

History Department
Annual Assessment for AY 2023-24
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 2023-24 ASSESSMENT

In consultation with the Faculty Director of Curriculum Development in the Humanities, we have put assessment data collection on pause while we have been planning, proposing, and implementing major curricular changes and innovations. In academic year 2023-4, we voted to change the degree requirements for our majors. In this report we provide a brief overview of the work happening in the program and the connection to previous assessment initiatives in lieu of the standard assessment of PLOs. We also 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.

CURRICULUM REVISION: Rationale and Overview

In March 2024, we submitted a curriculog petition to revise the major requirements and PLOs as described below. The change was granted final approval by the Provost on December 9, 2024. It will take effect in the 2025-6 catalogue. The requirements for the history minor remain the same.

The new history curriculum reflects a number of changes. These consisted of (1) revised PLOs, (2) an elimination of the separate geographic concentrations in favor of one unified history major curriculum, (3) the elimination of the 200-level methods elective requirement; and (4) introduction of a required internship class (HIST 396).

Elimination of the geographic concentrations and revised PLOs - We consolidated our PLOs, eliminated some redundancy; and, most significantly, revised the language to reflect the elimination of the history major's respective areas of geographic concentration. We continue, as a faculty, to offer classes that span the globe, but retirements and leaves have left us shorthanded and unable to sustain the breadth of offerings required for students to develop mastery in one specific geographic region. Most university history programs do not have regional concentrations, so it does not put students at a comparative disadvantage. Students will still obtain geographically broad preparation thanks to the retention of our requirement that they take two

upper-division classes outside of US/Europe, and the chronological breadth is retained as well, since we are not eliminating the pre-modern requirement.

We also consolidated the PLOs for majors and minors into the same list. Minors learn the same things but with less depth. A history major should approach mastery of each PLO; a minor may instead achieve adequacy.

Major requirement changes – summary:

- (1) Elimination of 200-level elective requirement
- (2) Elimination of regional concentration tracks
- (3) Introduction of internship requirement.

Curriculum Revision: High-Impact Practices

We have been reinvigorating our longstanding internship class (HIST 396), which is also a Community-Engaged Learning opportunity. In the revised major curriculum, HIST 396 is now required. It will replace the 200-level methods elective requirement, which we are eliminating. Moreover, requiring the internship class will help students (and parents) understand how the study of history (or indeed, the humanities) can lead to a career and the development of future-ready skills. The class consists of 100 hours of field work at the students' chosen internship site, but it also includes class time, discussion, and shared readings on the theory and practice of Public History.

The addition of the HIST 396 requirement not only highlights the hands-on, practical skills that a history major can learn through our curriculum, but it also increases the number of shared intellectual experiences for our majors. A student will now proceed through the four years of study as part of a more coherent cohort, by taking a shared 2nd year class (HIST 210), 3rd year (HIST 396), and senior capstone (HIST 400) with their fellow history majors. This is just one of several HIPS (High impact Practices) that we are introducing, inside and outside the classroom.

Department 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.

Program 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 and administrative structures 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. A third US historian will leave USF at the end of this year. 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. The recent (Dec. 2024) announcement by the Dean that departments will be dissolved and reorganized into 'Divisions,' has contributed to anxiety and uncertainty about whether the College and University are committed to supporting us in these duties, as has ongoing revision of the core curriculum, and the seemingly unilateral decision to eliminate language majors. Overall the distinct impression is increasingly that we in the humanities are seen as expendable, marginal to the 'real' education that parents supposedly want for their children. Historians are experts in the rich traditions of human societies across time and space: we know very well how shortsighted this impoverished vision of a Jesuit education really is, and fear for its implications.

In spite of the truly demoralizing developments, History faculty continue to serve the students in a way that honors our hard-earned expertise and the professional standards of the discipline, while also supporting the University mission. To that end: we plan to evaluate PLO 1 as part of our annual assessment for AY 2024-5 in fall 2025. 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 – revised March 2024

1. Understand the historical processes that have shaped human experiences across time and space;
2. Think critically and historically about the past;
3. Conduct historical research and craft persuasive historical arguments;
4. Understand how the practice of history can establish a valuable framework for considering ethical issues in the past and present.

Curricular Map – revised March 2024

	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	
Courses/Program Requirement	Understand the historical processes that have shaped human experiences across time and space	Think critically and historically about the past	Conduct historical research and craft persuasive historical arguments	Understand how the practice of history can establish a valuable framework for considering ethical issues in the past and present	
100-level survey courses	I, D	I	I	I, D	
200-level courses	D	I	D	D, M	
300-level	D, M	D, M	D	D	
400-level (Senior Seminar)	N/A	M	M	M	
Key: I = Introductory D = Developing M = Mastery N/A = Depends on instructor	We have sometimes listed two letters when we felt that our response is halfway between these two measures				

Assessment Schedule and Plan

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

Academic Year	PLO assessed
2023-24	Year of Reflection due to curricular changes
2024-25	PLO 1 and 2
2025-6	PLO 3 and 4
2026-7	PLO 5
2027-8	PLO 6
2028-9	Next APR

