

**MA History Department Assessment  
Colorado State University-Pueblo  
Department of History  
Graduate Director: Matt Harris**

**Institutional Mission Linkages**

The MA program in the Department of History was officially approved during spring 2010. The program serves Pueblo area teachers and those interested in graduate education in history who wish to remain in the southern Colorado area. By serving these constituencies, the Department will improve the quality of history and social studies teaching in local classrooms and improve the quality of historical knowledge in Pueblo and environs.

**Institutional Strategic Planning Linkages**

The university made a new strategic plan in fall 2008 with six initiatives. These include Academic Excellence, Student Access and Success, Diversity, Image Building, Community Engagement, Resource Management, and Shared Governance.

1. Academic Excellence: The History MA program was created as a result of two important factors: overwhelming student demand in southern Colorado and a \$1.7 million Teaching American History Grant that was awarded by the US Department of Education to Pueblo City Schools and CSU-Pueblo. Accordingly, the program has developed several effective assessment measures to gauge academic rigor in historical reading, thinking, and writing. The graduate faculty will begin implementing these measures in the fall 2009 and winter 2010, in anticipation of producing several data points that will address the strengths and weaknesses of the program.
2. Student Access and Success: Because of the generous funding from the Department of Education, the program has been able to accommodate a large number of students in the History MA program. This funding has allowed the grant to cover the teachers' books and tuition while at the same time allowing the Department to hire supplemental instructors in high-demand content areas.
3. Diversity: While the vast majority of the students in the MA program are public educators, the graduate committee remains committed to recruiting non-teachers in the program. This allows for more diversity in thought and discussion, as well as enhanced career opportunities for students who wish to pursue history education beyond the MA degree. With respect to Image Building, we have updated the Department's website, included a graduate page, and written a brochure outlining the parameters of the graduate program. Furthermore, we have contacted the School Boards at both Pueblo City Schools and Pueblo District 70, where our teachers have been recognized at Board Meetings for winning prestigious national awards. Finally, because of our Teaching American History Grants, which has totaled over \$4 million in federal funds, we have enjoyed very positive press from the local newspaper, the *Pueblo Chieftain*.

4. **Community Engagement:** While there are no specific goals outlined in the MA proposal, the Department has been very effective in working with the two Pueblo School Districts and the South Central Board of Cooperative Education Services in southern Colorado. History instructors have led workshops that involved District personnel, community members, and various other constituencies. In addition, the Teaching American History Grants has allowed us to organize and fund a speaker series with distinguished historians and educators, which the Pueblo community has wholeheartedly supported. Lastly, through the patronage of the TAH Grants, CSU-Pueblo historians have led several teacher-trips to study history at various historical sites in the United States, including New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco, among others.
5. **Resource Management:** At this writing the History MA program does not have a budget. In the future, it is anticipated that administrators will allocate to the program a fixed budget so as to help with enrollment issues and program costs.
6. **Shared Governance:** Shared Governance is important to the faculty in the History MA program. To that end, a graduate committee has been established to set policies and procedures for the program. This ensures faculty input for all interested stakeholders, as well as effective management on program outcomes and procedures.

### **College Planning Goals or Mission Statement**

The goals and initiatives of the History MA program are directly tied into the mission of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS). These include helping students “develop critical thinking skills, aesthetic awareness, and ethical perspectives,” and, most significantly, providing them “with the tools and expertise necessary to function as responsible citizens and professionals and to engage in intellectual and artistic pursuits.”

### **Program Purpose**

The MA program is intended to prepare students for a variety of career paths. The program offers excellent preparation for elementary and secondary school teachers, government service, library and archival work, preservation and museum management, journalism, and public history. It also provides an excellent foundation for advanced degrees in history, law, political science, and other social science and humanities disciplines. The general goals of the program are to enhance and invigorate critical thinking and writing, foster a greater understanding of and appreciation for historical scholarship, and, as stated above, to prepare students for a variety of career paths.

### **Program Improvement Research Administration**

Outcomes-based Assessment:

The following measures will be implemented during the start of fall semester 2009:

1. Students will complete an Attitude Assessment survey as they enter the program and as they exit the program. This qualitative tool allows us to measure student attitudes toward history education, critical reading and writing, as well as gauge the program’s strengths and weaknesses.

