

MISSION STATEMENT

The study of history is valuable intellectual training, as well as a means of understanding how human societies have developed and how they continue to function. Our courses acquaint students with history as a discipline and stimulate objective, evidenced analysis of past events. Our students gain the cognitive skills to understand and influence the present, and are provided with a broader perspective for facing the future. They learn to perceive patterns of societal change that affect institutions and societal values, while gaining an understanding of the historical, multicultural and international dimensions of the human experience. They grow to recognize their own cultural heritage, and that of others, while studying the nature and backgrounds of other contemporary world civilizations. We seek to counter parochialism and ethnocentrism by offering courses that incorporate as many as possible of the world's civilizations, nations, and peoples.

To attain these aspirations, the Department of History seeks to attract and retain professors who will embrace and promote high standards of teaching and scholarship, engage in their own continued intellectual growth, commit themselves to student growth and development, and offer their time and expertise to campus and community service.

DEPARTMENT OBJECTIVES & ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC ISSUES

1. We desire to acquaint students with history as a discipline and to stimulate objective, evidenced analysis of the past. We seek to equip our students with the critical thinking skills required to understand and affect the present, as well as provide them with a broader perspective for facing the future.
2. We want students to perceive patterns of societal change that affect institutions and societal values, while gaining an understanding of the historical, multicultural and international dimensions of the human experience. As they continue the study of history, we want them to recognize their own cultural heritage, and that of others, while learning about the nature and backgrounds of other contemporary world civilizations. Along with classroom instruction, we encourage internship and study abroad opportunities as avenues for effecting these objectives.
3. We seek to counter parochialism and ethnocentrism by offering courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels, open to both history majors and

non-majors, that incorporate as many as possible of the world's civilizations, nations, and peoples.

4. Throughout our curriculum, we emphasize the importance of source analysis, critical reading, and expository and argumentative writing—high-degree learning skills that will enhance student experience and advance student success.

Student Learning Goals

1. In addition to learning to think historically, history students will learn to think critically and analytically.
2. Students will learn how to approach, read, and evaluate primary and secondary historical sources.
3. Students will learn how to frame historical problems, pose historical questions, and conduct historical research.

Student Learning Measurement Tools

1. In-class examinations and exercises that emphasize analysis and interpretation rather than rote memorization. Take-home papers that stress effective argumentation and organization, as well as compelling use of evidence, while displaying clear expression and a fluid writing style.
2. As above, but including response papers and review essays in which students evaluate historical arguments on the basis of documented and source-based evidence.
3. As above, but including hands-on tutorials with History faculty and Mansfield Library personnel that introduce history students to library research, archival research, and work with online databases and repositories, as well as government document holdings. Advanced Writing (AW) course papers (of 20 to 25 pages) that advance and/or defend an argument originating from an evidentiary base of primary sources and situated within the secondary historiographical literature.

RESULTS AND MODIFICATIONS

Learning Goal Results

Learning goals center around the most important skill we emphasize in the History curriculum, namely, writing. In every class and at all levels of the curriculum, we stress the importance of effective writing.

Using the History Department Writing Evaluation, we reviewed student writing portfolios to determine whether History students were progressing satisfactorily toward the learning goals.

We looked at student work across three levels of the curriculum, beginning with Introductory 100-level courses and HSTR 200 (Introduction to Historical Methods, which is required of all majors). Next we looked at student work in Intermediate Writing courses and 300-level upper-division courses. Finally, we examined work in Advanced Writing courses at the 400 level.

This portfolio review revealed approximately three-quarters of students making at least satisfactory progress toward (a) historical thinking; (b) effective use of primary and secondary sources; and (c) framing and development of historical research questions.

We were satisfied with the overall findings, but we did identify several specific areas that would benefit from further attention and focus. (See Future Plans for Continued Assessment.)

Modifications Made to Enhance Learning

Within the department, we foster a collegial system of pedagogical exchange to encourage faculty to develop and follow through on methods for improving student writing skills at all levels of the curriculum.

Among the modifications we have made since our last assessment report are these:

1. Faculty teaching Intermediate and Advanced Writing courses have instituted an iterative cycle of research-paper writing that breaks down a lengthy research and writing project into its constituent parts. Thesis development, outline, annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources, rough draft(s), and final draft. At every step, students receive instructor feedback and undergo peer review.
2. Every 100-level History course exposes students to techniques for working with and analyzing primary sources. To prepare students for the rigors of upper-division coursework, these skills are reinforced in HSTR 200 (the methods course all majors are required to take).

