

Assessment Report for Undergraduate Education 2014

The following assessment report is divided into four 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 offers recommendations.

Part I: Methodology

Dr. Pacholl

Sections taught in Spring (sections 01D and 02D) and Fall 2014 (section 01D)

The following assessment report is based on three sections of Methodology taught by me in 2014. In Spring 2014, I taught two sections: 01D (17 students), 02D (17 students), and in Fall 2014, I taught one section (16 students), for a total of 50 students who completed all three courses.

Primary Source Analysis Papers

Students in all three classes analyzed George Washington's *Farewell Address*. The following numbers are based on 42 students who actually completed the assignment:

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

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 33% |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 57% |
| Developing (60-79 percent) | 10% |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 |

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

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

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

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 24% |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 47% |
| Developing (60-79 percent) | 29% |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 |

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

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 36% |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 45% |
| Developing (60-79 percent) | 19% |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 |

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

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 31% |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 59% |
| Developing (60-79 percent) | 10% |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 |

Suggested improvements

1. Discontinue the Assessment Exam that is given at the beginning of the semester. Those teaching Methodology have unanimously agreed that this exam has not yielded any tangible improvements for the course.
2. Since the department is undergoing a review of its assessment practices, Methodology assessment should also be reassessed. In the 2015-16 academic year, faculty teaching Methodology should meet to discuss Methodology assessment, revise the current assessment techniques, and present their findings to the rest of the department.

Dr. Vasconcellos

Summer 2014: July Session

I taught Methodology to 4 students (3 History majors, 1 Political Science major) during the July Session of Summer 2014 as a partially online course, with the majority of the class taking place in Courseden's online discussion forums. This was my first semester teaching the course as a partially online course, having taught it twice previously in the more traditional face to face setting. I am not sure why enrollment was so low, but I suspect it is a result of one or more of 3 factors: (1) the section was taught during the most unpopular session of the summer (2) substantial cuts to Pell Grant funding leave students with only two semesters of funding and they naturally choose Fall and Spring and/or (3) the partially online format.

That said, I do feel that the partially online format was effective. Face to face days were devoted to hands on activities such as learning citation format and finding/analyzing sources, as well as discussions of bias, plagiarism, and historiography. Online days were spent taking quizzes, discussing readings and the various subfields of history, and participating in discussion activities involving different types of sources and assignments. After discussing this change in format from a traditional face to face class to a partially online class with my students, we all agreed that it was an effective use of their time and they enjoyed the change in format. They did note that they did not like that the class was offered during the July session, arguing that the last session is inconvenient for them.

Assessment Exam

I administered the mandatory assessment exam online during the first week of class, giving students a deadline of 24 hours. Student responses to each question are analyzed below.

1. *Define the study of history and how you perceive it. Exactly what do historians do, and why do we do it?*

Students generally understood that our field revolved around historical inquiry and a study of the past, but their analysis of exactly what we do and why we do it did not go much further than that.

One student mentioned that it is our job to “find the truth” in the past, while another quoted the popular “those who do not understand history are doomed to repeat it.” However, no student offered much thought on what we do and how we do it beyond a few sentences.

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

- *Historiography*: none of the four students understood what historiography was
- *Plagiarism*: Students had a solid understanding of plagiarism and all four mentioned that one must cite their sources in order to avoid it. They all compared it to theft, with one even mentioning intellectual property.
- *Bias*: Each student characterized bias as not being open-minded with the subject or material, or having an agenda of some kind while reading/researching sources.

3. *What is Public History, and how does a Public Historian differ from a non-Public Historian?* None of the students questioned had a clear understanding of what public history was or how the two historians differ, although two mentioned museums. So, they understood a very basic idea, but could not really articulate a clear answer.

4. *What is a primary source? Give five examples of different types of primary sources.* Most students had a clear understanding of what primary sources were, although only 2 out of the 4 could give 5 examples. 1 student gave 4 examples, while the fourth gave 3.

5. *What is a secondary source? Give three examples of different types of secondary sources.* Students answered this question effectively, and gave three good examples.

6. *In your opinion, what makes a good book review? What should a book review tell the reader?* Each student noted that a summary must be given of the book’s subject, but very little was mentioned regarding how a book should be analyzed in the review. Each student did mention audience, and one student mentioned sources.

Finally, in at least two paragraphs, write a short bio about yourself:

- *Why did you become a history major?*
- *What specific history courses have you had to date?*
- *Looking back at your history course work to date, what have you learned about the nature of historical study? Try to support your general observations with specific illustrations drawn from specific courses*
- *What themes or topics have been of most interest to you, and why?*
- *How will you use your degree in history? Will you go on to graduate school, or will you teach?*
- *Is there anything you would like to add?*

Of the four, one student was a senior, while the other three were early juniors. Each student had taken a few upper division courses before taking Methodology, and one stated that she wished she had taken Methodology sooner. Two students were pursuing a history degree with a concentration in secondary education, and each noted that they were thinking of obtaining a graduate degree as well. My political science major was planning on pursuing an MA in Public Policy (and he is currently enrolled at UWG), and my final student was interested in becoming a commercial airline pilot in Asia after graduation. My political science major took the class because it is a suggested part of his program in POLS to take a methodology course in another discipline.

In the past, we have discussed limiting methodology to just history majors. I have always been in favor of this, especially during the semesters when we had a large number of students waiting for a spot in methodology, largely because our disciplines do have some differences in approach and POLS students have no experience with the Chicago citation format. This semester, I began to feel differently. My POLS student worked just as hard as my other students, did not complain about learning Chicago format, and he offered an interesting perspective throughout the semester. As a result, class discussion had a nice interdisciplinary feel and I think everyone got something out of it. So, it seems my feelings on this have changed. I still agree that it seems a fool's errand to teach Chicago format to someone outside of our discipline, but it was beneficial for our students to think outside of the box during class meetings. I think students from both disciplines got something out of it this semester.

Primary Source Analysis Paper

Students were required to analyze a primary source document that they found themselves in one of the databases housed on the Ingram Library website, and write a 2-3 page analysis of that document. Each student was asked to (1) give a brief summary of the document to provide context (2) discuss the document's main themes and points, and provide examples from the reading for each theme and point discussed and (3) discuss the audience and the purpose of this document. Furthermore, each student was asked to provide footnotes for one direct quote, one paraphrased statement, and one blocked quote of text.

