

History Department Undergraduate Academic Assessment Plan

Program Goals for Majors

The goals of our department are to help students grasp the vital themes and narratives in history, understand and apply the methods of historical inquiry and research, and improve their critical thinking and communication skills. Regardless of their career paths, we want them to be informed and dedicated citizens so that they may participate fully in the civic life of the communities in which they live.

Student Learning Outcomes

Graduating seniors will be able to:

1. discuss diverse time periods, peoples, situations, and societies; to perceive past events and issues as they were experienced by people at the time; to comprehend the interplay of change and continuity; to grasp the complexity of historical causation; to appreciate the often tentative nature of judgments about the past; to understand the relationship between geography and history as a matrix of time and place, and as a context for events; and to read widely and critically in order to recognize the difference between fact and conjecture, between evidence and assertion, and thereby to frame useful questions.
2. conduct original historical research. This involves the ability to design analytical and historiographically significant research questions; to find and analyze primary source evidence; construct an interpretation that answers the questions posed in the project; and to situate the interpretation in the historiography of the topic being analyzed.
3. communicate historical knowledge and explanations to other people. This involves the ability to present a historical interpretation in a well-organized and logical manner; to follow proper rules of grammar and syntax; and to convey the interpretation in prose that engages the reader.

Assessment Procedure

1. Measures: Direct Assessment

In HIS 200, the required course for all history and history education majors as a prerequisite for all other 200-level and 300-level history courses, students are required to write a final research paper of no less than twelve pages, not including bibliography and footnotes, that depends on primary and secondary source research and engages secondary sources in a historiographic manner. In HIS 300, the senior capstone course, students are required to write a research paper of no less than twenty pages in length, not including bibliography and footnotes, that depends on primary and secondary source research and engages secondary sources in a historiographic manner.

Uses of the Information

Every other year, the Assessment Committee collects a sample of HIS 200 and HIS 300 papers from all sections taught in the Department. The committee evaluates the papers in five categories, using a rubric that scores the papers on a 1-5 scale, in order to measure performance in the Student Learning Outcomes listed above [see rubric in the appendix]:

- Knowledge (Outcome 1)
- Research (Outcome 2)
- Analysis (Outcome 2)
- Historiography (Outcome 2)
- Communication (Outcome 3)

The committee then reports on the results of the sample to the Chair and the DFSC. The report includes recommendations for action to improve the department's performance in achieving its desired student learning outcomes. At a subsequent faculty meeting, the committee presents the report, and the faculty discusses the findings generated by the assessment exercise, and deliberates as to what actions to take, if any, to improve curriculum, instruction, and learning.

2. Measures: Indirect Assessment

In HIS 300, the senior capstone course, students are required to complete a 400-1000 word self-assessment of their experience in the major. They are instructed to discuss what they hoped to achieve by majoring in history at ISU; what they accomplished or failed to accomplish and why; which activities, both positive and negative, contributed most to their history education; and how well they have developed intellectually in the major. They also answer a series of questions about their satisfaction with the program and specific courses. (Outcomes 1, 2, and 3.)

Uses of the Information

The data is reviewed by the Assessment Committee every other year and summarized in a report to the Chair and the DFSC. At a subsequent faculty meeting, the committee presents the report, and the faculty discusses the findings generated by the assessment exercise, and deliberates as to what actions to take, if any, to improve curriculum, instruction, and learning.

Note: The Assessment Committee also reviews the results of the University Assessment Office's Alumni Survey, when available.

History Assessment Rubric

Knowledge	Research	Analysis	Historiography	Communication
<i>Knowledge of vital themes. Ability to discuss diverse time periods, peoples, situations, and societies; identify, describe, and apply relevant historical information and detail.</i>	<i>Research design skills and methodology. Ability to develop research questions; apply a research methodology and design appropriate to the topic; find and make use of appropriate primary and secondary sources</i>	<i>Historical thinking and analysis. Ability to develop a historical argument; perceive past events and issues as they were experienced by the people at the time; grasp complexity of historical causation; recognize differences between fact and conjecture; read evidence and arguments critically.</i>	<i>Historiographical thinking. Demonstrates knowledge of the historiography of the topic under analysis; understands the lines of the debate within the historiography; situates original research in the context of that debate.</i>	<i>Demonstrates the ability to communicate historical knowledge and explanation to other people.</i>
5. Relevant themes, narratives, information, and details thoroughly identified, described and used. Shows thorough awareness of where subject matter fits among time periods, people, situations, and societies; no factual inaccuracies	5. Strongly conceived research questions; Research design and methodology highly appropriate for the subject; superior use of primary and/or secondary sources.	5. An historical argument is strongly presented and developed with a persuasive use of evidence; superior use of historical thinking to analyze evidence and arguments and draw conclusions.	5. Shows thorough knowledge of the historiography of the topic under analysis; when appropriate, displays a superior understanding of the lines of debate within the historiography; when appropriate, skillfully situates original research in the context of that debate.	5. All knowledge and explanations presented in a way that logically introduces and develops the student's research and analysis; presentation is well-organized and thoroughly clear and focused; syntax and wording is skillful; no major grammatical errors.
4. Relevant themes, narratives, information, and details considerably identified, described and used. Shows considerable awareness of where subject matter fits among time periods, people, situations, and societies; only	4. Well-conceived research questions; research design and methodology mostly appropriate for the subject; good use of primary and/or secondary sources.	4. An historical argument is well presented and developed with a mostly persuasive use of evidence; good use of historical thinking to analyze evidence and arguments and draw conclusions	4. Shows considerable knowledge of the historiography of the topic under analysis; when appropriate, displays a good understanding of the lines of debate within the historiography; when appropriate, clearly situates original research	4. Most knowledge and explanations presented in a way that logically introduces and develops the student's research and analysis; presentation is sufficiently-organized, clear and focused; syntax and wording is good; only very minor

