Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet

Program Information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Assessed</th>
<th>BA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Paul Werth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment Coordinator</td>
<td>Elspeth Whitney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>Dec. 20, 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Person for This Report

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Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?

Please limit the narrative portion of your report to no more than four pages. You may attach appendices with data, tables, charts, or other materials as needed. Please explain the relevant conclusions from any appendices in your narrative. Please contact the Office of Academic Assessment if you have questions or need assistance.
STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the time students complete the program, they will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a broad knowledge of the development of world history from antiquity to the present.

2. Demonstrate knowledge of two of the four geographical areas including United States, Latin America, Europe and Asia.

3. Demonstrate an awareness of the changing nature of historical interpretation and the ability to make independent judgments about conflicting historical interpretations.

4. Demonstrate training in the collection, analysis and evaluation of historical information.

5. Demonstrate training in critical thinking and the ability to construct a cogent argument on the basis of historical information.

6. Demonstrate training in clarity of expression orally and in writing.

For this report, SLOs 3 and 5 were assessed in our HIST 451 (our Capstone Course). These overlap with UULO 2.1-6.

The rubric used last year for rating student performance was used again this year. (This rubric is a simplified version of the rubric suggested by the American Historical Association for History students.) HIST 451 requires students to write a 20-25 research paper based on primary sources. Faculty who have taught these courses over a period of time have generally found that some students are well-prepared to successfully complete their research projects at a high level of academic accomplishment; a larger group struggle with the demands of analytical, critical thinking and writing but are able to complete the project at a satisfactory level of accomplishment; and another group are derailed by a combination of factors beyond their control (family, personal, financial, issues) and academic skills that need more practice. Overall, students find Student Learning Objectives #3, #5 and #6 most difficult. The two factors that appear to contribute most to student improvement in these areas are 1) intensive, detailed and frequent feedback on their work from faculty and 2) practice in the form of doing multiple drafts, doing research papers in classes other than 251 and 451, more demanding general education courses, etc. However, both faculty and students are hampered from pursuing both of these strategies more often by unavoidable constrains on their time. There does not appear to be a quick fix to this problem.
Implementing the Transparency in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Project. Last year, the Department worked with Dr. Mary-Ann Winkelmes, Coordinator of Instructional Development and Research in the Office of the Provost and a member of the Department, to discuss the feasibility of implementing the Transparency in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Project in our undergraduate major. This year five faculty used the Transparency in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in their classes as a pilot project. Assignments in these classes were broken down into separate steps with highly explicit directions for each assignment, a list of criteria for success, and when possible, examples of successful student work. The classes included several sections of HIST 451 but also included a lower-division class and other upper-division classes. (A sample for HIST 451 is attached.) The results were mixed. No quantitative assessment was possible but qualitative assessment on an individual basis indicated that, while in some cases, the students responded that having examples of excellent work was “useful” to them, the overall exercise did not appreciably change outcomes. Most faculty felt that the best students did not need such a breakdown of the process and justification for each step in completing a project; one faculty member felt that the exercise got in the way of the better students by making the process mechanical and short-circuiting originality and deeper thinking. On the other hand, the exercise did not seem to make much difference to many of the poorer students, who were hampered by larger problems beyond clarity about what was being asked of them. In one case (HIST 100), both the instructor and the TAs felt that the instructions became very long and arguably tedious, so that both students and TAs felt “worn down” by the continuousness of the instruction process itself. The use of rubrics and dividing up of tasks into small elements ended up being to some extent constraining. In another case, a faculty member reported that the use of TTL seemed to make the learning process unnecessarily mechanical and routinized. In a third case, providing examples of excellent work on certain types of assignments did seem to raise the quality of some students’ work to a limited extent; however, the other aspects of TTL had little observable effect. Overall, these results do suggest that TTL as a basic principle is a good thing but needs tweaking when applied to the kinds of learning experienced in history courses.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PAPERS
A sample of 451 papers was assessed. Both first drafts and final drafts were assessed, with particular attention to SLO #3 and 5. This examination yielded what are now familiar results: students were better at finding sources and collecting information than they were in framing an argument and had some difficulty in situating their own approach in the context of the historiography. Students had particular trouble in keeping the thread of their argument, once framed, clear throughout the paper. It was also clear that students improved in the performance of SLOs #3 and 5 after specific and detailed feedback from the instructor. Consistent with previous direct assessments, about a quarter of the students performed excellently, a much larger group performed in a satisfactory manner to varying degrees, and a very small group were unable to complete the paper successfully. Attention in the future will be focused particularly on improving the performance of the middle group.