The assessment was based on the following rubric:

1. Does the paper analyze the primary source critically?

Exemplary (90-100 percent) 25 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent) 50 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent) 25 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent) 0 percent

2. Does the paper cite its sources correctly?

Exemplary (90-100 percent) 50 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent) 0 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent) 25 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent) 25 percent

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

Exemplary (90-100 percent) 50 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent) 50 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent) 0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent) 0 percent

4. Is the paper written clearly and persuasively?

Exemplary (90-100 percent) 50 percent
Proficient (70-89 percent) 50 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent) 0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent) 0 percent

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

Exemplary (90-100 percent) 25 percent

Proficient (70-89 percent) 75 percent

Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-69 percent) 0 percent

Unacceptable (below 60 percent) 0 percent

Although two of the papers were summary heavy, students generally provided good historical analysis of their documents and seemed to feel comfortable thinking historically. Each paper was well-written, with two of the papers having some grammatical and style errors throughout. Two students had a good grasp of the Chicago format in their footnotes, while one student (my POLS major) struggled, and one didn't even try. Two students had a hard time with blocked quotes, with one blocking every single quote they cited no matter the length. I was disappointed that one student did not even attempt to cite his footnotes properly, but he did not seem to take the class too seriously the entire semester.

I have marinated as to whether I should assign one specific document for this assignment or to continue letting them choose their own. I have decided to leave it their choice. I feel that this has benefits beyond the main goals of the assignment, as searching for their own document allows them to become familiar with the holdings of our own library, and they can improve their research skills in the process. I also enjoyed having a variety of documents summarized and analyzed, and I think the students enjoyed being able to read something from their preferred period of history. I do think that I will require students to choose something from outside of their preferred period of history, not only to expose them to something different, but also to give them experience finding similar topics of interest in different subfields of history.

For this assignment, I also had each student present a document to the rest of the class in the online discussion forums, requiring each student to not only briefly summarize the document but an argument as well. They then had to comment at least once on each of their fellow's posts, and respond to at least one comment made to their original post. This was by far the most enjoyable part of the assignment for all of us, as the students had a very detailed discussion of four separate historical documents on four very different topics. As was the case with the other class discussion days, I found that I did not have to prod students to participate, and the discussion continued long after the posting deadline.

Reflecting back on the course as a whole, I feel that three of the four students grew and progressed as writers and class participants, and each improved greatly in their ability to think historically. I think part of that is because of how the course is designed, but I also think that the partially online format helped students overcome some of their fears in participating in face to face class discussions. The first few traditional class meetings were a little uncomfortable, but by the last one we had a very productive conversation that had to be stopped because class time had ended. So, I am very interested to see how a partially online class will work with more than four students. My only suggestion is to perhaps put the session in June, or have it take place over the 8 week June-July session. However, I suppose that depends on scheduling and summer funding.

Dr. Nadejda Williams

In the fall of 2014, I taught one section of HIST 2302, a required gateway course into the History major. This was my second time teaching the course, and I offered it as a hybrid – meaning, the students met in class for one class session each week, but the second class meeting most weeks was replaced with CourseDen activities that complemented the classroom activities, and provided additional opportunities for students to practice newly-acquired skills, such as finding primary sources, or citing sources in Chicago format.

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.

Thirteen students took the departmental Methodology Assessment exam. The results were rather similar to what I saw on the Methodology Assessment exam that I had administered the previous time I had taught this course, a year and a half earlier. Students were uniformly passionate about history, and most indicated that they hoped to go into the education field. As one student wrote, "I decided to major in history simply because it fascinates me. My father was a history buff and eventually became a history teacher. From a young age I was exposed to the study of history. I hope to pass this knowledge and passion on to future generations." But while students expressed a love for history, their understanding of what historians actually do was rudimentary, as was their awareness of basic historical terminology. None of the students was able to provide a correct definition of historiography. And while the students had some general idea of what "bias" and "plagiarism" are, the definitions were rather incomplete or distorted. For instance, one student defined bias as "adding your opinion. It is not all facts." The final part of the assessment asked the students to pose a historical question, and write a brief essay responding to it. The topics selected showed just how personal the study of history can be for students – a theme that emerged earlier in the exam, when students were asked to explain what themes or topics have been of most interest for them, and why. Most of the women in the class, for instance, indicated a preference for women's history in different periods, and wrote about aspects of women's history in their essays, while a Jewish student wrote his essay in response to the question "why were Jews targets of the Nazi party?" In addition, a healthy proportion of the class showed a strong preference for military history, and especially the world wars. Unfortunately, all of the essays were rather elementary in content and analysis, which was not surprising, especially since this class consisted mostly of students who have not yet taken any upper-level courses in history, or were taking their first upper-level concurrently with this course.

The assignments I selected for the course aimed to remedy the typical deficiencies with which students come into Methodology, thus preparing them for upper-level coursework in history and, ultimately, the Senior Seminar. Students had to complete fifteen CourseDen skills-based assignments, including a discussion of plagiarism, a spelling and grammar quiz, and a

Chicago/Turabian formatting exercise, which all students had to keep redoing until they completed it perfectly. In addition, students wrote one book review of an academic monograph, and two primary source based papers of 3-4 pages each. The first paper asked the students to come up with a historical question, and write on any aspect of Spartacus' slave rebellion using the primary sources collected Brent Shaw's *Spartacus and the Slave Wars: A Brief History with Documents*. The paper thus trained the students to bring together multiple primary sources on the same topic in order to craft a coherent narrative of the historical event or phenomenon. The second primary source based paper required the students to use George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* as a historical source for any aspect of life in Britain in the interwar period. I graded both papers with the departmental rubric for Methodology papers, and the results of the novel-based paper are included below as Appendix 2. The assessment scores show that while thinking historically and analyzing the primary source critically were skills that the students acquired by the time of the second paper, writing clearly remained a significant weakness, with only two students of the twelve who completed the assignment producing a paper that was clearly written. Most disheartening were the low scores that many students received for criterion 2 on the rubric – citing sources properly. Despite completing the Chicago/Turabian citation exercise perfectly just weeks earlier, 6 of the students (50%) did not cite their sources perfectly in Chicago format on this paper. Still, the scores on the second primary source papers indicated a significant improvement from the first paper that the students wrote in the areas of historical thinking, critical analysis of primary sources, and organization of argument.