2. In graduate history courses, faculty will assign a Documents Based Question (DBQ) paper. This quantitative assessment is geared to gauge students' critical reading and writing ability, by having them critically appraise a set of primary historical documents. Through pre- and post-assessment measures, students make historical arguments in 8-10 typewritten pages as they interrogate the documents. This assessment tool allows us to measure students' reading and writing ability while we teach them historical methods.
3. Students' MA theses and independent study projects are evaluated by members of the History Graduate Committee, in conjunction with the goals and outcomes articulated in this assessment report. This includes an oral examination and/or a written component before the students' graduate.

Student Learning Outcomes at the start of fall semester 2009:

The history faculty has outlined four student learning outcomes consistent with the CHASS and University strategic plans:

1. To demonstrate a high level of competency in historical scholarship.
2. To demonstrate an understanding of theoretical works of history and methodology.
3. To demonstrate graduate-level writing and research skills appropriate for historical scholarship.
4. To demonstrate that students engage in critical reading, thinking, and writing consistent with Master's level work in history.

## **Description & Methodology**

### **Outcome**

1. Demonstrate a high level of competency in historical scholarship

### **Strategy**

All MA students must take at least three Readings Courses:

Hist 501—Early America, pre-Columbus to 1763

Hist 501—New American Nation, 1763-1840

Hist 501—US Southwest

Hist 501—Religion & Politics in US History

Hist 501—US History, 1914-1945

Hist 501—US History, 1877-1914

Hist 501—American West

Hist 501—Civil War & Reconstruction

Hist 501—US History Through Literature

Hist 501—Colorado History

Hist 501—US History Since 1945

### **Assessment Method(s)**

In addition to the papers and exams for the courses mentioned above, History Faculty will gauge competency in historical scholarship by requiring an MA thesis or written examination at the end of the program. The Graduate Director and two members of the

Graduate Committee will organize and administer the thesis defense and examination, at which time they will complete a form reflecting on the learning outcomes of the program.

### **Criterion**

The Graduate Director and Graduate History Committee expect students to perform at a satisfactory level before receiving their degree. This means that they will have to score a 3.0 or above on the committee evaluations to be considered proficient in the MA thesis defense or written examination. After the thesis defense or examination (students can choose either option), committee members will evaluate the students' work based on the following rubric: 4.0 High Pass, 3.0 Satisfactory Pass, 2.0 Unsatisfactory—student does not pass.

### **Outcome**

2. Demonstrate an understanding of theoretical works of history and methodology

### **Strategy**

All History MA students must take History 505—Historiography and Theory. This intensive course explores the theoretical, methodological, and historiographic orientations of historical scholarship. It is therefore one of the foundation courses in the History MA program.

### **Assessment Method(s)**

History Faculty will gauge a students' proficiency in historical theory by requiring a 25 page historiographic paper on a particular topic. In this paper, students will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a particular historical topic, taking great care to discuss the theoretical, methodological, and historiographical orientations of the authors.

### **Criterion**

The Graduate Director and Graduate History Committee expect students to perform at a satisfactory level in Historiography and Theory. This means that all students must score a 'B' grade or higher in the class in order to satisfy this program requirement.

To receive a 'B' grade or higher, students must adhere to the following standard that applies to a substantial historiographic paper in History 505:

- Does the paper contain a clear, well-developed thesis regarding the topic in question?
- Does it support the thesis with substantial relevant information drawn from the secondary works under review?
- Does it provide an effective analysis of the literature using a clear, coherent timeline?
- Does it contain factual errors?
- Does it represent an accurate reading of the authors' arguments?
- Is it well-organized and well-written?
- Is the conclusion justified by the evidence?

**Outcome**

3. Demonstrates graduate-level writing and research skills appropriate for historical scholarship.

**Strategy**

All Master's classes have a rigorous research and writing component. In particular, all MA students are required to take History 592 (Historical Research), which is foundation course for the program. In addition, students have the option of writing a Master's thesis (History 599), at which time they can refine their writing and research skills.

