

To: Gerardo Marin and Mike Webber
 From: Uldis Kruze, Chair, History Department
 Re: Assessment Results for History Majors for Spring 2009
 Date: June 1, 2009
 Cc: Hoag, Olds, Stanfield

Four members of the History Department (Heather Hoag, Katrina Olds, Mike Stanfield, and myself, Uldis Kruze) met twice in the Spring of 2009 and devised a rubric to assess Learning Outcome #1 for our History majors. We also presented our work and conclusions to two plenary meetings of the History department, seeking support and helpful revisions. The results of our work are as follows:

We decided to assess learning outcome #1 for Spring 2009 for the History majors in the lower division courses that Hoag, Olds, and Stanfield were teaching. (Kruze taught one section of East Asian Civilizations, but there were no History majors in that section.)

Learning outcome #1 for our History majors reads as follows: Our majors will be able to

1. demonstrate an understanding of a significant span of history over a wide geographic area, including how social, cultural, economic, and politics forces shape the development of societies

This is the rubric that we devised to assess this learning outcome:

Unacceptable	Competent	Exemplary
<i>FACTUAL CONTROL</i>		
The student does not master historical facts and/or evidence	The student masters some historical facts and/or evidence	The student makes effective use of many historical facts and/or evidence
<i>AWARENESS OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY OVER TIME</i>		
The student does not demonstrate significant awareness of change and continuity over time	The student demonstrates some awareness of both change and continuity over time	The student demonstrates a clear awareness of both change and continuity over time
<i>CONCEPTUAL CLARITY</i>		
The student does not demonstrate awareness of the social, cultural,	The student demonstrates some awareness of how social, cultural, economic,	The student effectively demonstrates how social, cultural, economic, and

economic, or politics forces that have shaped the development of societies over time	and politics forces have shaped the development of societies over time	politics forces have shaped the development of societies over time
<i>CRITICAL THINKING</i>		
The student does not engage in critical thinking by, for example, considering alternatives, making comparisons with appropriate analogies, highlighting internal inconsistencies within an argument, or demonstrating independent thought	The student engages in some critical thinking by, for example, considering alternatives, making comparisons with appropriate analogies, highlighting internal inconsistencies within an argument, or demonstrating independent thought	The student consistently engages in critical thinking skills by, for example, considering alternatives, making comparisons with appropriate analogies, showing internal inconsistencies within an argument, or demonstrate independent thought
<i>EFFECTIVENESS IN COMMUNICATION</i>		
The student does not present a well-organized or persuasive narrative/argument	The student's narrative or argument has sporadic moments of clarity but is inconsistent in quality	The student presents a well-organized and persuasive narrative/argument

Hoag, Olds, and Stanfield gave final exams in the lower division courses that they taught. Each of the final exams required the student to write a lengthy essay. Please refer to the pdf copies of the exams for the specific questions asked of the students. The total number of courses surveyed was six, and the total number of History majors sampled was 25.

I tabulated the responses that each of the instructors provided to me, and I have entered them in the scaled down version of the rubric below:

Unacceptable	Competent	Exemplary
<i>FACTUAL CONTROL</i>	8	17
<i>AWARENESS OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY OVER TIME</i> 1	9	15
<i>CONCEPTUAL CLARITY</i>	10	15

<i>CRITICAL THINKING</i> 1	11	13
<i>EFFECTIVENESS IN COMMUNICATION</i> 2	11	12

B. What did the faculty in the History Department learn from this exercise? First of all, I think it will be important to poll the other three members of the Assessment Group and secure their feedback after they have seen the results of this sample. Then I think that our "Assessment Group" should bring the results and findings back to the Department as a whole in order to reach broader conclusions. On a preliminary basis, I think the results validate the idea that we (as teachers) and they (as students) are doing a good job in teaching and learning. Four categories are tilted heavily to the "exemplary" column. The only category where the "competent" plus "unacceptable" columns outweigh the "exemplary" is the area of "effectiveness in communication." Perhaps this is the area that we need to initially address as a department: How to improve the communication skills of our majors.

C. What will be done differently as a result of what was learned? I would offer this scenario: The "Assessment Group" should consider and reflect on the results that we have obtained. Then we should share our observations with each other, and offer suggestions for the area or areas that we should address for improvement. On a very preliminary basis, I would argue that the area that could benefit the most from added attention would be that of enhancing "communication effectiveness" among our majors.

Pdfs to follow

Respectfully submitted by Uldis Kruze, Chair, History, June 1, 2009