

Program Assessment: *Annual Report*

Program(s): B.A.

Department: History

College/School: College of Arts and Sciences

Date: June 2018

Primary Assessment Contact: Charles Parker, Chair AND Douglas Boin, Assessment Coordinator

1. Which program student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

Learning Outcomes 1 and 2. 1) Historical Knowledge: Students will call to mind and explain significant historical facts in appropriate contexts. 2) Primary-Source Interpretation: Students will critically evaluate and analyze primary sources to produce reasoned historical interpretations.

2. What data/artifacts of student learning were collected for each assessed outcome? Were Madrid student artifacts included?

Instructors in 2800 Historian's Craft (required methods course) and in HIST 490X Senior Research Seminar (required capstone course) completed a worksheet with rubrics on their classes. These courses were offered both in the Fall (2800 Parker, 490X Schlafly) and the Spring (2800 Yarbrough, 490X Rozbicki). We have posted these artifacts on the Department's T drive.

3. How did you analyze the assessment data? What was the process? Who was involved?

NOTE: If you used rubrics as part of your analysis, please include them in an appendix.

The Department, according to its Assessment Plan, will examine the data in its August 2018 Department meeting and, if necessary make recommendations for changes. The chair (Parker) and assessment coordinator (Yarbrough [until May 2018]) were both instructors in these courses and discussed informally the data and their possible findings.

4. What did you learn from the data? Summarize the major findings of your analysis for each assessed outcome.

NOTE: If necessary, include any tables, charts, or graphs in an appendix.

The following comments are informal observations.

One trend common in learning outcome #1 for 2800 is that students (14 students in 2 courses, 1 in the Fall and 1 in the Spring) did not seem to grasp the context of the period as well as needed for a major. This is perhaps a result of spending much of the time on abstracted historical methods rather than historical content. So the faculty should consider if this calls for a rebalance between content and method in this course. For outcome #2, students seemed to be able to criticize primary sources extremely well, but often an "extreme mechanistic skepticism" held sway.

For 490X (14 students in 2 courses, 1 in Fall and 1 in Spring), there seemed less of any clear cut trend, except that students excelled in the research component. Since the courses highlight focused research, students sometimes needed to understand historical knowledge (outcome #1)

more extensively than they did.

The faculty will discuss the data in the August 2018 Faculty Retreat.

5. How did your analysis inform meaningful change? How did you *use the analyzed data to make or implement recommendations for change* in pedagogy, curriculum design, or your assessment plan?

NA. Faculty will consider the data and their implications in the August 2018 Faculty Retreat.

6. Did you follow up (“close the loop”) on past assessment work? If so, what did you learn? (*For example, has that curriculum change you made two years ago manifested in improved student learning today, as evidenced in your recent assessment data and analysis?*)

NA. Faculty will consider the data and their implications in the August 2018 Faculty Retreat.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any revised/updated assessment plans to the University Assessment Coordinator along with this report.

Please follow these steps to complete the assessment process for your course.

1. Please fill out the following information:

Question	Answer
HIST 2800 OR 4910/20?	2800
Number of HIST Major/Minor students?	8 majors/0 minors
Which of the outcomes listed on the Assessment Rubric (p. 3) are being assessed this semester? Please simply provide the corresponding numbers (e.g., 3 & 4). This information should be provided by the Assessment Coordinator or Chair.	1 and 2

2. Please fill out the following table for all Major/Minor students, using the **B.A. Assessment Rubric below**. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Delete any unfilled rows. If there are more than ten Major/Minor students, add the needed rows.

Student #	Degree of outcome A (# <u>1</u>) achievement, 5-1 (5=complete)	Degree of outcome B (# <u>2</u>) achievement, 5-1 (5=complete)
1	5	5
2	5	4
3	4	4
4	5	5
5	3	4
6	4	5
7	3	3
8	5	4
Average :	4.25	4.25

3. When you have finished entering the data for every Major/Minor student in the table above, please complete the following two steps in order to generate the average:
 - a. Highlight all (Ctrl+A on a PC; Command+A on a Mac)
 - b. Update all fields (F9 on a PC; Command+Option+Shift+U on a Mac)

4. In the space below, please compose a brief narrative evaluation of the results. Consider answering such questions as the following: What do the results reveal about the effectiveness of our courses in helping students to achieve the assessed learning outcomes? What might we do differently? What seems to be working well? What relevant information do the data fail to capture, in your view? How workable/user-friendly did you find the assessment process?