minor factual inaccuracies			in the context of that debate.	grammatical errors.
3. Relevant themes, narratives, information, and details partially identified, described and used; shows partial awareness of where subject matter fits among time periods, people, situations, and societies; some factual inaccuracies	3. Adequately conceived research questions; some research design and methodology is appropriate for the subject and some not; acceptable use of primary and/or secondary sources.	3. An historical argument is adequately presented and developed with an adequate use of evidence; incomplete, though adequate, use of historical thinking to analyze evidence and arguments and draw conclusions	3. Shows adequate knowledge of the historiography of the topic under analysis; when appropriate, displays a basic understanding of the lines of debate within the historiography; when appropriate, sufficiently situates original research in the context of that debate.	3. Some knowledge and explanations presented in a way that logically introduces and develops the student's research and analysis; presentation is adequately organized with some lapses in clarity or focus; clear and focused; syntax and wording is adequate; few grammatical errors.
2. Few relevant themes, narratives, information, and details identified, described and used; shows little awareness of where subject matter fits among time periods, people, situations, and societies; notable factual inaccuracies	2. Ill-conceived research questions; research design and methodology poses problems for the subject; less than adequate use of primary and/or secondary sources.	2. An historical argument is weakly presented and developed with little use of evidence; little use of historical thinking to analyze evidence and arguments and draw conclusions	2. Shows little knowledge of the historiography of the topic under analysis; when appropriate, displays little understanding of the lines of debate within the historiography; when appropriate, makes little attempt to situate original research in the context of that debate.	2. Little knowledge and few explanations presented in a way that logically introduces and develops the student's research and analysis; presentation is dis-organized with major parts unclear and unfocused; many problems in syntax and wording; notable grammatical errors.
1. Relevant themes, narratives, information, and details not	1. Nonexistent research questions; research design and methodology	1. There is no historical argument. No use of historical thinking to	1. Shows no knowledge of the historiography of the topic under analysis; when	1. Knowledge and explanations presented in a way that fails to introduce and

identified, described and used; shows no awareness of where subject matter fits among time periods, people, situations, and societies; information is inaccurate or irrelevant.	inappropriate for the subject; inadequate or non-existent use of either primary or secondary sources.	analyze evidence and arguments and draw conclusions	appropriate, displays no understanding of the lines of debate within the historiography; when appropriate, does not situate original research in the context of that debate.	develop the student's research and analysis; presentation is dis-organized, unclear, and unfocused; syntax and wording is inadequate; many major grammatical errors.
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History Department – Senior Survey

Your degree program: ___ History ___ History-Social Sciences Education

Your GPA: ___ Major ___ Overall at ISU

Did you ever visit Career Services? ___ Yes ___ No

Were you a transfer student? ___ Yes ___ No

Time to degree: ___ 4 years ___ More than 4 years ___ 2nd BS

If you took more than 4 years, what were the main reasons why?

Please highlight or mark with X a number for the following questions (1 = very dissatisfied; 5 = very satisfied)

How satisfied are you with the course offerings in History? 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

How satisfied are you with the quality of instruction in History? 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

How satisfied are you with the intellectual challenges of the program? 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

How satisfied are you with the knowledge and skills you have learned in the program?
1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5

How satisfied are you with the accessibility of faculty inside and outside the classroom?
1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

How satisfied are you with the academic advisement in your program? 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

How satisfied are you with employment opportunities and your career skills? 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

Please highlight or mark with X a number for the following statements (1 = strong disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Faculty encouraged me to challenge my ideas and those of others. 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5__

The program provided a sufficient core of knowledge and understanding of the discipline. 1__ 2__ 3__ 4 __ 5__

Faculty used appropriate teaching activities to help me learn. 1 __ 2 __ 3__ 4__ 5__

Faculty expectations for the quality of student work were high. 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

History 200 was a valuable experience. 1 __ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

History 300 was a valuable experience. 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

History 290/390 were valuable experiences (if applicable). 1 __ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__

Please type your answers to the following questions. Feel free to take more space than is allotted

1. What did you hope to accomplish by majoring in history? Do you believe you achieved what you hoped to achieve? Why or why not?

2. What does the History program at ISU do well? What activities contributed most to your education? How have you developed intellectually?

3. How could the History program at ISU be improved?

4. Overall are you satisfied with the education you have received in History at ISU?

5. Is there anything else you would like the History Department to know?

6. What is the best way for History to communicate with its majors / disseminate information in a way we know everyone has received it?

Please feel free to schedule an appointment with or contact the Department chairperson, Dr. Ross Kennedy, concerning any comments, questions, or concerns. He may be reached at rkenned@ilstu.edu or 438-5641. Thank you.