

Institutional Effectiveness

2020-2021

Program: History BS/BA

College and Department: College of Arts & Sciences – Department of History

Contact: Jeff Roberts

Mission: The Department of History offers a wide array of courses to diverse student populations. The department provides General Education instruction to a large number of students in the state-required American history sequence, while Western and World Civilization sequences satisfy TBR humanities requirements. In addition, department faculty offer numerous specialized courses that attract majors and non-majors alike.

The department has developed and maintains a comprehensive and successful curriculum for history majors. The programs are designed to provide future historians with the tools and knowledge for successful graduate study in the discipline, and to prepare graduates for careers in education, law, public service or business. Majors are expected to think analytically, ascertain facts and make objective judgments, and write clearly, communicating the results of reasoned analysis.

The department shares with the University both its broader commitment to cross-cultural understanding and its special obligation to serve the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee.

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to research and write a scholarly paper of professional quality.

SLO 2: The department desires to instill in students an appreciation of the past, to include a desire to explore history beyond the classroom.

SLO 3: History majors will demonstrate a reasonable command of general factual knowledge.

A departmentally developed curriculum map can be found in Appendix 1 that shows the connections between courses and student learning outcomes.

Assessment Methods:

SLO 1: Ability to research

1. Historical Methods and Senior Seminar Courses

Students capstone projects, completed in History 4900, are evaluated using a faculty developed rubric. The rubric includes the following criteria:

- a. Formulate an original thesis and defend it in a sustained argument
- b. Make effective use of primary sources (if possible) - AND/OR - Demonstrate an ability to professionally evaluate and employ secondary sources.
- c. Make proper use of citation conventions, thereby avoiding plagiarism.

- d. Use standard written English effectively and appropriately.
- e. Present a well-organized paper.
- f. Place the research topic and/or literature survey in broader historical context.
- g. Demonstrate critical thinking, reasoned analysis, and/or problem solving.
- h. Follow any additional directions as assigned by the professor.

SLO 2: Extracurricular activities

1. Student Participation in Co-curricular Activities

Tracking spreadsheet for the number of students who attend each co-curricular activity.

SLO 3: General factual knowledge

1. ACAT

The ACAT is an exit exam for students majoring in history. The ACAT includes four content areas including: U.S. 1820 to 1890, U.S. Colonial to 1763, U.S. Military/Diplomatic, and U.S. 1763 to 1820. Exam is administered in the senior seminar course.

2. Senior Exit Interview

The chairperson invites all graduating seniors to a one-on-one interview in the weeks prior to their graduation. The chair asks the seniors to review the program. He seeks information on successful classes and asks about areas in need of improvement. The results can provide useful information for all three SLOs, as well as general program development.

Results:

Between the pandemic and the near complete lack of a senior class of history majors, we have relatively little to share relative to institutional effectiveness. Spring 2020 saw one of the largest and most successful graduating classes in the history of the history department. Their numerous achievements are documented in last year's report.

Unfortunately, we entered the fall of 2020 with virtually no seniors at all. We had to cancel the fall senior seminar due to lack of enrollment (the first time this had ever happened since Senior Seminar began in the Spring of 2000!). Thus we had neither papers to evaluate nor test scores to examine.

SLO 1: Ability to research

We did have a senior seminar in the spring – with two seniors, and five students (the other three were auditors) overall enrolled. Dr. Krystal Akehinmi taught the course on African-American women. I had the pleasure of attending one session (as part of her tenure-track review) and found it professional and enlightening. Even that may not give the content full justice.

The two seniors also praised the course, and ultimately produced papers that met the rubric of SLO-1. One paper met all of the goals and then some, earning its grade of "A" with room to spare. The other

earned a “B.” Its thesis was somewhat disjointed, it suffered from some writing errors, and it lacked the sophisticated analysis of the A-paper (rubric items a, d, and g).

Given only two papers for the entire year, there was insufficient data to prompt any reexamination of the recently-revised rubric.

