

HIST Annual Assessment Report, 2022-23

Assessment Meeting: April 24, 2023

Present: Jonathan Hancock (Chair), Allison Shutt, and Deb Skok

In AY 2022-23, we assessed a section of departmental Learning Goal 3: “Develop a set of skills that are central to the craft of history, including the ability to: critically analyze primary and secondary sources.” As historians, we define “primary sources” as historical sources generated at the time being studied. “Secondary sources” are scholarly studies written by historians. Following our Student Assessment Plan, we used direct evidence from Skills Evaluations for students in two courses required for the major, HIST 300: Historiography and HIST 480: Senior Capstone, and indirect evidence from our senior survey to gauge History majors’ achievement of this goal.

Direct and indirect evidence shows that faculty and students agree that History majors are meeting this goal. In the 2023 Senior Survey, 4 students strongly agreed and 1 student agreed that they met the goal of “critically analyzing primary and secondary sources.” From the HIST 300 Skills Evaluation, 6 students were deemed “Exemplary” and 3 students were deemed “Competent” in meeting this goal. Along similar lines, in the HIST 480 Skills Evaluation, 3 students were deemed “Exemplary,” and 2 were deemed “Competent.”

We also have adjusted the language in our assessment instruments to align it directly with this departmental learning goal. In HIST Senior Surveys and Skills Evaluations for majors prior to AY 2022-23, the language for the Learning Goal skill being evaluated was “Critical thinking skills,” which we defined as the “ability to evaluate evidence, see problems from multiple points-of-view, and apply theories to my analysis.” The new language of Learning Goal 3, “critically analyz[ing] primary and secondary sources,” is phrased more precisely and doesn’t contain multiple items in a list, which also lends itself to more precise assessment.

Because the Senior Survey and Skills Evaluation form language has been changed to align it with the language in Learning Goal 3, it is more difficult to compare this year’s evidence to that of previous years. Also, from 2015-2019, the History Department sought to gather Skills Evaluation data for History majors in each course, whereas for consistency, the Department now focuses on gathering data for majors in the required courses of HIST 300 and HIST 480. However, when “critical thinking skills” were assessed in direct and indirect assessment instruments in the last decade, there has been a consistent trend of students agreeing and strongly agreeing that they met this goal, as well as faculty members finding student skills to be either “Exemplary” and “Competent.” Therefore, while this year’s assessment language differed from previous years, the tables on the following page show that students have been consistently meeting this goal over time.

During our assessment meeting, we discussed how our courses at various levels, and assignments within those courses, address this aspect of Learning Goal 3. We agreed that our lower-level courses’ engagement with secondary sources is minimal and begins to increase at the 200- and 300-levels, as lower-level courses tend to focus on primary source analysis. We also discussed

how assignments in courses other than HIST 300 and HIST 480 can facilitate building this skill before students take these courses.

Direct Assessment Data

Spring 2023 Skills Evaluation for Majors

Question about a section of Learning Goal 3: “Develop a set of skills that are central to the craft of history, including the ability to: critically analyze primary and secondary sources”

	Basic	Competent	Exemplary
HIST 300	0	3	6
HIST 480	0	2	3

Skills Evaluation for History Majors

Question about critical thinking skills for majors in all HIST courses: “This student was able to evaluate evidence, see problems from multiple points of view, and apply theories to analysis.”

	Basic	Competent	Exemplary
2015-16	0	0	41
2016-17	0	8	66
2017-18	0	15	140
2018-19	0	15	96

Indirect Assessment Data

Senior Survey Question about a section of Learning Goal 3

2012-22: “Develop skills in critical thinking”

2023: “Develop a set of skills that are central to the craft of history, including the ability to: critically analyze primary and secondary sources”

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree
2012	6	2	2
2013	8		1
2014	8	2	
2015	3	1	
2016	7	1	
2017	4	2	
2018	4	2	
2019	6	1	
2020	8	1	1
2021	8	4	
2022	6		
2023	4	1	