

Assessment Report for Undergraduate Education 2015

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

Spring 2015

Dr. Pacholl (section 01D)

A total of 15 students enrolled in the course.

Observations

The course was 60% online and modeled after the "flipped classroom" approach where content was assigned online and read outside of the classroom and class time was used to discuss the readings and focus on questions and issues raised by students about the readings. To assess student comprehension of content prior to coming to class, I created online assignments where students posted comments about the readings and responded to their peers. This seemed to enhance the quality of in-class discussions about the assigned readings.

One area of success is citing sources correctly in the primary source paper. This is due to the course policy that the primary source paper will not be graded until the entire paper is cited correctly. Initially, 10 papers (out of 14) were returned because they contained one or more incorrect citations. Three of these papers required several drafts before they were properly cited. But in the end, all 14 papers were properly cited.

Another area of success is the requirement to turn in multiple drafts of a research paper (which is six pages in length). 12 students submitted two drafts of their research paper – an initial draft and a revised draft. Initially, student achievement on the first draft was fairly dismal. Here is a breakdown of grades for those who turned in a first draft:

Initial Draft

A- 1
B- 5
C- 3
D- 1
F- 2

Students were required to address my substantial feedback in their revised drafts. It is clear that a majority of students attempted to address in some capacity (some more than others) feedback that was provided on the initial draft. Revised drafts are graded on how well students incorporate my feedback. Since they only have 2 weeks to revise the paper (due on finals week), my grading reflects what I think they can realistically accomplish in that time. For grades to improve, students must substantially address issues of content accuracy, primary source materials, writing clarity, citations, and other skills learned in the course. Below is a breakdown of grades for their revised drafts:

Revised Draft

A- 9
B- 2

C- 1
D- 0
F- 0

In several cases, grades jumped by at least two full letter grades in the revised draft. Compared to the initial drafts, the revised drafts were far more promising. Several students commented that the exercise of revising, in spite of the substantial time and effort required to revise a paper, proved useful in comprehending how writing can improve with multiple drafts.

Primary Source Analysis Papers

Students analyzed George Washington's *Farewell Address*. The following numbers are based on 14 students who actually completed the assignment:

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

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	2 (14%)
Proficient (70-89 percent)	12 (86%)
Developing (60-69 percent)	0
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

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

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	14 (100%)
Proficient (70-89 percent)	0
Developing (60-69 percent)	0
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

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

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	2 (14%)
Proficient (70-89 percent)	9 (65%)
Developing (60-69 percent)	3 (21%)
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

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

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	2 (14%)
Proficient (70-89 percent)	12 (86%)
Developing (60-69 percent)	0
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

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

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	3 (21%)
Proficient (70-89 percent)	11 (79%)
Developing (60-69 percent)	0
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0

Recommendations

1. Update assessment information on the webpage. It still mentions the Assessment Exam, which is no longer a part of Methodology assessment. There may be other updates we need to give our webmaster.

<http://www.westga.edu/~history/About%20History/assessment/assessmentofthecoresurvey%20courses.pdf>

2. The department has revised its program outcomes, so if necessary, Methodology learning outcomes should be adjusted to align with program outcomes.
3. This is not a recommendation but rather an affirmation: multiple drafts of a writing assignment in Methodology is an effective way to increase student performance in meeting our critical thinking and writing outcomes.
4. Writing continues to be a tortured process for many, and including a writing assignment in survey courses for History majors is suggested to help prepare them for the more rigorous writing demands placed on them in Methodology. I would ask the department to consider creating survey courses (1111, 1112, 2111, 2112) that are designed specifically for History majors. Only History majors would be allowed to enroll in these courses. Over the academic year, two of these courses could be offered each semester (ex: Fall = 1111 and 2111; Spring = 1112 and 2112). These courses could include one or more writing assignments and even introduce concepts like historiography and history methods. In my undergraduate coursework, I took these kinds of survey courses (history students only) and they proved valuable in my early formation as a historian because they were geared towards the needs of the History major.

Dr. Nadya Williams

In the Spring of 2015, I taught one section of HIST 2302. This was my third time teaching the course, and this time, I taught it as Partial-Distance, with approximately 60% of the course being delivered online via CourseDen, and 40% of the meetings taking place in the classroom. As in the first two times I taught the course, my aim in teaching it 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. Since students often come into the course with little to no knowledge of library resources, or even how to use a library, I included in the class schedule a session on library resources with Jessica Critten, and an introduction to archival materials with Blynn Olivieri. Based on my experience teaching this course 100% on campus, then as a Hybrid, and now as Partial-Distance, I would say that this class actually works very well with an online component, as it allows to assign significantly more smaller assignments to practice different skills.

