Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet

Program Information:

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<th>Program Assessed</th>
<th>Ph.D.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>History</td>
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<td>College</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
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<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>Jan. 29, 2017</td>
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Contact Person for This Report

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<thead>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Elspeth Whitney</th>
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<tbody>
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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

Upon completion of the Ph.D. program in History, students should be able to:
1. Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the content and historiography of an extensive body of scholarly material in a major field defined by historical period, geographic region or regions, or theme, e.g. History and Memory.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the content and historiography of an extensive body of scholarly material in a minor field defined by historical period, geographic region or regions, or theme, e.g. History and Memory.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the major theoretical and historiographical approaches to their major field.
4. Demonstrate an awareness of the role of historians in the construction of the past and the role of contemporary context in shaping the perspectives of historians.
5. Demonstrate the ability to formulate an original research project, identify pertinent sources, examine those sources thoroughly, efficiently, and even-handedly within the context of the existing scholarly literature in the field and construct a well ordered, well argued and well written paper of substantial length.
6. Demonstrate the ability to formulate a larger original research project in the form of a prospectus and its oral defense, which identifies pertinent sources and locates that project within the existing body of scholarship.
7. Produce a book-length dissertation that completes the project formulated in the prospectus and defend that work orally.
8. Demonstrate a reading knowledge of foreign languages pertinent to the student’s geographic fields of study.

2016 Assessment will focus on SLO 3, 4, 5 and 7 through review of completed dissertations over the past three years following a slightly revised plan as outlined in 2014 - 2015. Six dissertations chosen at random were reviewed out of a total of eight completed. The titles of the dissertations are attached in Appendix 1.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT

The dissertations were assessed through a rubric adapted from that developed by the American Historical Association for capstone courses (attached Appendix 2). The categories of the AHA rubric largely overlaps with the SLOs #3, 4, 5 and 7.

Review of dissertations written over the past three years shows that the History Department is doing a very good to excellent job of producing doctoral students who write dissertations that contribute to scholarship in the field of History. All dissertations were rated from very good (4+) to excellent (5) on the AHA rubrics.
It should be noted that the author of one of the dissertations included in the review was awarded a UNLV President’s Fellowship (Ian Baldwin), one of the most prestigious and competitive fellowships at UNLV, in 2015. Another author (Nicholas Pellegrino) has had four articles published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals, as well as one book chapter in a book published by Rowman & Littlefield. Two other dissertations won the College of liberal Arts Best Dissertation Award, one in 2014 and one in 2016 (Jordan Watkins and Margaret Huettl). Margaret Huettl is now a tenure-track Assistant Professor of History and Ethnic Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

In addition, doctoral students have been finishing their degrees in approximately six years. This is a significant improvement in time to degree.

Three further observations emerged from the assessment process.

1) The dissertations reviewed demonstrated a very high level of research skills using a wide variety of primary sources, including manuscripts, newspapers, oral interviews, and local, state and federal government reports, as well as other texts, and secondary sources. All demonstrated an excellent ability to construct an historical narrative and explain the historiographical and historical context; all provided a clear rationale for the topic and approach; and all linked evidence and interpretation in a convincing and solid manner. All were well written. Dissertations overall received slightly higher ratings on rubrics #1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 than on rubric #2 but all achieved an average of at least a 4 and two had an average of 5.

2) All dissertations under review were in the field of American history. These dissertations reflected current and up-to-date trends in the field, which include a focus on local case studies and intersections of law, politics and social history.

3) There was room for improvement in two respects. One, more attention might be paid to the conclusion of the dissertation. Outside readers are likely to read the introduction and the conclusion before reading the entire dissertation. Therefore, special attention should be paid to ensuring that the conclusion is as substantive and clear as possible and is more than a epilogue. Secondly, more attention should be paid to the Abstract. Many more readers will read the Abstract than the entire dissertation. The review showed that, with several exceptions, the Abstracts did not represent the focus, approach and conclusions of the dissertation in the most effective way. More attention should be paid to ensuring that the Abstract is as effective as the dissertation itself in demonstrating the research, scholarly and writing accomplishments of the author.

It needs to be remembered that writing a dissertation is an extremely demanding task and requires a major commitment from both the student and the faculty on the student’s Committee. The effort and time put into shepherding doctoral students through the process of writing a dissertation by both individual faculty members and the Department as a whole should be recognized and rewarded.
The findings will be reviewed by the entire faculty of the Department, with special attention by the Graduate Committee. The Graduate Committee will consider whether changes below the level of program change are indicated and present their findings to the department as a whole during a Faculty meeting for consideration.

