

**2005 Annual Report on the Assessment of Majors
Department of History and Philosophy
May 2006**

The Department of History and Philosophy bases its assessment of majors on two methods of evaluation: a one hundred-question multiple-choice CRT and research papers. The Department created the CRT in 1992 and refined it 1996 and 2000, and completed a revision during spring 2002 semester. The writing component of the exam focuses on senior- and, since 1998, junior-level research papers.

Mission Statement

As a part of the University of Virginia's College at Wise, the Department of History and Philosophy is committed to a liberal arts education in a public setting. Through the study of history and philosophy, we seek to prepare students to understand, and thereby to participate in, democratic society and the world at large. Specifically, we believe that students broadly educated in the humanities—especially history—are exposed to ideas and values that help them to become liberally-educated and thoughtful citizens. We are committed to preparing students for a lifetime of learning as well as for careers in areas including education, the law, business, and public service. Another central part of our mission is to prepare students for graduate and professional school.

The department believes that both faculty and student scholarship are crucial to achieving its mission. History is not finite; interpretations of past events evolve as new discoveries are uncovered. Rethinking the past, rather than simply reproducing existing knowledge, must be the goal of history departments in colleges and universities. Through active participation in scholarship students and faculty are transformed. Scholarship

molds and forms the character of the researcher, and it occurs not so much in the results, but rather in the process of pursuing them. One important result of such endeavor is the heightened ability to analyze and to question established thinking, a necessary skill for citizens of a democracy. Thus students and professors should immerse themselves in the scholarly outlook by pursuing individual projects of original research, even if, for students at least, this occurs in a very rudimentary way. In this way, their humanity, and their sense of justice will strengthen.

Goals

The Department has reconsidered and revised the goals it established in 1995.

The members of the department committed to these newly revised goals:

1. Students should know the basic facts, concepts, and literature of U.S. history and the history of western civilization.
2. Students should be able to use analytical and problem-solving skills in a historical context so as to relate specific facts to broader themes.
3. Students should increase their understanding of different perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes among peoples and societies.
4. Students should develop good communication skills. In particular, they should be able to write and speak in a clear, concise, and grammatically correct manner.
5. Students should actively participate in the process of historical scholarship.

These goals also correspond the College's goals. Below are the College's goals, followed by the department's goals to which they correspond.

1.1. Students gain the skills necessary to continue to educate themselves.

Learning outcomes 2, 3, and 5

1.3. Students learn to appreciate and respect diverse cultures.

Learning outcomes 1 and 3

1.5. Students understand the value of education.

Learning outcomes 1-5

1.6. Students acquire an international perspective.

Learning outcomes 1 and 3

1.7. Students value honor and integrity.

Learning outcomes 1 and 5

2.1. The College is a community of learners supported by all constituents, faculty, staff, and students.

Learning outcome 5

3.3. The College continues to strengthen the quality of K-12 education in Southwest Virginia in partnership with local schools.

Learning outcomes 1-5

Criteria

The CRT is based on information that is most commonly covered in all required surveys as well as in upper-division courses in American, European, and Cross-Cultural history. Majors must complete thirty-six hours of course work in history, twenty-four of which must be taken at the College. Of these thirty-six hours, eighteen must be upper-division courses. Nine of the eighteen must come from one course each in European, American, and Cross-Cultural offerings. The remainder of the courses is elective. Because the departmental requirements are relatively flexible and allow the students some latitude in choosing their courses, student knowledge varies greatly. Hence, devising and maintaining an instrument to assess student knowledge is a challenge.

The department continues to revise the CRT in an effort to reflect more accurately the material taught in its courses. For example, the department completed a question-by-question analysis of the CRT to determine if any patterns could be discerned from

consistently missed questions. A few such patterns did emerge, and steps have been taken to reconsider how we are teaching the relevant subjects and how we can address these deficiencies in the students' knowledge. During the 2003-2004 academic year, the department also placed a bank of possible CRT questions on reserve in the library. All students have access to this bank of questions, from which the actual CRT questions are drawn. The results from spring 2004 and 2005 CRT (below) indicated that this has been a successful strategy. The department has determined that it now needs to raise the minimum passing grade, which it will do during the 2006-2007 academic year. As yet, we have not determined what the appropriate level should be.