Rubric Results for Spring 2021

	Excellent	Good	Emerging	Weak
Thesis	0%	100%	0%	0%
Argument	50%	50%	0%	0%
Primary	0%	50%	50%	0%
Secondary	0%	50%	50%	0%
Citation	0%	100%	0%	0%
English	50%	50%	0%	0%
Organize	50%	50%	0%	7%
Context	0%	100%	0%	0%
Critical	0%	100%	0%	0%
Direction	0%	50%	50%	0%

SLO 2: Extracurricular activities

The department also struck out with regard to student participation in extra-curricular activities. There were none. Given the pandemic, most traditional events (Halloween party, local field trips, study abroad, Lyceum, etc.) were all cancelled. On the bright side, neither department faculty nor students perished from Covid-19.

What of online options, one might ask? Our two activities which draw the largest crowds are the Womack and Winchester guest lectures. We asked our donors if they wished to hold these lectures online. Both responded definitively “no.” As it is quite simply their money, we of course respected their wishes. Neither lecture occurred. The Womack is planned to resume this November, with the Winchester to follow in the spring of 2022.

A few inquiries as to other online possibilities met with indifference from our student body. During 2020-2021 apparently many of our students (and faculty) came to suffer from “screen burnout.” After spending hours online for their classes, few wished for anything involving more time on the computer. The result is we have no chart of activities to share relative to SLO-2– because we had no activities during the pandemic.

Whether we were able to “instill in students an appreciation of the past, to include a desire to explore history beyond the classroom.” (SLO-2) is open to debate. The students are desirous to travel, for example, (I’ve already had requests from the vaccinated for field trips this fall), just reluctant to risk their lives in so doing. We are hoping to host other activities as well, though the Delta Variant is keeping plans limited for the time being.

SLO 3: General factual knowledge

SLO 4: ACAT Results:

	Fall 2018 N = 6		Spring 2019 N = 11		Fall 2019 N = 10		Spring 2020 N = 15		Spring 2021 N = 2	
Area	Std Score	%'ile	Std Score	%'ile	Std Score	%'ile	Std Score	%'ile	Std Score	%'ile
U.S. 1820 to 1890	483	43	482	43	463	36	593	82	477	-
U.S. Colonial to 1763	460	34	517	57	467	37	586	81	491	-
U.S. Military/Diplomatic	457	33	490	46	507	53	569	75	481	-
U.S. 1763 to 1820	455	33	515	56	449	31	550	69	506	-
OVERALL PERFORMANCE	458	34	506	52	463	36	596	83	486	45

The ACAT scores were interesting. One was a “64” and the other a “26.” That makes an average of 45, slightly less than the national norm. One of the two students achieved 50 or more on each of the four subtests, thus none of those averages were remarkable either. Again, limited data precludes much reflection, save the following exception:

The 64 belongs to the student with the B-paper. She is a Motlow State community college transfer, who came here after four semesters with 53 credits. She currently has a 3.48 GPA, with 15 credits to go. With a good ninth semester, she may graduate cum laude in December. She is a good student, with a double-minor in Theater and Religious Studies.

The 26 belongs to the student with the A-paper. She is one of the most decorated students we’ve ever taught. She graduated in May with a perfect 4.0 GPA (only the fifth such student to do so in the History Department in the last 30 years at Tennessee Tech) earning the W.A. Howard Award, and summa cum laude distinction. A double major with Political Science, earlier that year she won the College of Arts and Sciences Liberal Arts Award, our college’s highest honor. She took challenging professors throughout her career, participated in a study abroad course, served as an officer in Phi Alpha Theta, and is currently enrolled in law school. She is one of the best writers I personally have ever had the pleasure to teach.

She was the only senior exit interview of all of 2020-2021. The interview was entirely pleasant. She offered only praise for the department and the university writ large (parking excepted).

The “26” (of which we received notice in June) however, once again raises doubts as to the utility of the ACAT. For years it has been essentially a default option. When our students score well, we can hold it up as evidence of general factual knowledge. When outstanding students essentially fail it, however, we are left doubting its utility. Given our flexible curriculum, the ACAT’s emphasis on basic American history (which some outstanding students may not have had since high school!), and the lack of any incentive to perform well, it may be time for the new chair, Dr. Kent Dollar, to once again consider another alternative. That, and perhaps another technique by which to measure “desire to explore history beyond the classroom,” are worthy of discussion.