As before, the assignments I selected for the course aimed to remedy the typical skills 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.

Writing is a serious challenge for most of our students, and I designed the class to be extremely writing-intensive. None of the assignments, however, were longer than four pages in length, allowing the students many opportunities to write the types of shorter papers that they would likely encounter in upper-level courses. Thus students wrote one book review of an academic monograph (they had a choice of two monographs in American history), and two primary source

based papers of 3-4 pages each. Rewrites were allowed and encouraged on all papers. The first primary-source 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 paper required the students to use Apuleius' novel *The Golden Ass* as a historical source for any aspect of life in the Roman Empire. I graded both papers with the departmental rubric for Methodology papers, and the results of the novel-based paper are included below.

Nine students (out of the fifteen enrolled in the course) completed the second paper, and their assessment scores show that the students who completed the assignment improved significantly over the course of the semester, and were achieving a level of comfort, if not mastery, with the skills taught in the course. Most of the students scored at least a 3 on every criterion assessed. The numbers, however, hide the rest of the story. Six students did not complete the assignment at all, and did not complete many other assignments in the course.

Finally, students had to carry out, in stages, a final research project, going through all of the steps necessary for writing a major research paper. Instead of writing the paper, however, each student had to make a 10-minute presentation in class.

Main problems: Each time I teach Methodology, I see an alarming attrition rate at the beginning of term, and a significant DFW rate at the end. One student in the class was a History major on her third attempt at Methodology. She failed the class for the third time. This issue is not captured by our assessment, but is a problem to keep in mind. Our majors are not well prepared for the rigors of Methodology.

Recommendations for improvement: Methodology is intended to be a gateway course into the History major, and aims to prepare students to succeed in upper-level History courses. Unfortunately, students regularly arrive in Methodology without basic writing competence or analysis skills. One semester of work on essential skills, no matter how rigorous, is simply not enough, and indeed, we regularly see students flounder on written assignments in our upper-level courses. One possibility for improvement could be to require writing assignments, however short, in all survey courses. After all, our majors have to take four surveys, and if all surveys were to require exposure to historical writing, students would get quite a bit of preparation for the major this way.

Rubric Scores for Primary Source Paper II (Novel as a source paper, based on Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*):

Does the paper analyze the primary source critically?

1. Unacceptable (F)	2. Needs Improvement (D)	3. Proficient (C-B)	4. Exemplary (A)
	1 (11%)	3 (33%)	5 (56%)

Does the paper cite its sources properly?

1. Unacceptable (F)	2. Needs	3. Proficient (C-B)	4. Exemplary (A)

	Improvement (D)		
	1 (11%)	4 (44%)	4 (44%)

Is the paper written clearly?

1. Unacceptable (F)	2. Needs Improvement (D)	3. Proficient (C-B)	4. Exemplary (A)
	2 (22%)	6 (66%)	1 (11%)

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)
		7 (78%)	2 (22%)

Does the paper demonstrate an ability to think historically?

1. Unacceptable (F)	2. Needs Improvement (D)	3. Proficient (C-B)	4. Exemplary (A)
		7 (78%)	2 (22%)

Fall 2015 Dr. McCullers

One section of Methodology were taught during the fall semester of 2015. All 21 students in the course were assessed.

Primary Source Analysis Papers

I assessed their primary source term paper, in which each part had been individually revised at least twice and the complete final paper was also revised twice. This was a five-page paper based solely on a primary source reader on the Black Death. I believe that the extensive work we did on this paper over the course of the semester is in part responsible for the high assessment scores. As well, this class was, on the whole an excellent group of students. Many of them are naturally very talented writers and are well prepared for college. As well, the weaker students really put in a considerable amount of work to improve their papers and it paid off.

Ability to cite sources properly

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	15	71 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	5	24 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	1	5 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0 percent

Ability to write standard English

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	13	22 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	8	31 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	0	0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0 percent

Ability to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	18	86 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	3	14 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	0	0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0 percent

Ability to think historically

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	14	66 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	5	24 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	0	0 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0 percent

PART II: Senior Seminar

Spring 2015 Dr. Tim Schroer

The eighteen papers submitted in the course were assessed for all of the departmental learning outcomes. Three of the 21 Senior Seminar students did not turn in their final papers and one additional student withdrew.

