

Outcomes Assessment Report
Southwest Studies: Concentration in History & Political Science

M.A. Southwest Studies, Concentration in History & Political Science

Report Year: 2017-2018

New Mexico Highlands University: Mission Statement (Adopted as part of new Strategic Plan, 2016)

New Mexico Highlands University is a public comprehensive university serving our local and global communities. Our mission is to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions within a diverse community.

Mission of the Department of History & Political Science

Because of its multi-ethnic composition, varied traditions, and rich history, the American Southwest lends itself to interesting and important studies. The M.A. in Southwest Studies marshals interdisciplinary resources in the study of the anthropology, history, and political science of the Southwest. Students will particularly demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the unique social and cultural makeup of the greater Southwest and of the complex prehistory and history that produced it.

Goals of the Southwest Studies Program, History & Political Science Concentration.

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

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose Linkage & Institutional Mission Reference:

The University's commitment to programs focusing on a diverse campus community, especially the rich heritage of regional traditions and cultures.

College/University Goals Supported:

The university aspires to develop broadly literate citizens and leaders, educated in analytical and critical thought, the use of technology, and the appreciation of the arts and sciences. The university's commitment is to programs focusing on a diverse campus community, especially the rich heritage of regional traditions and cultures.

Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes:

- 1) Students will demonstrate understanding and appreciation of the unique social and cultural makeup of the greater Southwest, as well as the complex prehistory and history that produced it.
- 2) Students will develop skills in reading, research, writing, critical and reflective thought, the use of technology, and communication.
- 3) Students will master the scholarly literature in their chosen field of concentration within Southwest Studies (History & Political Science).

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Students will demonstrate understanding and appreciation of the unique social and cultural makeup of the greater Southwest, as well as the complex prehistory and history that produced it.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1:

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

Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

- 1) Students fill out surveys (see attachment 2) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including a question asking them to comment on the program's impact on their appreciation of diversity. Criteria for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in that respect.

- 2) The program’s Graduate Coordinator will fill out a portfolio checklist (attachment 1) evaluating a sample of each graduating student’s written work, including his or her thesis, professional paper(s), or comprehensive exam. Criteria for success, rating of good or excellent on Checklist Item N^o 2 (understanding of Southwest prehistory, history, and culture).

Summary of Data:

1)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	100%

Note: A single questionnaire was returned.

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	3	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

With so little data, there are few concrete conclusions to be reached. The most obvious point is that the program concentration needs to recruit significantly more students—and move them through the program expeditiously—in order to prosper.

Student Learning Outcome 2:

Students will develop skills in reading, research, writing, critical thought, communication, and the effective use of technology.

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 for research.

Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:

- 1) Students will achieve a grade of A or B in Hist/Poli Sci 620: Research Methods in History. Criterion for success, 75% of students earning A or B.
- 2) Graduate Coordinator will fill out a portfolio checklist (attachment 1) evaluating all students' final papers in Hist 618: Seminar: Southwest (the sole History course in the Southwest Studies Core Curriculum). Criterion for success, average rating of good or excellent in the relevant measures of the checklist.
- 3) Students will achieve a grade of A or B on the electronic research assignment in Hist 618.
- 4) Students fill out surveys (see attachment 2) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including questions asking them to comment on the program's impact on their research, writing, and analytical skills. Criteria for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in all three areas.

Summary of Data:

1)

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

No Southwest Studies/Hist & Poli Sci students took Hist 620 in 2017-2018.

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
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Total Number of Students Assessed:	3	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	100%
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3)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	3	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	100%

4)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	100%

No questionnaires were returned.

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

With so little data, there are few concrete conclusions to be reached. The most obvious point is that the program concentration needs to recruit more students—and move them through the program expeditiously—in order to prosper.

Student Learning Outcome 3:

Students will master the scholarly literature in their chosen field of concentration (History & Political Science.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills

Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

- 1) Faculty portfolio checklists (attachment 1) ask Graduate Coordinator to evaluate student mastery of the relevant scholarly literature for theses and professional papers. Criterion for success, rating of good or excellent on the relevant evaluative measure.
- 2) Students fill out surveys (see attachment 2) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including questions asking them to comment on the program’s impact on their understanding of the literature of the field. Criteria for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in this area.

Summary of Data:

1)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	100%

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	100%

A single questionnaire was returned.

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

With so little data, there are few concrete conclusions to be reached. The most obvious point is that the program concentration needs to recruit more students—and move them through the program expeditiously—in order to survive and prosper.

Utilization of Results:

The faculty of the Southwest Studies/History & Political Science program have reviewed the numbers and have discussed concrete steps going forward. The primordial problem facing this concentration of the Southwest Studies Program is that recruitment efforts over the last several years have yielded relatively little fruit. A first

step in improving the program is to increase student recruitment, by seeking to attract students from throughout the region, and by developing and maintaining a website for the program. Another related problem is staffing. The History/Political Science component of the Southwest Studies program currently consists of two historians and a single professor of political science. Of the two historians, one's area of expertise is only tangentially relevant to the program. The department desperately needs to replace our recently-retired professor of American history, and an additional full-time political scientist is also needed. In our judgment, this is essential for the viability of the program over the long term.