PROGRAM CHANGE

One new program change was considered for implementation. M.A. students must now all take their comprehensive exams during one week during the Fall semester and one week during the Spring semester. This change was implemented to ensure greater coherence in the program and eliminate stress on the part of students, faculty and administrative staff in scheduling multiple times for taking exams spread out over the entire semester. The Graduate Committee will consider whether this change should be also applied to Ph.D. students.
APPENDIX 1.

Harrison Christian. 2014."Las Vegas in an Era of Limits: Urban Water Politics in the Colorado River Basin"


Lance Muckey, 2015.Regulating the Dead: Rights for the Corpse and the Removal of San Francisco's Cemeteries

Nicholas Pellegrino. 2015. Reviving a Spirit of Controversy" Roman Catholics and the Pursuit of Religious Freedom in Early America"

Kendra Gage. 2015. "This is Our Backyard" Virna Canson and the Mothers of the Civil Rights Movement in the California Delta, 1940-1988"


AHA History Tuning Project: History Discipline Core

History is a set of evolving rules and tools that allows us to interpret the past with clarity, rigor, and an appreciation for interpretative debate. It requires evidence, sophisticated use of information, and a deliberative stance to explain change and continuity over time. As a profoundly public pursuit, history is essential to active and empathetic citizenship and requires effective communication to make the past accessible to multiple audiences. As a discipline, history entails a set of professional ethics and standards that demand peer review, citation, and toleration for the provisional nature of knowledge.

Core competencies are numbered and learning outcomes are listed as bullet points below.

History students can:

1. **Engage in historical inquiry, research, and analysis.**
   - Develop a disciplined, skeptical stance and outlook on the world that demands evidence and sophisticated use of information.
   - Understand the dynamics of change over time.
   - Explore the complexity of the human experience, across time and space.
   - Evaluate a variety of historical sources for their credibility, position, and perspective.
   - Read and contextualize materials from the past with appropriate precision and detail.

2. **Practice historical empathy.**
   - Value the study of the past for its contribution to lifelong learning and critical habits of mind that are essential for effective and engaged citizenship.
   - Develop a body of historical knowledge with range and depth.
   - Recognize the ongoing provisional nature of knowledge.
   - Interpret the past in context; contextualize the past on its own terms.
   - Explore multiple historical and theoretical viewpoints that provide perspective on the past.
   - Recognize where they are in history.

3. **Understand the complex nature of the historical record.**
   - Distinguish between primary and secondary materials and decide when to use each.
   - Choose among multiple tools, methods, and perspectives to investigate and interpret materials from the past.
   - Recognize the value of conflicting narratives and evidence.

4. **Generate significant, open-ended questions about the past and devise research strategies to answer them.**
   - Seek a variety of sources that provide evidence to support an argument about the past.
   - Develop a methodological practice of gathering, sifting, analyzing, ordering, synthesizing, and interpreting evidence.
   - Identify and summarize other scholars’ historical arguments.

5. **Craft historical narrative and argument.**
   - Generate a historical argument that is reasoned and based on historical evidence selected, arranged, and analyzed.
   - Write effective narrative that describes and analyzes the past for its use in the present.
   - Understand that the ethics and practice of history mean recognizing and building on other scholars’ work, peer review, and citation.
   - Defend a position publicly and revise this position when new evidence requires it.
6. Practice historical thinking as central to engaged citizenship.
   - Engage a diversity of viewpoints in a civil and constructive fashion.
   - Work cooperatively with others to develop positions that reflect deliberation and differing perspectives.
   - Apply historical knowledge and analysis to contribute to contemporary social dialogue.

Sample Tasks for Demonstrating Competencies: This broad list is intended to give instructors, programs, and departments a wide range of items through which the competencies above might be demonstrated.
   - Describe your own position in history in written, oral, or other forms.
   - Generate class discussion questions from primary and secondary sources.
   - Engage the ideas of others constructively in oral or written conversation/dialogue/discussion.
   - Explain in written or oral presentation the difference between primary and secondary sources.
   - Explain in written or oral presentation the different perspectives (such as author, audience, and agenda) between two or more primary sources.
   - Explain in written or oral presentation the different perspectives (such as author, audience, and agenda) between two or more secondary sources.
   - Demonstrate how various sources may be synthesized.
   - Find appropriate materials online, in a library, or in the community and know how to cite them.
   - Demonstrate the relationship between primary and secondary materials by assessing a historian's work and recognizing the tools used to construct that historical argument.
   - Contextualize a source; demonstrate in written or oral presentation what historical detail a source needs to be understood.
   - Narrate, in written or oral presentation, an event from the past.
   - Present and analyze, in written or oral presentation, different perspectives on an event from the past.
   - Have a transcript that shows courses whose content ranges over time, space, culture, and methods.
   - Use specific primary and secondary sources in examinations, discussions, and oral presentations.
   - Select appropriate primary source(s) as evidence.
   - Select appropriate secondary source(s) as evidence or in support of a position or argument.
   - Identify existing and compelling questions about the subject.
   - Pose appropriate research questions and assess the range of materials necessary to answer them.
   - Write a proposal for the development of a work of history in any medium.
   - Identify and cite sources and points of evidence appropriate in number and type for exercises such as an annotated bibliography, paper proposals, a semester paper, or a capstone exercise.
   - Write a successful capstone research paper with appropriate citations.
   - Participate in internship and/or field experience, and also the creation of an e-portfolio/blog/website that demonstrates the creation of a historical narrative and an argument for public use.
   - Complete a substantial historical project autonomously.
**History Capstone Rubric**

