

## AY 2020-21 Assessment Report Department of History

### I. Program

**Name of Program:** History

*We offer a major and minor and our mission statement applies to both. This is an aggregate report as there is insufficient data to assess minors at this time, and our plans to do so were stalled by the pandemic. There have been no changes to our PLOs since our last report. We have made changes to our curricular map, which are discussed below.*

**Contact Person:** Taymiya R. Zaman (Chair) trzaman@usfca.edu

### II. Mission Statement

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.”

### III. PLOs

The History major has six PLOs of which three (highlighted) are PLOs for the minor:

1	Understand the breadth and diversity of human experience across time and space
2	Develop a substantive knowledge of range and depth in their areas(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

#### IV. Curricular Map

At a department meeting on November 3, 2021 we revised our curricular map based on feedback from the previous year's assessment report regarding the mapping of outcomes. Specifically, the committee stated the following:

- A. Outcomes #1 and #4 are “developed” and “mastered” but never “introduced.” Perhaps students are assumed to enter the program having been “introduced” to those outcomes.
- B. Outcome #2 is indicated as “introduced” and “mastered,” but no course level is mapped as “developing” this outcome. History faculty may determine whether some part of the curriculum might be mapped as “developing” this outcome or whether such a designation is necessary.

The feedback above was based on the following curricular map:

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	D	I	I		I	I, D
200-level methods courses	D		D	D	D	I, D
300-level major electives	D, M	M	D	D	D	D
400-level senior seminar		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						

Faculty discussed the map and responded as follows:

- Regarding PLO #1 and #4: Faculty who teach 100-level classes reflected on the degree to which these classes introduced and developed PLOs #1 and #4.
- For PLO #1, we concluded that our 100-level classes both introduce and develop it (depending on the instructor). Given that each of us has regional expertise, when we teach a 100-level survey, we either introduce students to a part of the world with which they are unfamiliar or alternatively, we teach them to understand a familiar part of the world (the US in particular) through a lens that reveals the diversity of human experience. Some of our 100-level courses go further and develop this outcome by using a comparative framework in

which students may study two countries or several cultural communities. For our senior seminar, which several of us teach, we agreed that each seminar is different (the same instructor may teach it differently each time) and that “N/A” would make the most sense for PLO #1 in this category.

- For PLO #4, while our initial thoughts had been that 100-level classes do not introduce students to historical research methods, we realized that the degree to which we rely on analyzing primary sources in these classes means that we do in fact introduce students to research methods in history. In our 200-level classes, we concluded that—to consider our different teaching styles—it would be more appropriate to say we help students both develop and master historical research methods; the former may take place through short papers on primary sources and the latter through research papers. We have amended our curricular map to reflect these changes. These are highlighted in green in the curricular map below.
- We thought it would be useful to determine, as suggested by the committee, what courses developed PLO #2. After discussion, we concluded that our 200-level classes, which allow individual faculty members to teach to their strengths (thematic or regional) certainly introduce students to PLO #2 and that our 300-level classes allow students to develop or master PLO #2, depending on the instructor. Developing PLO #2 in a 300-level class would include gaining enough knowledge of a theme, region, or topic to analyze it historically, while mastery would allow for a student to conduct independent research. We have amended our curricular map to reflect these changes. These are highlighted in grey in the curricular map below.

	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						

## V. AY 2020-21 PLO Assessment

For AY 2020-2021, we assessed student papers in our Fall 2020 senior seminar for PLO #6: Understand how the practice of history can establish a valuable framework for considering ethical issues in the past and present. There were no history minors in the seminar or in other appropriate courses and the department would be happy to work with Mark Merritt on how we might go about assessing our minors.

### (i) Assessment Schedule

At our department meeting on November 3, 2021, we had a focused, productive, and substantive discussion about our assessment schedule. We realized that this is an ongoing conversation and arrived at the following:

- (a) We are interested in the possibility of assessing PLO #1: Understand the breadth and diversity of human experience across time and space. We have not assessed this PLO yet for our senior seminar but this PLO has been assessed for Core C2 History in Fall 2020. We would like guidance on the following:
  - Is it possible to mine the data for C2 assessment of PLO #1 for assessing the same PLO for our senior seminar?
  - If so, what would the assessment committee suggest?
  
