

BA in History

<p>Learning Outcome</p> <p><i>What should a graduate in this major know, value, or be able to do at graduation and beyond?</i></p>	<p>Data Collection and Analysis</p> <p><i>What assessment tools and/or methods will you use to determine achievement of the learning outcome? Describe how the data from these tools and/or methods will be collected. Explain the procedure to analyze the data.</i></p>	<p>Results of Evaluation</p> <p><i>What were the findings of the analysis? List any specific recommendations.</i></p>	<p>Use of Evaluation Results</p> <p><i>What changes in curriculum, courses, or procedures were made as a result of the program learning outcome assessment process?</i></p>
<p>Students should know the basic facts and chronology of the entire range of the development of Western Civilization.</p>	<p>To assess student knowledge, the department crafted two examinations, one for Western Civilization to 1648 and another for Western Civilization since 1648. The exams were administered randomly to all students in upper-level history courses at the end of spring semester 2006 (See Note 1B)</p>	<p>Student performance on exam was woefully deficient. Curriculum Committee recommended development of mandatory sequence of core upper-level Western Civilization courses for history majors. (See Note 1C)</p>	<p>Curriculum Committee began work on development of Western Civilization core curriculum to be implemented no later than the 2008-09 academic year. The Committee also recommended development of a more sophisticated assessment instrument to be administered to students after they complete the new Western Civilization core, as well as an assessment process for U. S. History similar to the one under way for Western Civilization (See Goal #3 under VII C below).</p>
<p>Students should be able to read, think, and write critically and clearly about historical issues.</p>	<p>Alumni survey (See Note 2B-1) Portfolio review (See Note 2B-2)</p>	<p>See Notes 2C-1 and 2C-2</p>	<p>Beginning in Fall 2007, HIS 110 (Writing History, Introduction to reading, critical analysis of, and writing about historical literature and historical issues) will be a required prerequisite to all upper-level history courses.</p>
<p>Graduates should be well prepared for employment or graduate study in history or a related field.</p>	<p>Every five years, most recently in 2004 (See attached) the department conducts an alumni survey of history majors who have graduated since the previous survey. Graduates are asked if they are “presently working or studying (e.g., in graduate or professional school) either in history or field closely related,” as well as “to what extent [their] DSU course work and experiences” prepared them to “enter the job market in [their] chosen field” and “for graduate or professional school.”</p>	<p>In the 2004 survey, 56 percent of the respondents reported that they were working or studying in history or a related field; 63 percent stated that their course work “Very Much” prepared them for both “the job market in [their] chosen field” and “for graduate or professional school”; 69 percent stated that “knowing what [they] know now,” they would still “major in history”; 88 percent stated that if they again chose to major in history, they would do so at DSU. (See Note 3C)</p>	<p>The next alumni survey will solicit more specific information regarding graduates’ ability to secure employment or further study in their field and their performance in such employment or study.</p>

Note 1B

This assessment is the culmination of a process that began with the department’s January 2004 Report on Planning and Institutional Effectiveness. The Curriculum Committee modified the Report’s recommendation in 2005 and again in 2006. The current curriculum requires history majors to take only six elective hours of upper-level European history, leaving only the required

100-level Western Civilization survey sequence to expose majors to the broad sweep of Western history. The Curriculum Committee designed the two examinations to assess the effectiveness, for history majors, of the Western Civilization survey.

Note 1C

For Exam A (Western Civilization to 1648)

- 25 students completed the exam
- The median score (# of correct answers) was 60 out of 98 total questions
- The average grade (on a ten-point scale) was 58, ranging from a low of 22 to a high of 90
- On individual questions, 36% (35 out of 98) were answered incorrectly by more than half the students
 - 88% did not know the origin of the term “bourgeois”
 - 76% could not identify the “Dark Ages” of ancient Greek civilization
 - 76% could not correctly relate the principle of precedent to the institution of common law
 - 76% could not identify Giotto as the first great artist of the Renaissance
 - 72% did not know that universities developed from medieval cathedral schools
 - 68% could not identify Spain as the European country least influenced by the Protestant Reformation
 - 68% did not know that Spain was the country from whom the Netherlands won independence
 - 64% did not know that the Thirty Years’ War was fought largely on German soil
 - 60% could not identify the “Babylonian Captivity” of the papacy
 - 56% could not identify the antagonists in the Peloponnesian War
 - 56% did not know that Arianism was an early Christian heresy
 - 52% did not know that Philip II sent the Spanish Armada against England

For Exam B (Western Civilization since 1648)