Answer:

#1

The students seemed to do, for the most part, a good job of putting historical facts in context. They seemed particularly adept at drawing valid cause and effect relationships by giving attention to chronology and proximity of actors. The area of deficiency I noticed most acutely was in assuming pre-modern people did or should think as modern ones. When discussing witchcraft and the inquisition, for example, students often described people as superstitious or criticized the Catholic Church for not being more tolerant or open to women and religious minorities. These instances morphed into wonderful opportunities to discuss early modern ways of thinking and perceiving (in contrast to modern ones). By the end of the class, however, I am not sure the implications had sunken in.

#2

The students seemed extremely well prepared to analyze primary sources, perhaps because many of them had undertaken a number of primary source assignments in previous courses at SLU, esp. 1110 and 1120, and in high school history courses. They showed in general a significant degree of sophistication in contextualizing primary sources, critically evaluating them and using them as evidence. I wondered at the end of the course, if I had spent too much time on primary sources, because most students clearly seemed to a very good handle on how to utilize them and avoid taking sources at face value.

The assessment process seemed even more user friendly than I had anticipated.

History Department B.A. Assessment Rubric, Saint Louis University

	Degree of outcome-achievement demonstrated* *(i.e., in student's oral and written historical communication, e.g., essays, class discussion)				
<u>Outcome</u>	5: Complete	4	3: Partial	2	1: Minimal
<u>1. Historical Knowledge:</u> Students will call to mind and explain significant historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Reliably recalls and explains highly relevant historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Regularly recalls and explains relevant historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Regularly recalls and explains somewhat relevant historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Sometimes recalls and explains relevant marginally historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Occasionally recognizes or recalls marginally relevant historical facts in appropriate contexts.
<u>2. Primary-Source Interpretation:</u> Students will critically evaluate and analyze primary sources to produce reasoned historical interpretations.	Cogently evaluates most primary sources; analyzes them to produce creative and persuasive interpretations.	Cogently evaluates some primary sources; analyzes them to produce persuasive if unsurprising interpretations.	Plausibly evaluates most primary sources; analyzes them to produce mostly reasonable interpretations.	Plausibly evaluates some primary sources; analyzes them to produce some reasonable interpretations.	Little ability to evaluate primary sources; draws from them some relevant conclusions.
<u>3. Secondary-Source Interpretation:</u> Students will critically evaluate strengths and weaknesses of historical narratives and interpretations.	Critically and convincingly evaluates strengths and weaknesses of most secondary sources.	Critically evaluates strengths and weaknesses of some secondary sources.	Plausibly evaluates strengths and weaknesses of most secondary sources.	Plausibly evaluates strengths and weaknesses of some secondary sources.	Little ability to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of secondary sources.
<u>4. Historical Communication:</u> Students will produce correct, cogent, and effectively structured statements on historical topics.	Produces formally correct, eloquent, and well-structured statements.	Produces formally correct, cogent, and structured statements.	Produces statements that have only minor formal errors, are largely cogent, and show some structure.	Produces statements that have numerous formal errors, are only partly cogent, and show little structure.	Produces statements that have pervasive formal errors and show only glimmers of cogency/structure.

