

UND, Department of History, Assessment Plan 2005

Based upon the results of discussions and deliberations of two Department-wide teaching days, participation in an assessment workshop and several further discussions within the department and by members of the assessment committee, the following assessment plan is submitted for discussion, amendment and eventual approval.

Overall, the department agreed, on November 6, 2002, that the following - broken down into three broad areas - were the desired learning outcomes for our students:

1) Affective goals for students enrolled in history courses:

- To stimulate an appetite for history
- To encourage multi-cultural awareness and appreciation
- To foster a commitment to lifelong learning
- To foster the study and teaching of history
- To grasp their personal historical agency
- To understand their roles as citizens of the world

2) Behavioral goals for students enrolled in history courses:

- To instill critical thinking abilities
- To foster writing skills
- To improve communications skills

3) Cognitive goals for students enrolled in history courses:

- To master basic content, i.e., "the facts"
- To understand how historians interpret the past; i.e., theory and methodology
- To relate geography and literature to history
- To understand cultural differences
- To be able to locate information
- To be able to integrate and synthesize material
- To understand how groups of people have come to important societal decisions

Based upon these goals the following type of assessment procedure is proposed. First, with regard to majors, the Department will maintain a portfolio on each student, reflecting her/his work in our core courses, History 240 and History 440. Work from other courses in the major would be too disparate for a valid comparison among students of their development as historians, although the department reserves the right to reevaluate this decision in the future.

The portfolio should include "work product" from History 240 (journals, workbooks, etc.), as well as the History 440 paper. An examination of this material is meant to reveal writing and research skills, as well as the development of an "historical imagination" over a clear period. The inclusion of comments on the presentation now required of History 440 students will allow insight into oral communication skills, as well as interpersonal skills. (The assessment committee would also suggest that an oral report component be added to History 240 - the evaluations of which would be added to the portfolio - thereby adding another dimension to our evaluation of

majors over a period of time.) The portfolio will be archived by either the Department Chair, or by the Chair of the assessment committee.

Beyond the portfolios, majors will be assessed in the three aforementioned categories of learning (writing, research and historical imagination) via an exit interview. (See below for a copy of the proposed exit survey.) It is also proposed that majors will also be surveyed, particularly with regard to affective learning goals, at a point some time (5 to 10 years) following graduation.

A rubric to ensure uniformity of assessment across the committee will be developed to measure learning, as well as to permit individual and aggregate data collection.

In addition to assessment of our majors via portfolio, exit interview, and alumni interviews, our general student population will also be assessed. With regard to General Education Requirement-fulfilling courses, it was determined to include on the syllabi of History 101, 102, 103, 104 how each of the primary goals of the department is addressed. Hence, a book review assignment might be noted as a behavioral learning goal, discussion groups might be listed as behavior learning oriented, and text and lecture might be included as cognitive learning oriented.

The department also determined to include pre/post course tests as part of its assessment plan regarding History 101, 102, 103, and 104. The test questions listed below are designed to assess student learning outcomes in a very general sense. Thus, there are five short answer questions which deal fairly specifically with core questions which are important to historians. The sixth question helps us to address issues of critical thinking, written communication and a few of the cognitive goals listed above (for example, "To understand how historians interpret the past; i.e., theory and methodology," "To be able to locate information" and "To be able to integrate and synthesize material"). The assessment committee also feels that it would be an extremely good idea to administer this pre/post course test at the beginning of Hist. 240 and at the conclusion of Hist. 440. These results would be added to each student's portfolio.

We will run this test on a sample basis in a section of History 102, primarily so that we can use the completed tests to develop a rubric for assessing the written answer. These written answers - for the survey courses - will be sampled. In other words, not all of the writing samples will need to be subjected to the rubric assessment in every course, merely a representative sample.

Department of History: 100 level Pre/Post-course quiz

Please note: the results of this quiz will not be part of your final grade. The sole purpose of the

quiz - which will be administered at both the beginning and end of the semester - is to help us determine how well the Department is doing at fostering certain key skills related to history.

1. Historians use primary sources to understand the past. What is a primary source?

- a) an account from someone who witnessed the event in question
- b) a newspaper article, journal entry or letter
- c) government documents
- d) all of the above

2. Historians argue that national identity, gender and class identity are social constructs. What is a "social construct"?

- a) a social phenomenon that is always present and consistent no matter the circumstances
- b) a social phenomenon that is created in a given historical time and place
- c) a social phenomenon that determines people's behavior
- d) all of the above

3. What is historiography?

- a) the study of history
- b) the combined study of geography and history
- c) the study of how history has been written
- d) the study of artifacts

4) While the study of history is often viewed as being primarily concerned with names, dates and famous events, most historians use these "facts" in order to,

- a) interpret the past
- b) understand the present
- c) plan for the future
- d) all of the above

5) What is the difference between a novel and a study in the field of history?

- a) novels are about the present, works of history are about the past
- b) novels are works of fiction, histories are non-fiction
- c) novels never have footnotes, histories always have footnotes
- d) novels are always well-written, histories are not well-written

6) On a separate sheet of paper take ten minutes and write a brief essay which addresses the following matter.

Imagine that you are handed a piece of paper from sometime in the past - it could be a letter, a contract, a diary, a government document, anything from the past. It is your job to conclude something about the time period from which this piece of paper comes. How would you go about doing this? What questions would you ask of this piece of paper? What information might you look for? Where might you look for further information?

Sample Exit Interview (to be administered as part of History 440)

All of these questions call for written responses. Aside from #1 all of these questions will be introduced at the outset of 440 so that students will be able to reflect upon these issues during their capstone experience. It will be made clear to the students that the results of these “exit interviews” will not be part of their graded work and will not be analyzed until after the final grades have been recorded :

1) Complete the post-test survey and essay.

2) How has your experience as a History Major affected your outlook? For example, has it altered the way you think about yourself and the world? Has it had any impact on the way you see yourself as a citizen of a larger national and world community?

3) How would you describe your development (in terms of skills, intellectual development and acquisition of knowledge) over your course of study?

4) In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the History program?