- 24 students completed the exam
- The median score was 55 out of 76 total questions
- The average grade was 68 (a high “D”), ranging from 25 to 97
- On individual questions, 21% (16 of 76) were answered incorrectly by half or more of the students
 - 92% could not recognize the members of the World War I Triple Alliance
 - 67% did not know that the English Bill of Rights was enacted under William and Mary
 - 67% did not know that the Russo-Japanese War contributed to the 1905 Revolution in Russia
 - 63% could not identify the term “proletariat” with a class of industrial workers
 - 54% did not know that modern Italy became a unified country in the 19th Century
 - 54% could not identify Russia as a defeated power in the Crimean War
 - 54% could not identify Austria-Hungary as the Dual Monarchy
 - 54% did not know that the Dreyfus Affair occurred in the Third French Republic

The Curriculum Committee attributed the students’ poor performance largely to two factors.

(1) Failure of the traditional two-semester freshman survey of Western Civilization (HIS 101, 102) to provide sufficient grounding in the full range of facts and chronology to meet the needs of history majors. The freshman surveys (both American and Western Civilization) are designed primarily

to serve general education purposes. For reasons addressed in Departmental Goal #2 below, the relevance of those courses for history majors has diminished considerably in recent years.

(2) The elective flexibility of the upper-level requirements for history majors, which allows students to earn a degree without demonstrating mastery of any specific Western Civilization content beyond that provided by the freshman surveys. Such flexibility was perhaps justified in earlier generations, when students brought from high school a sufficient background in the history of Western Civilization to allow a rigorous expansion and reinforcement of that background in the freshman survey. Such is no longer the case.

The Committee therefore recommended a comprehensive revision and expansion of the major requirements for the B. A. degree in history to include a mandatory sequence of upper-level courses covering the entire range of Western Civilization. The Committee hopes to present specific proposals for such a Western Civilization Core to the University Academic Council in 2007-08.

Anticipating similar deficiencies in the general education surveys of U. S. history, the Committee recommended an assessment of upper-level students' mastery of basic facts and chronology in American history to be conducted during the 2006-07 academic year.

Note 2B-1

The department conducts a survey of recent graduates every five years. The survey asks graduates to "preface" certain "items with 'to what extent did your DSU history course work and experiences prepare you to...'" and respond with either (A) Very Much (B) Somewhat (C) Very Little (D) Not Applicable." The survey also asks, "What do you perceive as the major strengths of the DSU History Department?" A copy of the survey is found in Appendix 1.

Note 2B-2

To monitor student progress, the department maintains portfolios (including exams, quizzes, and other written assignments) for all history majors. At the end of spring semester 2006, those portfolios were reviewed to assess each student's current proficiency in articulating historical issues (chronology, cause and effect, organic and logical thesis development) clearly and coherently and in analyzing them critically. The review also noted the level of improvement since the previous review.

Note 2C-1

In the most recent alumni survey (2004), 14 of 16 respondents stated that DSU history course work and experiences "Very much" prepared them "effectively [to] communicate [their] ideas and opinions, both orally and in writing" and to "develop [their] ability to think clearly and precisely." Specific comments on the department's strengths included: "the determination of the professors to require more than multiple choice knowledge"; "the department encourages students to think & work hard (two admirable disciplines)"; "I always had a paper to write or a book to read—and that's the way it should be"; "depth & rigor of courses ... reading load."

While this assessment indicates student satisfaction with the department's rigor regarding reading, writing and thinking, these sentiments are significantly at odds with the faculty's current assessment of actual student achievement as reflected in the portfolio review below.

Note 2C-2

The assessment revealed that, with perhaps one exception, the students consistently fail to write with the proficiency expected of upper-level undergraduates. The deficiencies are manifold and diverse, ranging from grammatical mistakes to vague and imprecise expression to tortured syntax. Instructors'

comments included: “poorly phrased”; “unclear”; “sentences are not well constructed”; “not sure what you mean”; “difficult to follow.” Book reviews in particular revealed corresponding deficiencies in reading comprehension and critical analysis. Moreover, the assessment also revealed little evidence of improvement over time.

The Curriculum Committee concluded that student deficiencies in reading comprehension, critical analysis, and writing proficiency cannot adequately be addressed in the context of regular coursework and recommended development of a mandatory (and prerequisite to all upper-level coursework in history) three semester-hour “Writing History” course for History majors. The Committee also recommended development of a more thorough, systematic, and rigorous process of portfolio review, including possibly uniform departmental rubrics for book reviews and research papers.

Note 3C

While the alumni survey largely measures student satisfaction, it does provide some rough indication of students’ learning to the extent that they know enough to secure and maintain employment in the field or to enter and function adequately in graduate or professional study. As indicated in Note 2C-1 above, the latest survey indicated a significant discrepancy between student perception among recent graduates and faculty assessment of current student performance.