**Assessment Method(s)**

History Faculty will gauge a students' proficiency in historical research and writing by requiring an MA thesis or written examination at the end of the program. The Graduate Director and two members of the Graduate Committee will organize and administer the thesis defense and examination, at which time they will complete a form reflecting on the learning outcomes of the program. In addition, the Graduate Director and Graduate History Committee expect students to perform at a satisfactory level in History 592—Historical Research and Writing. This means that all students must score a 'B' grade or higher in the class in order to satisfy this program requirement.

To receive a 'B' grade or higher, students must adhere to the following standard that applies to a substantial research paper in History 592:

- Does the paper contain a clear, well-developed thesis regarding the topic in question?
- Does it support the thesis with substantial relevant information drawn from the documents?
- Does it provide an effective analysis of the question using a clear, coherent timeline?
- Does it contain factual errors?
- Is it well-organized and well-written?
- Is the conclusion justified by the evidence?

**Criterion**

The Graduate Director and Graduate History Committee expect students to score a 3.0 or above on the committee evaluations to be considered proficient in the MA thesis defense or written examination. After the thesis defense or examination (students can choose either option), committee members will evaluate the students' work based on the following rubric: 4.0 High Pass, 3.0 Satisfactory Pass, 2.0 Unsatisfactory—student does not pass. Students must score a 'B' grade or better in History 592 in order to demonstrate competence in this foundation course.

**Outcome**

4. Demonstrates that students engage in critical reading, thinking, and writing consistent with Master's level work in history.

### **Strategy**

All MA classes have a rigorous research and writing component. In particular, all MA students are required in each class to write a Documents Based Questions paper. This 8-10 page paper evaluates a students' ability to think critically and write succinctly—in effect, this assessment tool teaches students how to “think like an historian.”

### **Assessment Method(s)**

Through a pre- and post-assessment measure, History Faculty will score the DBQ papers based on the following criteria:

- Does the paper contain a clear, well-developed thesis regarding the topic in question?
- Does it support the thesis with substantial relevant information drawn from the documents?
- Does it provide an effective analysis of the question using a clear, coherent timeline?
- Does it contain factual errors?
- Is it well-organized and well-written?
- Is the conclusion justified by the evidence?

### **Criterion**

History Faculty will evaluate the DBQ papers based on the following rubric: 4.0 High Pass, 3.0 Satisfactory Pass, 2.0 Unsatisfactory—student does not pass. Faculty will compare the pre- and post-test assessment to evaluate the students' strengths and weaknesses.

### **Assessment Reporting**

1. The History 501 courses, which are offered two per semester during the academic year, will be used to measure all SLOs every year. This includes the DBQ assessment exam, which is administered in every 501 course.
2. The History 505 and 592 courses, which are offered annually, will measure SLOs appropriate to those courses. Reporting will occur each year.
3. Master's Exams will be scored every spring and the assessment outcomes will be tabulated and reported then, too.
4. Performance levels are discussed in the narrative above.

## **Curriculum map for History MA Program: Fall 2010**

Course/ SLO #	#1 Competency	#2 Historiography	#3 Research Skills	#4 Critical Analysis
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HIST 501	1– 8-10 page essays 1—Discussion group outcomes	1–8-10 page essays 1– Primary source analysis 1—Secondary source analysis	1–8-10 page essays 1–Small group discussion	1– Primary source analysis through DBQ 1—Secondary source analysis
HIST 505	R – Analytical Papers R – Quizzes R – Oral presentations R – Annotated bibs R – Historiographic essay R - Participation/Engagement with Readings I&M – Historiography Papers	I to M – developmental through all written work	M & R – Discussion M&R - Papers	I to R – Bibliographies, Papers I to M – Historiographic essay R – Primary source Interrogation/analysis R – Secondary source interrogation/analysis

HIST 592	R – Primary source analysis R – Secondary source analysis R – Research paper R – Oral presentation	R&M – all assignments	R – Discussion R—Class Presentations	R – Bib development assignments and paper
HIST 599	R – Primary source analysis R – Secondary source analysis R – Thesis paper R – Thesis defense	R – Thesis paper R – Thesis defense	R – Thesis paper	R – Thesis paper R – Thesis defense

Level:

I = Introduce

R = Reinforce

M = Master

Historiographic Essay

Means:

Exams

4-6 Page Essays

Oral Presentations

Field Experience

Research Paper or

Primary source analysis

Secondary source analysis

Group Discussions

Class Participation