

# Assessment of Student Learning Plan (ASLP): History Program

2016-17 Academic Year

## A. College, Department, Date

College CAHS  
Department History and Political Science  
Date May 2017

## B. Contact Person for the Assessment Plan

Name and title: Libby Bischof, Associate Professor of History and Director, Center for Collaboration and Development

## C. Degree Program

Name of Degree Program: HISTORY

## D. Assessment of Student Learning: Program Assessment

### Step 1: Identify the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)

a. Do you have your student learning outcomes published on your department's website? Yes/No

i. If yes, please indicate the url:  
<https://usm.maine.edu/history/overview>

b. Please identify **which of your student learning outcome(s) were assessed this past academic year**. (One or more of the outcomes and corresponding assessment plans could come from your department's CORE Course Blueprint(s)).

Students who study History at USM can: (See highlighted outcomes)

**\*engage in historical inquiry, research, and analysis.**

\*understand the dynamics of change over time.

*\*explore multiple historical and theoretical viewpoints that provide perspective on the past, and recognize where they are in history.*

*\*seek a variety of sources that provide evidence to support an argument about the past and develop a methodological practice for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence.*

*\*recognize and practice historical thinking as central to engaged citizenship in their application of historical knowledge and analysis to contemporary social issues and contemporary dialogue.*

These three highlighted outcomes are assessed in both our HTY 200 and HTY 400 courses, a required sequence (Methods and Capstone) that we have targeted for additional (and ongoing) assessment work through the development of common assignments, rubrics, and objectives. See the attached CCC blueprint for HTY 400 submitted in May. See a discussion of this work on pages 3-5 of this report.

- c. Do you have a **matrix or curriculum map** showing when your student learning outcomes are assessed and in which courses? Yes/No

*We will work on this as one of our ASLP goals for 2017-2018.*

- i. *If yes, do you have this map published on your website? Please indicate url or attach a copy of the curriculum map.*

### **Step 2: Assessment Methods Selected and Implemented**

- d. (and e.) *Identify which direct measures (other than course grades), that were used to determine whether students achieved the stated learning outcomes for the degree.*

As part of a multi-stage process to align and assess our HTY 400 Senior Seminar class (Capstone), required by all majors and taught on a rotating basis by all History faculty members, we have been collecting HTY 400 final assignments over the course of the last five semesters, so as to receive examples of student work from each faculty member's course/s. We also recently submitted the course for CCC Capstone designation, which required further work on the alignment of common learning objectives and a common set of assignments/assessments (see attachment). Now that we have a large sampling of student work across a variety of iterations of the HTY 400 course, we are in the process of developing a rubric that will help us assess the three highlighted outcomes listed on the previous page. A small group of faculty who teach the course will then go through the samples with the rubric. We will also do an exercise in blind grading to more closely examine our evaluation practices. In the blind grading and subsequent discussion, I would like to see if we can agree to refine some common standards/expectations for 200 and 400 around: what does it mean to get an A in this course, a B, a C, etc.?

Related to these three outcomes, but also to facilitate program improvement, Professor Bischof conducted a group exit interview for all students graduating in the HTY K-8 and 7-12 pathways on April 27, 2017. The qualitative data from this assessment is already being used to improve advising processes, refine connections between the content major and the education requirements, and to adjust the curriculum for the 7-12 pathway to include more Social Studies courses beyond History (e.g. Sociology, Political Science, etc.). This qualitative data (in addition to department level surveys piloted this year in CAHS with your office) will inform a lot of our curricular review/redesign next year.

**Step 3: Using the Assessment results to Improve Student Learning**

- a. *Briefly describe your unit's process of reviewing the program assessment results (i.e. annual process by faculty committee, etc).* We completed the program review process for 2015-2016 in fall of 2016 (officially), culminating in meetings with the Dean and the Provost. The Provost's office has been circulating the History Program Review as a model and example for other departments. I am sending a copy of the program review under separate cover. As a department, we have discussed the reviewer feedback, as well as the letters from the Dean and Provost in a series of meetings. We will be doing a significant curriculum review (and perhaps overhaul) in 2017-2018. We waited a year in between this Program Review process and beginning this curricular large task in order to complete our search for a new TT Assistant Professor of Modern European History, Lacey Sparks, who will start in fall 2017. Her position is essential to this revision process.
- b. *What specific changes have been or will be made to improve student learning, as a result of using the program assessment results?* Total curriculum review (and potential overhaul) is slated to begin in fall 2017. Outside reviewers were very complimentary of the program and our engagement with students, but we have work to do in terms of aligning our curriculum with our current capabilities in terms of who is now staffing the program (retirements, new hire, etc.). Since defining the learning outcomes and posting them on the website, we have become more intentional around thinking about how our courses are mapped in regards to these outcomes and what potential common assessments can now emerge. We have had many more informal discussions around assessment, grading, and student expectations as a program this year than I can ever remember in the past decade.
- c. *Date of most recent program review/self-study?* 2015-2016 (Process fully completed, through Provost level review, in fall 2016).