Five of the students in this course took the HIST 3500 Junior Historiography Seminar in the fall with this instructor and prepared a prospectus in that course. (The course was added to the Undergraduate Catalog and taught under that number from fall 2013.) Those students clearly benefitted from that preparation and did well on the learning outcomes generally. Of those five students, two earned an A, two earned a B, and one earned a C in Senior Seminar. I believe that the student who earned a C might not have passed Senior Seminar without the preparation in the Junior Historiography Seminar. He was able to pose a significant historical question early on in the course. None of the students who took the Junior Historiography Seminar in the fall withdrew from the course or earned a D or F. This year was the first time that the same faculty member taught HIST 3500 in the fall and HIST 4484 in the spring. That continuity facilitated the tracking of growth in student learning across the year. The evidence shows that the department's decision to create the Junior Historiography Seminar, including the preparation of a prospectus, has helped to improve student learning.

The DFW rate for the course was a disappointingly high 27 percent. Two students earned Ds in the course, three students who did not submit a final paper failed the course, and one student withdrew.

In its spring 2015 discussion of assessment data, which continued into the fall, the department devoted considerable attention to DFW rates in Senior Seminar and in the program more broadly. In spring 2015, I added three students into Senior Seminar above the cap just before the semester began because they had failed the course in fall 2014. I piloted an approach to help those students successfully complete in which they prepared a written two-page plan for how they would complete the work in the course with a passing grade. All of them passed the course. One of them earned a D, while the other two earned Cs.

This evidence suggests that students who fail the course can successfully complete the course a second time around without reducing the challenge presented by it. I hope that the three students who did not submit a paper and the student who withdrew can do better next time. The size of the challenge for our students should not be understated. Beyond the evidence from the reflective essay discussed below, two of our stronger students expressed during meetings in my office that they were feeling considerable stress. Both of those students earned an A in the course and showed strong command of the learning outcomes. One of them subsequently had a proposal based on the paper accepted at a national conference.

Ability to demonstrate general knowledge of U.S. and world history and in-depth knowledge of a particular historical question

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	7	39 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	6	33 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	5	28 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0

Ability to recognize and to pose significant historical questions

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	12	66 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	2	11 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	3	17 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	1	6 percent

Ability to find useful primary and secondary sources

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	7	39 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	7	39 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	4	22 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0

Ability to cite sources properly

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	4	22 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	5	28 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	7	39 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	2	11 percent

Ability to analyze sources critically

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	0	0
Proficient (80-89 percent)	7	39 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	11	61 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0

Ability to write standard English

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	0	0
Proficient (80-89 percent)	7	39 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	10	56 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	1	6 percent

Ability to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	3	17 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	7	39 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	8	44 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0

Ability to think historically

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	4	22 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	9	50 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	4	22 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	1	6 percent

Ability to make an effective ten-minute oral presentation

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	9	50 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	6	33 percent
Developing/ Does Not Meet Expectations (60-79 percent)	3	17 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0	0

The Reflective Essay

One student stated that more attention should be given to teaching historiography in the history major, writing that “it only comes up within Methodology and Senior Seminar.”

A number of students testified that Senior Seminar was very challenging. One student wrote, “The semester has been challenging as it pushed the boundaries of what I thought my capabilities were.” This student regretted that she chose to write on a topic in which she was not really interested.

One student suggested that “Senior Seminar be split into two semesters like some other departments do, because this allows for stronger research and outlining in the first semester, while the second can be used solely to focus on the paper and presentations.”

Suggested improvements:

- Require all students to devise a two-page written plan at the beginning of the semester for how and when they will spend 150 hours during the course of the semester to complete the work required. Students could then further be required to submit reports every two weeks indicating how much time they have spent on the coursework. This measure will help students complete the assessment instrument and encourage them to put the time in necessary to master the learning outcomes.
- In advising students, describe the success that students who took the HIST 3500 and HIST 4484 sequence have enjoyed.
- Consider encouraging faculty to teach a sequence of HIST 3500 in the fall and HIST 4484 in the spring.
- In order to improve student writing, the department should set caps in 4000-level courses at 25 in order to allow faculty to provide more individualized attention to student writing.
- The department should further consider amending the Department Handbook to adopt a policy of making all 4000-level courses writing-intensive, in the absence of a written request by the instructor to the Scheduling Coordinator in the teaching wish list request.

