

2017-2018 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College, and to james.solomon@csun.edu, Director of the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review, by September 28, 2018. You may, but are not required to, submit a separate report for each program, including graduate degree programs, which conducted assessment activities, or you may combine programs in a single report. **Please identify your department/program in the file name for your report.**

College: Social and Behavioral Sciences

Department: History

Program:

Assessment liaison: Dr. Richard Horowitz

1. Please check off whichever is applicable:

- A. **Measured student work within program major/options.**
- B. **Analyzed results of measurement within program major/options.**
- C. **Applied results of analysis to program review/curriculum/review/revision major/options.**
- D. **Focused exclusively on the direct assessment measurement of General Education Natural Sciences learning outcomes**

2. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s). On a separate sheet, provide a brief overview of this year's assessment activities, including:

- an explanation for why your department chose the assessment activities (measurement, analysis, application, or GE assessment) that it enacted
- if your department implemented assessment **option A**, identify which program SLOs were assessed (please identify the SLOs in full), in which classes and/or contexts, what assessment instruments were used and the methodology employed, the resulting scores, and the relation between this year's measure of student work and that of past years: (include as an appendix any and all relevant materials that you wish to include)
- if your department implemented assessment **option B**, identify what conclusions were drawn from the analysis of measured results, what changes to the program were planned in response, and the relation between this year's analyses and past and future assessment activities
- if your department implemented **option C**, identify the program modifications that were adopted, and the relation between program modifications and past and future assessment activities
- if your program implemented **option D**, exclusively or simultaneously with **options A, B, and/or C**, identify the basic skill(s) assessed and the precise learning outcomes assessed, the assessment instruments and methodology employed, and the resulting scores
- in what way(s) your assessment activities may reflect the university's commitment to diversity in all its dimensions but especially with respect to underrepresented groups
- any other assessment-related information you wish to include, including SLO revision (especially to ensure continuing alignment between program course offerings and both program and university student learning outcomes), and/or the creation and modification of new assessment instruments

3. Preview of planned assessment activities for 2018-19. Include a brief description as reflective of a continuous program of ongoing assessment.

History Department Assessment Report 2017-18 Activities

In Fall 2017 following the recommendation of the History Department Assessment coordinator, the Department agreed to assess research papers from History 301 and History 497 and look at the following Student Learning Objectives (SLOs).

#3. To learn to read and interpret historical sources critically and analytically

5. To select a research problem and search for relevant primary and secondary sources;

These two SLOs are closely related, and students undertaking research papers must demonstrate both skills. History 301 which is the research methods class students usually take in junior year, History 497, the capstone course in the major, which students take in their senior year. Both classes have required students to undertake a large research paper, with the expectation that papers in History 497 should be more sophisticated. While this would add to the workload, we felt there was added value in looking at both classes at the same time as it would give us a look at students at two different points. Because the papers involved are lengthy (10-20 pages), in order to manage the workload, we decided assess a random sample of the papers. The committee's plans were approved by the department in a its September 22 meeting and the rubric subsequently circulated for review and refinement.

During Fall of 2017, the assessment committee developed a rubric for assessing these SLOs. The rubric identifies five areas in which each paper is to be scored on a 4 point scale, with 4 demonstrating a high level of proficiency, 3 demonstrating good proficiency, 2 demonstrating limited ability, and 1 demonstrating little or no ability. The assessment rubric includes descriptions of the kind of work that would merit each score. The Department would like to see scores of 3 or higher in each area for about 70% students.

Assessment Data Collected

In January of 2018, the Assessment Committee scored four randomly selected papers from each section of History 301 and History 497. The Committee assessed 12 papers from History 301 classes (83 students were enrolled in three sections), and 16 papers from History 497 (60 students were enrolled in four sections) using the rubric.