<p><u>5. Historical Research:</u> Students will produce research in which they interpret primary sources in order to propose informed, original solutions to historical problems.</p>	<p>Identifies insightful research problems, locates many relevant documents, interprets them to propose compelling, original solutions.</p>	<p>Identifies important research problems, locates some relevant documents, interprets them to propose persuasive if unsurprising solutions.</p>	<p>Identifies meaningful research problems, locates a few relevant documents, interprets them to propose plausible solutions.</p>	<p>Understands given or derivative research problems, interprets sources provided to propose coherent solutions.</p>	<p>Shows some grasp of given research problems, interprets sources provided to formulate some elements of relevant solutions.</p>
<p><u>6. Application and Extension of Historical Thinking:</u> Students will articulate meaningful relationships between contemporary issues and historical facts, interpretations, and skills.</p>	<p>Spontaneously applies general-knowledge, source-interpretation, research, and communication skills in concert to contemporary issues to articulate insightful relationships.</p>	<p>Spontaneously applies general-knowledge, source-interpretation, research, and communication skills in concert to contemporary issues to articulate meaningful relationships.</p>	<p>When guided, applies some general-knowledge, source-interpretation, research, and/or communication skills to contemporary issues to articulate some parallels.</p>	<p>When guided, applies limited general-knowledge, source-interpretation, research, or communication skills to contemporary issues to make distant connections.</p>	<p>When guided, is able coherently to restate, in own words, the relevance of certain elements of historical knowledge and skills to some contemporary issues.</p>

Please follow these steps to complete the assessment process for your course.

1. Please fill out the following information:

Question	Answer
HIST 2900 OR 4910/20?	HIST 4900-01
Number of HIST Major/Minor students?	7 Majors 0 Minors
Which of the outcomes listed on the Assessment Rubric (p. 3) are being assessed this semester? Please simply provide the corresponding numbers (e.g., 3 & 4). This information should be provided by the Assessment Coordinator or Chair.	1,2

2. Please fill out the following table for all Major/Minor students, using the **B.A. Assessment Rubric below**. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Delete any unfilled rows. If there are more than ten Major/Minor students, add the needed rows.

Student #	Degree of outcome A (# ___) achievement, 5-1 (5=complete)	Degree of outcome B (# ___) achievement, 5-1 (5=complete)
1	5	5
2	4	5
3	5	5
4	5	5
5	4	5
6	4	4
7	4	4
Average :	4.43	4.71

3. When you have finished entering the data for every Major/Minor student in the table above, please complete the following two steps in order to generate the average:

- a. Highlight all (Ctrl+A on a PC; Command+A on a Mac)
- b. Update all fields (F9 on a PC; Command+Option+Shift+U on a Mac)

4. In the space below, please compose a brief narrative evaluation of the results. Consider answering such questions as the following: What do the results reveal about the effectiveness of our courses in helping students to achieve the assessed learning outcomes? What might we do differently? What seems to be working well? What relevant information do the data fail to capture, in your view? How workable/user-friendly did you find the assessment process?

Answer: This course, Autobiography: History through Those Who Lived It was based solely on primary sources; that is, students first discussed autobiography as an historical source, then we read and discussed eight autobiographies , some of them excerpts. Then each student developed a research paper (20-25 pp.) based on one of the autobiographies read in class, or in some cases, another autobiography. This included selecting and discussing a topic, finding bibliography, presenting initial drafts for discussion, then submitting a finished paper. For the papers, the autobiography chosen had to be set in the context of secondary sources for the person's life. (see attached syllabus)

Students found this structure very effective in learning how to use and analyze primary sources and how to use someone's story for a research paper. In each case, this meant analyzing the autobiography for reliability, asking what was included or omitted and why, and discussing a life in the context of someone's historical time.

The emphasis, therefore, was not on general historical knowledge, although students for the most part did acquire what was necessary to put their subjects in context.

A general problem I noticed with the often very good students in this course was that while they had done well in their previous courses, they did not have overall general knowledge. This is not their fault but rather of the fact that our undergraduate requirements don't demand this.