Changes to Program Based on Results:

The limited data available indicate that our students are meeting expectations in the program; the few students currently enrolled are performing well in many of the learning outcomes measured by the assessment plan. One change made in the program made recently in keeping with the outcomes assessment results—despite their being inconclusive based on small sample size—has been an intensification of the focus on mastering the historical literature of the field. Hist 618—the sole history course in the Southwest Studies core—has been reconfigured to devote more attention to the historiography of the region and its societies. Nonetheless, the program's greatest problems remain in new graduate student recruitment and successful completion of the program. We continue to work on new approaches to aiding students to complete the program and receive their degrees in a timely fashion. Another potential problem facing both of our graduate programs is staffing. The department has lost a total of two faculty position, and this hurts both our undergraduate and graduate programs.

In a sense, the needs of the program go beyond the concentration alone. One of the other concentrations in the Southwest Studies Program—the concentration in Spanish Language & Literature—has been suspended for most of a decade.

Retention Strategies:

Before students can be retained, they need to enter the program. Our main focus for the 2017-2018 academic year has to be recruitment. The Southwest Studies faculty from the History & Political Science Department is attempting to develop new strategies to recruit students. Traditionally, the program—or at least our concentration—has relied on graduates of our undergraduate programs to transition to the graduate program; shrinking undergraduate enrollments in History & Political Science (a national trend) are progressively rendering this an unsustainable strategy. The components of a new

strategy will necessarily involve an up-to-date web presence, better promotional materials, and targeted contacts with other universities who graduate students who may be interested in our program. It should be noted that many of the obstacles to recruitment facing the Southwest Studies: History and Political Science concentration are common to many of the graduate programs in the College of Arts & Sciences. The Graduate Council has discussed this pervasive series of problems and is attempting to develop a comprehensive strategy. Meanwhile, some progress has been made in the development of new promotional materials; program faculty will endeavor to work with University Relations to improve the website. We will continue to importune the administration for permission to fill vacant faculty positions, in order to shore up the undergraduate programs, and strengthen our ability to recruit and serve new graduate students.



Portfolio Checklist for Outcome Assessment Southwest Studies/History & Poli Sci

Student: _____

Semester: _____

Evaluator: _____

Work Evaluated: _____

After reviewing the work being evaluated, assign a number from 1 to 5 for each of the categories below, with 5 signifying “excellent” and 1 signifying “poor.”

	Poor	Fair	Excellent
1. Subject matter relevance to program mission	1	2	3 4 5
2. Understanding of Southwestern prehistory, history, culture		1	2 3 4 5
3. Factual accuracy	1	2	3 4 5
4. Organization (chronology, logical progression)		1	2 3 4 5
5. Clarity of expression and argument	1	2	3 4 5
6. Review of literature (completeness, critical thought)		1	2 3 4 5
7. Original contribution to the field		1	2 3 4 5

Total Points: _____

Mean Score: _____

Comments:

Survey of Graduating Students

Southwest Studies Program

New Mexico Highlands University

Please help us to evaluate and improve the Southwest Studies Program by responding to the following questions. All responses will remain anonymous. **Note: PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE SHEET.**

1. Name _____ ID N° _____.

2. Program Evaluation (please use reverse side if necessary)

2.1. Considering what you learned while in the Southwest Studies program at Highlands, what has been most useful or helpful to you?

2.2. To what extend did your experience in the Southwest Program assist you in:

	Poorly		Extremely Well		
Understanding the literature of the discipline	1	2	3	4	5
Critical analysis of written arguments	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciating cultural diversity	1	2	3	4	5
Writing clearly	1	2	3	4	5
Developing the skills necessary for research	1	2	3	4	5
*Developing a basic grasp of Spanish language	1	2	3	4	5

2.3. Is there something you wish you had learned while at Highlands that was not included in your master's program?

(OVER)

2.4. How would you rate the Southwest Studies Program in terms of:

	Poor		Fair		Excellent	
Quality of courses offered	1	2	3	4	5	
Variety of courses offered	1	2	3	4	5	
Availability of courses offered	1	2	3	4	5	
Accessibility and approachability of faculty	1	2	3	4	5	
Education and qualification of faculty	1	2	3	4	5	
Quality of academic advising	1	2	3	4	5	

2.5. What recommendations would you make concerning the Southwest Studies Program at Highlands?

2.6. Looking back, are you pleased you chose to pursue a Master's in Southwest Studies? Please explain.

2.7. In your opinion what is the academic quality of:

	Poor		Fair		Excellent	
The Southwest Studies Program overall:	1	2	3	4	5	
Your specific area of concentration:	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments: _____

Please return this questionnaire to Dr. Linder in Douglas Hall N° 241. Thank you very much for your assistance.

* Please answer these questions only if they are relevant to your experience in the program and concentration.