While the first time I taught Methodology I required a final research paper, I decided that most students at this level are not well-prepared for such an undertaking. Instead, students had to do much of the research and thinking for a final paper, but instead of writing the paper, they merely wrote an abstract, and presented their research in class. Overall, I believe that this was a good assignment, as it honed the students' research skills, and allowed them to focus on finding primary and secondary sources for their topic, and analyzing these sources to come up with historical analysis and conclusions. In order to help students learn to locate sources more easily, I included two Library sessions in this class: a session with the History librarian, Jessica Critten, who introduced the students to the research databases available for different fields of history; and a session with the archivist, Blynne Olivieri, who gave the students an overview of what archives are, and how historians can use them in their research. I highly recommend that future Methodology classes incorporate both of these sessions, as the students found them very helpful.

Appendix 2: Rubric Scores for Primary Source Paper II (Novel as a source paper, based on George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*):

Does the paper analyze the primary source critically?

| 1. Unacceptable (F) | 2. Needs Improvement (D) | 3. Proficient (C-B) | 4. Exemplary (A) |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| | | 4 (33.3%) | 8 (66.6%) |

Does the paper cite its sources properly?

| 1. Unacceptable (F) | 2. Needs Improvement (D) | 3. Proficient (C-B) | 4. Exemplary (A) |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 (8.3 %) | 3 (25%) | 2 (16.6 %) | 6 (50%) |

Is the paper written clearly?

| 1. Unacceptable (F) | 2. Needs Improvement (D) | 3. Proficient (C-B) | 4. Exemplary (A) |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| | 1 (8.3%) | 9 (75%) | 2 (16.6%) |

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

| 1. Unacceptable (F) | 2. Needs Improvement (D) | 3. Proficient (C-B) | 4. Exemplary (A) |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| | 1 (8.3%) | 4 (33.3%) | 7 (58.3%) |

Does the paper demonstrate an ability to think historically?

| 1. Unacceptable (F) | 2. Needs Improvement (D) | 3. Proficient (C-B) | 4. Exemplary (A) |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| | 1 (8.3%) | 4 (33.3%) | 7 (58.3%) |

PART II: Senior Seminar

Spring 2014 Dr. Michael de Nie

Two of the twenty-four Senior Seminar students did not turn in their final papers. The remaining twenty-two were assessed for all of the departmental learning outcomes.

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 the remaining eighteen offered clearly stated theses. Three 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 less impressed by the general quality of the papers in this class than the last time I taught this class. 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 this semester.

Ability to cite sources properly

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 18 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 45 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 18 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 18 percent |

Planned improvement:

The next time that I teach this course I will offer a short, basic review of Chicago style citation methods at the beginning of this course, followed by two short quizzes or take-home assignments on Chicago-style footnoting given near the beginning and end of the semester.

Additional comments:

Most of the students who completed their papers demonstrated a very basic knowledge of Chicago-style citation. All of the papers contained footnotes or endnotes, but nearly all of them contained citation errors of some kind. Several papers had errors in every citation. All of the students should have learned how to footnote in their Methodology course, but clearly many have not mastered the technique. I recommend spending more time on Chicago style citation in Methodology and offering a review and quizzes in Senior Seminar.

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

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 23 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 50 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 23 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 4 percent |

Planned improvement: None

Additional comments:

Several of the students demonstrated the ability to research a topic in detail, but the majority did not consult as many sources on their topic as I had hoped. I required students to identify a minimum of six primary and ten secondary sources in consultation with the appropriate member of the History Department. Nearly all of the students met this minimum standard when they turned in their initial bibliography, but some of them clearly did not return to these sources when they wrote their papers. As in the past, this failure to research a topic in sufficient detail seems mainly to have been the result of poor time management and/or students having simply too many demands on their time. Most of my students this semester had part-time or even full-time jobs, most of them off-campus, and several others were taking a course overload to graduate on time. Throughout the semester, and especially in the beginning, I strongly emphasized the necessity of good time management and getting an early start on writing. While there were a few exceptions, I believe that in most cases the students simply did not have enough time to conduct as much research as they would have wished.

Ability to recognize and to pose significant historical questions

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 32 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 50 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 18 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: None

Additional Comments:

On balance the students were fairly strong in this semester. I was impressed with a number of the original and interesting questions, and was only disappointed in the efforts made to answer them. Students still tend to be too general with their questions, but in most cases we were able to fairly easily narrow down to a topic that can be addressed in a single semester and with the sources available to them. Compared to the last time I taught this class it was easier to guide the students to a workable topic, although three members of the class proved to be fairly impervious to either friendly suggestion or pointed criticism and produced rather sprawling and unfocused papers.

Ability to find useful primary and secondary sources

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 41 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 41 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 18 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: None

Additional Comments:

I required students to identify a minimum of six primary and ten secondary sources in consultation with the appropriate member of the History Department. Nearly all of the students met this minimum standard when they turned in their initial bibliography, but some of them clearly did not return to these sources when they wrote their papers. On the whole I was pleased with the

students' diligence in gathering relevant secondary and primary resources, although their efforts were not quite as impressive as in my previous experience with this course. While the students demonstrated acceptable to 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) | 14 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 50 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 32 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 4 percent |

Planned improvement:

The next time that I teach this course I will spend more time examining how the sample readings assigned at the start of the course effectively utilize their primary sources. I may assign additional readings as well.

Additional Comments:

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. Several students proved quite adept at weaving the primary sources into their argument and their paper while others tended to use quotes that did nothing to clarify or further their argument. Several of the papers 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 write standard English

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 23 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 54 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 23 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: None

Additional Comments:

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 twenty-two papers were well-organized, clearly written, and well-argued.

Ability to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 18 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 60 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 22 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: None

Additional Comments:

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. At least three 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. Four 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) | 23 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 50 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 27 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement:

The next time that I teach this course I will spend more time examining how the sample readings assigned at the start of the course place their argument in historiographical context. I may assign additional readings as well.