These results (summarized below in figures 1 & 2 on the following page) were presented to the Department in its meeting at the end of January and the consensus of the Department was that these results are disappointing. While they point to substantial improvement between 301 and 497, students in 497 fell short of the desired goal (70% getting 3 or above) in 3 out of 5 areas. Across the board scores were disappointing in History 301. One particular finding across both classes is that, as many faculty had suspected, that many students are not skilled at using scholarly secondary sources.

Figure 1: History 301 – 12 Papers Assessed

	Average Score	% who met the Departmental goal of 3 or above)
1. Student defined an appropriate research topic and identified good research question(s)	2.75	58%
2. Student was able to find relevant primary source materials	2.25	42%
3. Student demonstrated ability assess the reliability of primary sources and use them appropriately as evidence	2.5	58%
4. Student demonstrates ability to find secondary sources appropriate to her/his topic	2.83	67%
5. Student is able to use secondary sources appropriately, and relate her/his own research to existing scholarship	2.16	50%

Figure 2: History 497: 16 Papers Assessed

	Average Score	% who met the Departmental goal (score of 3 or above)
1. Student s defined an appropriate research topic and identified good research question(s)	3.25	81%
2. Student was able to find relevant primary source materials	2.88	62%
3. Student demonstrated ability assess the reliability of primary sources and use them appropriately as evidence	2.75	62%
4. Student demonstrates ability to find secondary sources appropriate to her/his topic	2.94	82%
5. Student is able to use secondary sources appropriately, and relate her/his own research to existing scholarship	2.6	50%

Department Response to Assessment

While some wondered whether there were problems with sampling, for the most part faculty felt that these results were consistent with their experience in the two classes. Faculty have long described History 301 as the most difficult course to teach in the major: many if not most students are simply not ready for it, a problem compounded by the size of the class (25-30 students) limiting the ability of faculty to work individually with students. History 497 is viewed as much easier to teach, class size is smaller and students much better prepared. At this level most students are able to undertake the primary source research required, but struggle to manage their time and don't always complete other aspects of the assignment at the level we would expect.

The Department decided it would make the most sense to focus on History 301, believing that taking on both classes at the same time was too much, and that very likely many of the problems in 497, were rooted in problems with History 301. Other analyses have also shown that 301 is the course in the major that has the highest failure/repeat rate.

The Department established a subcommittee consisting of the chair of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Assessment Coordinator, and faculty who have taught History 301 in recent years. The Chair was able to provide funding to support the participation of several lecturers who have taught the class in recent years, and their contributions were exceptionally valuable.

The committee met twice and made several recommendations.

1. It would be helpful to improve communication among faculty teaching History 301, having perhaps 2-3 meetings a semester, exchanging syllabi and teaching materials, and sharing problems and concerns as they arise.
2. The committee compiled a list fourteen specific skills students should develop in History 301. This list should be distributed to all faculty teaching the class. It is hoped that by focusing on skills students need to cultivate, it will help faculty frame more effective assignments.
3. The committee proposed to replace the previously required long final research paper with a more loosely defined final project. It was generally agreed that the length of the paper was itself a problem, as students struggle to organize their time over the course of 6 weeks or so dedicated to it. Shorter more frequent assignments seem to be more effective at keeping students engaged. The committee suggested that project might take one of several different forms. For example, a portfolio of several shorter papers on a single research topic, a digital history project, or several short papers that can be edited together to form single longer paper. The form of the project should be appropriate to the teaching style and skills of the Instructor. But whatever form it takes, it must include certain components including primary source research, a review of historiography on the topic, multiple drafts and revision, and peer review.
4. Reduced class size would be helpful.

The department endorsed these conclusions in its May meeting. The faculty teaching History 301 this year met during a department retreat on August 24 to discuss issues related to the course.

Assessment Planning for 2018-19:

The History Department has two activities planned for 2018-19

(1) The Department has several courses in the Arts and Humanities section of GE. We will be undertaking direct assessments of two classes – History 150 and History 303.

(2) We will continue to follow through on the efforts last year to improve History 301, and based on the results collected last year, we plan to have some discussion of History 497.