

HISTORY/POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT OCTOBER 31, 2008

For Academic Year 2007 to 2008

I. Brief Summary of Assessment Plan

The History/Political Science program's first assessment plan was presented in May, 2004, towards the close of the program's first year in existence. This plan articulated program goals and outcomes for the next three year period (Fall 2004 - Spring 2007). Following a preview of the plan by Sharon Calhoun, Director, Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment; Kathy Ross, Instructional Technologist; and other members of the Assessment Council, these goals and outcomes were readjusted, and submitted in August, 2005 in a revised History/Political Science Program Assessment Plan. The program goals listed in our Program Assessment Plan of 2007 (for the academic year 2007-2008) included: Command of Historical Knowledge, Command of Political Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Communications Skills, Research Skill, and Professional Behavior. In the 2007 assessment plan it was indicated that focus would be on assessing Communications Skills which have been defined as follows for the areas of History and Political Science, with regard to outcomes and components. During the Spring 2007 semester the Division of Education requested that we assess the basic knowledge of students in the area of history and/or political science to meet their program's assessment needs. A multiple choice test in the area of

U. S. history was piloted and administered to students in the capstone history/political science seminar, COAS S400. The capstone is taught every two years and thus will be taught in Spring 2009 by Dr. Andrew McFarland (History). We expect to have more survey results compiled at the end of next semester. This test was also a step towards assessing program goal number one: **Command of Historical Knowledge**, in our list of ultimate program goals.

Goals One and Four have been defined as follows:

Goal 1. Command of Historical Knowledge

The student demonstrates familiarity with a basic body of knowledge in United States and world history, which includes the ability to explain the role of individuals and social groups as creators in history, and to explain the relationship between change and such themes as population and demographic shifts; political, social and economic institutions and organizations; religious movements; scientific and technological developments; industrialization; urbanization; imperialism and post-colonialism; globalization; intellectual and ideological developments; and cultural and trans-cultural currents. The student can compare and contrast historical developments and issues across cultural/geographic boundaries. For example, Dr. Sarah Heath's goal of insisting that her students gain a command of historical knowledge is illustrated below in the rubric that she uses.

Goal 4. Communication Skills

Outcome 1: Students will write effectively

Component 1: Organization

Component 2: Grammar/Mechanics

Outcome 2: Students will develop an effective historical or political argument

Component 1: Recognition of thesis statement in assigned readings

Component 2: Thesis articulation in student's own written work

Component 3: Supporting evidence in student's own work

Particular Outcomes Assessed, 2007-2008:

Goal 1: Command of Historical Knowledge

Writing an essay in History for Dr. Sarah Heath's courses.

Think of it this way: on any given day in lecture, I probably talk about dozens of people, events, acts of government, and ideas, and you read about many more. **YOU NEVER HAVE TO RECREATE ALL OF THOSE FACTS TO DO WELL IN MY COURSE.** You do, however, need to give me a fair, representative story line that shows me you learned something about US History for the period in question. If you can produce an outline that incorporates a few examples for each lecture topic that applies to a particular question, then you are focusing on the time period in question, and there is little way a person could accuse you of not knowing what you were talking about (or worse, not having been in class).

Remember also that you are being compared to other students in the class. Those students who make use of readings in their essays will do better than students who simply "parrot back" the lectures.

*** Notice that all of the questions ask you to consider the period from the founding of the colonies through the middle of the 1700s. **That means that you have to provide specific evidence from each and every class that has met in order to cover that whole span of time.** To make sure you offer a representative story line for all lecture topics, try to fill in a chart that looks like this:

Lecture topic	2 examples from lecture	1-2 examples from reading	SO WHAT? (analysis)
Cultures in Contact			
English in America			
Indians, Servants, Slaves			
Colonies and Conflicts			
Women in 17 th Century			

Witchcraft					
Social Disruptions/Change					

For each lecture topic mentioned, you should try to offer:

2 examples from lecture;

1 or 2 examples from reading; and

Link back to the question asked by explaining “so what do these examples show about the question asked?”

One positive aspect of this approach is that you can create your outline ahead of time, and keep rehearsing your story line. Pick facts that you feel most comfortable discussing (and avoid those that you cannot discuss clearly). Regardless of which question is asked, you will be covering a fair representative “story line” about that period, so you will satisfy one of the exam’s objectives.