PROGRAM CHANGE
No new program changes were implemented. Several initiatives begun last year (new students surveys for HIST 251 and 451 and a new exit survey for graduating students) are still in the process of development.
Dr. Elspeth Whitney                                                                           Spring 2016
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CAPSTONE RESEARCH SEMINAR
Medieval Culture

HIST 451.003: Elspeth Whitney
Section 1: Thursday 2:30-5:15            3 credits

These assignments together encompass all of the University Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (UULOs).

GUIDE TO ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: ALL ASSIGNMENTS BUILD ON PREVIOUS ASSIGNMENTS
FAILURE TO TURN IN ANY SINGLE ASSIGNMENT ON TIME HURTS YOUR ABILITY TO COMPLETE THE COURSE.
THEREFORE FAILURE TO TURN IN ANY SINGLE ASSIGNMENT RESULTS IN A LOWERING OF THE FINAL GRADE BY HALF A LETTER GRADE AS WELL AS AN F FOR THAT SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT.

ASSIGNMENTS 1-10    25 % OF FINAL GRADE
FINAL PAPER        75% OF FINAL GRADE

I will post some examples from previous classes on WebCampus.
1. ASSIGNMENT: JOURNAL

DUE DATE: every week of the Spring semester through April 29.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this assignment is to provide an additional mechanism for communication with me about problems you are encountering, questions etc. so that I can provide help, suggestions and advice as needed, as well as to help keep you on track when class does not meet. It also focuses your attention on what you need to do in order to keep the process of writing your paper moving forward.

SKILLS: This assignment supports written communication skills.

KNOWLEDGE: This assignment increases your awareness of the process of writing your paper over time.

TASK: Each week write about 1-2 pages explaining what you have accomplished on your project during the week, what problems or difficulties you have encountered, how you feel about your project, etc. These are to be handed in during class each week. During weeks we do not meet, you may e-mail your weekly journal (please e-mail in the body of the e-mail, not in an attachment and put HIST 451 journal in the subject line). Journal entries will not be graded individually but failure to hand in these weekly accounts will result in a lowering of your final grade by half a grade (you may miss two without penalty).

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Successful completion of this assignment entails:

That you complete the assignment each and every week through April 29.

That you be thoughtful and honest in communicating your progress on research and writing your paper.
2. ASSIGNMENT: general topic and research question; preliminary primary source bibliography

DUE DATE: Feb. 11

PURPOSE: The purpose of this assignment is to begin the process of formulating your research question, as well as to be finding relevant primary and secondary sources. FINDING AN APPROPRIATE AND DOABLE RESEARCH QUESTION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER IS A CRUCIAL ELEMENT FOR SUCCESS IN THIS COURSE. This assignment provides the foundation for the next assignment, formulating your final topic and question you are researching.

SKILLS: Completing this assignment will enhance your research skills by accessing relevant primary and secondary sources in print and/or electronic format through the library. It will also give you practice in formulating a focused question and identifying methods for finding evidence relevant to that question.

KNOWLEDGE: Completing this assignment will begin to build your knowledge of your topic.

TASK: On one page (typed, double spaced), define your research question and its historical context. Attach to your topic statement a bibliography of at least three substantial primary sources and about 15 secondary sources (roughly divided equally between books and articles) that you have examined and found to be relevant to your topic. The secondary sources should be scholarly in character (that is, not textbooks, popular literature, or general readership encyclopedias). Use bibliographic forms as given in Rampolla. Be prepared to read your topic statement to the class.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS:
A successful assignment will:

Formulate a research question that is of interest to you and is doable in terms of the time and sources available to you in one page (typed, double-spaced).

Demonstrate that you have a preliminary knowledge of your topic.

Demonstrate that you have taken time to write clearly and have proofread your completed assignment.