**E. Course Assessment Activities:** *Is your program able to report any assessment-related activities at the Course-Level... (i.e. created grading rubrics to use in required courses, examined student progress in entry-level courses, developed a new course, etc)? Please briefly explain any assessment projects.*

Yes, in January of 2017, prior to the start of the spring semester, Professors Bischof and Zhao worked to align objectives and common activities and assessments for HTY 200, our required research methods course. Currently, we are the only ones teaching this course. We also have a common rubric for the main course project, a 12-15 page research paper. I have submitted this rubric with my ASLP report. We also applied earlier this month (May 2017) to the CCC to have our HTY 400 counted as a Capstone for the Core, which required assessing the course and aligning objectives (see application submitted with ASLP form). Also, Professor Bischof sponsored (through the CCD) and attended a variety of Assessment workshops in 2016-2017, notably the Assessment Mini-Conference and the Title III Symposium, but also the workshop on Assessment with Susan Walcott in fall 2016. She also taught a workshop on efficient assessment practices with Google forms (rubric based, a practice she developed in fall 2016 and uses with HTY 360 and HTY 374). While no specific new courses were developed this year, we did, as the Department of History and Political Science, launch a new Race and Ethnic Studies minor in fall 2016, which has taken a lot of time and attention. Finally, History has been involved in two Dual Enrollment pilots this year in US History level survey courses with Gorham High School (Bridge Program, HTY 122) and Boothbay Regional High School (HTY 122 and HTY 123). These dual enrollments have required a good deal of course level common assessment of the HS teachers (syllabi and credential review, course visits), but also of student work (developing new course assessment activities, blind grading of sample culminating assessments, etc.). Professor Bischof has been the primary contact for these Dual Enrollment programs.

**F. Community Engagement Activities in your departmental curriculum:**

*a. Does your department have a student learning outcome that is related to any community engagement activities? If so, please state the outcome.* Yes. "Students who study History at USM can recognize and practice historical thinking as central to engaged citizenship in their application of historical knowledge and analysis to contemporary social issues and contemporary dialogue."

b. Please indicate if any of the community engagement activities listed below are included in your program's curriculum, by noting which activities are required or optional for students in your major.

<u>Community Engagement Activity</u>	<u>Required/Optional</u>	
Student Research (related to a community-based problem)	R	O
Student-Faculty Community Research Project*	R	O
Internship, or a Field Experience	R	O
Independent Study (community-related project)	R	O
Capstone Course (community-related project)	R	O
Service-Learning (course-based)	R	O
Study Abroad, or an International Program	R	O
Interdisciplinary Collaborative Project (community related)	R	O
Student Leadership Activities (related to a team project)	R	O
Students/Faculty Community Leadership (advisory boards, committees, conference presentations)	R	O
Other Activities (not mentioned above):		

\*Two examples: *Maine World War One Memorial Inventory Project*:  
<http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/wwi/>

*Portland, Maine Women's History Trail: (Also a Mobile App)*  
<http://media.usm.maine.edu/~pwht/>

c. Please list any courses (i.e. EDU 400) that have a community engagement activity in your program.

Entry-level courses: HTY 122 (Bischof)  
 [Also, EYE courses taught occasionally by Bischof and Tuchinsky]  
 Mid-level courses: HTY 200 (Bischof), HTY 300 (History Internship)  
 Upper-level courses: HTY 364 (Eagan) HTY 360 (Bischof), HTY 345 (Rowe), HTY 346 (Rowe),  
 HTY 347 (Rowe), HTY 394: WWI Culture, Politics, Memory (Bischof)

I fully anticipate that our new hire, Lacey Sparks, will also develop significant community engagement activities in many of her new courses, and I look forward to reporting those next year.