History Department B.A. Assessment Rubric, Saint Louis University

	Degree of outcome-achievement demonstrated* *(i.e., in student's oral and written historical communication, e.g., essays, class discussion)				
<u>Outcome</u>	5: Complete	4	3: Partial	2	1: Minimal
<u>1. Historical Knowledge:</u> Students will call to mind and explain significant historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Reliably recalls and explains highly relevant historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Regularly recalls and explains relevant historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Regularly recalls and explains somewhat relevant historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Sometimes recalls and explains relevant marginally historical facts in appropriate contexts.	Occasionally recognizes or recalls marginally relevant historical facts in appropriate contexts.
<u>2. Primary-Source Interpretation:</u> Students will critically evaluate and analyze primary sources to produce reasoned historical interpretations.	Cogently evaluates most primary sources; analyzes them to produce creative and persuasive interpretations.	Cogently evaluates some primary sources; analyzes them to produce persuasive if unsurprising interpretations.	Plausibly evaluates most primary sources; analyzes them to produce mostly reasonable interpretations.	Plausibly evaluates some primary sources; analyzes them to produce some reasonable interpretations.	Little ability to evaluate primary sources; draws from them some relevant conclusions.
<u>3. Secondary-Source Interpretation:</u> Students will critically evaluate strengths and weaknesses of historical narratives and interpretations.	Critically and convincingly evaluates strengths and weaknesses of most secondary sources.	Critically evaluates strengths and weaknesses of some secondary sources.	Plausibly evaluates strengths and weaknesses of most secondary sources.	Plausibly evaluates strengths and weaknesses of some secondary sources.	Little ability to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of secondary sources.
<u>4. Historical Communication:</u> Students will produce correct, cogent, and effectively structured statements on historical topics.	Produces formally correct, eloquent, and well-structured statements.	Produces formally correct, cogent, and structured statements.	Produces statements that have only minor formal errors, are largely cogent, and show some structure.	Produces statements that have numerous formal errors, are only partly cogent, and show little structure.	Produces statements that have pervasive formal errors and show only glimmers of cogency/structure.

<p><u>5. Historical Research:</u> Students will produce research in which they interpret primary sources in order to propose informed, original solutions to historical problems.</p>	<p>Identifies insightful research problems, locates many relevant documents, interprets them to propose compelling, original solutions.</p>	<p>Identifies important research problems, locates some relevant documents, interprets them to propose persuasive if unsurprising solutions.</p>	<p>Identifies meaningful research problems, locates a few relevant documents, interprets them to propose plausible solutions.</p>	<p>Understands given or derivative research problems, interprets sources provided to propose coherent solutions.</p>	<p>Shows some grasp of given research problems, interprets sources provided to formulate some elements of relevant solutions.</p>
<p><u>6. Application and Extension of Historical Thinking:</u> Students will articulate meaningful relationships between contemporary issues and historical facts, interpretations, and skills.</p>	<p>Spontaneously applies general-knowledge, source-interpretation, research, and communication skills in concert to contemporary issues to articulate insightful relationships.</p>	<p>Spontaneously applies general-knowledge, source-interpretation, research, and communication skills in concert to contemporary issues to articulate meaningful relationships.</p>	<p>When guided, applies some general-knowledge, source-interpretation, research, and/or communication skills to contemporary issues to articulate some parallels.</p>	<p>When guided, applies limited general-knowledge, source-interpretation, research, or communication skills to contemporary issues to make distant connections.</p>	<p>When guided, is able coherently to restate, in own words, the relevance of certain elements of historical knowledge and skills to some contemporary issues.</p>

Please follow these steps to complete the assessment process for your course.

1. Please fill out the following information:

Question	Answer
HIST 2800 OR 4910/20?	2800
Number of HIST Major/Minor students?	6
Which of the outcomes listed on the Assessment Rubric (p. 3) are being assessed this semester? Please simply provide the corresponding numbers (e.g., 3 & 4). This information should be provided by the Assessment Coordinator or Chair.	1 & 2

2. Please fill out the following table for all Major/Minor students, using the **B.A. Assessment Rubric below**. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Delete any unfilled rows. If there are more than ten Major/Minor students, add the needed rows.

Student #	Degree of outcome A (# <u>1</u>) achievement, 5–1 (5=complete)	Degree of outcome B (# <u>2</u>) achievement, 5–1 (5=complete)
1	2	3
2	4	5
3	5	5
4	4	4
5	2	2
6	4	5
Average :	3.50	4.00

3. When you have finished entering the data for every Major/Minor student in the table above, please complete the following two steps in order to generate the average:
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 - b. Update all fields (F9 on a PC; Command+Option+Shift+U on a Mac)

4. In the space below, please compose a brief narrative evaluation of the results. Consider answering such questions as the following: What do the results reveal about the effectiveness of our courses in helping students to achieve the assessed learning outcomes? What might we do differently? What seems to be working well? What relevant information do the data fail to capture, in your view? How workable/user-friendly did you find the assessment process?

