

History Department
Annual Assessment for AY 2022-23
Submitted by Katrina Olds, Chair, History Department

The History Department offers a major and minor; our mission statement applies to both, and this is an aggregate report.

AY 2022-23 ASSESSMENT

We did not collect data that would enable us to assess a PLO this year, and, in consultation with the Faculty Director of Curriculum Development in the Humanities, opted instead to make time and space to respond thoughtfully to the many shifting realities with which the department is contending. These challenges potentially affect student learning, and therefore assessment. In this report I will outline some of the challenges and opportunities we are facing and propose ways in which we may use the assessment process to help guide us in responding to them.

Successes

Since 2015, when the department completed a revision and updating of our mission statement, PLOs, and curriculum, our assessment reports have consistently revealed that students have generally met or exceeded expectations for our major's learning outcomes. In spite of the many headwinds which have diminished enrollment in the humanities, the number of history majors and minors has been relatively stable. We have been able to offer a wide range of classes across the vast geographic, temporal, and thematic divides which characterize the discipline of history, and the introduction of a "Global" concentration in fall 2018 has proven popular among students, who enjoy being able to choose an international focus for their major. Our senior faculty are engaged in teaching lower-division and core (C2 history) classes; we have a small but dedicated number of part-time faculty members who also continue to receive consistently positive reviews from students.

We have adjusted the number of classes that we offer in each area of geographical concentration – Africa, Asia, Europe, Islamic World, Latin America, and the United States – in order to meet student demand, and we have been able, for the most part, to avoid or minimize cancellation of classes due to underenrollments. Regular rotation of the duties of chairing the department among full-time faculty in order of seniority has helped reinforce an already-thriving culture of shared responsibility toward our majors, minors, staff, and each other.

In light of an increased concern among students and parents about career-readiness, and to better equip our students to succeed after graduation, we have increased our efforts to connect the study of history with post-baccalaureate pursuits. The required “Historical Methods” class (HIST 210) has increasingly introduced students to real-world examples of how they might utilize their research skills and historical training in a future career. HIST 396, “History Internship,” brings students into libraries, archives, and other local organizations to engage in hands-on learning about public history and the practice of historical scholarship outside the classroom. The department is brainstorming how to increase awareness of these efforts and opportunities among our students. We are also considering an initiative that would broaden and enhance the professional development activities in our required capstone (HIST 400, “Senior Seminar”). As a whole, these efforts are intended to guarantee that students receive guidance and professional formation across the entire span of their time in the history major, in a coordinated and coherent manner.

Challenges

One of the hallmarks of the USF history major has been its truly global scope, which has been thanks in large part to a full-time faculty trained in areas of the world which often fall outside the scope of North American history departments. This training has allowed our students to truly choose from a global range of classes; it has also enabled our history faculty to contribute to an eye-popping range of majors, minors, and special programs across the University. The global orientation is reflected in our mission statement and PLOs.

Yet shifting budgetary priorities at the University and College levels are jeopardizing this curricular breadth. Since 2018, the number of full-time history faculty members has decreased: in 2018, we were at 12; this year, we are at 9, a decrease of 25%. This is due to the fact that a large percentage of our faculty members were hired, and are retiring, within a few years of each other. This wave of retirements is expected to continue for the next few years. Two US historians and one Asian history professor have retired since 2018, and have not been replaced. Repeated requests for new full-time hires have been denied, as have requests for term replacements for faculty on sabbatical and leave. We estimate that, by 2028, we will be down to circa 6-7 FT faculty, which represents a drop of 50-60% from the staffing we had when we last tweaked the curriculum in 2018.

We remain committed to offering classes which enable our students to meet or exceed our department PLOs, which reflect the standards of our profession, as echoed in guidelines developed by our professional organization, the American Historical Association. Yet the department has decided to consider revising our required curriculum in order to better align our offerings with the shifting faculty. During our

December department meeting, we identified two principal areas of concern and discussion: (1) ensuring sufficient variety and availability of HIST 210 and required 200-level electives; (2) ensuring sufficient variety and availability of upper-division classes in each geographic concentration; (3) how or whether to maintain specific areas of geographic specialization as a requirement for history majors.