Include at least three substantial primary sources and about 15 scholarly secondary sources (roughly divided equally between books and articles) that you have examined and found to be relevant to your research question.

Listed your sources using the correct form for bibliographies as given in Rampolla.

Give you the necessary foundation for the next stage in writing your final paper, a more focused topic and a more developed bibliography.

Be turned in by 4pm on Feb. 11 in both electronic and hard copies. The emailed version should be in the form of an attachment and the name of the attachment must be in this format:
Your last name, name of assignment (Assignment #2)
The subject of your email should, of course, include 451.
3. ASSIGNMENT: final research question and primary and secondary source bibliography

DUE DATE: Feb. 25

PURPOSE: The purpose of this assignment is to refine and focus your research question and develop the process of finding relevant primary and secondary sources. Developing a good question to research is an essential element for success in this course. REMEMBER THAT YOU MUST BE ASKING A QUESTION, NOT SIMPLY COLLECTING INFORMATION ABOUT A SUBJECT.

SKILLS: Completing this assignment will enhance your research skills by refining the parameters of your research question and becoming more explicit about the question you are asking in your research. It will also give you a larger base of sources and begin the process of a close reading of your sources in order to apply them to the question you are asking.

KNOWLEDGE: Completing this assignment will increase your specialized knowledge of your research area.

TASK: Write a one to two page statement which includes the general area of your research, the question you are asking in your research, the general directions you expect possible answers to take as far as you know at this stage, a list of specific citations from your primary sources dealing with the question you are researching, properly documented with end- or footnotes. Attach your bibliography, including any additions or changes from last week. Be prepared to read your statement to the class and comment on any problems and successes you have had.

After this date you may modify but not change your topic.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS:
A successful assignment will:
- Precisely formulate your research topic and the question that you will analyze in your paper in one or two pages (typed, double-spaced).
- Demonstrate that you have a growing knowledge of your topic.
- Demonstrate that you have taken time to write clearly and have proofread your completed assignment.
- Demonstrate that you have closely examined your primary sources by including a list of at least 5 quotations from those sources that are relevant to your topic.
- Demonstrate that you can use correct citation form as given in Rampolla by using endnotes or footnotes to cite these quotations.
- Include at least three substantial primary sources and at least 15-20 scholarly secondary sources (including both books and articles) that you have examined and found to be relevant to your topic in your bibliography.
Give you the necessary foundation for the next stage in writing your final paper, a more focused and developed topic, the formulation of a question and THESIS and a more developed bibliography.

Be turned in by 4pm on Feb.25 in both electronic and hard copies. The emailed version should be in the form of an attachment and the name of the attachment must be in this format:
Your last name, name of assignment (Assignment #3)
The subject of your email should, of course, include 451.
4. ASSIGNMENT: **WORK-IN-PROGRESS REPORTS AND THESIS STATEMENT**

**DUE DATE: March 10**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this assignment is to further refine, develop and clarify the question you are researching and begin the process of coming to a thesis. Again, this is an essential step for success in this course. A thesis is an argument responding to a research question.

**SKILLS:** Completing this assignment will help develop your skills in critical reading, thinking and writing. It will also develop your skills in oral and written communication.

**KNOWLEDGE:** Completing this assignment will develop your specialized knowledge of your topic and question.

**TASK:** a 2-3 page statement explaining in detail the question you are researching, why it is important, what evidence you will use to document your conclusions, and what conclusions you have come to at this point in the process. Attach an outline of your paper as you conceive it at this point. Be prepared to read your statement to the class and comment on your progress, problems encountered, changes in your project, etc.

**CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS:**
A successful assignment will:
- Precisely formulate your research topic and the question that you will analyze.
- Clear explain your argument in response to the question you are asking and why it is important in two to three typed, double-spaced pages.
- Demonstrate that you have a growing knowledge of your topic.
- Demonstrate that you have thought carefully about the question you are asking in your paper.
- Demonstrate that you have begun to think about how you will organize your paper.
- Demonstrate that you have taken time to write clearly and have proofread your completed assignment.
- Give you the necessary foundation for the next stage in writing the first draft of your paper, due March 14.
- Be turned in by 4 pm on March 10 in both electronic and hard copies. The emailed version should be in the form of an attachment and the name of the attachment must be in this format: Your last name, name of assignment (Assignment #4)
- The subject of your email should, of course, include 451.
5. ASSIGNMENT: Conference #1

DUE DATE: March 17

PURPOSE: The purpose of the first conference is to enable a one-to-one conversation with me to discuss your paper and your progress. Come prepared with questions about any aspect of your work and I will do my best to help you focus your work, find bibliography if needed, suggest revisions in your approach, answer background questions, etc.