MY DEFINITION OF “EXAMPLES” AND “ANALYSIS” ARE AS FOLLOWS:

“EXAMPLES” should:

- use proper names of people, events, actions, ideas, and policies—name names!
- give a brief “story line” (you should show that you know what happened—what was the end result of the action you mention? What did the person do? What key ideas or beliefs are you illustrating? How did policies change the way people did things?)
- Likely will take only 1-3 sentences to cover (remember, you have to get through a total of 21-28 to complete your exam, so decide what facts will help you make a bigger point about the question asked)

ANALYSIS (“so what?”):

- goes beyond summarizing facts; it explains what you think the examples show
- summarizes the significance of ALL the examples you used in one lecture topic, not just one
- helps to explain what your feelings or opinions are about the question asked
- reinforces or refers to themes or key words included in the question
- reinforces why the side you took on the question asked was a reasonable conclusion to make
- should be brief; often is well done when it is a summary sentence at the end of a paragraph

If you follow these instructions, then EACH PARAGRAPH of the body of your essay would use this format:

Setup sentence (introduce the topic, or reinforce a bigger point you are making)

Example 1 (~2 sentences that offer a “high points” description of that person, policy, or event)

Example 2 (~2 sentences that offer a “high points” description of that person, policy, or event)

Example 3 (~2 sentences that offer a “high points” description of that person, policy, or event)

Example 4 (~2 sentences that offer a “high points” description of that person, policy, or event) [example 4 is optional, but use it if you have time; use one or two examples from readings to flesh out good coverage of all available material]

Analysis: tie together all of the examples used in this section, and explain what they show about the question asked. Be sure that your opinion is clear; take a side on the question asked!

Goal 4: Communication Skills

Outcome 1: Students will write effectively.

Component 1: Recognition of thesis statement in assigned readings

Performance criteria:

Satisfactory: Student is able to recognize thesis statement

Unsatisfactory: Student is unable to recognize thesis statement

Component 2: Thesis articulation in student’s own written work.

Performance criteria:

Excellent: Student clearly articulates thesis in introduction, skillfully develops it in body of paper, and clearly summarizes it in conclusion

Satisfactory: Student articulates thesis in introduction, adequately develops it in body of paper, and summarizes it in conclusion

Unsatisfactory: Student fails to articulate thesis in conclusion, does not attempt to develop it in body of paper, or fails to summarize it in conclusion

Component 3: Supporting evidence in students’ own work

Performance criteria:

Excellent: Student always supports thesis and arguments with adequate supporting evidence

Satisfactory: Student usually supports thesis and arguments with adequate supporting evidence

Unsatisfactory: Student does not support thesis and arguments with adequate supporting evidence

An example of Goal 4 (Communication Skills, Outcomes 1 & 2) was utilized in the History/Political Science Senior Seminar course during Spring 2007, which I taught. The requirements to gauge a student's communication (written in this case) skills were enumerated in the syllabus with deadlines for each section of the research paper. As well, Dr. McFarland's Global History of Modern Sport and Russian Revolution and Soviet Union class illustrates this goal (Component 3) being met as well.

Research Design for Research Paper for History/Political Science Senior Seminar
(2007)

Introduction/Outline/Thesis: Introduction of a research problem includes objectives and how those objectives will be achieved (methodology) (approach) (e.g., comparative case study, single-country analysis, historical archival research, and field research). Your thesis statement (main idea of the paper should be recognizable and clearly articulated in your Introduction). **First Draft due: Week of Jan. 29.**

Literature review/Annotated Bibliography: review of previous work (including strengths and limitations of prior research) relating to research problem (to define, explain, justify), and review of previous work relating to methodology. An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and/or documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive/critical paragraph, i.e., the annotation.

More information can be found at the following website:

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>

Second Draft due: Week of Feb. 12.

