

Outcomes Assessment

Department of History & Political Science

B.A. History Major

Assessment Period: Fall 2020-Spring 2021

Date Submitted: 30 October 2021

The Mission of the Department of History & Political Science

Historical and political awareness and understanding constitute 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 in which we live and work.

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. Also, 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 completing 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 completing the history major, students will be able to write a well-organized historical paper that articulates and defends a position or thesis that marshals evidence supporting that thesis, demonstrating competent use of language and correct formatting.

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 provide the basis 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 course.

Summary of Data:

History 3220, Medieval Europe

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	7	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	4
Total Number of Students Assessed:	11	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	64%

History 3010, Research Methods

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

History 4540, History Through Film: WW2

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	6	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

History 4140, American Presidency

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	5
Total Number of Students Assessed:	11	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	55%

History 4120, Civil War & Reconstruction

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	2	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	40%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

Despite some variation between courses, in 22 out of 34 cases overall, history majors earned a B or above in 300/400 level courses in Spring 2020. In other words, we are exceeding our assessment goal of 50% of history majors attaining a B or above in upper-division courses. Some of the ongoing difficulties students face in *History 3010* and *History 4800*, the only two classes currently required for students in our major, are addressed below; we contemplate further revisions to our programs and courses. The recent pandemic and the switch to online teaching likely negatively affected enrollments and student performance.

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 3010 *Research Methods* provides data for this assessment. The course instructor 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 utilization of relevant sources to support the thesis/argument. A grade of B or above indicates successful completion of this outcome.

Summary of Data:

History 3010: Research Methods

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

Based on the criteria, the students met the benchmark for this outcome. The sample size was very small this year, making firm conclusions difficult, but it seems as though the department's recent adjustments for Hist 3010 have been producing the desired results.

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 project in *History 4800 Historiography* is the basis for this assessment. The history faculty bases its evaluation on the student's ability to present the development of historical writing and thought as represented by a historian in a selected field. The presentation is scored according to a specific rubric, a copy of which is attached). A grade of "B" or better on the project will indicate successful completion of this outcome.

Summary of Data:

No data available. Hist 4800 was not offered 2020-2021.

Second Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

The final essay in *History 4800 Historiography* is used for this assessment. The course instructor evaluates the paper based on 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 discipline or by the same author. A grade of B or above will indicate the successful completion of this outcome.

Summary of Data:

No data available. Hist 4800 was not offered 2020-2021.

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

The two assessments above measure the outcomes of the second required course in the history major. *History 4800* teaches, among other things, how historical writing is itself reflective of the preoccupations of the time and place in which it was written. The regular course was not offered 2020-2021 due to low enrollment. Students in the course are required to analyze a particular scholar's work 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 4800* is the most intellectually rigorous of the required courses for the major.

Student Learning Outcome 4:

Upon completing the history major, each student will be able to write a well organized historical paper that states and defends a position or thesis, marshals evidence in support of that thesis, and demonstrates competent use of language and proper format.

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 3010 Research Methods* forms the basis for this assessment. The history faculty will evaluate the paper on 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 based on the attached rubric. A score of B or above will indicate the successful completion of this outcome.

Summary of Data:**History 3010: Research Methods**

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 4:

Based on the criteria, the students met the benchmark for this outcome. Again, this year the sample size was very small, making firm conclusions difficult.

Utilization of Results:

The Outcomes Assessment process continues to inform the history faculty's discussions of our program. We have made *History 4540: History through Film* a permanent part of our course offerings, and it was taught again in Spring 2021. With a new faculty member, Dr. Luke Ritter, we have been able to offer *History 4120: Civil War* and *History 4140: American Presidency*. Faculty continue to experiment with various media and types of historical representation and seek to introduce more

guest speakers while building bridges with other institutions. Faculty have hosted guest lectures by visiting scholars at the United World College and political activists and authors from the community. The faculty has also offered more courses online. Since the start of the current pandemic emergency, all of our faculty have perforce begun teaching via distance, and the change will require further assessment. 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 improve our writing outcomes. The History faculty is still considering ways to reorganize History 4800 to demonstrate the fundamentals of historiographical analysis while making it more accessible to our undergraduates. These discussions are continuing. The addition of Dr. Luke Ritter to the department, teaching full time this current academic year, bodes well for our discipline's recovery.

We remain committed to maintaining our program's academic rigor and breadth 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. The major's demands can be challenging 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. However, any of these positions require our students to read critically, write analytically, and interpret both narrative and quantitative data.

Changes to Program Based on Results:

Dr. Williams has designed and piloted new courses in recent years. These included *History 435: ST: The Crusades*, which was offered—with considerable success—in the fall 2017 semester and another selected topics course on the History of World War I, offered in Spring 2020. *Hist 4160/5160, The Crusades*, is now a permanent course offering. Several iterations of *History through Film* have been taught, most recently in Spring 2021 as *History 4540: History through Film – WW2*. Dr. Ritter is now offering new special topics courses, such as *History 4350: American Conspiracies* and *Hist 4350: History of Religion in the United States*. Faculty are also considering other topics that might provide more accessibility to the concepts underlying historiography. Finally, faculty continue 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 to get practice with research and writing during their junior year to prepare them for both *Hist 4800: Historiography* and other upper-division courses in 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 remains committed to advising students on an individual basis, and both *History 3010* and *History 4800* have individual meetings with faculty built into the courses. Faculty regularly invite students in lower-division classes to meet with them if

they are interested in the History major and identify students with the skills to complete the major. We are continuing to schedule extracurricular events to the extent possible, given the current situation with the pandemic. For example, another celebration of Constitution Day is being planned for November 2021—the fourth year in a row—to make History as a discipline and a program more visible on campus and in the community. We are currently reviewing the departmental Strategic Plan to strengthen our retention efforts. We are gratified that we have successfully hired an American historian to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Dr. Ross. Dr. Luke Ritter joined the department in August of 2020 and is now teaching full time. He has now moved to Las Vegas and is able to teach and advise in person, further enhancing his effectiveness.

Appendix 1: Scoring Rubric for Presentations: Name: _____

Category	Scoring Criteria	Possible Points	Score
Organization (15 points)	The type of presentation is appropriate for the topic and audience.	5	
	Information is presented in a logical sequence.	5	
	Presentation appropriately identifies sources.	2	
Content (32 points)	Introduction is attention-getting, lays out the problem well, and establishes a framework for the rest of the presentation.	5	
	Any unfamiliar terms are well-defined in language appropriate for the target audience.	3	
	Presentation contains accurate information.	10	
	Material included is relevant to the overall purpose.	10	
	Appropriate amount of material is prepared, and points made reflect well their relative importance.	5	
	An obvious conclusion summarizes the presentation.	5	
Presentation (33 points)	Speaker maintains good eye contact with the audience and is appropriately animated (e.g., gestures, moving around, etc.).	3	
	Speaker uses a clear, audible voice.	3	
	Delivery is poised, controlled, and smooth.	3	
	Good language skills and pronunciation are used.	2	
	If used, visual aids are well prepared, informative, effective, and not distracting.	5	
	Length of presentation is not too long or too short.	5	
	Information was well communicated.	9	
Score	Total Points	80	