according to the Georgia performance standards as well as ways to keep students engaged in learning history. I know that majority of the history majors are not concentrating in education so there may be a need for only one course option each semester. I know that this option would have been a great one for me and I would have enjoyed the opportunity to learn how to teach from my history professors rather than the education professors in the COE, because many of those are not historians."

*On the need for more historiography seminars for undergraduates:*

"I think when I got into my major field I thought it would be more heavily focused on the actual content of what we were studying, like dates and facts. What I did not know is that I would have to deal with historiography throughout my career as an undergraduate. I guess before I had never thought about studying history through the eyes of other scholars, but I do think that it helps understand where the specific field is going and the fact that I learned about it before I took senior seminar really helped when I wrote my senior paper. However, I really wish that historiography was more heavily stressed in the lower level history classes and that they required all history majors to do a class on it around the time that students take methodology. I took historiography of the Caribbean this semester along with senior seminar and I really wish I had done the class earlier in my college career because it would have helped me prepare better to write the senior paper. I think most students have a difficult time with historiography and I think making this class required before students go into their senior seminar class would make the paper just a little easier on everyone."

*On the value of class presentations:*

"I also wish that history classes would do more presentations on research papers. All of the experiences I have had with presenting in front of class have been great and also made me even more comfortable talking in public. I think by having students do more presentations in class it will help if they plan on being teachers in the future."

*Another student wrote this about the value of class presentations:*

"In addition to being able to write a scholarly paper, I have also learned the importance of giving a public presentation. I have discovered that an important part of being a historian is not only being well researched, but also being able to convey my argument and ideas in public presentations. The speaking skills I have learned will allow me to have confidence to deliver the best presentation I can, as well as help me better present my arguments. I have learned that I am able to present information to others in a meaningful way, and I believe that this will help me in a career in education."

*On the value of collaborative assignments:*

"I have also learned that one of the most important skills that anybody can learn is being able to work with others to achieve a common goal. In many group projects as well as tutoring sessions, I have learned the value of being able to communicate and learn from other students. The constructive criticism that has been offered by my classmates has always been helpful in revising my work. Also, being able to have fellow students to help me has been a vital part of my academic success."

*On the value of primary-source-based assignments:*

"The high school curriculum for history tends to focus on the memorization of key facts that can be easily tested on multiple choice standardized testing. One of the first lessons I learned was that history is just not one universally accepted factual story, but instead a field that has competing arguments and many subfields of scholarship. At first, I struggled with grasping how I could ever possibly write a paper which could compete with professional scholars. Different professors encouraged me to challenge existing scholarship, if I did not agree with it. With this encouragement, I began to learn the entire research process. Overall, I still relied on secondary sources from scholars to compose the majority of the main body of my research papers. Dr. Pacholl in his New American Republic class required the class to write a research paper using only primary sources. The goal of the assignment was to force students to engage with only primary sources and craft their own original arguments. I wrote a research paper about the political beliefs of George Washington during the 1780's, and now reflecting back on this work, it was a pretty weak piece of scholarship. This assignment still raised my confidence as a historian. I started to believe that I could actually engage with primary sources and write original and well-crafted research papers. During the past few years, I firmly know that my skills as a historian have grown and that I am not afraid to argue against an existing historical theory, if I do not entirely accept it."

A number of students spoke of the value of the Methodology class and said that it was essential for students to take that class in their sophomore year before taking upper-level courses. Several students said that they entered college believing that historical study consisted only of the memorization of historical facts, and that it was while their survey courses partially disabused them of this notion, it was really the Methodology class that taught them how to use primary source materials to form arguments and how to begin doing the work of a historian. It appears, based on students' comments, that Methodology is an extremely valuable class.