Methodology (how the results were achieved): explanation of how data was collected/generated, & explanation of how data was analyzed, explanation of methodological problems and their solutions, effects, & implications. **Third Draft due: Week of Feb. 26.**

Results and discussion: presentation of results, interpretation of results, discussion of results (e.g., comparison with results in previous research, effects of methods used on the data obtained). **Fourth Draft due: Week of March 26.**

Conclusions/Implications: has the research problem been "solved?" To what extent have the objectives been achieved, to what extent has your research contributed new information to the discourse? What are some of the implications for future research in this area of endeavor? What has been learned from the results? How can this knowledge be

used? What are the shortcomings of the research, and the research methodology? **Fifth Draft due: Week of April 9.**

H425-26074, Global History of Modern Sport, Fall 2007, 7 students handed in papers, and the course included a 12-15 page term paper with a required rough draft.

Articulation of Thesis

Rough Draft:
Excellent: 0
Satisfactory: 1
Unsatisfactory: 6

Final Term Paper:
Excellent: 2
Satisfactory: 5
Unsatisfactory: 0

Support of Thesis

Rough Draft:
Excellent: 0
Satisfactory: 2
Unsatisfactory: 5

Final Term Paper
Excellent: 1
Satisfactory: 6
Unsatisfactory: 0

Articulation of Thesis

100% in excellent or satisfactory, although most were only satisfactory.
Expectations Met

Support of Thesis

100% in excellent or satisfactory, although most were only satisfactory.
Expectations Met

H410-26227, Russian Revolution and Soviet Union, Spring 2008, 13 students handed in papers, and the course included an 8 page biography paper on a person or event and placing that event into historical context.

Articulation of Thesis

Rough Draft:
Excellent: 0
Satisfactory: 5
Unsatisfactory: 8

Final Term Paper:
Excellent: 3
Satisfactory: 7
Unsatisfactory: 3

Support of Thesis

Rough Draft:
Excellent: 1
Satisfactory: 5
Unsatisfactory: 7

Final Term Paper
Excellent: 3
Satisfactory: 9
Unsatisfactory: 1

Articulation of Thesis

77% in excellent or satisfactory, although most were only satisfactory.
Expectations Not Met because of the 80% goal.

Support of Thesis

92% in excellent or satisfactory, although most were only satisfactory.
Expectations Met

Changes:

In the Spring, 2007, at the suggestion of peers in the Assessment Council, it was decided to abandon the assessment of students' ability to recognize thesis statements in reading assignments (component number one.) It was suggested that the focus instead be on assessing the end product, i.e. the actual research papers submitted by students as opposed to a developmental skill that would lead to the other components. Thus in the Spring semester, assessment was limited to measuring students' abilities to articulate clear thesis statements and to support these statements adequately.

II. Assessment Methods

When, Where, and How Students Demonstrated Achievement of Outcomes

The outcomes for Goal 4, Communications Skills, were measured in the Spring 2006 in History H425: American History and Film, and in the Fall, 2007 in History A314: U. S. History, 1917-1945.

In the Spring, History H 425 course, quizzes were given to assess students' skills in thesis recognition. Students were asked to identify the thesis of reading assignments. This was done as a step towards developing students' abilities to articulate a clear thesis in their own research papers and to support these theses with sufficient supporting evidence.

In the Fall, assessment of History A314 the measurement of students' ability to recognize thesis statements in reading assignments was abandoned, at the suggestion of peers in the Assessment Council. It was suggested that the focus instead be on assessing the end product, i.e. the actual research papers submitted by students.

In both the Fall and Spring semesters, students were assessed in their ability to articulate a thesis and to support their thesis adequately. Students were evaluated for this in the first draft of their research papers for the course, as well in the final version of their research papers.

In April, 2007 students participating in the COAS S400 seminar were given a brief multiple choice test which tested for basic knowledge in the field of American history (Goal 1). This was done at the request of the Education Division, to provide information that they needed for assessment and accreditation purposes, and also served as a small pilot for our program's assessment endeavors.

Changes in Assessment Methods

As indicated above, at the recommendation of members of the Assessment Council who reviewed assessment efforts, it was decided to discontinue in the Fall, 2006 assessing quizzes or writing exercises in which students were asked to identify thesis statements in class reading assignments. Instead the focus would be on assessing the outcomes in their research papers in the areas of thesis articulation and thesis support. In addition, we piloted the use of a multiple choice test in the capstone seminar as an initial effort to assess Goal 1, Command of Historical Knowledge.