   SKILLS: This assignment supports oral communication skills.
   KNOWLEDGE: This assignment supports knowledge of your topic.

TASK: Sign up for a conference time and come to my office Wright B320 prepared to discuss your work to date, questions you would like answered, etc.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Successful completion of this assignment:
   You sign up for the conference in class and/or on signup sheet posted on my office door.
   You come to your conference on time and prepared to discuss your work to date. This might include general and specific questions and a review of your successes and problems to date.
   You take down in writing any suggestions, feedback etc from me and apply them to your work.
6. ASSIGNMENT: First draft of paper.

DUE DATE: March 14

PURPOSE: The purpose of this assignment is to provide a foundation for your final draft and clarify for you what you need to do to produce an excellent and effective final paper.

SKILLS: Completion of this assignment will improve your critical reading, thinking and writing skills, provide a foundation for your final draft, and enable me to provide useful feedback for the final draft of your paper. Completing this assignment will enable you to focus on how to work on your paper for the final draft.

KNOWLEDGE: Completion of this assignment will strongly improve your knowledge of your topic.

TASK: Turn in your draft of your paper as it now stands in both electronic and hard copy. Your draft must include footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography in correct form as given by Rampolla. The pages of your draft must also be numbered. I will comment on your first draft. Comments by me must be addressed in your final draft.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS:
A successful assignment will:
State your thesis clearly at the beginning of the paper.
Clearly explain the importance of your thesis and topic at the beginning of the paper.
Demonstrate a clear organization so that the points follow each other in a coherent way.
Provide evidence for your points, using footnotes or endnotes as appropriate, properly formatted.
Demonstrate good editing so that the writing is clear and direct.
Demonstrate careful proofreading so that the paper has minimal grammatical and spelling mistakes, typos, etc.
Demonstrate that the body of the paper supports the thesis as stated in the beginning of the paper.
Provide a conclusion that synthesizes your findings.
Include a bibliography in correct form.
Pages are numbered.
Be turned in by 4pm on Nov. 6 in both electronic and hard copies. The emailed version should be in the form of an attachment and the name of the attachment must be in this format:
Your last name, name of assignment (Assignment #6)
The subject of your email should, of course, include 451.
7. ASSIGNMENT: Revising of first draft of paper and second draft of paper.

DUE DATE: March 18-April 14

PURPOSE: The purpose of this assignment is to improve on your first draft. All written work is better with ongoing and thorough revision. Revision will enable you to produce an excellent and effective final paper.

SKILLS: Completion of this assignment will improve your critical reading, thinking and writing skills and provide a foundation for your final draft.

KNOWLEDGE: Completion of this assignment will improve your knowledge of your topic.

TASK: Continue to revise your paper, incorporating any suggestions from me on your first draft. Apply techniques for successful revision as discussed in class.

ASSIGNMENT: Second draft of paper.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Successful completion of this assignment will demonstrate continued strengthening of the organization of your paper, a more thoughtful or precise statement of your thesis, a more persuasive use of evidence to support your argument, and a clearer and more direct writing style.
8. ASSIGNMENT: Second conference

DUE DATE: April 21

PURPOSE: The purpose of the second conference is to enable a one-to-one conversation with me to discuss your paper and your progress. Come prepared with questions about any aspect of your work and I will do my best to help you focus your work, find bibliography if needed, suggest revisions in your approach, answer background questions, etc.

    SKILLS: This assignment supports oral communication skills.
    KNOWLEDGE: This assignment supports knowledge of your topic.