(20 students)

Ability to cite sources properly

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	31 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	62 percent
Developing / Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	6 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Comments: As I had done in the fall 2014 version of this course, I gave the students in my fall 2015 Senior Seminar section a citation quiz during the second month of class, and instructed them to prepare for the quiz by reviewing the sections of the Turabian manual that covered citation. I then assessed their proficiency in citation by evaluating the footnotes in the final version of their research papers. If a student's citations included all of the relevant publication information for a source but was not formatted properly according to Chicago style, I assigned that student an assessment grade of "proficient" for source citation. If all of a student's footnotes were properly formatted according to Chicago style, I assigned that student a grade of "exemplary." Based on this assessment criterion, it is clear that nearly all of the students in the class attained a level of citation mastery that at least would have allowed readers of their papers to locate the sources cited in the paper without any problem. Nearly one-third of the students demonstrated full mastery of Chicago-style citation. The rest continued to struggle with Chicago style, but at least nearly all of the students demonstrated that they understand how to use footnotes and that they know what information should be included in each footnote.

Ability to demonstrate general knowledge of U.S. and world history and in-depth knowledge of a particular historical question

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	56 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	6 percent
Developing/ Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	38 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Comments: More than half of the students mastered the available source material on their research questions to the extent that I would expect for a senior capstone undergraduate research seminar.

Ability to recognize and to pose significant historical questions

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	31 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	31 percent
Developing/ Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	38 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Comments: I think that many students struggle with the ability to recognize the difference between a historically significant research question and a question that is not fully historical or that is too broad in scope. Nearly one-third of students selected research questions for their papers that were excellent – that is, tightly focused, significant questions that could be answered adequately in the space of a 20-25 page research paper. Another third selected questions that were historical and that were somewhat significant, but perhaps overly broad or not as insightful as they could have

been. The remaining students selected questions that needed improvement. Many of these questions were strictly factual questions (e.g., “What were the experiences of Japanese-American children in the internment camps during World War II?,” or “Did the evidence presented in the Leo Frank trial indicate that Frank was guilty or not guilty of the crime of murdering Mary Phagan?”) rather than more complex questions of historical causality, motivation, or interpretation. I devoted a significant amount of class time at the beginning of the semester to a discussion of what makes a good research question, and I also offered students detailed feedback on their research questions near the beginning of the semester, but I think that the assessment data indicate that it might be useful to spend additional time helping students to recognize the difference between historically significant research questions and strictly factual questions.

Ability to find useful primary and secondary sources

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	44 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	25 percent
Developing/ Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	31 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Comments: I offered students detailed feedback on their bibliographies and required them to discuss their source lists with a professor in their field during the first month of class. I also arranged two separate library tours – one tour of the archives and another of the university databases. I think that most of the students knew how to locate useful sources for their papers, but due to time constraints, a significant number (31-56 percent) were not able to research their topics as extensively as I would have liked.

Ability to analyze sources critically

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	44 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	25 percent
Developing/ Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	31 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Comments: Nearly half of the students demonstrated excellent ability to analyze sources critically by considering their point of view, historical context, and intended authorship. Another quarter of the students demonstrated proficient ability to do this. But nearly one-third of the students seemed unable to assess the relative value of various primary sources, and some of them also accepted many primary sources uncritically when a consideration of their authorship, historical context, and intended audience might have been helpful in interpreting them. Most students made excellent use of secondary sources in their papers, and all of the students used at least some primary sources, but a number of them (perhaps nearly one-third of the students in the class) had trouble engaging with those primary sources critically and asking the right questions of those sources.

Ability to write standard English

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	13 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	69 percent
Developing/ Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	19 percent

Unacceptable (below 60 percent) 0 percent

Comments: Academic writing continues to be a significant challenge for even some of the best students in our program. Most are at least proficient in academic writing by the time they finish Senior Seminar, but only 13 percent demonstrated the ability to produce cogent academic writing that was free of grammatical and syntactical errors. I think that we should place a greater emphasis on training students to write well at earlier stages of our program.

Ability to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	19 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	38 percent
Developing/ Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	44 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Comments: Nearly 20 percent of the papers that I received were tightly constructed around a persuasive central argument based on sufficient evidence, but many papers either lacked a strong central argument or presented an argument that was based on insufficient evidence.

Ability to think historically

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	38 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	19 percent
Developing/ Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	44 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Ability to make an effective ten-minute oral presentation

Exemplary (90-100 percent)	44 percent
Proficient (80-89 percent)	44 percent
Developing/ Needs Improvement (60-79 percent)	13 percent
Unacceptable (below 60 percent)	0 percent

Comments: Most of our students do well with oral presentations. The best presenters in the class usually come from the secondary education certification program, because the College of Education gives students extensive training in classroom presentation techniques. As the percentage of students enrolled in the secondary education certification track continues to decrease, we may begin observing a simultaneous decline in the quality of student presentations in Senior Seminar, but for the moment, it seems that students are still doing well with their class presentations. I have started assigning class presentations in all of my upper-level undergraduate history classes in order to prepare students for mastery of this skill in Senior Seminar, and I would encourage other faculty to do the same if we consider this learning outcome important.

