

Outcomes Assessment

Department of History and Political Science

B.A. History Major

Assessment Period: Fall 2015-Spring 2016

Date Submitted: March 1, 2017

Mission of the Department of History & Political Science

Historical and political awareness and understanding constitutes one of the chief attributes of a functional and involved citizen of the United States. It is the mission of this department to provide an education that will contribute to the realization of this ideal by every student. We also seek to train graduates to work in a variety of public and private sector jobs, utilizing their historical and political skills and knowledge. Finally, the department is committed to preserving, interpreting, and promoting the unique multicultural heritage of the region.

Goals of the History Program

It is our goal to train students for careers in teaching plus various kinds of professional employment. Professional applications of history include careers in public affairs, business, and the private sector where research, communication, and other liberal arts skills are required and appreciated. In addition, the program seeks to prepare students for advanced graduate programs in history and the law.

Program Student Outcomes

1. Upon completion of the history major, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of major historical periods, figures, and developments.
2. Upon completion of the history major, students will be able to demonstrate a comprehension of the fundamental processes of historical analysis.
3. Upon completion of the history major, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the literature in given fields.
4. Upon completion of the history major, students will be able to write a historical paper that is well organized, that states and defends a position or thesis, that marshals evidence in support of that thesis, that demonstrates competent use of language, and that is formatted correctly.

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of major historical periods, figures, and developments.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills

Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

Grades from 300/400-level history classes offered during the spring semester. Successful completion of this outcome will be indicated by at least 50% of history majors receiving a B or above in each of the courses.

Summary of Data:

History 414: The American Presidency

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	1
Total Number of Students Assessed:	4	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

History 435: The Civil War Through Film

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	2
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

History 301: Research Methods in History

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	4	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	5
Total Number of Students Assessed:	9	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

History 325: Modern Europe to 1815

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

History 347: History of Modern Mexico

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	3	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

History 480: Historiography

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	4
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

Although there is some variation between courses, in 16 out of 31 cases overall, our history majors are earning a B or above in their 300/400 level courses. In other words, we are meeting our assessment goal of 50% of history majors attaining a B or above in their upper division courses. Some of the difficulties that students are having in *History 301* and *History 480*, both required courses for our majors, are addressed below.

Student Learning Outcome 2:

Students will be able to demonstrate a comprehension of the fundamental processes of historical analysis.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective use of technology

Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:

The final research project in History 301 *Research Methods in History and Political Science* will be used for this assessment. The history faculty will evaluate the paper based on the accuracy of the content, the use of literature in the field, the soundness of the historical argument and interpretation, the organization and logical progression of the argument, and the use of relevant sources to support the thesis/argument. A grade of B or above will indicate a successful completion of this outcome.

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	4
Total Number of Students Assessed:	9	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

Over half our majors earned an A or a B based on the criteria used for this assessment. *History 301* requires that students identify an original topic and practice developing a coherent historical argument and interpretation of their research over the course of one semester (all of this is done with the frequent assistance of the professor). A challenging course, it exposes students to the fundamental processes of historical research and analysis. Mastering these skills is essential for Highlands' history majors to be competitive with those from other universities. Though some students struggle with the course, anecdotally they all agree that the course not only enhances their overall academic skills, but also boosts their self-confidence as history majors.

Student Learning Outcome 3:

Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of historical literature in a given field.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective use of technology

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

The final oral presentation of the historiographical essay in History 480 *Historiography* will be used for this assessment. The history faculty will evaluate the presentation on the basis of the student's ability to accurately present the development of historical writing and thought as represented by a historian in a selected field. The presentation will be scored on the basis of the attached rubric. A grade of "B" or better on the project will indicate a successful completion of this outcome.

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	2
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

Second Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

The final essay in History 480 *Historiography* will be used for this assessment. The history faculty will evaluate the paper on the basis of the student’s analysis of the historical argument of a work by a historian in a particular field and the student’s ability to place that argument in relation to other writing in the same field and/or by the same author. A grade of B or above will indicate a successful completion of this outcome.