Additional Comments:

A clear majority of the papers were reasonably good and demonstrated a strong ability to think historically, but compared to the last time I taught this course the students were less proficient in placing their arguments in the proper historiographical context. The most common problem was a failure to adequately explain the historiography of their selected topic. Instead many students simply summarized a small number of secondary works with little in the way of comparison or criticism. A number of students also failed to explain how their paper contributed to our understanding of the topic at hand. Compared to my previous experience, the students were less likely to rely on secondary sources in the main section of the paper, which was largely devoted to analysis of primary sources in most of the papers.

Ability to make an effective ten-minute oral presentation

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 4 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 50 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 46 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: None

Additional Comments:

I found this class of students to be less proficient than my previous one in their final presentations, at least in terms of their clarity, organization, and ease with public speaking. Six of the final oral presentations were quite strong, while five were poorly organized. The class as a whole performed rather better in their primary source presentations earlier in the semester, leading me to believe that many of the students were suffering from fatigue. Perhaps the brightest spot of the presentations was the number and quality of questions asked by the class.

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. There were rather fewer of those that fell in the first category than in my first Senior Seminar class. As before, these essays were quite complimentary of the History Department, remarking favorably on the relationships they had developed with the professors and their willingness to assist and guide students. Numerous students discussed the various skills they had learned as History majors, such as critical thinking, writing, and time management. 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 much more positive than in my last class. Although a number of 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, they were still quite pleased with their experience at the university. A majority of the students stressed the intellectual and emotional growth they experienced, and many commented on the very important friendships they forged at West Georgia.

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 2014 (Dr. Daniel K. Williams)

Ability to cite sources properly

Exemplary (90-100 percent)

21 percent

| | |
|--|------------|
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 79 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 0 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

I am happy with the procedure that I developed this year, so I would not recommend any changes for next semester. After I taught the course in the Fall 2013 semester, I realized that many of the students in the class had not mastered the format of Chicago-style footnoting, so I decided that for the Fall 2014 semester, I would devote increased instructional time to a review of Chicago-style citation methods by assigning a graded quiz (worth 5% of the total class grade) on citation methods. The quiz took place after the first month of class, so the students had time to study for it by reviewing the pages of the assigned Turabian guide that I listed on the syllabus. After the quiz, I spent a few minutes reviewing citation instructions in class, and then we discussed the subject periodically throughout the semester. As a result, all fourteen of the students who completed the course by turning in their final papers had become at least proficient (if not exemplary) in their use of Chicago-style citation.

For the purposes of this assessment, “exemplary” means that a student’s paper contained perfectly formatted Chicago-style footnotes. I define “proficient” to mean that although a student’s footnotes may lack the proper punctuation or italics, or may present publication information using the wrong word order, the footnotes contain all of the information that a reader would need to locate the source, and the paper includes a citation whenever a citation is necessary.

Thus, even though most of the students who completed this course might not have fully mastered all of the technicalities of Chicago-style footnoting, they had become sufficiently proficient in this citation style to write papers that would allow any reader to follow the trail of their research and easily look up the source of any information presented in the paper. I am satisfied with this level of proficiency, and I therefore intend to continue using the instructional methods that I devised this past semester. I am especially pleased to report that some students who scored only in the 50s or 60s on the citation quiz that I gave early in the semester became proficient in the use of Chicago-style citation formatting by the time that they turned in the final drafts of their papers at the end of the semester. This indicates that some students in the course gained an increased proficiency in the use of citation methods during the course of the semester.

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

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 36 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 43 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 21 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

I was generally very pleased with the effort that students made to master the sources on their topics. I encouraged the students to choose topics that were narrow enough for them to develop a mastery of their topics after only a couple months of research, and most of the students did this. Based on the responses that I received to an online survey that I took of the class at the end of the semester, I think that most of the students wished that they had had more time to work on their research projects, but given the time constraints that they had, I think that most of the students demonstrated the ability to find relevant material on their topic and master it. The three students

whose work was below a proficient standard in this area failed to read the books that I had encouraged them to read on their topics earlier in the semester, and as a result, their papers demonstrated a lack of in-depth understanding of their subjects.

Ability to recognize and to pose significant historical questions

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 50 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 43 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 7 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

I devoted an extensive amount of time in the early weeks of the semester to a discussion of the students' specific research questions and to a general discussion of what makes a good research question. As a result, nearly all of the students in the class demonstrated the ability to pose significant historical questions in their papers.

Ability to find useful primary and secondary sources

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 43 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 36 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 21 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

All of the students are required to spend the first few weeks of the semester developing a comprehensive bibliography on their topic and to have the bibliography reviewed by a faculty member with expertise in the field. As a result, all of the students are expected to embark on their research projects with a clear idea of the relevant primary and secondary sources that they will need to consult. Most of the students demonstrated the ability to find these sources and use them appropriately.

Ability to analyze sources critically

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 58 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 21 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 21 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

The required primary source presentation and the class discussions of early drafts of the papers give us plenty of opportunities to discuss ways to analyze sources critically. As a result, most of the students in the class demonstrated excellent skills in this area by the end of the semester.

Ability to write standard English

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 14 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 57 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 29 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

Many of the students in this class required a lot of help with their writing technique. I think that the requirement that all of the students produce 3-page drafts of the introductory sections of their papers, followed by a 10-page draft of their essays (a new requirement that I added this semester), helped the students improve their writing, especially because we devoted a couple class sessions to a discussion of these drafts. I still believe that many of the students would benefit from additional practice in writing, but I'm not sure how a class of this nature can do any more to help students master basic writing techniques that they probably should have learned at an earlier stage of their academic careers.

Ability to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 29 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 42 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 29 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

I think that the existing assignments in this course – which include a 3-page draft, a 10-page draft, a primary source presentation, and a 10-minute oral research presentation – give students extensive practice in using historical evidence to make persuasive historical arguments. We discussed this theme extensively in class. I am not sure that any more attention could be given to it.

Ability to think historically

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 29 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 50 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 21 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

Ability to make an effective ten-minute oral presentation

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 21 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 58 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 21 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 0 percent |

Planned improvement: No planned changes.

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.