*On the value of public history internships for undergraduates:*

"For the last two years, my days at the school have been full between my load of classes and my job at the Center for Public History. The job at the Center was the greatest thing to happen to me at this school. I am able to have hands-on experience with working in public history and I have worked on many projects that I have been able to use to add experience to my resume. I have had the opportunity to learn which aspects of the business I really enjoy, and those that I would like to avoid. For the most part, I love the public history field and I feel confident in the choice I have made pertaining to my career goal. Working in the Center has provided me with various opportunities to see the inner workings of the public history field. Making connections has become extremely important to further my career and I have been able to accomplish that during my time at UWG. I signed up to do an internship as one of my classes with the help of Dr. McCleary and Dr. Hebert. I was able to get an internship at Chieftains Museum/Major Ridge Home in Rome. It was perfect for me because it was in my field of study, as well as my area of interest. It was also in my hometown, so the drive time was cut significantly. After interning at the museum for the summer, I learned how much it takes to run and preserve a historic place, but I also learned that I love working in this



field. Without the help of the University of West Georgia and the Center for Public History, I would not have had the chance to fulfill my career goal.”

*On the value of the foreign language requirement and Study Abroad programs:*

“When I changed majors from nursing to history, I had to choose a minor and finish my foreign language. I chose the German language. Through the excellence of the professors, I had come to love the German language as much as I had come to love history. It also opened a new opportunity for me. I was able to study abroad in Germany and it resulted in a change of life style and frame of mind. I feel that the German department changed me in a way that I reflected on my individual position in the ever evolving world. The opportunity changed my life forever.”

*Numerous students praised the willingness of history professors to help their students, and they appreciated the fact that we're happy to see students during our office hours. A number of students commented on the help that they received from professors in improving their writing skills.*

*Here's one such comment:*

“One of the things I remember that was told to me in high school by more than one of my teachers there was that “in college, you won’t get the one-on-one student attention that you get here”. They said that the college teachers don’t care if you do the work or pass or fail. I have found this to not be one-hundred percent true. Not only have the majority of my professors here at the University of West Georgia been willing to help me if I needed help or had questions, but they do want to see the students succeed. I have found that my professors have been more than happy to help me over the years. If you take time to go by their offices for help and are willing to work and study, they recognize this and will help you get out everything you put into the subject. My college professors actually had more time for me than any of my high school teachers.”

### **Part III: Core Courses**

#### **A. HIST 1111**

##### **Overview:**

In the Fall 2013 semester, I assessed my section of World Civilizations 1 (HIST 1111 01) on the basis of the following Georgia Board of Regents approved learning outcome:

- Students will demonstrate the ability to understand the political, social, economic, or cultural dimensions of world history.

I have established several related learning outcomes particular to my sections for students who completed the class successfully. They are:

- Students will demonstrate introductory knowledge of pivotal trends and issues in global history.
- Students will demonstrate improved abilities in processing and analyzing information from historical sources.
- Students will demonstrate improved skills at crafting written arguments based on information from historical sources.

The Assessment Instrument:

In order to assess student achievement, I used the following writing-based instrument:

Craft a well-organized and well-argued essay responding to the question below.

Your essay must be in proper format, meaning it must have an introduction that states a clear argument and how you intend to prove it, a series of body paragraphs that use evidence from readings and lecture to support your argument, and a conclusion that restates your argument and its broader significance.

The three books all focus on heroes and heroines whose words and deeds exemplify central values and beliefs of the cultures that created them. What are the most important distinctions between the texts when it comes to heroes and values, and why? What do those differences reveal about the larger societies and cultures that produced the three works? In relating specific aspects of the books to the larger historical context, make sure to discuss directly at least one political, social, economic, or cultural dimension for each case.

Students crafted essays responding to the above question as part of their final exam basing their arguments on materials from in-class lectures and discussions as well the three books assigned during the second half of the semester.

The Assessment Rubric:

Their responses were evaluated first on a 50-point scale, thus establishing a raw score. That score was then broken down into a four point scale as follows: below 30 = 1 (developing); 30-34 = 2 (needs improvement); 35-44 = 3 (met expectations); 45-50 = 4 (exceeded expectations).

The rubric numbers correspond with traditional letter grades in the following manner: 1 = F range; 2 = D range; 3 = C through B range; 4 = A range.

In the course syllabus, I provided students with the following description of letter grades:

- Grading Criteria

Assignment and final grades reflect your mastery of assigned materials, specifically lectures and readings.

In general, “A” grades reflect totally excellent work—work that is well written, well organized, and well argued; work that avoids summarizing and instead integrates lecture and reading material into a deep analysis. “A” work contains no factual errors, excellent writing with no mistakes in spelling, grammar, or organization, and displays complete mastery of the main issues of our class.