Since so many of these issues are interlocking, and our staffing levels are unclear, we are still trying to determine the specific sequence of decisions to make, let alone how to resolve these dilemmas. In spring 2024, the department will consider several proposed revisions. These could range from a minor revision to requirements to a major revision, including possibly to our PLOs. For example, any changes to the concentration-based structure of the major would, inevitably, entail a reconsideration of PLO #2 (Develop a substantive knowledge of range and depth in their area(s) of concentration, whether regional and/or topical/thematic).

In the meantime, we are planning to evaluate PLO 1 as part of our annual assessment for AY 2023-4 in fall 2024. If we continue to evaluate one or two PLOs each year, we will be well on the way to meeting the requirement to evaluate all PLOs between each APR cycle.

Conclusion

This report has been circulated to department members for comments and feedback. We see the assessment process as part of a conversation among ourselves and between us, and we look forward to hearing back from you.

ADDENDA

Mission Statement – *unchanged since last report*

The essence of historical inquiry is, simply put, to study and understand the past. The History Department at the University of San Francisco is a community of scholars and students who seek an informed and critical sense of the past and an awareness of the role of the past in shaping the present. Such an understanding is, we believe, the basis for effective and engaged citizenship in the contemporary world.

We seek to educate our students about the variety of past human experience within a global setting. Toward that end, we offer six regional emphases within the history major, and students elect a single or a double emphasis in the histories of Africa, Asia, Europe, the Islamic World, Latin America, and the United States. Our courses similarly cover the span of human history from antiquity to modern times and utilize a range of methodological approaches. History at USF offers both breadth and depth into fields and specializations that reveal the complexity of human societies, past and present.

While we hope to impart a love of history and an appreciation of its value, we also aim to prepare our students for further study and professional development in the many areas in which history majors find employment, including (but not limited to) teaching, law, business, and the public sector. The study of history—with the training it provides in close reading, logical reasoning, careful argumentation, and persuasive writing—is an ideal major to prepare for “the real world.”

Program Learning Outcomes - unchanged

1. Understand the breadth and diversity of human experience across time and space
2. Develop a substantive knowledge of range and depth in their area(s) of concentration, whether regional and/or topical/thematic
3. Think critically and historically about the past
4. Understand and appropriately apply historical research methods
5. Craft and present persuasive historical arguments in both oral and written form
6. Understand how the practice of history can establish a valuable framework for considering ethical issues in the past and present

Curricular Map – unchanged since last revision in AY 2021-22 assessment report

| | PLO1 | PLO2 | PLO3 | PLO4 | PLO5 | PLO6 |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| Program Learning Outcomes X Courses | Understand the breadth and diversity of human experience across time and space. | Develop a substantive knowledge of range and depth in their area(s) of concentration, whether regional and/or topical-thematic. | Thinking critically and historically about the past. | Understand and appropriately apply historical research methods. | Craft and present historical arguments in both oral and written form. | Understand how the practice of history can establish a valuable framework for considering ethical issues in the past and present. |
| Courses or Program Requirement | | | | | | |
| 100-level survey courses | I, D | I | I | I | I | I, D |
| 200-level methods courses | D | I | D | D, M | D | I, D |
| 300-level major electives | D, M | D, M | D | D | D | D |
| 400-level senior seminar | N/A | M | M | M | M | M |
| Note: We have sometimes listed two letters when we felt that our response fell halfway between the two measures. | | | | | | |
| Key: | | | | | | |
| I = Introductory | | | | | | |
| D = Developing | | | | | | |
| M = Mastery | | | | | | |
| N/A=Depends on Instructor | | | | | | |

Assessment Schedule and Plan

Our last APR was in 2018-9, and the next is scheduled for fall 2028.

| Academic Year | PLO assessed |
|----------------------|---|
| 2012-13 | The department developed a curricular map; no other assessment information available |
| 2013-14 | No information about these years can be found in the History Department shared google drive, nor on CAS Assessment page |
| 2014-15 | |
| 2015-16 | Report did not clearly specify which PLOs were assessed |
| 2016-17 | PLO 5 |
| 2017-18 | PLO 3 |
| 2018-19 | PLO 4 – Last APR |
| 2019-20 | PLO 5 |
| 2020-21 | PLO 6 |
| 2021-22 | Year of reflection |
| 2022-23 | Current year |
| 2023-24 | PLO 1 |
| 2024-25 | PLO 2 and 3 |
| 2025-6 | PLO 4 |
| 2026-7 | PLO 5 |
| 2027-8 | PLO 6 |
| 2028-9 | Next APR |