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October 31, 2006

History Learning Outcomes Assessment Project 2006-2007

As a discipline that documents and interprets continuity and change through time, California State University Channel Islands' History Program prepares students to search into the human experience, as well as to communicate and analyze historical interpretations and ideas, verbally and in the written form. An emphasis of the program is to examine events from local and global perspectives. In this regard, a defining aspect of the History Program consists of a cutting-edge series of courses that emphasize the United States' relationship with the Pacific Rim, encompassing the Americas, the Pacific Islands, and Asia.

In support of the University's commitment to an interdisciplinary education, the History Program affords students the opportunity to integrate into their plan of study cross-listed history courses as well subjects outside the discipline to be utilized as part of their electives. Furthermore, the History Program promotes community-based applied research by placing student interns within public, private, and non-profit institutions as part of its Capstone Course.

History Program Student Learning Outcomes

Students graduating with a B.A. in History should possess a:

- good understanding and knowledge of the history of North America.
- good understanding and knowledge of global history in other regions of the world.
- good knowledge and problem-solving skills in analyzing contemporary and historical events.
- good communication skills in oral and written forms.
- good skills in historical research, analysis, and presentations.

For the 2005-2006AY, the program selected two lynchpin outcomes to assess:

- communication skills in written forms
- skill in historical research, analysis, and presentation

These learning outcomes were assessed through evaluation of two courses required of history majors, HIST 280 and HIST 491.

Data and Analysis

HIST 280 The Historian's Craft is a lower division general education course required for history majors designed to instill an appreciation for the historical methodology, writing, and interpretation of the past. HIST 491 is the upper division course required of history majors that focuses on method and theory in the practice of history. Final projects for HIST 280 and HIST 491 were collected in 2005-06. Ten essays from each course level were selected at random for evaluation following the attached rubrics. The data for the HIST 280 evaluations were compared to the data for HIST 491. From these two sets of data and rubrics comparative analysis was conducted in order to assess the degree of achievement of learning outcomes for majors in the CSUCI History Program.

Conclusions and Implications for Program Modification

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For rubric A, assessment of the written communication skill, the average score in HIST 280 Historian's Craft was 3.4 (out of 5, see attached rubric), and for HIST 491 Historiography it was 4.5. Students came out of the sophomore-level Historian's Craft course with fair written communication skills, as the essays overall were fairly clearly written and contained basic elements of effective argumentation. The students' writing abilities in the senior-level Historiography course were stronger, with well-written essays with clear structure and clear arguments. This comparison of the two course results for this learning outcome shows that History students are learning good written communication skills, though there is room for improvement. The results suggest while more attention in Historian's Craft to structure and grammar through rewriting exercises could help students acquire more written communication skill earlier in their student career, the history program's emphasis on writing in all of its courses is yielding positive results by the end of their program of study.

For rubric B, assessment of skill in historical research, analysis, and presentation, the average score in HIST 280 Historian's Craft was 3.2, and for HIST 491 Historiography it was 4.0. Sophomores came out of the Historian's Craft course with fair skills in historical research, analysis and presentation. The essays on a whole showed that students can integrate primary evidence into an historical narrative, and that they are learning to balance description and analysis in their essays. The balance of applied descriptive and analytic method was higher in the senior-level Historiography group, where students showed that they had a good understanding of historiographical theory and methods. Comparing the results of the two courses, it is clear that students in the program do learn to undertake historical research, analyze evidence and methods, and present results in a satisfactory manner. There was improvement in the level of achievement between the sophomore and senior level courses. The results for HIST 280 suggest that students would benefit from more practice in primary source analysis. The results for HIST 491 suggest that students are understanding different historiographical methods but need more direction in how to integrate the implications of those methods into personal biography.

The analysis of the evaluation data for these two key courses in the major suggests that the History Program's pedagogy and assignments are yielding the learning outcome goals for the two outcomes measured in this assessment. To foster even better achievement of history students regarding these outcomes, professors teaching HIST 280 should incorporate more rewriting exercises and more exercises on document analysis, and HIST 491 professors should develop exercises that will push students to further consider the implications of the different methods they are studying.