TASK: Sign up for a conference time and come to my office Wright B320 prepared to discuss your work to date, questions you would like answered, etc. Comments on your first and second drafts must be addressed by you in your final draft.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Successful completion of this assignment:
    You sign up for the conference in class and/or on signup sheet posted on my office door.
    You come to your conference on time and prepared to discuss your work to date. This might include general and specific questions and a review of your successes and problems to date.
    You take down in writing any suggestions, feedback etc from me and apply them to your final draft.
9. ASSIGNMENT: Presentation of your paper to the class

DUE DATE: May 5

PURPOSE: The purpose of this assignment is to provide an opportunity for you to enjoy presenting what you have discovered to the class and get feedback from your peers.

SKILLS: Completion of this assignment will improve your oral communication skills.

KNOWLEDGE: Completion of this assignment will improve your knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of your research and paper as it now stands.

TASK: Prepare an oral presentation of about 5 minutes explaining to the class your thesis (question you are asking, its importance, and a solution), the main points of your evidence supporting your thesis, and your conclusion. You may include a brief visual presentation or a brief handout for the class if you wish.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Successful completion of this assignment will:

- Your oral presentation will explain your paper effectively in about 5 minutes.
- You will listen carefully to comments on your paper by other members of the class and be prepared to revise your paper in light of those comments.

10. ASSIGNMENT: Critique of two other papers by two other students in the class

DUE DATE: May 5

PURPOSE: The purpose of this assignment is to help other students in the class produce an excellent final paper by offering your comments and suggestions for improvement from the perspective of the reader. A second purpose is to give you a perspective on your own paper by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the papers of other students.

SKILLS: Completion of this assignment will improve your critical reading and thinking skills and oral communication skills.

KNOWLEDGE: Completion of this assignment will improve your knowledge of aspects of history through reading other students’ papers.

TASK: Prepare a 5 minute discussion of the paper you have chosen to review through the signup sheet provided by the instructor. Your comments should include both what the author of the paper has successfully accomplished and suggestions for improvement. You should prepare notes for oral comments and 1 page of written comments for the author, with a copy to me.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: Successful completion of this assignment will:
Clearly point out whether the paper has a clearly stated thesis, asking a question and providing a solution to the question.
Clearly assess whether the paper succeeds in doing what the author claims it will do.
Clearly assess whether the paper is well-organized.
Clearly assess whether the paper has a clear and effective writing style.
Clearly assess whether the paper has been carefully proofread.
Clearly assess whether the conclusion synthesizes the research findings.
Have 1 page of written comments for the author, with a copy for the instructor.
11. ASSIGNMENT: final draft of paper

DUE DATE: May 12 by noon.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this assignment is to produce an excellent and effective 20-25 page research paper based on primary and secondary sources. Congratulations, you are an historian!

SKILLS: Completion of this assignment demonstrates a high level of accomplishment in inquiry and critical thinking skills; research skills; and written communication skills. All these skills are highly valued by business and professional communities and are essential for being an engaged citizen and an effective manager of the practical aspects of life.

KNOWLEDGE: Completion of this assignment makes you an expert in one focused aspect of history.

TASK: Submission of a 20-25 paper (typed, double-spaced) based on earlier assignments and feedback from the instructor and from other students.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS:
A successful assignment will have:
- Substantially revised your first draft so as to incorporate suggestions and comments from the instructor, other students and your own rethinking and rewriting.
- Stated your thesis clearly at the beginning of the paper.
- Clearly explained the importance of your thesis and topic at the beginning of the paper.
- Organized your paper so that the points follow each other in a coherent way.
- Provided evidence for your points, using footnotes or endnotes as appropriate, properly formatted.
- Demonstrated that you have edited your paper so that your writing is clear and direct.
- Demonstrated that you have proofread your paper and corrected grammatical and spelling mistakes, typos, etc.
- Made sure that the body of your paper supports your thesis.
- Provided a conclusion that synthesizes your findings.
- Included a bibliography in correct form.
- Numbered your pages.
- Provided a substantial demonstration of your academic and managerial skills that may be useful in your academic, work and personal life.
- Be turned in by noon on May 12 in both electronic and hard copies. The emailed version should be in the form of an attachment and the name of the attachment must be in this format:
  Your last name, name of assignment (Assignment #11)
The subject of your email should, of course, include 451.