Students are introduced to historical research and writing in History 300. Here they learn the basic skills of the historical craft without the additional burdens of a traditional content-heavy course. They produce substantial research papers based on primary research and/or on the investigation of historiographical themes. After they have satisfactorily completed History 300, majors are then required to produce a senior-level research paper in a 400-level course. Students are expected to write more sophisticated and polished papers at the senior level than at the junior level. Both junior- and senior-level papers must receive a passing grade (C-) from the instructor for whom they were written. The members of the department then evaluate the papers on the basis of the goals listed above using a standardized rubric. They look for a clearly defined and sustained argument based on appropriate sources and using the correct grammar and format.

In addition, although history is a written, rather than an oral, discipline, the department has adopted the college's grading rubric to help in the evaluation of oral

communications competency for purposes of general education. 2005 was the first year that these rubrics were used in History 300 and the data have not yet been analyzed.

Results for 2005

The department administered the CRT portion of the assessment exam, which provides evaluation of goals #1, #2, and #3, at the end of the 2003-2004 academic year. Students are required to achieve a score of at least 50% on the exam. This score appears low at first glance, primarily because it seeks to recognize the diversity of experience in the history major. Because students are offered a wide choice within the areas they are required to fulfill, not all face the exam with the course experiences that might be the case in a more prescriptive major. However, because of the results from the last two years, the department expects to raise its requirements for the next academic year.

The median score for 2005 was 77.6%. This percentage is consistent with last year's results, which represented a significant upturn from the previous five years.

1998	65.18%.
1999	66.35%
2000	69.89%
2001	66.19 %
2002	72.3%
2003	66.82%
2004	77%
2005	77.6%

The standard deviation for 2005 was 9.88, which is significantly better than the last three years.

1998	15
1999	13
2000	8.63
2001	11.16

2002	12.45
2003	13.96
2004	11.72
2005	9.88

In March 2004, the department completed an evaluation of randomly-selected 300- and 400-level research papers from the past five years. Last year, the task was somewhat less involved because only the six 400-level papers from the fall semester, along with the History 300 papers from each of these, were examined. The grade variation was consistent with the random sample of 2003, but showed no significant improvement. In 2005, the department decided only to compare 300- and 400-level papers every three years. Otherwise, it continues to use the standardized rubrics to record evaluation of junior- and senior-level papers. The department collected 36 research papers in History 300 during the 2005-2006 academic year. The results follow.

- A. Thesis
3.2
- B. Organization
3.02
- C. Paragraphing
3.2
- D. Language
3.0
- E. Sources and Documentation
3.5

Although the Department used a version of the standardized rubric during the last two assessment cycles, it did not analyze 300 and 400 papers on an item by item basis.

Instead, all items were added together, averaged, and translated into a grade. Because

this is the first year that history 300 papers have been evaluated using the college's on a item by item basis, it is unclear exactly what to make of this data. In addition, the department has not standardized its own expectations for 300-level papers using the new rubric. The department expects to do so during the 2006-2007 academic year.

Changes in 2005

The Department of History completed a mission statement and revised the goals it established in 1995, but no major changes to the History curriculum occurred in 2005. After adding several new courses during the 2002-2003 academic year, the department's course offerings now more accurately reflect the expertise and interests of its faculty. With the anticipated addition of two new tenure-track positions in 2006-7, the department expects to revise its offerings again. The department is not currently participating in the college's piloted humanities course, although it has left open the possibility of doing so in the future. This interdisciplinary course, which was recommended by the General Education Committee, was devised by three professors of English and three members of the History department: Tom Costa, Dana Sample, and Mark Clark. Both Costa and Sample, along with instructors from the Department of Language and Literature, taught this course on a trial basis. This course was not designed to replace History 101 and History 102 on a one-to-one basis. However, it was designed to bring the best aspects of Western Civilization and Freshman Composition together. Assessment of this course took place at the end of the 2003-2004 academic year with relatively unsatisfactory results for writing. Although no assessment was completed on the history portion of the course, both Sample and Costa were less than satisfied with the historical knowledge

their students exhibited on exams. Partly for this reason, the department is not currently participating in the humanities course.