Answer:

When HIST 2800 is focused on a fairly specific historical time-period or subject matter, as it usually is, considerable background preparation is necessary in order to give students an adequate baseline of historical knowledge (Outcome 1). However, since this need stands in tension with the need to teach “the historian’s craft” (historiography, methodology, terminology, etc.), students may well not receive that preparation, and thus may not be found not to demonstrate high achievement of the outcome. In my course, for instance, I don’t feel I was able to adequately teach students about the broad contours of historical Middle Eastern travel, though those students with backgrounds in related subfields (Middle Eastern history, Russian history) were better prepared in this respect. Broadening the historical topic of the seminar, or conceiving of 2800 as “content *plus* craft” rather than mainly “craft” (as I believe the new undergraduate strategy does) could help to address this issue. Separately, it may also be relevant that students who do not speak up much in class, and who also write only to the specifications of written assignments, may have little chance to demonstrate their achievement (or not) of Outcome 1.

I think that students demonstrated a somewhat more extensive ability to analyze primary sources (Outcome 2). Their skeptical instincts seem finely honed. In fact, they sometimes seem to take skepticism to a mechanistic extreme, deploying rather flat notions of “reliability” and “bias” and applying them to any and all sources, no matter how well authenticated in the secondary literature. Frankly, I think that carefully constructed pedagogical units that asked students to reconstruct particular historical events using given sets of primary sources would be helpful in refining their conceptions of basic source criticism. Conversely, the range of purposes to which students seem prepared to imagine putting a primary source seemed relatively circumscribed; this could be taught more intentionally. However, in general it seemed to me that students were comfortable working with primary sources, and that our courses are doing a creditable job in this respect.

The assessment process was fairly painless. One general observation is that I feel my evaluations of student outcome-achievement may have been skewed by the general climate of grade-inflation and grade-flattening that pervades the mindset of professors near the end of the semester; i.e., the way so many students seem eventually to muddle their way somehow into the mushy “A- to B” range, by an opaque process in which instructors are doubtless much involved. In the future, we might want to consider making clear to professor-evaluators that they should feel liberated to shake off this mindset and give low (but honest) assessment evaluations to students who earned middling grades, or high assessment evaluations to students who showed they had achieved the learning outcome but who for other reasons (e.g., disorganization, lack of diligence) performed less well in the class than their outcome-achievement would predict.

History Department B.A. Assessment Rubric, Saint Louis University

Outcome	Degree of outcome-achievement demonstrated* *(i.e., in student's oral and written historical communication, e.g., essays, class discussion)				
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Please follow these steps to complete the assessment process for your course.

1. Please fill out the following information:

Question	Answer
HIST 2800 OR 4900/01/02?	4910-01
Number of HIST Major/Minor students?	7
Which of the outcomes listed on the Assessment Rubric (p. 3) are being assessed this semester? Please simply provide the corresponding numbers (e.g., 3 & 4). This information should be provided by the Assessment Coordinator or Chair.	1 and 2

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1	5	5
2	5	5
3	5	4
4	4	4
5	4	4
6	5	4
7	n/a: extension due to illness	n/a: extension due to illness
8		
9		
10		
Average :	4.66	4.33

3. When you have finished entering the data for every Major/Minor student in the table above, please complete the following two steps in order to generate the average:
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Answer:

This is a senior seminar, so I have taken into consideration class participation as well as the final research paper. Compared to typical lower division courses and lectures, this type of class creates more opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement in the two outcomes considered here due to a strong emphasis from the beginning of the course on using primary sources and on interpreting facts in their historical context. This is essential to achieving good results in these two rubrics.

What also works well is spending some time at the outset on explaining the essence of historicism (and, conversely, presentism).

As to the rubrics, it appears that five degrees of outcome achievement is too many, as it requires rather thinly made distinctions between them. Three would be plenty, and it would make for clearer distinctions, produce a sharper picture of the situation, and offer a more user-friendly tool.

Note: That participants in this course did well illustrates the good quality of students admitted to the history program. This includes the foreign students in this class. Although they had learned English recently, and thus had some difficulties in expressing more complex ideas, the substance of their theses and the quality of reasoning was comparable with the rest of the class.

History Department B.A. Assessment Rubric, Saint Louis University

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