“B” grades indicate good work—work that mixes analysis with summary. “B” work contains few factual errors, good writing with few mistakes in spelling, grammar, or organization, and displays a good command of the main issues of our class.

“C” grades indicate average work that offers only summary and lacks analysis and organization. “C” work contains some factual errors, average writing with some mistakes in spelling, grammar, or organization, and displays an average command of the main issues of our class. Something to think about: a “C” reflects summarizing of the material (the questions of who, what, and when)—“B” and “A” indicate you have gone beyond mere summary to address the crucial questions of why and how.

“D” grades reflect poor work that fails to demonstrate a mastery of assigned material. “D” work contains many factual errors, poor writing with many mistakes in spelling, grammar, or organization, and displays a less-than-average mastery of the main issues of our class.

“F” grades reflect work that fails to achieve any of the above criteria and display no mastery of assigned materials whatsoever.

Assessment Results for HIST 1111 01 (Fall 2013):

Student:	Raw Score (out of 50):	Rubric:
1	44	3
2	42	3
3	46	4
4	44	3
5	41	3
6	44	3
7	44	3
8	50	4
9	45	4
10	39	3
11	40	3
12	47	4
13	36	3
14	37	3
15	37	3
16	40	3
17	39	3
18	44	3
19	40	3
20	42	3
21	39	3
22	46	4
23	40	3

24	25	1
25	35	3
26	36	3
27	36	3
28	39	3
29	47	4
30	37	3
31	36	3
32	35	3
33	39	3
34	42	3
35	0	1

Rubric Score:	#of Instances:	Percentage:
4	6	17.14%
3	27	77.14%
2	0	0%
1	2	5.71%

**Application of Results:**

I will be sharing these results with the History Department’s HIST 1111 Survey Assessment Committee (SAC) as the basis of a discussion regarding learning techniques in the classroom. Based on my last assessment of HIST 1111 (Spring 2012), I have adjusted my instrument, linking it more clearly to the Georgia Board of Regents Approved Learning Outcome. I am now using it twice during semester—as part of the midterm as well as the final exams so as to create a pre- and post-assessment process. I also connected other written assignments in the class to the Learning Outcome. In addition, I have revised my written overview of writing for my class and have distributed the revised edition for the first time in the Spring 2014 semester.

**B. HIST 1112**

Fall 2013

Newnan

Exemplary (90-100 percent)

28 percent

Proficient (80-89 percent)

20 percent

Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	40 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	12 percent

Planned improvement: Revise curriculum to eliminate those primary sources that have not proven successful with students.

Carrollton	
Exemplary (90-100 percent)	33 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	33 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	25 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	8 percent

Planned improvement: Revise curriculum to eliminate those primary sources that have not proven successful with students.

### C. HIST 2111

Fall 2013

Learning Outcome for HIST 2111

“Students will demonstrate the ability to think historically through understanding of the political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of United States history; comprehension of causal relationships and patterns of change and continuity over time; and awareness of the social significance of ethnicity, gender, race, and class in historical events and study.”

Assessment of Learning Outcome

To assess the above learning outcome, HIST 2111 students are required to write an essay that examines the pamphlet *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine. The essay requires students to emphasize several aspects of the learning outcome, including the political context of Paine’s pamphlet and how it reflects changing values of the eighteenth century. Students are required to write a 3-paragraph (minimum) essay that develops the various themes found in the reading. A total of 29 students completed the essay. Essays are then assigned a score based on the four-point scale described below:

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	28 percent (8 students)
Proficient (80-89 percent)	31 percent (9 students)
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	38 percent (11 students)
Unacceptable (below 69 percent)	3 percent (1 student)

Below is a breakdown of the results:

Almost 60% of the students performed at a high level. Their essays generally offered detailed analysis of the reading and included examples from the document to support their main points. Students in this category reflected an ability to think historically by explaining the political significance of *Common Sense* and making connections to significant changes taking place in American thought during the debate over Independence.

