

## Institutional Effectiveness

2019-2020

**Program:** History BS/BA

**College and Department:** College of Arts & Sciences – Department of History

**Contact:** Jeff Roberts

**Mission:** The Department of History offers a wide array of courses to diverse student populations. The department provides General Education instruction to a large number of students in the state-required American history sequence, while Western and World Civilization sequences satisfy TBR humanities requirements. In addition, department faculty offer numerous specialized courses that attract majors and non-majors alike.

The department has developed and maintains a comprehensive and successful curriculum for history majors. The programs are designed to provide future historians with the tools and knowledge for successful graduate study in the discipline, and to prepare graduates for careers in education, law, public service or business. Majors are expected to think analytically, ascertain facts and make objective judgments, and write clearly, communicating the results of reasoned analysis.

The department shares with the University both its broader commitment to cross-cultural understanding and its special obligation to serve the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

SLO 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to research and write a scholarly paper of professional quality.

SLO 2: The department desires to instill in students an appreciation of the past, to include a desire to explore history beyond the classroom.

SLO 3: History majors will demonstrate a reasonable command of general factual knowledge.

A departmentally developed curriculum map can be found in Appendix 1 that shows the connections between courses and student learning outcomes.

### **Assessment Methods:**

*SLO 1: Ability to research*

#### 1. Historical Methods and Senior Seminar Courses

Students capstone projects, completed in History 4900, are evaluated using a faculty developed rubric. The rubric includes the following criteria:

- a. Formulate an original thesis and defend it in a sustained argument
- b. Make effective use of primary sources (if possible) - AND/OR - Demonstrate and ability to professionally evaluate and employ secondary sources.
- c. Make proper use of citation conventions, thereby avoiding plagiarism.

- d. Use standard written English effectively and appropriately.
- e. Present a well-organized paper.
- f. Place the research topic and/or literature survey in broader historical context.
- g. Demonstrate critical thinking, reasoned analysis, and/or problem solving.
- h. Follow any additional directions as assigned by the professor.

*SLO 2: Extracurricular activities*

- 1. Student Participation in Co-curricular Activities

Tracking spreadsheet for the number of students who attend each co-curricular activity.

*SLO 3: General factual knowledge*

- 1. ACAT

The ACAT is an exit exam for students majoring in history. The ACAT includes four content areas including: U.S. 1820 to 1890, U.S. Colonial to 1763, U.S. Military/Diplomatic, and U.S. 1763 to 1820. Exam is administered in the senior seminar course.

- 2. Senior Exit Interview

The chairperson invites all graduating seniors to a one-on-one interview in the weeks prior to their graduation. The chair asks the seniors to review the program. He seeks information on successful classes and asks about areas in need of improvement. The results can provide useful information for all three SLOs, as well as general program development.

**Results:**

*SLO 1: Ability to research*

A total of 25 students completed the senior seminar, ten students in Fall 2019 and fifteen students in Spring 2020. Eleven out of twenty-six students met all requirements of the rubric. A few of these papers truly are of publishable quality (one has been submitted for review). The other students were held accountable for failing to meet all the standards of the rubric, coming up short on either item a, d, e, g, or h.

Rubric Results for Spring 2020

	Excellent	Good	Emerging	Weak
Thesis	7%	87%	7%	0%
Argument	7%	73%	20%	0%
Primary	27%	47%	27%	0%
Secondary	20%	60%	20%	0%
Citation	0%	100%	0%	0%
English	27%	40%	13%	20%
Organize	33%	53%	7%	7%
Context	7%	73%	20%	0%

Critical	7%	33%	33%	27%
Direction	7%	47%	40%	7%

Spring semester proved problematic when the university moved online following spring break. By this point, all students had their topics and had at least begun their research. The online environment worked better for some than others. While some thrived amidst extended research time others seemed to lag without regular in-class encouragement. At semester's end, five students simply had not produced papers of sufficient quality. Given the circumstances of the pandemic, Dr. Roberts chose to allow these students incomplete grades, rather than F's. He gave them the summer to complete their work. Three of these students had to delay their graduation from spring to summer.