Many students did well on this assignment and wrote essays that offered a candid statement of their views. In the assessment report that he filed for Senior Seminar in the Spring 2013 semester, Dr. de Nie noted that the reflective essays that he received “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.” He wrote, “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.” By contrast, he wrote, “The papers that tended to focus more on the general university experience were on the whole somewhat pessimistic, expressing some degree of disillusionment.” I noted the same phenomenon in the papers that I received this semester. Several students praised the willingness of particular history professors to give them assistance both inside and outside of class, and they seemed to think that their time in the program had been well spent. On the other hand, several students complained about the insensitivity of the university bureaucracy or discussed the challenges that they had faced as college students – challenges that, in some cases, they never fully resolved.

One student provided a particularly articulate summary of what seems to be a widely held sentiment: “During my time at UWG, I have come to the conclusion that the educational system to which I owe my degree is neither entirely geared against students nor is it entirely a benevolent or egalitarian body. I have realized that the institution is not a system dedicated to the broad service of humanity, but a complex conglomerate of individuals trying to do some good in their lives. There have been times when I have looked at university policy such as tuition hikes, drastic fee increases within the education program, and reduction in services as predatory, and I’m not entirely convinced that I was wrong. However I have resigned to the fact that such policies are the nature of the beast and I cannot expect a human institution to be looking out for the best interest of its students on a macroscopic level. What I have found however, is a consistent trait in my upper level classes in which the educators are significantly vested, emotionally and otherwise, in their students on a microscopic level. This speaks to the true purpose of education in my opinion in that individuals are dedicated to sharpening and improving the lives of others in the academic arena.”

Additional comments:

For all of the questions listed above, I reported only the grades and performance of the 14 students who completed this course by turning in their final papers. I did not factor in the performance of the students who failed to complete the course.

The DWF rate for this course was 39 percent. Of the 23 students enrolled in the course at the end of the add / drop period, three withdrew (receiving a grade of W) and six received grades of F for failing to turn in their final paper. Of the six students who received a grade of F, three had been enrolled in the class in the Fall 2013 semester (which they had also failed to complete successfully), which means that the Fall 2014 class was at least their second time to fail to complete Senior Seminar.

All of the students who submitted a final paper in this course received at least a C for the class. In my experience, students who attend class and complete their Senior Seminar paper will receive at least a satisfactory grade in this course. Students who do not turn in a final paper will fail the class.

In order to find out what prevented students from turning in their final papers, I sent the students in the class an online survey a few days after the class had ended. I sent the survey to all students enrolled in the class, including those who had not completed their final papers, but of the nine students who completed the survey, eight self-identified as students who had completed their final papers. Even though nearly all of these students had completed their papers successfully, they indicated that completing the papers had been a struggle, and they expressed a feeling of exhaustion due to the challenges of time management. One hundred percent of the students were working at paid employment, and 100 percent were taking other courses, with more than half of the students taking 13-15 credit hours in the semester. One was taking more than 18 credit hours. Eight of the nine students worked only one job, but one was working two jobs. The amount of time that they worked at their jobs varies, with the students split about evenly between those who worked 11-20 hours per week, those who worked 21-30 hours, and those who worked 31-40 hours. One student said that s/he worked "more than 50 hours" per week throughout the semester. One hundred percent of the students said on the survey that they wished that they had started writing their papers earlier, and most said that they felt that they had not had enough time to devote to their papers.

While I was not able to take a systematic survey of the students who withdrew from the class or failed to turn in their final paper, my sense is that time constraints or time management issues were the primary reason why students who failed the class or withdrew from it did not complete the course satisfactorily. One student who completed a 3-page draft and presented a research presentation emailed me at the end of the semester to thank me for the course and to apologize for not completing it successfully. "I work at the Walmart warehouse in Carrollton and once the holiday schedule began it was near impossible for me to come to your class and get to work on time," he wrote. While it's impossible for me to know for certain, I suspect, based on the survey that I took of the other students in the class, that most of the students who did not complete the course successfully are probably in similar situations. All of the students in this class faced competing pressures from work and school. The students who failed the class chose to give work first priority. The students who successfully completed the class chose to forego sleep and expressed a high degree of frustration and exhaustion at the end of the semester – frustration with themselves in not starting to write their research papers earlier, and exhaustion as a result of a prolonged lack of sleep.

One student (who self-identified as a student who worked 30 hours a week in addition to taking 15 credit hours) wrote, "Make this course span 2 semesters rather than just one. MANY universities do this. I feel I would have been far more successful I had more time and guidance." This student successfully completed the course, but believed that s/he could have been more successful if given more time to work on the research project.

Perhaps as a department, we can discuss ways to make this course more manageable for students who are trying to balance the demands of work, academics, and family responsibilities. Until we can find a way to do that, I think that this course will continue to have a high DFW rate and that we will not fully serve the needs of our students.

Part III: Core Courses

A. HIST 1111 (Dr. Gary Van Valen)

Overview:

In the Fall 2014 semester, I assessed my section of World History to 1500 (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.

The Assessment Instrument:

My assessment instrument was a final written assignment (typed, double spaced, 12-point font, 5 page minimum) answering one of the two following questions:

1) Discuss connections that drew the regions of Afro-Eurasia together, using examples of trade, religious ideas, disease, and conquests, up to the early 1400s. Describe the more isolated civilizations of Native America and Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of the unique characteristics that made them different from Afro-Eurasia. Explain why Europeans began sea explorations in the 1400s, and what the results were.

2) Use information from myths (including creation stories and hero stories) to describe the civilizations of at least three different regions we have studied this semester. What basic beliefs and values do they demonstrate? Then describe the influence of the ancient Hebrew and Greek cultures on later civilizations, with examples of how later civilizations tried to legitimize themselves by attaching their history to the Hebrew or Greek tradition.

Students were to use information from class lectures and assigned readings to answer these questions. I allowed students to choose between two final assignment questions to reflect the type of readings used in the course. Question #1 allowed students to use more material from Jerry Bentley, *Old World Encounters*, while question #2 allowed them to focus on readings from Donna Rosenberg, *World Mythology*. While I designed the questions to allow students to concentrate on one source or the other, they were expected to include information from lectures and allowed to include information from both books.

I designed the two questions to equally connect to the learning outcome. Students who attended class lectures and did the readings were provided with abundant examples of political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of world history applicable to their final assignment. For question #1, students had the opportunity to discuss the political dimension with conquests, the American and African civilizations, and the results of European exploration. They had the opportunity to describe the social dimension with religious ideas, disease, and the American and African civilizations. They had the opportunity to discuss the economic dimension with trade, disease, the American and African civilizations, and the European explorations. They had the opportunity to discuss the cultural dimension with religious ideas, the American and African civilizations, and the European explorations.