The Reflective Essay

Students' reflective essays described a variety of experiences. Some of the students in the class were nontraditional students who had returned to college after a hiatus of several years, and others were transfer students from community colleges or other educational institutions. Some were first-generation college students who struggled to feel comfortable on campus. Nearly all had spent more than four years in college. But despite some of their frustrations with the educational process, the students recognized that they had learned some valuable skills. In particular, they believed that their college studies had improved their skills of analysis and their writing ability. Some students also noted that they benefited from understanding the broad outline of world history, because they believed that this understanding gave them a better sense of who they were as human beings and where they had come from. One student wrote that he had learned "how and why we behave as we do as human beings" and "why we constantly engage in human events related to human conquests, religious conflicts and culture clashes that have touched off countless wars among human factions over the course of centuries." Another student wrote: "I learned how to craft an argument, provide and find support. Most importantly, I learned the importance of context, as history has everything to do with context."

Several students noted that the analytical skills that they learned in history classes helped them to navigate challenges in their daily lives that were not directly related to an academic study of history. One student wrote, "These same skills as a historian have helped me in other areas of my life as well. . . . As I have learned there are always other ways of interpreting a situation in life, and more than one way to look at the situation. Consequently, the way that an individual chooses to look at the situation determines the way that they rectify it or seek to find a solution."

Other students focused their essays on lessons learned outside of history classes, as well as in them – lessons such as self-confidence in dealing with peers. One student wrote: "This institution gave me a solid foundation to face my fears and accomplish my goals in the real world. I will no longer feel inadequate and shy. I have learned to stand up for what I believe and most importantly I am proud to say I am a product of strength and positivity."

Several students noted connections between coursework that they completed in history classes and the readings that they did for other academic disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy, and anthropology. It seems that many of our senior history majors have a holistic approach to learning, and their historical research therefore reflects insights that they gained in other humanities or social science courses.

Plans for improvement:

When I taught this course in the fall 2015 semester, I had two major goals for improvement:

- 1) Decrease the DFW rate in the class by structuring the course in such a way that students would begin writing their papers earlier and therefore be more likely to complete their papers by the end of the semester. I recommend the following schedule:

Three months before the beginning of the semester, email students a copy of the syllabus and encourage them to start thinking about their topics and email their research questions to the instructor for review.

Week One:

The preliminary version of the research question is due the day after class began.

Week Two:

The bibliography and final version of the research question are due on the second class day (that is, one week after the class began).

Week Eight:

Intro and historiography sections due.

Week Twelve:

Complete draft of the entire paper due.

- 2) Give students instruction in career development that would help them to move into graduate programs or career tracks immediately after graduation. I did this by scheduling several class sessions that featured guest presentations by people associated with Career Services, the College of Education, and the public history program at UWG.

I met both of these goals. In the fall of 2014, only 14 of the 20 students completed their research papers and received a passing grade in the class, but in the fall of 2015, 17 of 20 students did so. I consider this a substantial improvement, because it represents a reduction in the failure rate for this course from 30 percent to only 15 percent. While it is difficult to say for certain that the decrease in the DFW rate was due to the restructuring of class deadlines in order to make sure that students started writing their papers earlier in the semester, I think that the evidence suggests this. The effectiveness of the career preparation sessions may be more difficult to assess in the short term, but several students told me how much they appreciated those sessions, and at least two students used information from those sessions to make a decision to attend our M.A. program in history. Another is seriously exploring career options in public history, and several others are preparing to be middle school or high school teachers.

The Undergraduate Education Committee has formed an ad hoc departmental committee this semester to examine Senior Seminar and suggest further revisions to the course. I do not want to preempt this committee's analysis, but based on my experience, I would suggest that we make improvement in students' proficiency in academic writing a major goal for our program. We need to find ways to make training in academic writing a more central part of our department's curriculum focus throughout the entire undergraduate program if we want to see improvements in students' quality of writing in the senior capstone course. Students need to receive extensive training in research paper writing long before they reach Senior Seminar. We do some of that with our Methodology and DSW classes, but I would suggest that we find ways to give students additional training in writing in order to prepare them to meet their academic and career goals.

Part III: Core Courses

A. HIST 1111

Parameters of Assessment:

For the Fall 2015 semester, the HIST 1111 Survey Assessment Committee (SAC) assessed my HIST 1111 03 section on the basis of the following two World Civilization core learning outcomes:

- 1. • Students will demonstrate the ability to understand the political, social, economic, or cultural dimensions of world history.
- 2 • Students will demonstrate an understanding of the commonalities and differences among two or more societies, nations, or cultures outside of the United States in regard to any of the following: language, literature, aesthetics, politics, economics, or social and cultural practices.