This rubric has been modified by John Williams and Jane Murphy.

### Argument

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<tr>
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<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationale/Motivation</strong></td>
<td>No clear rationale or a weak rationale for the project</td>
<td>Some rationale presented, begins to motivate the work</td>
<td>Provides and discusses a suitable rationale</td>
<td>Persuasive and creative rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope/Dealing with Complexity in Framing a Topic</strong></td>
<td>Frames complex questions as simple ones</td>
<td>Invests questions with some complexity; may oversimplify or overextend</td>
<td>Reasonable balance between focus and complexity</td>
<td>Frames the topic with a full appreciation of its complexity while retaining appropriate focus</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td>Not clear what was done or why, or an inappropriate method</td>
<td>Approach is generally appropriate and properly executed</td>
<td>Well chosen and appropriate, and well executed</td>
<td>Creative and sophisticated methods</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Historiographic/Theoretical Context</strong></td>
<td>Author does not demonstrate awareness of the scholarly literature, may overly rely on too few sources</td>
<td>Author demonstrates a reasonable awareness of the literature</td>
<td>Author demonstrates broad awareness and situates own work within the literature</td>
<td>Author is aware of scholarly literature, situates own work within the field, and makes a contribution to the field, or identifies a new direction for investigation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Position/Thesis</strong></td>
<td>Does not take a clear or defensible position or draw a clear conclusion</td>
<td>States and/or critiques a position that may already exist in the literature</td>
<td>Thoroughly and effectively supports, tests, extends, or critiques a position that may already exist in the literature</td>
<td>Develops a clear and defensible position of his/her own; draws a significant conclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Argumentation</strong></td>
<td>Weak, invalid, or no argument, perhaps a simple assertion</td>
<td>Some arguments valid and well supported, some not</td>
<td>Main arguments valid, systematic, and well supported</td>
<td>Arguments both well supported and in conversation with conflicting explanations</td>
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### Sources/Research

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<th>Level 4</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Sources located too few or inappropriate for stated project</td>
<td>Sources located of reasonable range, but may be limited in number or kind</td>
<td>Source base wide ranging and thorough; demonstrates effective use of bibliographic tools</td>
<td>Source base complex and extensive, and compiled using creative and sophisticated methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Selected sources inappropriate for investigation of stated problem</td>
<td>Some sources address stated problem but others are inappropriate; source base may lack key or relevant sources</td>
<td>Sources selected are appropriately relevant and extensive enough to allow exploration of stated problem</td>
<td>Creative and sophisticated source selection that brings new sources to bear on question, or brings new questions to better-known sources</td>
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<td>Analysis and Interpretation</td>
<td>Draws on little or no evidence, treats related evidence as unrelated, or draws weak or simplistic connections</td>
<td>Some appropriate use of evidence, but uneven; begins to establish connections and implications of source material</td>
<td>Feasible evidence appropriately selected and not overinterpreted; brings together related sources in productive ways; thoroughly discusses implications of sources</td>
<td>Fully exploits the richness of the sources and is sufficiently persuasive in analysis; develops insightful connections and patterns that require intellectual creativity</td>
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**Writing Mechanics**

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<th>Level 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and Spelling, Usage</td>
<td>Significantly impairs readability</td>
<td>Frequent or serious errors</td>
<td>Some minor errors</td>
<td>Virtually no errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Needs significant improvement</td>
<td>Structure is of inconsistent quality; may be choppy and/or have redundancies or disconnections</td>
<td>Structure supports the argument; clearly ordered sections fit together well</td>
<td>Structure enhances the argument; strong sections and seamless flow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity, Style, Readability (as Appropriate to Genre and Discipline)</td>
<td>Gets in the way of reading for content</td>
<td>Beginning to be comfortable with appropriate conventions, though style is inconsistent or uneven</td>
<td>Effective prose style; follows relevant scholarly conventions; emergence of voice</td>
<td>Mastery of the genre, including elegant style, established voice</td>
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