Four students have since finished their project. One changed her subject entirely, and with better motivation, earned a B. Two others who struggled with both writing and analysis (rubric items d and g), received "C" grades. The "D" paper was weak in those areas and item h as well - the student did not complete all her other assignments. One student never finished – and received an “F” for the course.

*SLO 2: Extracurricular activities*

The Covid-19 pandemic dramatically curtailed our student activities in 2019-2020. For the first time in reporting we cannot say with absolute certainty that we surpassed our goal of 50% participation, though we at least got close before we began to shelter in place. Things started well when we hosted the fourth annual Pauline Womack lecture in the fall. Popular radio personality Bill Landry drew a huge crowd. Two joint projects, Constitution Day and Law Night, were also well attended. Dr. Allen Driggers and Club President Jenny Huffman hosted a handful of History Club activities. One study abroad trip also transpired when Drs. Susan Laningham and Kent Dollar took eight students to Rome over Thanksgiving week.

The university cancelled all plans for spring break adventures (which included a seminar trip to Washington DC). Plans to host the Phi Alpha Theta (PAT) State Conference fell through as well. The national organization cancelled the meeting, and they have cancelled next year's as well (Hannah Cowan, who won first prize in 2019, had no chance to defend her title). For the first time in over a decade there was no Winchester Lecture in the spring (we had scheduled it in conjunction with PAT). Jenny's December graduation left History Club bereft of energetic leadership until Covid-19 short-circuited any remaining opportunities. Some students did offer helpful assistance to victims of the March 3 tornado. Graduating senior Caitlyn Harris in particular, working through the Baptist Student Union, coordinated several relief activities before the pandemic intervened.

Opportunities for co-curricular activities remain limited as the crisis continues. One optimistic note is that Constitution Day is scheduled for September 17, as an online webinar.

*SLO 3: General factual knowledge*

History majors will achieve a score at or above the national average on the ACAT achievement tests.

ACAT Results:

Area	Fall 2018 N = 6		Spring 2019 N = 11		Fall 2019 N = 10		Spring 2020 N = 15	
	Std Score	%ile	Std Score	%ile	Std Score	%ile	Std Score	%ile
U.S. 1820 to 1890	483	43	482	43	463	36	593	82
U.S. Colonial to 1763	460	34	517	57	467	37	586	81
U.S. Military/Diplomatic	457	33	490	46	507	53	569	75
U.S. 1763 to 1820	455	33	515	56	449	31	550	69
OVERALL PERFORMANCE	458	34	506	52	463	36	596	83

Fall 2019's ACAT scores were frankly disappointing. Only 2 of 10 students scored above the national average. The high was 81%, the low a wretched 6%, from a student with an otherwise decent track record. Most scores came in the 30's, as did the average – 36%. Arguably the only bright spot was that the class averaged 53 on the Military/Diplomatic subtest. Two students were ROTC cadets.

Spring 2020's scores, on the other hand, were the best ever recorded. 12 of 15 scored above average (thus 14 of 25 did so for the entire year). 8 scored above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, including a 99, two 98s, a 97 and a 96. The lowest was a 33, which surprisingly came from our most decorated graduating senior (she won the College of Arts and Sciences most prestigious award). The overall spring average was a whopping 81, thus the year average was 54. We somehow rallied to achieve the target.

I am at a loss to explain the huge discrepancy between the two semesters. Spring's class was slightly better "on paper" than Fall's, but not by such a huge margin. It is particularly puzzling to note that our two Magna Cum Laude Spring 2020 graduates scored 44 and 33 respectively, while two others with marginal records, whose papers barely cleared the rubric, scored well over 90.