3. We have redoubled our efforts to partner more deliberately with the university's Writing Center to help students develop greater clarity in their writing and hone their analytical skills.
4. All instructors of HSTR 200 schedule special sessions for students to meet with experts at the Mansfield Library in order to develop online, digital, and onsite research skills and gain familiarity with holdings in the Mansfield Library, the Mansfield Archives, and the government documents collection.
5. All instructors of HSTR 200 ensure students become acquainted with the discipline-specific mode of citation used in History (i.e., Chicago Style). Instructors have introduced new worksheets and documents to help students master this method of citation, and they have devoted additional class time to make sure that students fully comprehend this objective.

Learning Goal Results

A sample of essay examinations from introductory survey courses (HSTA and HSTR 101) were assessed across the first two of the learning goals using designations of very good (VG), good (G), acceptable (A), and deficient (D) levels of proficiency. A similarly sized sample of 300-level course examinations were assessed across the same learning goals using the same designations. The results were as follows:

Learning Goal One:

Critical, Analytical, and Historical Thinking

	100 level	300 level
VG	14%	42%
G	29%	26%
A	31%	19%
D	25%	13%

Learning Goal Two:

Using Historical Sources

	100 level	300 level
VG	23%	45%
G	29%	32%
A	23%	16%
D	25%	7%

We are very pleased that students demonstrate considerable progress across learning goals one and two as they move from introductory to upper division courses.

Learning Goal Three, which addresses proficiency in historical research, has been assessed at the level of our advanced writing classes, taken at the 400 level, which effectively serve as the department's major "capstone." Here we deployed the department's longstanding evaluation rubric for papers in AW classes, which uses the designations of very good, good, acceptable, and deficient across five criteria of proficiency (proper citation of sources, clear articulation of thesis, quality of prose, appropriate use of appropriately chosen evidence, and cogency of interpretation and depth of analysis).

We are also pleased with these results (see overleaf). The most significant area of deficiency relevant to the learning goal is proper citation of sources, present in 14% of the papers examined. This small but significant deficit could be addressed in HSTR 200, the only course specifically required of history majors. The department is still weighing expanding HSTR 200 into a full three-credit course from its present state as a one-credit offering.

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Writing Evaluation

	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Deficient
CITATION: Paper documents research findings according to standard bibliographic and citation formats	32%	28%	26%	14%
THESIS: Paper contains a clearly articulated and well developed thesis supported by logical argument and research findings	36%	32%	26%	6%
PROSE: Paper is written in clear, well-structured prose	32%	30%	24%	14%
EVIDENCE: Paper makes appropriate use of a variety of sources and distinguishes between primary and secondary sources	36%	30%	30%	4%
ANALYSIS: Paper shows evidence of accurate interpretation and analysis of the developments over time	36%	30%	28%	6%

Curriculum Map

Department of History, University of Montana

Undergraduate History Major: Intended Student Learning Outcomes

Required courses	Learning Goal #1	Learning Goal #2	Learning Goal #3
<i>Introduction to Historical Methods:</i> HSTR 200	D	I, D	I
<i>Lower Division History Courses:</i> <i>American, European, world</i> HSTA 101, 102, 103, 104; HSTA 255, 262, 275; HSTR 210E, 211H, 239H, 231H, 240, 262, 264, 272.	I, A	I, A	i
<i>Upper Division History Courses:</i> <i>American, European, world</i> HSTA 397Y, 315, 316, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 333, 335, 336E, 342H, 343H, 344, 347, 361, 364, 369, 370H, 371H, 373, 377, 389, 382H, 385, 415, 417, 461, 471; HSTR 301, 302, 304H, 309, 312, 315, 316, 320, 321, 323, 325, 326, 334, 335, 345H, 368, 348, 349, 350, 352, 353, 354, 355, 357, 358, 361, 363, 365, 377, 386, 401, 418, 435, 437.	D, A	D, A	I, D
<i>Advanced Writing Course:</i> HSTA 415, 417, 418, 427, 437, 461, 471	D, M	D, M	D, M, A

Key: "I"=Introduced; "D"= developed/reinforced, with opportunities to practice; "M"=mastery that is demonstrated (often at the senior or exit level); "A" = assessment evidence collected.

Student Learning Goal # 1: In addition to learning to think historically, students will learn to think critically and analytically.

Student Learning Goal # 2: Students will learn how to approach, read, and evaluate primary and secondary sources.

Student Learning Goal # 3: Students will learn how to frame historical problems, pose historical questions, and conduct historical research.