- (b) We have successfully assessed our senior seminar based on the premise that the senior seminar provides us with a sense of what our graduates are learning. Many faculty members brought up that learning outcomes may be worth measuring in other classes, such as History 210: Historical Methods, which is required for our major.
  - Would it be worthwhile to assess majors who are in the middle of our program, rather than at the end? If so, we would welcome suggestions from the committee.

### (ii) Methodology

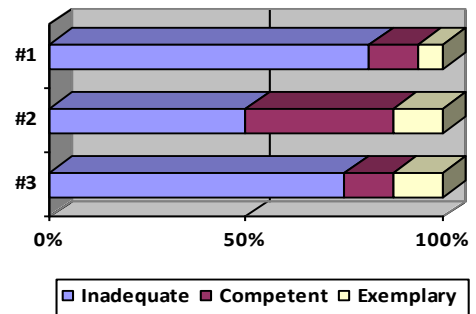
A sub-committee of two reviewers, Kathy Nasstrom and Candice Harrison assessed 16 final research papers in our senior seminar for the degree to which they addressed PLO #6: Understand how the practice of history can establish a valuable framework for considering ethical issues in the past and present. The rubric used by the reviewers is below:

Paper #: __	Exemplary	Competent	Inadequate
<b>Demonstrates an understanding of how what is considered <u>ethical</u> and moral has changed over time</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper clearly demonstrates how what is considered ethical and moral has changed over time	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper suggests, but does not clearly demonstrate, how what is considered <u>ethical</u> and moral has changed over time	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper fails to demonstrate how what is considered ethical and moral has changed over time
<b>Identifies the causes of major ethical conflicts between historical actors and groups and how they were resolved or failed to be resolved</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper clearly identifies an ethical conflict and its causes, and clearly shows how and why it was resolved or not resolved	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper identifies an ethical conflict, but does not sufficiently <u>addresses</u> its causes and/or show how and why it was resolved or not resolved	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper either fails to clearly identify an ethical conflict and/or does not address its causes or its resolution
<b>Applies historical knowledge and historical thinking to the analysis of contemporary social issues and problems</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper clearly delineates a contemporary social issue or problem, places it in its historical context, and identifies how historical thinking is valuable in the analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper delineates a contemporary social issue or problem, but does not sufficiently place it in its historical context and/or identify how historical thinking is valuable in the analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper either fails to delineate a contemporary social issue or problem or delineates it but fails to place it in its historical context and identifies how historical thinking is valuable in the analysis

### (iii) Results

The breakdown of findings was as follows:

- a) Demonstrates an understanding of how what is considered ethical, and moral has changed over time (I: 13, C: 2, E: 1)
- b) Identifies the causes of major ethical conflicts between historical actors and groups and how they were resolved or failed to be resolved (I: 8, C: 6, E: 2)
- c) Applies historical knowledge and historical thinking to the analysis of contemporary social issues and problems (I: 12, C: 2, E: 2)  
[I = Inadequate, C = Competent, E = Exemplary]



### (iv) Analysis

The reviewers discussed the results between themselves and with the Chair, after which results were discussed at a department meeting on November 3, 2021. Below is a summary:

- Most papers got inadequate on all measures; both reviewers agreed that this was not the fault of the students; rather, the instructor had not worded the assignment in a manner that suggested students should engage ethical issues at all. After a thoughtful and engaged discussion, the department agreed that it would be worth working with an instructor more closely in the future to assess a learning outcome. We agreed that the diverse teaching approaches of our faculty members are a strength, and it would be valuable for our department if faculty members could work with the Chair on streamlining assignments in a manner that helped the assessment sub-committee assess learning outcomes.
- What was interesting to the reviewers was that some papers did engage with ethical issues sufficiently enough to warrant a competent score while others even received exemplary scores. The reviewers suggested that credit for this went to USF's general curricular orientation toward ethics, which meant that students wandered into ethical terrain on their own, even if the assignment didn't require it of them. Faculty agreed with the reviewers on this.
- On history and ethics, a majority of faculty felt that historians can help frame ethical debates in valuable ways but it's worth investigating our curriculum in general and the degree to which these outcomes are embedded into it.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Following discussion at our department meeting, this report was circulated to the department for comments and feedback, which have been integrated into it. We see the assessment process as part of a conversation among ourselves and between us and the assessment committee and we look forward to hearing back from you.