Having personally taught the Spring group, and with full knowledge of fall's desultory scores, I can attest to having stressed to the class repeatedly the need to take the test seriously. I even gave them a week off from other assignments (amidst the pandemic), promised them attendance points for completing the online test, provided general study advice (focus on American History to 1890) and allowed a few to borrow my textbooks for review purposes. Whether such "incentivization" should become standard is open to question.

**Modifications for Improvement:**

With the student activity goal surpassed, the majority of students meeting every goal of the seminar rubric, and standardized testing satisfactory despite the perpetual problems of sporadic indifference and a non-standardized curriculum, the Department of History saw no reason for modification to the Student Outcome Goals at this time. The myriad challenges of the pandemic itself, along with the pursuit of various program goals, provided more than enough opportunities for continuous improvement.

*SLO 1: Ability to research*

With the first full use of the revised rubric, the faculty noticed that 60% of students did not meet the threshold for critical thinking and analysis. In the Fall 2020 semester, two senior level courses are being revised to incorporate critical and creative inquiry as part of the University's QEP.

*SLO 3: General factual knowledge*

We will continue giving the ACAT test for the time being. However, the usefulness of standardized testing, and the probity of incentivization, will remain open to discussion.

**Appendices**

1. History BS\_BA Curriculum Map

**Appendix 1: History BS\_BA Curriculum Map**

Basic Course #	Short Title	Factual Acumen	Research & Writing	Additional Career Readiness	Race/Gender Diversity & Citizenship	Global Awareness
1066	University Life				X	
1310	World Science	X				X
2010	Early US	X			X	
2020	Modern US	X			X	
2210	Early Western	X				X
2220	Modern Wstrn	X				X
2310	Early World	X				X
2320	Modern Wrld	X				X
3100	Tennessee	X	X		X	
3360	US Military	X	X			X
3390	Civil Rights	X	X		X	
3410	Methods		X	X		
3420	Archives		X	X		
3430	Digital History		X	X		
3550	Ancient	X	X			X
3710	Spain	X	X			X
3720	Mexico	X	X		X	X
3900	Environment	X	X			X
4010	Colonial	X	X		X	
4020	Early Republic	X	X		X	
4030	US Civil War	X	X		X	
4040	Gilded Age	X	X		X	
4050	Early 20th C	X	X		X	
4060	Postwar US	X	X		X	
4090	Pop Culture	X	X		X	X
4100	Appalachia	X	X			
4200	Old South	X	X		X	
4210	New South	X	X		X	
4230	Economic	X	X			
4250	US West	X	X		X	
4290	Science Tech	X	X			
4330	Religion	X	X			X

4350	Gender	X	X		X	
4360	US Social	X	X		X	
4380	Black Women	X	X		X	X
4390	African-Amer	X	X		X	X
4400	Film History	X	X			X
4420	Public History	X	X	X		
4440	Native Amer.	X	X		X	
4470	Sports History	X	X		X	
4520	Medieval	X	X			X
4530	Renn/Reform	X	X			X
4540	Abs/Enlightm	X	X			X
4550	French Revo	X	X			X
4560	19th C Eur	X	X			X
4565	World War I	X	X			X
4570	World War II	X	X			X
4620	Russia/USSR	X	X			X
4630	Mod France	X	X			X
4640	Mod Germany	X	X			X
4650	Early England	X	X			X
4660	Mod England	X	X			X
4680	Holocaust	X	X			X
4690	Br Cmmwlth	X	X		X	X
4710	Africa	X	X		X	X
4730	Middle East	X	X			X
4740	Japan	X	X			X
4750	China	X	X			X
4760	Vietnam	X	X			X
4790	Latin America	X	X		X	X
4800	Legal History	X	X			
4810	Sci. Cntovrsy	X	X			
4880	Hist Medicine	X	X			
4890	Hist Nursing	X	X			
4900	Topics	X	X			
4910	Directed Stu.	X	X			
4940	Internship	X		X		
4990	SeniorSeminar	X	X			