III. Description of Assessment Results

Goal 4: Communications Skills

History A314, Spring 2007

Articulation of Thesis:

On Draft:

(10 students submitted a draft)

Excellent 1 (10 %)

Satisfactory 4 (40%)

Unsatisfactory 5 (50%)

Total 10 (100%)

On Final Term Paper:
(10 students submitted a final term paper)

Excellent	1 (10%)
Satisfactory	6 (60%)
Unsatisfactory	3 (30%)
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Total	10 (100%)

Support of Thesis:

On Draft:

Excellent	2 (20%)
Satisfactory	3 (30%)
Unsatisfactory	5 (50%)
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Total	10 (100%)

Goal 1 Command of Historical Knowledge

RESULTS OF PILOT TEST
ASSESSMENT OF COMMAND OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE
May 1, 2007

On April 25, 2007 a pilot examination was administered to the five students enrolled in the S400 capstone seminar, taught by Dr. Todd Bradley for the History/Political Science program. The exam was constructed at the suggestion of Dean Cantu, of the Division of Education, who indicated the need for an assessment instrument for students pursuing licensure in secondary social studies education. In addition, it was believed by the faculty of the History/Political Science program that this would be a good opportunity to pilot an instrument to evaluate the “command of knowledge” goals listed in the program’s assessment plan.

The particular instrument used was a 25 multiple choice question exam devised by Professor Allen Safianow that covered basic factual information in the area of U.S. history. The hope is that ultimately similar exams can be administered in the areas of political science and world history. Students who took the exam were asked not to give their names, but rather their areas of concentration in the program, i.e., history, political science or secondary education. The score results are as follows:

- | | |
|------------|-----|
| 1. History | 68% |
| 2. History | 92% |

3. Political Science	72%
4. Secondary Education	92%
5. Concentration unidentified	64%

Since this was a pilot, no formal benchmark targets were set. The faculty of the History/Political Science program will be meeting to discuss the results and plans for future assessment of the “Command of Knowledge” goal.

B. Interpretation of Results

The data above would suggest that with regard to the component of thesis recognition (which was assessed in the Fall, 2006) students were attaining the set benchmark of 80%, but that they were having more difficulty articulating or supporting their own thesis statements. At times they fell somewhat below the 80% benchmark. The data also indicates, however, that overall students do benefit from submitting first drafts which can be critiqued, and that there is a significant improvement in their final papers.

Only five students (the students enrolled in the COAS S400 seminar) took the test to assess command of knowledge in the area of American history. The results were mixed—two of the five students (40%) did rather well, achieving scores of over 90%. The other three had mediocre performance. Students were given the test without any prior warning or preparation, so scores in the 60 and 70 percent range might be seen in a more favorable light than in the case of course-related tests where students are given advance notice so that they might prepare.

IV. Using Assessment for Program Improvement

The History/Political Science program continues to be in a state of transition. We have only three resident faculty members, and one of them resigned in December, 2005. This meant that our courses in western civilization and upper level non-U.S. history courses during the 2007-2008 academic year were taught by adjuncts as well as a visiting instructor from the IU Future Faculty Fellowship program. In the Spring 2007 semester a full-time faculty member, Dr. Andrew McFarland, was hired to teach western civilization and upper-level non- U.S. history courses, and this individual began his teaching assignments in the Fall of 2007.

In the future, work might be done to develop a more inclusive instrument to assess Goal 1, Command of Historical Knowledge, as well as Goal 2, Command of Political Knowledge. This instrument might be employed in the next capstone seminar, which is tentatively scheduled for the 2008-2009 academic year. The development of this instrument should probably be done in consultation with members of the Education Division involved in assessment of their secondary education degree in social studies.

The program assessment plan for the year 2007-2008 envisions assessing Goal 5, Research Skills. The plan breaks down the goal into separate outcomes and components.

The steps that are being taken to assess Goals 1, 2 and 5 are in line with the recommendations made in the History/Political Science assessment report for 2005-2006, and will mark a significant advance towards assessing all six goals that have been singled out for ultimate assessment.

V. Dissemination of Results:

This report will be disseminated to the faculty of the history/political faculty, to the chair of the Social and Behavioral Science Department, and to the Assessment Council's Program Assessment Reports Subcommittee. We will continue the practice of making a summary of the report available to students, staff and others through the Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment's "Web Resources for Assessment" which can be reached via Oncourse. This year we will also endeavor to add a link allowing those who consult the summary to see the full report.