The assessment instrument consisted of the following essay question, which was administered as part of the second examination:

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? [Addresses Learning Outcome #2] 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. [Addresses Learning Outcome # 1]

Thirty (30) students took the assessment instrument. They received a raw score of between 1 and 50 on the essay based on their ability to demonstrate an understanding of commonalities and differences as well as an understanding of political, social, economic, or cultural dimensions of world history. These raw scores were converted into a four-point scale score where a 1 means “did not meet expectations; 2 means “developing;” 3 means “met expectations;” and, 4 means “exceeded expectations. The conversion was as follows:

- Raw score below 30 = 1 (did not meet expectations)
- Raw score between 30 and 34.5 = 2 (developing)
- Raw score between 35 and 44.5 = 3 (met expectations)
- Raw score between 45 and 50 = 4 (exceeded expectations)

Assessment Results Tables

Student	Raw Score	Scale Score
01	35	3
02	40	3
03	42	3
04	39	3
05	50	4
06	40	3
07	34	2
08	44	3
09	37	3
10	43	3
11	44	3
12	40	3
13	37	3
14	39	3
15	35	3
16	39	3
17	47	4
18	36	3
19	34	2
20	46	4
21	35	3
22	44	3
23	35	3
24	37	3
25	34	2
26	50	4
27	36	3
28	33	2
29	44	3
30	40	3

Scale Score	# of Results	Percentage
4	4	13.33%
3	22	73.33%
2	4	13.33%
1	0	0.00%

Basic Assessment Results

2011

Rubric	Instances	Percentage
4	10	16.94
3	38	64.40
2	9	15.25
1	1	01.69

2012

Rubric	Instances	Percentage
4	21	37.5
3	19	31.93
2	12	21.43
1	4	7.14

2013

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

2014

Rubric Score:	#of Instances:	Percentage:
4	10	28.6%
3	14	40%
2	5	14.3%
1	6	17.1%

2015

Rubric Score	# of Instances:	Percentage
4	4	13.33%
3	22	73.33%
2	4	13.33%
1	0	0.00%

Five Year Average Percentages

Rubric Score	Percentage
4	22.702%
3	57.360%
2	12.862%
1	06.024%

B. HIST 1112

Area E Learning Outcome

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

Indirect assessment measure

Exemplary: 21.8 percent

Proficient: 40.6 percent

Developing: 32.3 percent

Unacceptable: 5.2 percent

Direct assessment measure

Carrollton

One section was assessed. Seventeen students completed the assessment instrument:

Exemplary	90-100 percent correct	6 percent
Proficient	80-89 percent correct	60 percent
Developing	60-79 percent correct	34 percent
Unacceptable	below 60 percent correct	0 percent

Newnan

One section was assessed.

Exemplary	90-100 percent correct	35 percent
Proficient	80-89 percent correct	40 percent
Developing	60-79 percent correct	20 percent
Unacceptable	below 60 percent correct	5 percent

It is too early to tell if the implementation of the writing-to-learn exercise adopted after analysis of the 2014 assessment data has been paying significant dividends. The SAC believes that requiring more student writing is a promising approach and will continue to apply it and collect more assessment data. The improvement described below is designed to build on the measure adopted in 2014.

Improvements

The faculty teaching HIST 1112 held a workshop on March 25, 2016, to further develop strategies for improving student learning through working with primary sources. At the workshop, the faculty agreed to develop a written guide for all students in HIST 1112 on how to read primary sources. The SAC also established a file on the shared drive where faculty could share primary sources that have worked well in their section. These are primary sources beyond the common set.

Global Perspectives Learning Outcome

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the commonalities and differences among two or more societies, nations, or cultures outside of the United States in regard to any of the following: language, literature, aesthetics, politics, economics, or social and cultural practices.

Indirect assessment measure

Exemplary: 21.4 percent
Proficient: 44.1 percent
Developing: 30.1 percent
Unacceptable: 4.4 percent

Direct assessment measure

Carrollton

One section was assessed. A total of 36 students completed the assessment instrument:

Exemplary	90-100 percent correct	39 percent
Proficient	80-89 percent correct	0 percent
Developing	60-79 percent correct	0 percent
Unacceptable	below 60 percent correct	61 percent

The breakdown among the unacceptable responses was as follows:

50% / 1 correct = 17 (47%)

0% / both wrong = 5 (14%)

Newnan

One section was assessed.

