Program Information:

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<td>Department</td>
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<td>College</td>
<td>LIBERAL ARTS</td>
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<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>DECEMBER 15, 2017</td>
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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.
WHAT ARE THE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES?

By the time our 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.

WHICH LEARNING OUTCOMES WERE ASSESSED?

The goal of assessment is to evaluate student learning with the intention to improve it. For this report, SLO 6 was assessed in HIST 251 (our Milestone Course). This overlaps with UULO #3 (Communication).

HIST 251 introduces students to methods in history and usually requires them to write a 12-15 page historiographical (literature review) essay based on their analysis of journal articles, monographs, and other scholarly material.

HOW WERE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSED?

This SLO was assessed using three instruments:

A) Up-to-date statistics on withdrawal rates;
B) An end-of-semester survey (Fall 2017) designed to identify what students find most challenging about HIST 251 and what resources they consider most useful;
C) A grading rubric for directly assessing a sample of the HIST 251 students’ final essays in Fall 2017 (this is a simplified version of the rubric suggested by the American Historical Association).

A) Up-To-Date Statistics on Withdrawal Rates
Statistics on withdrawal rates over the past several years (for all offered sections of HIST 251 each semester) were collected and collated. They are:

Spring 2014
HIST251: 39 enrolled, 8 withdrawals 20% withdrawal rate
Fall 2014
HIST251: 33 enrolled, 12 withdrawals 36% withdrawal rate

Spring 2015
HIST251: 28 enrolled, 4 withdrawals 14% withdrawal rate

Fall 2015
HIST251: 30 enrolled, 5 withdrawals 17% withdrawal rate

Spring 2016
HIST251: 32 enrolled, 7 withdrawals 22% withdrawal rate

Fall 2016
HIST251: 33 enrolled, 6 withdrawals 18% withdrawal rate

Spring 2017
HIST251: 37 enrolled, 7 withdrawals 19% withdrawal rate

Fall 2017
HIST251: 34 enrolled, 2 withdrawals 6% withdrawal rate

B) Student Survey
In an effort to understand what it is about HIST 251 that students find so difficult (while simultaneously figuring out what measures the instructors and students themselves could take to help the students complete it effectively), a survey (see Appendix #1 attached) was administered toward the end of the Fall 2017 semester.

C) Grading Rubric
A large sample of the HIST 251 students’ final essays (Fall 2017) was also directly assessed using a standardized rubric (see Appendix #2 attached). For the purposes of assessing this year’s SLO, the “Question,” “Argument,” and “Conclusion” categories of the rubric were focused on.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

A) Up-To-Date Statistics on Withdrawal Rates
These statistics confirmed what similar studies in previous years have suggested: that students find HIST 251 daunting. Only time will tell whether or not the relatively low number of withdrawals this past semester (Fall 2017) signals a change in the trend or an exception that proves the rule.

B) Student Survey
This survey of 17 students suggests that we might be able to improve our students’ ability to communicate by dedicating some class time not only to the nuts and bolts of the historian’s craft but also to strategies of “college success.”

On the one hand, for example, the two most common obstacles/difficulties that students felt they faced were: 1) truly understanding what is meant by “historiography” [scholarly debates amongst historians]; 2) having a grasp on how to cite scholarly literature properly (one student said “footnotes will haunt me for years”). These obstacles directly connect to the issue of
communication as it is impossible for students to accurately describe a concept without fully understanding it first. Following the truism that “to be a good writer, one must be a good reader,” future iterations of HIST 251 might attempt to rectify this problem by providing the students with more model examples of historiographical essays and scholarly citations so that they could refer to them throughout the process.

At the same time, the survey results also suggest that the problems facing our HIST 251 students involve what are sometimes referred to as strategies of “college success” (skills and work habits employed by high-achieving students). Several students admitted to having struggled with “time management,” for example, which left them less time to polish their writing. A few others felt that they would have benefitted from one-on-one time with their professor (during, for example, office hours). As one student admitted when asked what she/he could have done to overcome their difficulties: “reached out to the professor more.” Careful time management and one-on-one meetings with professors are two classic tools of “college success.” There is no doubt that our students’ ability to communicate effectively would be aided by our helping them develop these strategies (as is done in the College of Liberal Arts’ First-Year Seminar, COLA100).

C) Grading Rubric

The direct assessment of 16 papers demonstrates that the students who completed the course performed relatively well at communicating their ideas, averaging 3.38, 3.25, and 3.34 (out of 4) respectively on the three rubric categories employed this semester (“Question,” “Argument,” and “Conclusion”). These results confirm what previous assessment reports have suggested: that students’ skills benefit from structured classroom environments characterized by significant individual attention from the instructor.