Modifications for Improvement:

2020-2021 was a bizarre, if adventurous year. It was in many ways productive, in that Covid-19 left many History faculty little choice but to learn techniques of online and distance learning which will likely pay dividends for years to come. Program development continued unabated, highlighted by the successful implementation of two new courses in Digital History and Archiving, both of which promise to enhance the career-readiness of our majors. Furthermore, with the establishment of a minor program in Race and Ethnic Studies, the department will begin 2021-2022 poised to contribute in a significant way to the university's diversity goals.

SLO 1: Ability to research

Unfortunately, only 2 seniors completed the senior seminar course, so there is insufficient data to prompt any reexamination of the recently-revised rubric or to reevaluate progress on critical thinking skills. However, two new critical and creative inquiry courses were offered in 2020-21. HIST- 4690 British Empire and Commonwealth and HIST-4650 Medieval Britain offered students the chance to explore and analyze social, cultural, and political events in popular historical shows such as the Tudors. Over the course of the semester, students completed journaling assignments using discovery processes, such as library and archival research, to start to develop a problem or question, collect the necessary primary sources to address the research problem, and finally, evaluate the information to produce a formal paper. These courses will continue to include creative inquiry next year and with 9 students enrolled in senior seminar, we hope to see substantial progress with our cohort.

Appendices

1. History BS_BA Curriculum Map

Appendix 1: History BS_BA Curriculum Map

Basic Course #	Short Title	Factual Acumen	Research & Writing	Additional Career Readiness	Race/Gender Diversity & Citizenship	Global Awareness
1066	University Life				X	
1310	World Science	X				X
2010	Early US	X			X	
2020	Modern US	X			X	
2210	Early Western	X				X
2220	Modern Wstrn	X				X
2310	Early World	X				X
2320	Modern Wrld	X				X
3100	Tennessee	X	X		X	
3360	US Military	X	X			X
3390	Civil Rights	X	X		X	
3410	Methods		X	X		
3420	Archives		X	X		
3430	Digital History		X	X		
3550	Ancient	X	X			X
3710	Spain	X	X			X
3720	Mexico	X	X		X	X
3900	Environment	X	X			X
4010	Colonial	X	X		X	
4020	Early Republic	X	X		X	
4030	US Civil War	X	X		X	
4040	Gilded Age	X	X		X	
4050	Early 20th C	X	X		X	
4060	Postwar US	X	X		X	
4090	Pop Culture	X	X		X	X
4100	Appalachia	X	X			
4200	Old South	X	X		X	
4210	New South	X	X		X	
4230	Economic	X	X			
4250	US West	X	X		X	
4290	Science Tech	X	X			
4330	Religion	X	X			X

4350	Gender	X	X		X	
4360	US Social	X	X		X	
4380	Black Women	X	X		X	X
4390	African-Amer	X	X		X	X
4400	Film History	X	X			X
4420	Public History	X	X	X		
4440	Native Amer.	X	X		X	
4470	Sports History	X	X		X	
4520	Medieval	X	X			X
4530	Renn/Reform	X	X			X
4540	Abs/Enlightm	X	X			X
4550	French Revo	X	X			X
4560	19th C Eur	X	X			X
4565	World War I	X	X			X
4570	World War II	X	X			X
4620	Russia/USSR	X	X			X
4630	Mod France	X	X			X
4640	Mod Germany	X	X			X
4650	Early England	X	X			X
4660	Mod England	X	X			X
4680	Holocaust	X	X			X
4690	Br Cmmwlth	X	X		X	X
4710	Africa	X	X		X	X
4730	Middle East	X	X			X
4740	Japan	X	X			X
4750	China	X	X			X
4760	Vietnam	X	X			X
4790	Latin America	X	X		X	X
4800	Legal History	X	X			
4810	Sci. Cntovrsy	X	X			
4880	Hist Medicine	X	X			
4890	Hist Nursing	X	X			
4900	Topics	X	X			
4910	Directed Stu.	X	X			
4940	Internship	X		X		
4990	SeniorSeminar	X	X			