Exemplary	90-100 percent correct	45 percent
Proficient	80-89 percent correct	0 percent
Developing	60-79 percent correct	0 percent
Unacceptable	below 60 percent correct	55 percent

The breakdown among the unacceptable responses was as follows:

50% / 1 correct = 35 percent

0% / both wrong = 20 percent

The Global Perspectives Overlay was discontinued by the BOR in March 2016.

C. HIST 2111

Learning Outcome

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

Direct Assessment Measure

Carrollton Campus

One section of U.S. History 2111-H (enrollment of twelve students) was assessed. The students read one of the primary texts (*Hospital Sketches*) agreed upon by the 2111 SAC and were given eight study questions to think about. They then wrote two essays in class answering two of the study questions. All twelve students completed the assessment instrument.

Exemplary 90-100 percent correct 58%

Proficient 80-89 percent correct 42%

Developing 60-79 percent correct

Unacceptable below 60 percent correct

The students in this section of History 2111-H did exceptionally well on this assignment. The same primary source assigned in non-honors sections of History 2111 with identical study questions and essay assignment results in a much greater range of grades.

Newnan Campus

UWG offered one section of HIST 2111 in the fall of 2015. There was no assessment done in this section and this oversight was solely the fault of the SAC Committee chair. Assessment of 2111 at Newnan will definitely take place in 2016.

Improvements

The faculty teaching 2111 met in late March, 2016, to develop strategies for improving student learning through the use of writing assignments that analyze primary documents. The SAC decided

to create a multiple-choice test (around twenty-five questions) that will be administered at the beginning and end of the semester to assess student learning. We have created a Google doc and started posting possible questions on it. The SAC is considering how to sample the sections of the course. Two instructors will do a test run in fall 2016.

D. HIST 2112

Learning Outcome:

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 one 35-student section of HIST 2112 in the fall 2015 semester by administering a 50-minute in-class essay exam to the students at the end of the semester. Normally, we also assess an honors section of US history, as well as a section taught on the Newnan campus, but because no sections of HIST 2112 were offered as honors courses or Newnan campus classes in the fall 2015 semester, this was not part of our assessment exercise this year. Instead, we assessed only a single class taught on the Carrollton campus.

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 (90-100 percent); a 3 represented "proficient" work (80-89 percent); a 2 was given for an essay that "needed improvement" (60-79 percent); and a score of 1 signified "lack of understanding" (below 60 percent).

Assessment Results:

The results of the assessment exercise were as follows:

Score of 4: 26 percent (compared to 25 percent in fall 2014)

Score of 3: 50 percent (compared to 46 percent in fall 2014)

Score of 2: 21 percent (compared to 24 percent in fall 2014)

Score of 1: 3 percent (compared to 5 percent in fall 2014)

Analysis:

The section of HIST 2112 that was assessed this year was a small (35-student) section that emphasized writing throughout the semester. All students were required to submit ten short (3-paragraph) essays analyzing primary source documents, so by the time they completed the assessment exercise, they had had extensive practice writing about primary sources, which, I think, is why 76 percent of the students demonstrated proficiency or

exemplary ability to “understand the political, social, or cultural dimensions of American history” using this assessment exercise.

Plan for improvement:

The HIST 2112 assessment team (Dr. Julia Brock, Dr. Stephanie Chalifoux, and I) has agreed on the following plan for improvement in the 2016-17 academic year:

- 1) Because we realize the importance of primary source-based writing, we will ask all instructors who are scheduled to teach HIST 2112 in the 2016-17 year to assign their students at least one graded primary source-based writing assignment in addition to the writing assignment that will be assessed. The writing assignment can be an-class writing assignment or an essay assignment that students will complete outside of class time. The exact nature of the assignment, including length and sources assigned, will be determined by each instructor. Because we believe that the best way to increase students’ proficiency in the skills measured by our assessment exercise is to require the students to do more primary source-based analytical writing – and because we are convinced of the connection between writing and learning – we are therefore going to work to improve student learning in this class by requiring a primary source-based writing assignment for all sections in this course.
- 2) We will ask all instructors teaching HIST 2112 in the fall 2016 semester to assess one of their HIST 2112 sections. To assess their students, instructors will select a primary source-based essay question from the HIST 2112 assessment folder posted on the department’s shared drive, and they will require students to complete the graded assessment exercise during a 50-minute period at or near the end of the semester. This will increase the number of HIST 2112 sections assessed and will give us a more complete range of data to evaluate student learning next year.