For question #2, students had the opportunity to discuss the cultural, social, and political dimensions by relating myths to the civilizations that produced them. They had the opportunity to discuss the cultural, social, political, and economic dimensions by describing the influence of the Hebrew and Greek traditions on later civilizations.

While question #1 allows students to focus more on the political and economic dimensions, and question #2 allows them to concentrate more on the cultural and social dimensions, both questions meet the requirements necessary to assess the learning outcome.

The Assessment Rubric:

Students' responses were evaluated first on a 10-point scale, thus establishing a raw score. That score was then broken down into a four point scale as follows: below 6 = 1 (developing); 6-7 = 2 (needs improvement); 8 = 3 (met expectations); 9-10 = 4 (exceeded expectations).

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

Assessment Results for HIST 1111 01 (Fall 2014):

| Student: | Raw Score (out of 10): | Rubric: |
|----------|------------------------|---------|
| 1 | 7 | 2 |
| 2 | 8 | 3 |
| 3 | 9 | 4 |
| 4 | 0 | 1 |
| 5 | 10 | 4 |
| 6 | 0 | 1 |
| 7 | 9 | 4 |
| 8 | 6 | 2 |
| 9 | 7 | 2 |
| 10 | 0 | 1 |
| 11 | 9 | 4 |
| 12 | 9 | 4 |
| 13 | 0 | 1 |
| 14 | 9 | 4 |
| 15 | 7 | 2 |
| 16 | 7 | 2 |
| 17 | 0 | 1 |
| 18 | 4 | 1 |
| 19 | 7 | 2 |
| 20 | 0 | 1 |
| 21 | 0 | 1 |
| 22 | 9 | 4 |
| 23 | 7 | 2 |
| 24 | 8 | 3 |
| 25 | 8 | 3 |
| 26 | 0 | 1 |
| 27 | 6 | 2 |
| 28 | 8 | 3 |
| 29 | 7 | 2 |
| 30 | 7 | 2 |
| 31 | 5 | 1 |
| 32 | 8 | 3 |
| 33 | 8 | 3 |
| 34 | 3 | 1 |
| 35 | 5 | 1 |

| Rubric Score: | #of Instances: | Percentage: |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| 4 | 7 | 20% |
| 3 | 14 | 17.1% |
| 2 | 2 | 28.6% |
| 1 | 12 | 34.3% |

Application of results:

The results of the 2014 HIST 1111 Assessment indicate that approximately 66% of students assessed either met or exceeded expectations as regards the required learning outcome. The fact that 34.3% of students received a rubric score of 1 reflects the fact that 8 out of 35 students did not complete the final written assignment. As all but one of these students also failed to hand in other written assignments over the course of the semester, their failure to complete the final assignment appears to be part of a more general neglect on their part (6 out of these 8 also failed the course). If we remove these students from the assessment, and count only the 27 of the 35 students who completed the final written assignment, the percentages would be 25.9% for rubric score 4, 22.2% for rubric score 3, 37% for rubric score 2, and 14.8% for rubric score 1. Using these results, approximately 85% either met or exceeded expectations.

In the same semester, I taught another section of the same course, HIST 1111-02. In almost all respects, the class was the same as HIST 1111-01: it had the same number of students, the same classroom, the same professor, the same syllabus, the same readings, the same lectures, and the same final written assignment using the same two questions. Nevertheless, the results of an analysis of student performance on the final written assignment are very different. These results can be summarized as follows:

| Rubric Score: | #of Instances: | Percentage: |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| 4 | 10 | 28.6% |
| 3 | 8 | 22.9% |
| 2 | 11 | 31.4% |
| 1 | 6 | 17.1% |

In HIST 1111-02, approximately 83% of students either met or exceeded expectations as regards the required learning outcome. In addition, the rubric score of 1 reflects the fact that 5 out of 35 students did not complete the final written assignment. If we remove these students from the assessment, and count only the 30 of the 35 students who completed the final written assignment, the percentages would be 33.3% for rubric score 4, 26.7% for rubric score 3, 36.7% for rubric score 2, and 3.3% for rubric score 1. Using these results, approximately 97% either met or exceeded expectations.

The only variable when comparing these two sections is the students themselves. Since professors have no control over which students register for their courses, nothing can be done to make sure that future results resemble those of HIST 1111-02 rather than those of HIST 1111-01. The results of the 2014 HIST 1111 Assessment therefore cannot be taken to indicate a need to radically alter the HIST 1111 curriculum. Nevertheless, the variability of results between otherwise equal sections of HIST 1111 is worth further consideration. Factors such as individual students' attendance, preparedness upon entering the course, and time spent studying and preparing written assignments might provide part of the answer, although only the first of these factors would be easily assessable.

One possible way to lower the number of students who simply did not complete the assignment used as the assessment instrument would be to increase its point value. In both of my HIST 1111 sections, the assignment was worth only 10% of the final grade (the same as the other nine assignments that contributed to the final grade), so some students may have decided to lose 10 points rather than make the effort to answer the questions. Rather than making the instrument a separate take-home assignment worth 10%, it could also be made part of an in-class exam worth 20%. Another alternative would be to create a new rubric score of zero for those students who do not complete the assessed assignment. In that way, they could be removed from assessment rather than artificially dragging down overall results for the class.

When the HIST 1111 Survey Assessment Committee met at the beginning of the 2014-2015 Academic Year to discuss the course and its assessment, the committee members agreed to continue with their teaching approaches and to monitor the results of the 2014 assessment to see if changes would be warranted. As the above report indicates, the majority of HIST 1111 students continue to meet or exceed expectations. Based on these results, the committee decided against major curricular changes and to continue monitoring of assessment data. In addition, recognizing that in the 2015-2016 Academic Year the committee will gain a new member, the committee elected to discuss throughout that year how to develop a clearer definition of the term “demonstrate understanding” used in the Learning Outcome.

