**Annual Assessment Report for 2020-2021 AY**

**Department of History M.A. Program**

Reports completed on assessment activities carried out during the 2020-21 AY will be due September 30th 2021 and must be e-mailed to the Director of Assessment, Dr. Douglas Fraleigh (douglasf@csufresno.edu).

Provide detailed responses for each of the following questions within this word document. Please do NOT insert an index or add formatting. Furthermore, only report on two or three student learning outcomes even if your external accreditor requires you to evaluate four or more outcomes each year. Also be sure to explain or omit specialized or discipline-specific terms.

Department/Program: \_\_\_\_History\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_MA\_

Assessment Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_Brad Jones\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Please list the learning outcomes you assessed this year.

**SLO 1:** Students will demonstrate advanced content knowledge in specified areas of concentration.

**SLO 2:** Students will demonstrate a mastery of historiographical debates related to the specific areas of concentration.

1. What assignment or survey did you use to assess the outcomes and what method (criteria or rubric) did you use to evaluate the assignment? **Please describe the assignment and the criteria or rubric used to evaluate the assignment in detail and, if possible, include copies of the assignment and criteria/rubric at the end of this report.**

The department reviewed eight Comprehensive Exams completed between the Spring 2019 and Spring 2021 semesters. Only a small percentage of our MA students pursue, as their final culminating assignment, the Comprehensive Exam option. During this five-semester window, of the twenty-four students who completed their degree, just nine (38%) completed the Comprehensive Exam option.

The Comprehensive Exam option requires that students take three written exams, and they can choose from five different geographic fields that represent the areas of expertise in our department: Europe, United States, Latin America, Asia, Middle East. They work with their examiners to choose their specific exam topics, though they must choose from at least two of the five geographic fields. With the guidance of their examiner, they create a reading list of between 15-20 books by the eighth week of the semester prior to taking their exam. The exams are given during the months of November and April. The format of the exam various by instructor, though all require that the student demonstrate a solid understanding of the major historiographical debates surrounding the particular exam field. The examiner grades the exam, and the possible grades given are: High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, and Fail.

We used a Comprehensive Exam rubric developed by History faculty at Sam Houston State University. Their rubric had three scoring categories: High Pass, Pass, and Fail. We added an additional category – Low Pass – to reflect the four possible grades we offer in our Comprehensive Exam option. The rubric also includes five categories, which broadly speaking, asses the student’s ability to demonstrate advanced content knowledge (SLO 1) and a mastery of the major historiographical debates surrounding the subject (SLO 2). Students were expected to receive a 3 or 4 on all rubric criteria. The rubric is attached at the end of this report.

1. What did you learn from your analysis of the data? Please include sample size (how many students were evaluated) and indicate how many students (number or percentage instead of a median or mean) were designated as proficient.

We reviewed a total of eight comprehensive exams, given over period of five semesters (Spring 2019 to Spring 2021). As stated above, few of our MA students complete the Comprehensive Exam option, with most choosing instead to write a thesis. To receive a “High Pass,” a student must receive a four in all five categories. To receive a “Pass,” a student must receive a three or four in all five categories. To receive a “Low Pass,” a student must receive a two in at least three of the five categories. Receiving a one in any of the five categories results in a “Fail.”

All eight students passed their Comprehensive Exam, with four receiving a High Pass, two a Pass, and two a Low Pass. These students were especially strong in the “sophistication of argument,” with six out of the eight demonstrating a clear and convincing thesis supported by evidence. They also did very well to draw substantive connections between books to show how historians have thought about a particular topic over time and from various perspectives. The same was true of the quality of writing in these essays, with six of the eight students producing well-written essays that were clear and logically organized. Five of the eight students also displayed a mastery of the historiography, which is perhaps the most important aspect of the Comprehensive Exam. These students effectively identified key debates among historians, how those debates have changed over time, and the more recent trends in scholarship on their particular subject. These findings are not entirely surprising. Much of our graduate coursework centers on developing students’ historiographical skills, which are essential to understanding how historians have thought about the past. That these students were able to successfully produce a well-written, evidenced essay grounded in the historiography of their subject is evidence that our seminars do well to develop these skills.

Students were less successful in demonstrating a mastery of historical content. Just half of the eight students were able to do this at a high level, though an additional two did an adequate job. This is likely also a product of the way in which we conduct our seminars. Though our courses are centered on particular subjects in history, we spend less time working with students on developing content knowledge, and more on thinking about how historians write, and how arguments about the subject change over time. Additionally, two of our students received a Low Pass, which is evidence that we need to continue focusing on historical skill building in our seminars.

1. What changes, if any, do you recommend based on the assessment data?

The department will not make any major changes to the Comprehensive Exam option since all of the students passed their exams. However, one thing that did become apparent in the assessment process is that it makes little sense to have a “Low Pass” option. Rather it’s better to just have a Pass/Fail option, along with High Pass to note those students who produced exemplary work. The findings of this report will be shared with the department.

1. If you recommended any changes in your response to Question 4 in last year’s assessment report, what progress have you made in implementing these changes? If you did not recommend making any changes in last year’s report please write N/A as your answer to this question.

N/A

1. What assessment activities will you be conducting during the next academic year?

We are in the midst of drafting a new department SOAP, so we have yet to identify what we will be assessing this academic year.

1. Identify and discuss any major issues identified during your last Program Review and in what ways these issues have or have not been addressed.

We completed a program review in Spring 2019. The review team offered recommendations in five areas:

1. **Curriculum**

**Recommendation 1:** The reviewers urged the department to formalize the recent changes to Hist 200A and 200B to allow for a more standardized student experience in these two courses.