Unfortunately, over 40% of the class did not perform at a high level, with most of these essays providing very limited analysis of the reading and lacking a historical understanding of Paine’s document. They often focused on only one theme of the reading and/or offered minimal support for the points they did make. They often failed to connect the reading to broader currents taking place in Revolutionary America.

### Plans for Improvement

This assessment was assigned during the first month of the class, and this might explain why some students did not perform at a high level. They simply did not have enough time to develop the skills of analyzing documents and developing historical significance of primary sources. In future classes, it would be advisable to assign the assessment later in the semester. This would give the class time to practice on several documents early in the semester and receive feedback on how to critically analyze historical sources. If the assessment is given toward the end of the semester, the number of students performing at a higher level should increase.

### **D. HIST 2112**

Fall 2013

Learning Outcome for HIST 2112

“Students will demonstrate the ability to think historically through understanding of the political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of United States history; comprehension of causal relationships and patterns of change and continuity over time; and awareness of the social significance of ethnicity, gender, race, and class in historical events and study.”

Assessment of Learning Outcome

To assess the above learning outcome, HIST 2112 students are required to write an analytical response to a primary source reading. The essay requires students to analyze the document’s audience, author, and internal logic. Students are also asked to compare the document with other course materials in order to contextualize the information provided. Students are required to write a 3-paragraph (minimum) essay that develops the various themes found in the reading.

Essays are then assigned a score based on the following scale:

4 = Exemplary (90-100%)

3 = Proficient (80-89%)

2 = Developing / Does not meet Expectations (60-79%)

1 = Unacceptable (below 60%)

A total of 16 students completed the essay. Below is a breakdown of the results:

4 = 28% (4 students)

3 = 57% (8 students)

2 = 14% (2 students)

1 = 3% (1 student)

28% of the students performed at a high level. Their essays generally offered detailed analysis of the reading and included examples from the document to support their main points. Students in this category reflected an ability to think historically by explaining the significance of their document and relating that document to broader trends in the historical literature. The majority of the class scored at a level of proficiency or higher. Only 3% of students assessed failed to meet expectations.

Plans for Improvement

This assessment demonstrates that HIST 2112's 2012 plan for improvement has yielded some improvements in student performance. Since 2012, HIST 2112 instructors have incorporated additional primary source analytical assignments throughout the semester that have better prepared students to succeed during assessment. Individual class periods are also devoted to helping students acquire analytical skills required to achieve proficiency on this assignment.

In 2014, HIST 2112 instructors shall try to improve student performance by providing students with additional opportunities to use primary and secondary source analysis as a means of understanding and communicating historical understanding. Instructors shall incorporate additional analytical writing assignments throughout the semester to provide students with additional opportunities to demonstrate how their skills may have changed during the semester. Such improvements will involve explicitly incorporating analytical demonstrations into course lectures and providing students chances to work through these problems verbally in groups as part of course discussions.

#### **Part IV: HIST 3500 Caribbean Historiography, Fall 2013 (Dr. Vasconcellos)**

I only had a total of 10 students in class, which could have been a result of the course title being listed as Junior Historiography Seminar rather than Caribbean Historiography. 2 students in the course were enrolled in Senior Seminar at the same time as my course, but the remaining 8 had some time before they enrolled in the latter. All students agreed that the course was beneficial in helping them prepare for Senior Seminar, and appreciated that the department had created this course with that in mind.

#### **Assignments:**

1. 750-1000 word Traditional Book Review of Kris Lane's *Pillaging the Empire*
2. 6-8 pg Comparative Book Review of Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* and Seymour Drescher's *Econocide*
3. Revised 6-8 pg Comparative Book Review
4. 5pg Essay on the Debates Concerning Slave Acculturation in the Caribbean
5. 5pg Essay on Marcus Garvey and Black Nationalism in the Atlantic World
6. An Annotated Bibliography of 20 Secondary Sources
7. 3 pg Prospectus
8. Revised 3 pg Prospectus

The most challenging assignments for my students were the book reviews and the prospectus, and we spent a great deal of class time discussing how to approach each assignment in addition to discussing the class material related to those assignments. Where the book reviews were concerned, some students relied more on narrative and summary than critical analysis of the works being reviewed. I also found that revisions were next to none, and most students simply turned in the same paper and did not do any revisions at all, which was frustrating. However, some students did take the comments to heart and did revise their work. As for the prospectus, many found it difficult to choose and narrow down a topic for their prospectus. Although we spent an entire day on how to craft a prospectus, those students not already taking Senior Seminar found the assignment to be an intimidating one. They agreed that the Annotated Bibliography assignment aided them in placing that topic into the current historiography, but they still struggled with the assignment as a whole. Again, as was the case with the Comparative Book Review, little effort went into the revised draft for most students.