B. HIST 1112

Fall 2014

Newnan

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 25 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 47 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 12 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 16 percent |

Carrollton

| | |
|--|------------|
| Exemplary (90-100 percent) | 10 percent |
| Proficient (80-89 percent) | 30 percent |
| Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) | 45 percent |
| Unacceptable (below 60 percent) | 15 percent |

Planned improvement: Students will be required to prepare a written analysis of a set of primary sources before their understanding of them is assessed.

C. HIST 2111

Fall 2014

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 Tool for Learning Outcome:

This semester, I assessed the above learning outcome in two sections of HIS 2111 (sections N02 and N03) by assigning a 2-3pg paper on an excerpt of *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass*. In this paper, students were asked to discuss the significance that Douglass placed on literacy.

Assessment of HIS 2111-N02:
28 students in total

Exemplary (90-100 percent) 39 percent (11 students)
Proficient (80-89 percent) 42 percent (12 students)
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) 5 percent (1 student)
Unacceptable (below 69 percent) 14 percent (4 student)

Below is a breakdown of the results for section N02:

Students in this first section did well analyzing the selection of Douglass's narrative, producing a solid discussion. 39% of the class had good papers that mentioned key points such as Douglass's feelings regarding the positive and negative sides of learning to read, the change in Mrs. Auld, and the influence the *Colombian Orator* had on Douglass. The majority of the students who completed this assignment, or those falling into the "proficient" category, focused solely on the positive benefits of learning to read, understanding that literacy helped Douglass obtain his freedom. 4 students did not do the paper at all, and 1 student did not seem to have understood the document provided. Many of the papers had significant grammatical and stylistic errors.

Assessment of HIS 2111-N03:
31 students in total

Exemplary (90-100 percent) 38 percent (12 students)
Proficient (80-89 percent) 45 percent (14 students)
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent) 7 percent (2 students)
Unacceptable (below 69 percent) 10 percent (3 students)

Below is a breakdown of the results for N03:

As with section N02, the majority of the class did well analyzing this excerpt. While those in the "exemplary" category seemed to understand the deeper meanings of the significance Douglass placed on literacy, the majority of the class still seemed to only focus on the benefits of literacy rather than negative aspects that Douglass discussed. 3 students did not turn in the paper, while 2 students produced papers that were not only extremely poorly written but did not discuss the significance of literacy much at all.

Plans for improvement:

In the past, we have assigned our assessment of this learning outcome earlier in the semester. This time, we opted to assign it much later in the semester. This was the third of three papers that my students were required to write, and I saw marked improvement with each paper in both sections. In fact, the first paper's grades were significantly lower for N02 and N03 than their grades for this paper. Therefore, it seems that assigning the paper later in the semester is working. As for planned improvements, I do not have any at this time.

D. HIST 2112

Fall 2014

Learning Outcome for HIST 2112

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

Assessment Procedure:

In accordance with the procedures agreed upon by the history department, we assessed four sections of HIST 2112 in the fall 2014 semester by administering a 50-minute in-class essay exam to the students at the end of the semester. The exam required students to write an essay answering a set of questions that were based on two short primary source documents chosen by a committee of the department's HIST 2112 instructors. Instructors then assessed each student essays on a 4-point scale according to the following standard: "How well did the student demonstrate the ability to understand the political, social, economic, or cultural dimensions of American history?" A score of 4 was given for "exemplary" work; a 3 represented "proficient" work; a 2 was given for an essay that "needed improvement"; and a score of 1 signified "lack of understanding."

The sections assessed included three 35-student sections taught on the main Carrollton campus, one 11-student honors section taught in Carrollton, and one 15-student section taught on the Newnan campus.

Assessment Results:

The results of the assessment exercise were as follows:

Three 35-student sections on the main campus in Carrollton (95 students):

Score of 4: Twenty-four students (25%)
Score of 3: Forty-three students (46%)
Score of 2: Twenty-three students (24%)
Score of 1: Five students (5%)

Honors section (11 students):

Score of 4: Three students (27%)
Score of 3: Five students (46%)
Score of 2: Three students (27%)
Score of 1: Zero students (0%)

Newnan campus (15 students):

Score of 4: Four students (27%)
Score of 3: Five students (33%)
Score of 2: Five students (33%)
Score of 1: One student (7%)

Analysis:

This semester, the assessment exercise was given to a much wider range of sections. In the Fall 2013 semester, only a single 16-student section was assessed, but in the Fall 2014 semester, we assessed three 35-student sections, one honors section, and one section taught on the Newnan campus.

The results of this broadly administered assessment exercise indicate that the majority of students in this course demonstrate a proficient or exemplary mastery of the learning outcomes for this class. I would therefore not recommend any systematic changes to this course or to the assessment procedure. However, several instructors noted that our students could probably benefit from additional practice in writing short essays on primary source documents. Some sections of HIST 2112 already include these assignments, but for those that do not, I would encourage the instructors to consider incorporating them in their classes.

One instructor wrote: "What I find most interesting from this assessment is that there seems to be a disconnect from in-class discussion to writing these essays. All of my students that were present for the discussion on second-wave feminism seemed to have a firm understanding of the topic, but this did not carry over in all of the essays. I noticed this in other class writings as well. Many of my students communicated their thoughts better verbally than they did in their writing assignments. I do not necessarily think that improvements need to be made in the HIST 2112 course. Unfortunately, I think the changes that need to be made are at the high school level, and helping students learn to transition their thoughts into writing. I did suggest to multiple students to utilize the writing center, and to send me rough drafts in an effort to help them with this problem (as well as grammar issues). Overall, I think the students are capable of analyzing the information presented to them, and to discuss and/or write about the information in an intellectual manner. Even the student who received a 1 on the assessment was able to discuss the topic intelligently and with understanding in class. The student was not a good test taker even though he always did well in discussion."

The instructor for the honors section wrote:

"This section consisted of very talented, hard-working, and engaged students who consistently attended the class meetings. They also did quite well in their overall grades. Thus, I was not surprised to see that 8 students, or about 72% of the class, earned 4s or 3s on the assessment examination. Additionally, I was pleased to see that none of the students earned a 1.

"The 3 students who earned 2s on the assessment examination failed to answer most of the questions posed by the prompt. All 3 provided some historical context, although it was rather broad and general. One student mainly compared and contrasted the two quotations. The 2 other students wrote essays that revolved around their personal opinions about the morality of violence versus nonviolence.