Capstone Course Proposal, HISTORY

**Proposer Name: Libby Bischof**

**E-mail: elizabeth.bischof@maine.edu**

**Phone: x5219**

**Course number and name: HTY 400 Senior Seminar**

**Names of faculty developing the course:** Libby Bischof, Gary Johnson, Jie Zhao and Leroy Rowe. All History faculty members rotate through the teaching of this course on a regular basis. Each faculty member can choose the topic of emphasis.

**Names of faculty expected to teach course (if different from above):** Our new History faculty member (9/2017), Lacey Sparks, will also teach this course in a rotation.

**Department notification/approval**

**As program chair, and author of the proposal, I affirm that this course is taught within the normal load of our faculty, on a rotating and equitable basis.**

**Scheduling:**

**Expected number of sections: 3 per academic year, dependent upon number of graduating seniors in a given cohort.**

**Semester/days/times/campus(es) in which you plan to offer the course for the first time (all sections): This course is already regularly offered; it's not a new course. We are just seeking formal Capstone approval. We offer it in both Portland and Gorham.**

**Has this scheduling been approved by the department(s) involved?  Y / N**

**After the first offering, what semesters do you plan to offer this course and how many sections will you offer per semester?**

**Fall 2017: 1 section      Spring 2017: 1-2 sections**

**Fall 2018: 1 section      Spring 2019: 1-2 sections**

## **HTY 400 Senior Seminar Capstone Course Proposal Narrative**

- 1. Describe how each of the Capstone learning outcomes and course characteristics will be addressed in the course; For each Capstone outcome, describe at least one example of an assignment students will complete to achieve the learning outcome:**

History's HTY 400 Senior Seminar course, the required Capstone course for our BA degree, currently meets the learning outcomes of the University's Core Curriculum Capstone requirement. To this end, please see text inserted after the following list of required outcomes for a more detailed articulation of how HTY 400 addresses these outcomes.

### ***Draw on the specialized knowledge of the major to articulate a significant theme, topic, issue or problem:***

Each HTY 400 Senior Seminar course carries with it a specialized theme or topic that the individual instructor wishes to explore in depth with his/her students over the course of the semester. The catalog description of the course, however, is common to all individual sections, and directly addresses the scope of this LO: "The Senior Seminar serves as the Capstone to the History major and is a requirement for the degree. The Seminar explores the nature and craft of history and students are expected, through discussion and writing, to apply knowledge and skills acquired in previous history courses." Recent topics offered have included: Visualizing History; Gender, Race, and Justice in America, and Race and Slavery in the Roman Empire. In both theory and practice, each and every assignment given in HTY 400, from leading group discussions of reading, to writing analytical essays, crafting annotated bibliographies, and presenting one's work orally requires students to draw on their specialized Historical knowledge gained over the course of their undergraduate career.

### ***Design and generate a significant oral, written, creative or applied final project:***

Although the format of the final project in each section of HTY 400 can vary according to the instructor's individual preference, all HTY 400 sections incorporate a final project into their syllabi and course requirements. All HTY 400 final projects, whether they be written or presented orally/visually, incorporate significant individual student research on a topic related to the course theme. Students choose the subject of their research, and, over the course of the semester, work to situate their topic within the larger historiography of the theme, and finally, craft an individual project (typically, but not always, a research paper and presentation). HTY 400 courses typically require at least 25 pages of writing over the course of the semester (often more), sometimes broken down into multiple assignments. In all cases, writing presented in the final project format, is typically ten pages or more. In my syllabus (Bischof, Spring 2016), you will note that the students had to also design a visual component to their work, but the same level of research was expected. Students are evaluated on their ability to obtain and incorporate a wide variety of primary and secondary source material, the originality of their arguments and analysis, and their ability to put multiple sources in conversation with one another.

*A Note on Assessment:* As part of the History programs recent ASLP forms (for Susan King and the Assessment Office), we have been working on assessment for both HTY 200 (our research methods course) and HTY 400 (our senior seminar and capstone) as well as the links between those two courses (200 is the pre-requisite for 400). For the past four semesters (five iterations of the HTY 400 course), we have collected examples of student work, with a focus on final/culminating assignments. These assignments have been scanned and held in a common (password protected) drive, and now, with the addition of Professor Johnson's spring 2017 culminating assignments, we are preparing, in summer and fall 2017, to do blind reads of these collected assignments. These blind reads (which will be done by all faculty who teach the course, including our new department member) will allow us to assess for content (specific to the course); skill (in preparing, conducting and presenting research, as well as historical analysis); and, to what extent our guiding learning outcomes for the History program as a whole (see below, and our [website](#)) are being met by the time students graduate our program, as evidenced by the culminating work completed in HTY 400. One of the outcomes of our assessment will be a general rubric that can be applied to all HTY 400 final projects, regardless of what form the projects and final assignments take.