Part IV: Recommendations

- **Require all students in Senior Seminar to devise a short, written plan at the beginning of the semester for how and when they will complete the work required. This measure will help students complete the assessment instrument and encourage them to put the time in necessary to master the learning outcomes.**
- **Undergraduate Education Committee will create advising roadmap for all majors organized by semester.**
- Offer HIST 3500 every semester.
- In advising students, describe the success that students who took the HIST 3500 and HIST 4484 sequence have enjoyed.
- Title HIST 3500 in Banweb as Junior Historiography Seminar.
- Consider encouraging faculty to teach a sequence of HIST 3500 in the fall and HIST 4484 in the spring.

- Make HIST 3500 a prerequisite for HIST 4484 Senior Seminar. The Senior Seminar instructor should override the prerequisite only if the student provides a two-page written prospectus clearly identifying the question that will be addressed in the Senior Seminar paper and providing a draft bibliography.
- The department should further consider amending the Department Handbook to adopt a policy of making all 4000-level courses writing-intensive, in the absence of a written request by the instructor to the Scheduling Coordinator in the teaching wish list request.
- Structure the Senior Seminar syllabus as follows:

Three months before the beginning of the semester, email students a copy of the syllabus and encourage them to start thinking about their topics and email their research questions to the instructor for review.

Week One:

The preliminary version of the research question is due the day after class began.

Week Two:

The bibliography and final version of the research question are due on the second class day (that is, one week after the class began).

Week Eight:

Intro and historiography sections due.

Week Twelve:

Complete draft of the entire paper due.

- Give students instruction in career development that would help them to move into graduate programs or career tracks immediately after graduation. I did this by scheduling several class sessions that featured guest presentations by people associated with Career Services, the College of Education, and the public history program at UWG.
- Make improvement in students' proficiency in academic writing a major goal for our program. We need to find ways to make training in academic writing a more central part of our department's curriculum focus throughout the entire undergraduate program if we want to see improvements in students' quality of writing in the senior capstone course. Students need to receive extensive training in research paper writing long before they reach Senior Seminar. We do some of that with our Methodology and DSW classes, but I would suggest that we find ways to give students additional training in writing in order to prepare them to meet their academic and career goals.
- Pilot a new course called Case Studies in History in which students will read a large enough sampling of secondary and primary sources (along with utilizing available films, documentaries, music, etc.) that they could get a better-than-usual handle on the key material. The class would be sort of a manageable, student-friendly cross between Methodology and Historiography, and build toward Senior Seminar.
- Require writing assignments, however short, in all survey courses. After all, our majors have to take four surveys, and if all surveys were to require exposure to historical writing, students would get quite a bit of preparation for the major this way.
- Update assessment information on the webpage. It still mentions the Assessment Exam, which is no longer a part of Methodology assessment. There may be other updates we need to give our webmaster.

<http://www.westga.edu/~history/About%20History/assessment/assessmentofthecoresurvey%20courses.pdf>

- The department has revised its program outcomes, so Methodology learning outcomes should be adjusted to align with program outcomes. (This recommendation applies to all courses that address program learning outcomes, including Senior Seminar.)
- Continue requiring multiple drafts of a writing assignment in Methodology. It is an effective way to increase student performance in meeting our critical thinking and writing outcomes.
- Writing continues to be a tortured process for many, and including a writing assignment in survey courses for History majors is suggested to help prepare them for the more rigorous writing demands placed on them in Methodology. I would ask the department to consider creating survey courses (1111, 1112, 2111, 2112) that are designed specifically for History majors. Only History majors would be allowed to enroll in these courses. Over the academic year, two of these courses could be offered each semester (ex: Fall = 1111 and 2111; Spring = 1112 and 2112). These courses could include one or more writing assignments and even introduce concepts like historiography and history methods. In my undergraduate coursework, I took these kinds of survey courses (history students only) and they proved valuable in my early formation as a historian because they were geared towards the needs of the History major.
- Implement conforming changes to assessment procedures consistent with changes to the learning outcomes adopted in February 2016.
- Create Google Doc drawing course requirements together in one place for instructors.

Improvements Adopted at April 15 meeting

Upon consideration of the evidence and following extensive discussion, the department decided to adopt the following improvements to be put into place in 2016:

- Require all students in Senior Seminar to devise a short, written plan at the beginning of the semester for how and when they will complete the work required. This measure will help students complete the assessment instrument and encourage them to put the time in necessary to master the learning outcomes.
- The Undergraduate Education Committee will create an advising roadmap for majors offering a plan or plans, organized by semester, for timely, successful completion of the degree.
- Pilot a new course called Case Studies in History which, in focusing on significant but narrowly defined topics, will enable students to cover and gain mastery of a substantial sampling of relevant secondary and primary source material. The course will provide students with experience in applying historical methods and historiography and will help them build toward Senior Seminar.