

# **Outcomes Assessment**

## **Department of History and Political Science**

B.A. History Major

Assessment Period: Fall 2016-Spring 2017

Date Submitted: August 25, 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 are used for this outcome. 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 411: Women in the United States**

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	4	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	4	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

**History 345: Modern Latin America**

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	

**History 301: Research Methods in History**

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 322: Medieval Europe

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	

### History 480: Historiography

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	8	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

#### Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

Although there is some variation between courses, in 20 out of 30 cases overall, our history majors earned 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* is used for this assessment. The history faculty evaluates 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 indicates a successful completion of this outcome.

**Summary of Data:**

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

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:**

Well over half our majors (4 out of 5) earned an A or a B based on the criteria used for this assessment. *History 301* requires students to 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* is used for this assessment. The history faculty bases its evaluation on 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 is scored according to 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:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	8	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

### Second Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

The final essay in History 480 *Historiography* is used for this assessment. The history faculty evaluates 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:	4	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	4
Total Number of Students Assessed:	8	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 half were able effectively to present their analysis in writing.

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

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 4:**

The rubric for this assessment is attached. Four out of five 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.

**Utilization of Results:**

The Outcomes Assessment process continues to inform the history faculty’s discussions of our program. This past year we designed at least one new course, The Cold War, and we went through the process to make History through Film a permanent part of our course offerings. Faculty continue to experiment with a variety of media and types of historical representation and seek to introduce more guest speakers while building bridges with other institutions. In keeping with our strategic plan, faculty have hosted guest lectures by visiting scholars at the United World College and political activists and authors from the community. The faculty have also offered more courses online. One faculty member has tried offering History 100 The Western World online. Members of the faculty regularly participate in professional development courses such as Writing Across the Curriculum and On Course seminars to enhance their teaching and to try to improve our writing outcomes. The history faculty is again 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.

We are committed to maintaining the academic rigor of our program despite a decline in the number of majors that is consistent with nationwide trends. 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.

### **Changes to Program Based on Results:**

We designed a new course, The Cold War, which will be offered in the fall 2017 semester. Faculty are also considering topics that might provide more accessibility to the concepts underlying historiography. The discipline has extended its online offerings to one introductory course and is discussing how best to evaluate the outcomes. Finally, faculty are continuing to explore techniques for improving student writing and active learning by attending developmental seminars. We have developed two and four year “degree roadmaps” to help both faculty and students plan their programs so that they get practice with research and writing during their junior year to prepare them for both Historiography and upper division courses during their final year.

### **Retention Strategies:**

The history faculty have attendance policies that help faculty recognize those students who need assistance and advising early in the semester. In our lower division courses, faculty regularly participate in Attendance Alert and Early Alert. The faculty is very committed to advising students on an individual basis, and both History 301 and History 480 have individual meetings with faculty built into the course. Faculty regularly invite students in lower division courses to meet with them if they are interested in the history major and, in addition, try to identify students with the skills to complete the major. We host two social events, one in the fall and one in the spring, to introduce students to the department and to forge closer relationships with our majors. Finally, we hosted well-attended campus-wide events that featured guest speakers from both the United World College and the community to stimulate interest in the department and discipline of history. We are planning to continue to schedule extracurricular events, for example a celebration of Constitution Day, to make history more visible on campus and in the community.