Faculty teaching HIST 251 agree, however, that time management remains an issue. “More emphasis during the first few weeks of the term might help students become better at budgeting time outside of class for researching and developing their projects,” suggested one instructor although she also acknowledged that, by the end of the semester, most of her students “felt they had become more self-disciplined and more adept at budgeting the time necessary for a term-length project.” As discussed above, time management plays an important role in giving students the space to communicate effectively.

Moreover, future iterations of HIST 251 may benefit by encouraging the students to consider the contemporary relevance of the work they are doing. “Even by the end of the course,” mused one instructor, “most students have some difficulty communicating in their essays why, besides curiosity, readers should be interested in their chosen topic.”

HOW ARE WE RESPONDING TO WHAT WE LEARNED?

One lesson from all of this information is clear: that the problems students face in HIST 251 (such as time management) are inseparable from their earlier experiences as freshmen. As a result, the department needs to identify and address these issues as early in each student’s career as possible.

As part of our commitment to this process, the Department of History will continue to collaborate with Dr. Mary-Ann Winkelmes, Director of Instructional Development and Research in the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (and a member of our department). Together, we will work on implementing the Transparency in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Project (TILT). In December 2017, we systematically administered a TILT survey across our 100-level courses to
learn more about the kinds of problems our freshmen students are already encountering and what measures our instructors could take to help them. Administering this online survey in December 2017 provided us with a baseline of information with which we can hopefully make better decisions regarding our curriculum (including but not limited to HIST 251) next year.

This TILT survey will also inform our efforts to support Retention, Progression, and Completion rates amongst History majors. We will focus especially on students' responses to questions about “predictors” of students’ persistence (i.e. awareness of skill development, sense of belonging, sense of confidence).

Moreover, these lessons will offer food for thought and action as our department crafts its new Assessment Plan in 2018.

Thank you,

CTM
APPENDIX #1 (STUDENT SURVEY)

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
History Department
HIST 251 Assessment Form (END OF TERM)

Course Section #: __________ Semester: _______ Expected grade for course: _______

Are you a: History major ____   History minor ______

Current standing:  Freshman ___  Sophomore ___  Junior ___  Senior ___

This survey is designed to find out what YOU THINK about the following questions:

What is the **BIGGEST OBSTACLE/DIFFICULTY** you have faced in this course?

What **BENEFIT/RESOURCE** have you found most useful?

What **COULD THE PROFESSOR HAVE DONE** to help you either overcome your obstacles or exploit your resources?

What **COULD YOU HAVE DONE** to either overcome your obstacles or exploit your resources?

In what ways has your experience in HIST251 **PREPARED YOU** for future history courses and/or the capstone seminar, HIST451?
APPENDIX #2 (GRADING RUBRIC)

HIST 251 Student Performance Rubric

Criteria: From 4 (best) to 0 (worst)

Question
4: Question is clearly stated, feasible, and reflects understanding of issue at hand.
3: Question is stated but either infeasible or lacking broader understanding of issue at hand.
2: Question is stated but some terms remain undefined and ambiguities are unexplored.
1: Question is stated without clarification or description.
0: Question is either not stated or unintelligible.

Evidence
4: Information derives from sufficient sources, is well-organized, and properly cited. Biases are acknowledged.
3: Information derives from sufficient sources but is either poorly organized, improperly cited, or lacking acknowledgement of biases.
2: Information derives from barely adequate sources and is either poorly organized, improperly cited, or lacking acknowledgement of biases.
1: Information derives from inadequate sources and is either poorly organized, improperly cited, or lacking acknowledgement of biases.
0: Information is inadequate in several ways.

Analysis
4: Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal several interesting points of contrast, comparison, or connection.
3: Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal some interesting points of contrast, comparison, or connection.
2: Organizes evidence but reveals few if any interesting points of contrast, comparison, or connection.
1: Lists evidence but offers little analysis.
0: Offers no analysis.

Argument
4: Argument is clearly stated and carefully organized into thesis and sub-arguments. Other points of view acknowledged.
3: Argument is clearly stated but organization of thesis and sub-arguments is lacking in one or two important ways.
2: Argument is adequately stated but organization of thesis and sub-arguments is lacking in three or more important ways.
1: Argument is poorly stated and inadequately organized.
0: There is no definable argument.

Conclusion
4: Conclusion is imaginatively stated and based on careful evaluation of evidence and different perspectives.
3: Conclusion is adequately stated but loosely connected to preceding analysis of evidence.
2: Conclusion is adequately stated but either introduces new information or poorly connected to preceding analysis of evidence.
1: Conclusion is inadequately stated and poorly connected to preceding analysis of evidence.
0: There is no clear conclusion.