***Students who study History at USM can:***

- \*engage in historical inquiry, research, and analysis.
- \*understand the dynamics of change over time.
- \*explore multiple historical and theoretical viewpoints that provide perspective on the past, and recognize where they are in history.
- \*seek a variety of sources that provide evidence to support an argument about the past and develop a methodological practice for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence.
- \*recognize and practice historical thinking as central to engaged citizenship in their application of historical knowledge and analysis to contemporary social issues and contemporary dialogue.

***Collaborate or consult with others to research, create or discuss solutions or approaches to the project;***

Due to the size of the HTY 400 course (capped at 14, can go up to 16), the seminar style in which the course is taught leads to frequent collaboration between individual students. In all sections of the course, regardless of who is teaching the section, students are required to lead weekly discussions of course materials in pairs or groups. They engage in significant oral discussions throughout the semester (each week the course meets for a 2.5 hour block—lectures in this course are limited—the emphasis is

on analysis of source material and rich discussion). Furthermore, some sections also require collaborative projects beyond the significant group work that occurs in every class. For instance, my senior seminar students frequently undertake a project of sorts, e.g. helping to paint the Gorham Community History mural currently hanging on the exterior of Amato's, or curating an exhibition in Special Collections. As another example, in Professor Eagan's courses, over the years, students have worked collaboratively to document and map monuments around Maine.

*A Note on Assessment:* Students will be assessed on both the quantity and the quality (substantive) of their class participation throughout the course of the semester, as these frequent discussions are a key part of the HTY 400 seminar experience, and depending on the section, can be worth up to 30% of the grade for the course. Students are also assessed on the materials they prepare for discussion groups they lead, as well as the discussion itself. Group projects such as a curated exhibition are assessed at the individual level (e.g. the individual labels a student wrote for an object) as well as the extent to which they engaged and participated in the process as a whole.

***Analyze, apply, and integrate multiple sources of information and specialized perspectives to complete the project:***

Another commonality you will note in different HTY 400 syllabi is the heavier reading load. It is typical to find four to seven monographs assigned, in addition to various journal articles and primary sources. In addition to the course reading, students are required to conduct significant primary and secondary source research for their final written projects. By the very nature of a discipline that studies change over time, Historians rely on multiple sources and perspectives to shape any argument. Quoting three of Professor Rowe's specific learning objectives for HTY 400 speaks to this point, as well as Capstone LO #4: (1) Improve methods of historical research, gained familiarity with critical primary and secondary sources, and practiced incorporating such sources productively into her/his own writing; (2) Develop strategies for the close reading of historical texts, methods of critical analysis, and effective presentation of historical arguments, and (3) Demonstrate achievements by developing and writing an original a research proposal and a biographical essay."

*A Note on Assessment:* These objectives will be assessed throughout the semester and especially in the final project, in the case of Professor Rowe's course, the research proposal and bibliographic essay (see lengthier explanation to this end on page 3). Many of the final projects rely on a series of culminating assignments (e.g. the research proposal), and students are given substantive written feedback on these culminating assignments to help ensure the final project meets the stated objectives.

***Draw on learning in general education and other courses to reflect on and critically interrogate learning within the capstone and the major.***

Students in HTY 400 frequently find the rigor of the course to be both challenging and immensely rewarding. The challenge comes from a decided shift from being the receivers and analyzers of provided historical content, to the teachers, discussants, and creators of historical content. They go from 36 credits of learning history, learning what historians do, and learning the methods of the discipline, to a capstone experience of having to not only apply previous content knowledge, but to use the knowledge and methods of historical inquiry to create original work. This shift to creators of history that others will consume results in many discussions and opportunities to critically reflect upon prior learning, both in the capstone course, and within the major as a whole. For example, when my Senior Seminar students designed a public exhibition for USM's Special Collections department, they had to learn how to construct a narrative based on adding text to objects, and arranging objects in such a way that their overall arguments became clear to viewers. They could not do this complex creative and reflective work without the content knowledge gained in prior courses

*A Note on Assessment:* In addition to the aforementioned assessment practices, one of the hallmarks of the HTY 400 is the opportunity for continual reflective practice over the course of the semester—both in terms of personal growth over the course of one's college career, as well as professional growth as historians.