General Education Courses

The Department of History offers a number of courses that serve the student body at large. These courses also serve as introductions within the major. History 101 and 102 (Western Civilization) are widely subscribed—the department can easily fill as many as 10-12 sections, a large number for a small college. Additionally, both History 101 and 102 are required by the Education Department for their Liberal Arts and Sciences (Pre-K through Grade Six) majors. In both cases, the classes fulfill Western Heritage requirements for the general education purposes. History 107 and 108 (Survey of American History) are often taken to fulfill the Humanities portion of general education; again, the Education Department requires its majors to enroll for one of these. All four of these courses insist on student integration of ideas and information, analysis, and a fair amount of writing.

The department hopes to begin using the recently-developed Survey of Western Heritage in its history courses in order to assess their effectiveness in meeting general education goals.

Alumni Results

The college assessment office regularly surveys college graduates two years following graduation. The department's results for the 1999- 2001 alumni groups are as follows:

	1999	2000	2001	2002
Satisfaction with education	3.8	3.3	3.7	3.9
Satisfaction with advising	3.3	2.5	3.6	3.6
Relation of degree to occupation	2.8	3.6	3.2	
Usefulness of degree in workplace	3.3	2.8	3.5	3.4
Preparation for citizenship	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.5
Preparation for use of technology				2.7
Freshman experience				2.9
Engagement				3.0

The 2002 results continue to be strong, except in the new categories of Technology, the Freshman Experience, and Engagement. Since this is the first year that these questions have been used, it is difficult to tell what will be the future norms, although the numbers for these categories seem somewhat low compared to the other categories. The department will continue to monitor alumni opinion.

Conclusions and Future Plans

The department has been granted two new tenure-track lines in Asian and Nineteenth Century US/Public History. Searches are ongoing, and the department expects to fill these positions during summer or fall 2006. With the addition of these two positions, the departmental curriculum will surely change, with more courses being offered in Asian history, at both the upper-division survey and advanced levels, and early-nineteenth century US.

With the new expert in public history, the department expects greatly to enhance its offerings in public history courses and field experience. This would seem to be an especially timely development. Three of the department's former majors are either pursuing or planning to pursue graduate study in public history: Julie Yates, Sara Roop, and Heather Crabtree. During 2005-2006, the department established a public history

internship at the Southwest Virginia Museum, an experiment that it expects to continue and expand. A new public historian should also help the library to organize its archival holdings.

The department is pleased that several of its graduates from 2005-6 attended graduate or professional school this year. Five are currently pursuing masters degrees in history, four are attending law school, and two plan to attend divinity school.

Several members of the department continue to participate in the Teaching U.S. History Grant that Dr. Costa has helped to create. Participation in this service allows department members to rethink teaching techniques in particular areas of American History and then share their expertise with interested high school and middle school teachers. One of the department's priorities for the 2006-2007 academic year is to strengthen its ties with the local school system. Discussions with local teachers and administrators have already begun. By the conclusion of the academic year, the department expects to have some clear strategies.

The department continues to value scholarship as a crucial part of professional development and teaching effectiveness. Significant publications during the past year include articles by Dana Sample and Mark Clark, books by Brian Wills, Brian McKnight, and Mark Clark, and scholarly presentations by Tom Costa, David Rouse, and McKnight. Mark Clark participated in an NEH Summer Institute on German Studies. James Humphreys successfully defended his dissertation at Mississippi State University and has been offered a book contract by the University of Florida Press. Cindy Wilkey plans to take a semester-long sabbatical either in fall 2006 or spring 2007 to pursue research on a new book.

