

HIST Annual Assessment Report, 2021-22

Assessment Meeting: April 26, 2022

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

In 2021-22, we assessed Learning Goal 2: “Learn a variety of approaches to the practice of historical analysis.” Historians use the term “historiography” to refer to the methods and theories that comprise the “variety of approaches to the practice of historical analysis” in the learning goal. Following our Student Assessment Plan, we used direct evidence from a major assignment in HIST 300: Historiography and indirect evidence from our senior survey to gauge History majors’ achievement of this goal.

This is the third year we have used the HIST 300 rubric as a direct assessment instrument. While limited in the number of student assignments assessed over time, the results show that after most assignments fell in the “Exemplary” and “Competent” categories in 2020, assignments trended toward “Basic” in 2021 before returning to mostly “Competent” and “Exemplary” in 2022.

In HIST senior surveys from 2012 to 2021, we asked students to assess two separate aspects of their knowledge of historiography: “Understanding the research methods used by historians to study the past” and “Achieving familiarity with the basic theories and contributions of historians.” Beginning in 2022, we aligned the senior survey question more directly with Learning Goal 2, and students were asked to assess the extent to which they “learn[ed] a variety of approaches to the practice of historical analysis.” For the purposes of this report, answers to the previous survey question about “understanding the research methods used by historians to study the past” were compared to the new survey question about Learning Goal 2. Evidence from this survey suggests that students consistently agree that they meet this learning goal.

Given the disjuncture between the direct and indirect assessment evidence in 2021, as well as some trends in HIST 300 student work that the instructor has noticed, the department discussed ways to enhance students’ ability to meet this learning goal. Discussion centered on two topics: 1) changes to HIST 300: Historiography, a course required for the major, and 2) ways to introduce students to historiography in other history courses to enhance their preparation for HIST 300. Regarding adjustments to HIST 300, we discussed switching the course textbook, as the current textbook’s metaphorical framing of historiography as separate “houses of history” constrains some students’ understanding of approaches to historical analysis that involve multiple “houses.” For instance, a historical study could combine oral history, gender theory, and quantitative methods, whereas the textbook frames these fields as distinct “houses.” Other proposed adjustments to HIST 300 included ways to set students on firmer paths for carrying out their historiographical essays: adding incremental deadlines for completing segments of the essay, and giving feedback about those segments, as well as supplying students with a list of essay topics from which they must choose one topic to write about.

As for introducing students to historiography in other departmental courses, we discussed integrating assignments in other courses that address historiography, so that students can make clearer connections between their work in HIST 300 and other courses in the major.

Direct Assessment Data**Assignment Rubric for HIST 300: Historiography**

	Basic: Able to identify distinct historiographical approaches to the practice of historical analysis	Competent: Able to identify distinct historiographical approaches & the implications of their differences for the practice & truth claims of historical analysis	Exemplary: Able to identify distinct historiographical approaches and the implications of their differences through the analysis of the historiography of a certain topic.
2022	1	3	3
2021	5		1
2020	2	4	5

Indirect Assessment Data**Senior Survey Question about Learning Goal 2: Learn a variety of approaches to the practice of historical analysis**

2012-21: “understand the research methods used by historians to understand the past”

2022: “learn a variety of approaches to the practice of historical analysis”

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree
2022	4	1	1
2021	8	4	
2020	9	1	1
2019	6	1	
2018	6		
2017	6		
2016	5	3	
2015	3	4	
2014	4	6	
2013	8	1	1
2012	6	4	