**Department Response:** We agree with this recommendation. These changes have helped our students to find viable thesis projects sooner, and to better grasp the requisite disciplinary skills needed to research and write in our field. While the department is often correct to resist efforts to standardize our courses, these two introductory classes serve a very different purpose than the other required courses in our program.

**Recommendation 2:** The report observes that given our department’s investment in growing our public history program, the committee suggests we should diversify course and research opportunities to appeal to the divergent interests of our students.

**Response:** We agree with this recommendation. Provided the necessary resources, the department hopes to offer more seminars and paid public history internships to expose our students to a diverse array of public history projects and programs. However, the recent departure of our Public Historian, Dr. Romeo Guzman, will delay some of these changes.

**Recommendation 3:** The committee supports the department’s self-study recommendation that we make the Teaching Option available not just to current teachers, but to aspiring secondary educators as well.

**Response:** We agree with this recommendation and are exploring ways for this to be possible.

1. **Funding**

**Recommendation 1:** The review team argued for an increase in program funding to offset the recent and drastic funding cuts to the program. They also support the Graduate Coordinator receiving an additional course release per year. Finally, they believe the department should establish a Development Committee to explore additional fundraising opportunities for student support and growing the public history program.

**Response:** We agree with these recommendations. If not addressed, the cuts to funding will have a negative long-term impact on our ability to recruit and maintain a healthy cohort, and to offer our students with paid internships in fields related to our discipline. Additionally, it simply not feasible to expect a faculty member to run a program of this size on one course release per a year. We also agree to explore the idea of a creating a Development Committee though we continue to believe that first and foremost, the college and university should support its programs.

1. **Advising**

**Recommendation 1:** While the department has improved its retention and graduate rates, the committees believes that students still need more advising. As such, they recommend that every student be assigned an advisor when they begin the program.

**Response:** The department understands that our students need help with making important decisions that impact their ability to complete the program in a timely manner. Currently, the Graduate Coordinator provides incoming students with a degree roadmap and has an open-door policy for meeting with students. We are also taking steps to have HIST 200A instructors assign students to possible thesis advisors so that they can begin as soon as possible to think about their research projects.

1. **New Hires**

**Recommendation 1:** The review team recommends a replacement hire for the Asian history position recently vacated, and a joint hire with the Classics Department in Ancient History.

**Response:** We were able to hire an Asian historian, Dr. Daniel Kim, who joined our department his fall. We also continue to explore the possibility of creating a joint hire in Ancient History with the Classics department.

Student:

Examiner:

 High Pass(4) Pass(3) Low Pass(2) Fail(1)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sophistication of Argument | The essay advances a clear and convincing thesis, supported by specific and relevant evidence from a range of assigned materials. The essay builds original and substantive connections between books or historiographies. | The essay articulates a thesis, supported by relevant evidence from a few of the assigned materials. The essay demonstrates a few connections between assigned readings. | The essay articulates a thesis, but is supported by only a couple of the assigned materials. The essay makes a few connections between assigned readings, but the connections are vague and not all are correct. | The essay either fails to articulate a thesis or does not marshal supporting or relevant evidence. The essay only gestures at the connections between assigned readings. |
| Historiographical Understanding | The essay demonstrates a mastery of the historiography by clearly articulating the interventions of relevant books and articles. With precision, the essay identifies key debates and animating questions, as well as recent trends in the scholarly literature. | The essay demonstrates a strong understanding of the historiography, including relevant books and articles. The author addresses important questions and debates in the scholarly literature. The author may gesture at recent trends in the field. | The essay demonstrates a basic understanding of the historiography, including relevant books and articles. The author recognizes some of the important questions and debates in the scholarly literature, but does not fully explain them. | The essay does not substantively engage the scholarly literature, neglecting to address key authors or animating debates. The essay is mostly unaware of conflicting interpretations. |
| Mastery of Historical Content | Through specific examples drawn from assigned texts, the essay demonstrates a mastery of the historical content. | Through supporting details, the essay demonstrates a solid understanding of the relevant historical content. | Through supporting details, the essay demonstrates a basic understanding of the relevant historical content. | The essay does not demonstrate an MA level knowledge of the historical content, offering no supporting details. Factual errors may be present. |
| Historical Methodology/Analytical Rigor | The essay demonstrates a mastery of the historian’s craft. The essay is keenly aware of change over time, conveys an understanding of the past’s complexity, and situates events in context. | The essay demonstrates a solid understanding of the historian’s craft. The essay situates events in context and is aware of the past’s complexity and change over time. | The essay demonstrates a basic understanding of the historian’s craft. The essay situates some events in context, and is ware of the past’s complexity, but does not demonstrate this across all of the readings. | The essay does not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the historian’s craft. The essay generalizes or lacks the nuance or analytic rigor of MA level work. |
| Grammar/Mechanics | The essay is well written, with no errors in sentence structure, usage, or grammar. The organization is clear and logical. The essay is of professional quality. | The essay is mostly well written, with no major errors in sentence structure, usage, or grammar. The organization is mostly clear and logical. | The essay contains some errors in sentence structure, usage, or grammar. There is some organization to the essay, but overall it lacks clarity and logic.  | Numerous errors in grammar or usage detract from the quality and content of the essay. The paper is not well organized. |

**High Pass**: All five indicators must be scored “high pass.”

**Pass**: All five indicators must be scored “pass” or “high pass.”

**Low Pass**: At least three indicators scored a “low pass.”