References

Course Descriptions:

HIST 280 THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT (3)

Three hours lecture per week

Prerequisite: Sophomore Standing or consent of the instructor

This is a survey course on the writing of history. Utilizes and analyzes library resources, oral interviews, and other material in the writing of history.

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GenEd: D

HIST 491 HISTORIOGRAPHY (3)

Three hours lecture per week

Prerequisite: HIST 280, Senior Standing, or consent of the instructor

This course surveys major historians and their theoretical and methodological approaches to the discipline from the nineteenth century to the present day. The course is designed to update students to the most influential theories in the study of history. Included in this survey are theoretical approaches based on the writings of Braudel, Foucault, Freud, and Marx.

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Evaluation Criteria of Essays

HIST 280 HISTORIAN'S CRAFT

CSUCI History Program

Program Learning Outcomes Assessment Project AY 2005-06

Instructional Outcomes	Score
A. Written Communication Skill	
B. Historical Research, Analysis, and Presentation	

Scoring Criteria:

1. Inadequate.
 - A. Prose is not clear. Essay is not organized and does not effectively communicate ideas.
 - B. Essay does not engage in historical analysis of primary documents, shows no understanding of historical methods.

2. Poor.
 - A. Essay uses poor grammar and could be better organized.
 - B. Essay focuses on topical material in a descriptive fashion. The emphasis on document analysis is minimal. Evidence of the use of research methods are minimal or nonexistent.

3. Fair.
 - A. Essay is fairly clearly written and contains basic elements of effective argumentation.
 - B. Essay makes an attempt to integrate the analysis of primary sources with the topical narrative. Essay demonstrates some balance between descriptive and analytical methods.

4. Good.
 - A. Essay is well-written, with a clear structure, and a clear argument.
 - B. Essay provides an acceptable balance between the use of descriptive and historical methods. The historical analysis may not be well-developed, or be well-integrated, but the essay does demonstrate an acceptable level of understanding of method.

5. Very Good.
 - A. Essay displays strong prose and effective structure, and the argument is articulate and persuasive.
 - B. Essay provides a good balance between the use of descriptive and historical methods. Topical material is well-explicated and historical methods are used in an analytic fashion.

Evaluator Initials and Date

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Evaluation Criteria of Essays

HIST 491 HISTORIOGRAPHY

CSUCI History Program

Program Learning Outcomes Assessment Project AY 2005-06

Instructional Outcomes	Score
A. Written Communication Skill	
B. Historical Research, Analysis, and Presentation	

Scoring Criteria:

1. Inadequate.
 - C. Prose is not clear. Essay is not organized and does not effectively communicate ideas.
 - D. Essay does not engage in historical analysis, shows no understanding of historiography or biographical methods.

2. Poor.
 - C. Essay uses poor grammar and could be better organized.
 - D. Essay focuses on biographical material in a descriptive fashion. The emphasis on historiography is minimal. Evidence of the use of historiographical theory or research methods are minimal or nonexistent.

3. Fair.
 - C. Essay is fairly clearly written and contains basic elements of effective argumentation.
 - D. Essay makes an attempt to integrate the use of historiographical theory or methods with the biographical description. Essay demonstrates some balance between descriptive biographical and historiographical methods.

4. Good.
 - C. Essay is well-written, with a clear structure, and a clear argument.
 - D. Essay provides an acceptable balance between the use of descriptive biography and historiographical theory and methods. The historiographical theory and methods may not be well-developed, or be well-integrated, but do demonstrate an acceptable level of understanding of theory and method.

5. Very Good.
 - C. Essay displays strong prose and effective structure, and the argument is articulate and persuasive.
 - D. Essay provides a good balance between the use of descriptive and historiographical theory and methods. Biographical material is well-explicated and historiographical theory and methods are used in an analytic fashion.

Evaluator Initials and Date