"I believe the students who scored 2s likely have very little experience with this type of writing assignment: responding to an essay prompt they did not know in advance of the class period. All 3 of them did well on the midterm and final examinations in the course, in which they were asked to write short answers in response to terms selected from a list they received in advance of each respective test. I believe that if they had undergone a "practice run" with the specific type of test format used for the assessment examination, they would have had a better chance of performing well.

“In the future, it might be helpful for the HIST 2112 assessment committee to compile a collection of “practice prompts” and give each instructor an opportunity to administer a practice version of the assessment examination prior to the final, graded version. That could permit the students who have little experience with this type of test to gain some helpful practice in quickly organizing their thoughts, developing an outline, and providing thorough responses for a test administered through this particular format.”

I think that each of these instructors noted something that I have observed as well: Students will do well on this assignment only if they have had a lot of practice doing the type of writing that is required for this assessment; class discussions of primary sources, while valuable, are not sufficient preparation for this assessment exercise. In my 35-student section, I required the students to write ten primary-source-based essays that were very similar to the types of essays required for this assessment. As a result, by the time of the assessment exercise at the end of the course, the students in my class had had extensive practice answering essay questions that were based on a comparison of two primary source documents, and I think that that may have given many of them good preparation for the assessment exercise.

Another instructor noted that most of the students who received scores of 2 or below on this assessment exercise had not attended class very often, an observation that implies that most of the students who regularly attended class throughout the semester and kept up with the other assignments in the course gained the knowledge and skills that were necessary to demonstrate proficient mastery of the course’s learning outcomes through this assessment exercise.

On the whole, it appears that most of our students who complete one of our smaller sections of HIST 2112 – regardless of whether they are in a Newnan campus course, an honors course, or a 35-student section course on the main campus in Carrollton – demonstrate the ability to interpret primary source documents in their historical context and to synthesize information from those documents with material from other class readings and lectures in order to answer a question about the social, political, or cultural aspects of recent American history. I think that this assessment exercise demonstrates that no substantial changes are needed in our HIST 2112 instruction, at least as far as the smaller sections of this course are concerned. I would continue to encourage instructors to assign as many primary-source-based essay assignments as possible in their classes, since I think that these assignments will help students develop the skills that will be tested through this assessment exercise and that we expect students in our courses to master, but on the whole, I think that the students who complete this course are demonstrating mastery of the learning outcomes for this class.

Part IV: Recommendations

1. Pre- and Post-Test in all sections of all survey courses (Dr. Goodson)

The Chair’s earlier email said in part:

Have each Survey Assessment Committee (SAC) come up with a multiple-choice Assessment Exam that can be given via CourseDen to every survey student at the beginning and end of each semester.

We discussed the fact that all of us teach in different ways, but we decided that there is certainly a core of basic objective knowledge that we expect every survey student to obtain from each survey course. It will be up to the members of each SAC to come up with a group of questions for its

survey. This in itself should be a useful exercise in that it will involve discussion of just what major "facts" we want students to take from our courses.

These exams can be loaded into CourseDen for every survey course we teach at one time, I'm told. We won't even have to grade the exams -- that can be done by CourseDen.

It will be up to each SAC to meet regularly to study and discuss the before-and-after exam results from a random sampling of students in each of its survey sections. Then it will be the responsibility of the SAC to recommend any improvements in any subject areas that appear to be lacking. To emphasize, these meetings and discussions will have to be held and improvements will have to be considered and implemented where necessary

I am well aware of the aversion many of you have to multiple-choice exams. (For the record, I don't personally share that aversion to well constructed multiple-choice questions, as I have included an MC section on every exam I have ever given). I also understand that we strive to teach our students a great deal more than "facts."

But the learning of facts is easily measurable. And the system I have outlined would appear to be the least cumbersome and least intrusive system available to an overworked and frequently exhausted department (that, by the way, is provided with no release time for anyone to oversee a more elaborate assessment procedure). This will also allow us to automatically and regularly conduct assessment in every section no matter what its size.

2. HIST 4483 Undergraduate Writing: Senior Seminar Preparation (Dr. D. Williams)

Dr. Williams's earlier email said in part:

It seems to me that we need to figure out a way to reduce the high DFW rate in this course. In January, I'd like to present the results of my brief survey of the Senior Seminar students to any department members who are interested, and I'd like to propose one change that I think would help more students get through this class successfully: I'm considering the idea (if the department approves) of offering an experimental prequel class to the HIST 4484 course called "Undergraduate Writing: Senior Seminar Preparation." This class, which might be listed as HIST 4483, would train students in research methods, historiography, writing technique, and the formulation of a strong thesis. The end product of the class would be an 8-10 page research paper that students could then turn into a Senior Seminar paper in the next semester. If I offered this class in the spring 2016 semester, students would finish the course in April with a research paper that would put them well on their way to a successful completion of Senior Seminar the following fall. They could continue to work on their research projects over the summer and they could then spend the fall semester polishing their work. I would encourage students who entered Senior Seminar in the fall of 2016 with an 8-10 page research paper already completed to turn in their 20-25 page drafts in mid-October. That would then give them an additional 6 weeks to revise their work and consult additional source material if needed.

My prediction would be that if we offered this two-semester writing / Senior Seminar sequence, the DFW rate in Senior Seminar for students who entered the class with an 8-10 page research paper would probably be close to zero, and a significant number of those students would have a chance to earn high B's or A's on their papers - which didn't happen this semester. This semester, in fact, I'll probably give only one A grade and, at most, one or two A-minuses, because in general, the quality of the Senior Seminar papers was pretty low. I think that we could change this in the future by offering an Undergraduate Writing course to prepare students for Senior Seminar. I know

that we've talked about using our junior historiography courses to prepare people for Senior Seminar, but an Undergraduate Writing course might be another way to accomplish this.

3. HIST 1112: Students will be required to prepare a written analysis of a set of primary sources before their understanding of them is assessed.
4. Assess the Global Perspectives learning outcome in HIST 1111 and HIST 1112. (Schroer)
5. Add an indirect assessment of student learning in all sections in the core as well as in Senior Seminar. (Schroer)
6. Eliminate the ungraded assessment examination in Methodology. (Schroer)
7. Eliminate two learning outcomes in the major to decrease the number of learning outcomes. (Schroer)