For example, at the end of my HTY 400 course, students spend time orally reflecting on what they've gotten out of the course, as well as how they can connect the course to their past learning as well as their future trajectory.

Furthermore, we often conduct informal student focus groups within these courses where we encourage students to reflect and assess their own experiences within the History major at USM. These qualitative assessments, both formal and informal, are very useful to the program faculty as we prepare to revise our curriculum starting in 2017-2018.

2. **Provide a course outline** for the capstone course, showing organization of **topics, central questions, related readings and assignments, etc.** If available, a recent syllabus will suffice:

**See attached syllabi—Bischof and Rowe.**

3. **Identify at least two of the discipline's specific foundational concepts and/or methods** and explicitly articulate where and **how they are currently being introduced and explored within the major and how they are applied within the capstone course.** (For example, how are these key concepts or methods introduced and explored in the major prerequisites to the capstone?)

The major pre-requisite for our HTY 400 course is HTY 200: Research, Reference, and Report-Writing, our Historical methods course. While content knowledge acquired in previous 100 level and 300 level

History courses may be useful to students taking the Capstone, it is really the research skills and historiographical knowledge gained in HTY 200 that facilitate the ability of a History major to complete their final HTY 400 project. To this end, so you can see the developmental relationship between HTY 200 and HTY 200, I offer the three major learning objectives taken from my Spring 2017 HTY 200 syllabus: “Objective I: Preparing you to: a. identify an event, person, issue or problem you would like to research, b. develop a working thesis, c. gather and evaluate primary and secondary source materials to support your thesis, d. outline and e. write a 12-15 page research paper on your chosen topic— complete with footnotes and a bibliography; Objective II: Exposing you to: various historical methods and styles, historiography, and the CRAFT of history. We will talk a great deal over the course of the semester about what historians do and how and why they do it; Objective III: Introducing you to the daily work of historians, especially as it relates to research (and related skills). This semester, we have the opportunity to work with Special Collections in the Glickman Library to transcribe and contextualize a series of letters written by Harriet Sweetser (1881-1925) while she was a student at the Gorham Normal School, 1898-1901. We will also be designing a small exhibition on College Life in the late-1800s/early-1900s that will be on display in the cases on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Glickman in late-March and early-April.”

The practical, skills-based knowledge History students gain in HTY 200 (conducting primary and secondary research, formulating a research question, developing an original thesis, writing a research paper, understanding the craft of history, etc.) is essential for the independent research and higher-level analysis required in HTY 400.

#### **4. A final note on course characteristics:**

To the extent possible (and frequently with the assistance of Title III High Impact Practices teaching grants), HTY 400 courses incorporate a variety of experiences outside of the traditional classroom. These experiences range from field trips to museums, libraries, archives and historical societies to presenting one’s work in a public exhibition or at thinking matters. The availability of creative and flexible final project options (e.g. not always having to produce the traditional historical research paper) has also resulted in interesting action-oriented research and public presentations, e.g. the creation of heavily researched historical documentary films, podcasts, and interactive Google maps. Students are also encouraged to present their work at the annual April Thinking Matters Student Research Symposium. As a discipline, we must remain current, allowing our graduating students to access the most important and current work in the field, but also allowing them to fully realize the range and possibility of historical skills as deployed in a variety of career pathways.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PROJECT \_\_\_\_\_

**THE FINAL ESSAY IS WORTH 30% of your grade for the course.**

**THE ESSAY IS GRADED OUT OF 100 POINTS, broken down as follows:**

- 1. Essay has all of the proper components in the proper order [Title Page, Table of Contents, Introduction, Historiography, Body (Subtopics), Conclusion, Bibliography, and Appendix (if needed)] and pages are numbered [10 points]:**
- 2. Clarity of Thesis/Argument as presented in the Introduction and throughout the essay itself [10 points]:**
- 3. Historiography [2.5 points]:**
- 4. Use of supporting evidence from your research to support your argument[s] throughout the essay [15 points]:**
- 5. Ability to draw analytical conclusions from your observations [10 points]:**
- 6. Content in Body of Essay [22.5 points]:**
- 7. Conclusion [5 points]:**
- 8. Quality and Amount of Sources Used for Research [10 points]:**
- 9. Proper Format for and Quality of Footnotes [10 points]:**
- 10. Proper Format for Bibliography [5 points]:**

**Overall SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_**

**COURSE GRADE \_\_\_\_\_**