

History Department
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Degree Program(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods	Number of Individuals Assessed
B.A. in History	1. Evaluation of general written work using University rubric	35 students
	2. Evaluation of research papers from capstone courses using departmental rubric	5
	3. Analysis of majors' enrollment in required upper-division courses carrying the HIST prefix	115
M.A. in History	1. Analysis of fields of study undertaken as reflected in Plans of Study	18
	2. Evaluation of research component (theses, report, creative component) using departmental rubric	6
Ph.D. History	1. Analysis of fields of study undertaken as reflected in Plans of Study	22
	2. Evaluation of research component (dissertation) using departmental rubric	3

Analysis and Findings

Undergraduate

During the 2003-2003 academic year, the History Department revised its assessment plan, and this past year it was fully implemented for the first time. Much of the fall semester was spent training a graduate student to score undergraduate artifacts, and during the spring artifacts were collected and scored. Because nearly all undergraduate courses in History are designed as general education courses, we aligned our learning outcomes with those of the University's general education assessment concerning communication of original thought through written communication. Thus, we use the same rubric. The rubric used in this process assigns a numerical value of 1-5 for measuring competency in these skills, with 1 representing poor skill levels, 3 average, and 5 superior. This past year, we also formulated a plan for assessing the M.A. and Ph.D. programs.

The writing samples collected in undergraduate History courses reveals that students are essentially meeting the learning outcomes of thinking critically and communicating their thoughts in writing. In HIST 1103, Survey of American History (a course required of all OSU student), 100% scored a 3 or higher. The 60% scoring a 3, however, suggest that students most commonly are demonstrating "average" critical thinking and writing skills, and it may be possible to do more to help develop these skills. Performance in the Survey of Western Civilization classes (HIST 1613 and HIST 1623), interesting, was markedly better. Once again, all scored at least a 3. However, only 25% demonstrated "average" critical thinking and writing skills. Of the remainder, 60% scored a 4 and 15% scored a 5. In samples from selected upper-division courses, 100% scored 3 or higher. The same middling effect reflected in scores for HIST 1103 is evident at the upper-division level. Sixty percent scored a three, 20% scored a 4, and 20% scored a 5.

The distribution of upper-division History courses taken by majors reveals that they take a wide variety of courses representing the three major areas of European, American, and World History. This addresses the objective that History majors be exposed to a broad spectrum of historical knowledge. European History continues to enjoy a slight edge over American. Enrollment in World History courses increased over the past year, no doubt due to the return of a faculty member from sabbatical. Specifically, the distribution of upper-division History courses taken by majors is as follows: European, 42.1%; American, 40.0%; and, World History, 17.9%.

Finally, a sample of papers from HIST 4903, Senior Seminar, was assessed. This course is designed to give students the opportunity to conduct research and write a paper based on the use of those sources, most of which should be primary in nature. In essence, the class seeks to introduce majors to the craft of being a historian. Since the outcomes for this class parallel those of History classes generally, although at a higher level, the same rubric was used. In the sample 20% scored "average," 60% scored a 4, and 20% scored a 5.

Graduate: M.A.

The Plans of Study for M.A. students reveal that they are gaining expertise in both American and non-American history, as planned through the degree requirements. Overwhelmingly, American history is the primary field undertaken by M.A. students. Indeed, only one M.A. student has a non-U.S. field as the primary field of study. Non-U.S. history typically is one of the secondary fields of study. Among the non-U.S. fields, Modern Europe is the most popular, followed in order by Latin America, Women's History, Middle East, Russia, Ancient, Early Modern Europe, and Medieval Europe.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, including the summer 2003, six M.A. students completed their degrees. The evaluation of the capstone research project by their respective advisory committees indicates that they successfully met the desired outcome of being able to identify and analyze historical data to make an effective written argument. Using a rubric in which 1 indicates poor performance in meeting this goal, 3 means average, and 5 is superior, all scored a 4.

Graduate: Ph.D.

Once again, an analysis of fields of study reveals that doctoral students, as designed in departmental degree requirements, are acquiring expertise in both U.S. and non-U.S. history. Similar to the M.A. program, American history dominates as the primary field of study, especially Modern U.S. Among secondary fields, European history, and Modern Europe especially, is again most popular. Non-U.S. and non-European fields being pursued by Ph.D. students include Latin America, East Asia, and Women's history.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, three M.A. students completed their degrees. The evaluations of the dissertations--the capstone research project-- by their respective advisory committees indicates that they successfully met the desired outcome of being able to identify and analyze historical data to make an effective written argument that is a unique scholarly contribution to their primary field. Using a rubric in which 1 indicates poor performance in meeting this goal, 3 means average, and 5 is superior, two scored a 4 and one scored a 5.

Uses of Assessment Results

The results of assessment during the 2003-2004 academic year continue to reinforce changes in the requirements for History majors made in 1995. At that time, the Department formalized the distribution of upper-division History electives taken by majors in the three areas of American, European, and World History by requiring 15 hours in one area, 9 in a second, and, 6 in a third. This attempt to assure majors complete their degree with a breadth of historical understanding is clearly working. It also means we must continue to schedule regularly classes that allow students to meet this requirement. So is the Department's commitment to assure majors have the opportunity to actually "do" history in the setting of the Senior Seminar. This class largely involves students researching and writing a paper based on primary sources.

The assessment plan adopted in 2003 also compliments the Department's long-standing commitment to general education, and especially to the goal of instilling critical thinking and writing skills among students. For at least 15 years, the Department has pursued these goals by stressing essay exams and various writing assignments in the curriculum. The initial results for this past year, consistent with last year, indicate that we are enjoying success in conveying these skills to students. At the same time, they also suggest once again that room for improvement exists as part of our continual review and refining of the curriculum. To facilitate this process, a summary of the report will be presented at a faculty meeting and a full copy filed in the main office for more detailed review.

The results of the initial implementation of the History Department's assessment plan for its graduate programs will be very beneficial in a number of ways. First, it will guide us in scheduling graduate seminars that will address those fields of study being pursued by the most graduate students. It simply is impossible to schedule seminars for every possible field of study being pursued by students. Moreover, every time we do offer one, it means that an upper-division course, normally taught by the seminar instructor, is not offered.

The most efficient use of scarce faculty resources can be achieved by scheduling seminars that meet the greatest need of graduate students, with minimal loss of undergraduate upper-division classes. The scoring of the research projects will also help us to understand how well we are instilling our graduate students with the research, analytical, and writing skills necessary to be a professional historian. Results from the first year of assessment indicate that we are doing a good job, but room for improvement exists. Again, a summary of the report will be presented at a faculty meeting and used as a means to discuss how we might better meet the departmental goals for the graduate programs.