#### Assessment:

- 4 = Exemplary (90-100%)
- 3 = Proficient (80-89%)
- 2 = Developing / Does not meet Expectations (60-79%)
- 1 = Unacceptable (below 60%)

#### Results:

- 4 = 30% (3 students)
- 3 = 30% (3 students)
- 2 = 20% (2 students)
- 1 = 20% (2 students)

60% of the students in the class performed at a high level. They took the class seriously, participated in the class discussion, and improved as the class progressed. The 2 students who were also enrolled in Senior Seminar that semester naturally made an A in the course, as they knew how to approach the assignments and they proved to be a great help to those students who were a little lost. 40% of the class proved to be disappointing, as 2 students stopped coming to class around mid-terms and 2 other students turned in every single assignment at least two days late. That said, if those 2 students had turned in their assignments on time, they likely would have made a low B or a very high C in the course.

#### Moving Forward:

In terms of moving forward with this class, I think it is necessary to add a few more things to the syllabus to help with those assignments my students struggled with this semester. In fact, adding a few things from my Methodology course to this course may be beneficial. For instance, I think adding an assignment asking students to find a book review that they would then discuss with the rest of the class in terms of what makes it a good book review would be a good idea. Furthermore, I think focusing on the prospectus more from the start of the class would also be a good idea. Therefore, I will have them submit a topic, thesis statement, list of sources, etc. at various points of the semester to help them think about the prospectus more throughout the semester.

Lastly, I will begin to incorporate more of these assignments into my other upper division courses as well. From now on, I am going to require students to do an Annotated Bibliography ahead of their research papers, which I think will aid them in thinking about how their paper fits into the current historiography. I will also require all students to include a paragraph or two of historiographical discussion in their papers.

#### **Part V: Recommendations**

1. Require Methodology students to revise and resubmit for a grade one paper in the course.
2. In Senior Seminar instructors should consider including a short, basic review of Chicago style citation methods at the beginning of this course. A short quiz or take-home assignment on Chicago-style footnoting near the beginning of the semester might be helpful for many students. (Dr. Williams)
3. In Senior Seminar instructors should consider requiring all students required to meet with a faculty advisor in their relevant field of study during the first month of the semester, and



that they should be required to seek the faculty advisor's approval for their source list. Perhaps we can create a uniform set of guidelines that faculty advisors can use to assess these source lists and offer feedback. I think that it is important for students to know at an early stage of their research projects whether they have selected appropriate sources for their topics. This is often a question that faculty whose research areas lie well outside of a particular subject area cannot answer, so for that reason, I think that it is important to create a system that will allow instructors for this course to call upon the expertise of colleagues who may be better acquainted than they are with the particular subject areas that students in this class select for their research papers. (Dr. Williams)

4. In HIST 3500, instructors should consider adding an assignment asking students to find a book review that they would then discuss with the rest of the class in terms of what makes it a good book review would be a good idea. Furthermore, I think focusing on the prospectus more from the start of the class would also be a good idea. (Dr. Vasconcellos)
5. HIST 1112: Revise curriculum to eliminate those primary sources that have not proven successful with students.
6. HIST 2111: Perform the assessment later during the semester.
7. HIST 2112: In 2014, instructors shall try to improve student performance by providing students with additional opportunities to use primary and secondary source analysis as a means of understanding and communicating historical understanding. Instructors shall incorporate additional analytical writing assignments throughout the semester to provide students with additional opportunities to demonstrate how their skills may have changed during the semester. Such improvements will involve explicitly incorporating analytical demonstrations into course lectures and providing students chances to work through these problems verbally in groups as part of course discussions.
8. HIST 1111: No change recommended; results satisfactory