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	2	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

The two assessments above measure the outcomes of the second required course in the history major. *History 480* teaches, among other things, how historical writing itself is reflective of the preoccupations of the times in which it was written. Students are required to analyze the work of a particular scholar and then place that work within the larger body of historical writing on the same subject or within the body of work by the same author. *History 480* is the most intellectually rigorous of the required courses for the major. More than half of our majors were able to earn an A or a B on the oral presentations of their analysis, while slightly less than half were able effectively to present their analysis in writing.

The history faculty is currently considering ways to reorganize History 480 to demonstrate the fundamentals of historiographical analysis while making it more accessible to our undergraduates. One idea is to focus the course on a particular topic chosen by the professor and studying that topic through a historiographical lens.

Student Learning Outcome #4:

Upon completion of the history major, students will be able to write a historical paper that is well organized, that states and defends a position or thesis, that marshals evidence in support of that thesis, that demonstrates competent use of language, and that is formatted correctly.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 4:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective use of technology

Means of Assessment for Outcome 4:

The final research project in History 301 *Research Methods in History and Political Science* will be used for this assessment. The history faculty will evaluate the paper on the basis of a clear statement of an organizing thesis, the accuracy and development of a historical argument, the clarity of expression, and the proper formatting of a historical essay. The paper will be scored on the basis of the attached rubric. A score 3.0 or above will indicate a successful completion of this outcome.

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	2
Total Number of Students Assessed:	8	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 4:

The rubric for this assessment is attached. Three quarters of history majors achieved a 3.0 or above on their final research paper based on the criteria outlined in the rubric. *History 301* has one overall objective: to teach students how to research, analyze, and write like a historian. Even when students have to repeat the class—and that number has been very small over the history of the course--our majors agree that this course is transformative, honing their academic skills and historical imaginations.

Conclusion:

The history faculty at Highlands is committed to maintaining the academic rigor of our program despite the decline in the number of majors and what seems to faculty nationwide as a decline in academic skills. As an academic discipline, history requires that students read extensively and develop their writing skills. This can be difficult for many of our students even if they demonstrate some ability and are interested in interpreting and handling the raw materials of historical analysis. The faculty unanimously agree that if our majors are to compete with graduates from other programs, they must master the foundational skills emphasized in our program. History majors have many options open to them after graduation including postgraduate study, law school, teaching, political office, archival and museum work, as well as government employment in the diplomatic service, the park service, and intelligence agencies. Any of these positions, however, require our students to read critically, to write analytically, and to interpret both narrative and quantitative data.

That being said, the history faculty is aware of the need to adapt to some of the changing preferences of our student body. We have embarked on an effort to offer a greater diversity of courses, to incorporate a variety of media and types of historical representation in our teaching, to seek more training in effective online education, and to identify appropriate internships for students in local museums and state and national parks. These interventions could attract a larger number of students and encourage them to invest time and energy into the difficult but rewarding tasks of reading and writing necessary to complete the major.

Paper Evaluation Criteria

Learning Outcome 4

Department of History 2016-2017

Student: _____

Evaluator: _____

Work Evaluated: _____

Grade: _____

After reviewing the work being evaluated, please assign a number from 1 to 5 for each of the categories below:

	Excellent		Fair		Poor
Content (accuracy of factual material & appropriate length)	5	4	3	2	1
Understanding/review/use of literature in the field	5	4	3	2	1
Comprehension of historical processes and interpretation	5	4	3	2	1
Use of language	5	4	3	2	1
Use of relevant material to support thesis/arguments	5	4	3	2	1
Organization (chronology, logical progression, assertion and conclusion, as appropriate)	5	4	3	2	1
Form (citations, bibliography, etc., as appropriate)	5	4	3	2	1

Comments:
