Georgia Southern University
Department of History
ASSESSMENT PLAN for the MA in HISTORY[1]
Adopted April 2010

Assessment Plan and Learning Outcomes for the MA in History

Assessment Committee

The Department of History Graduate Studies Committee shall be the Committee of Record for reviewing, implementing, and reporting assessment of the MA in History. The Graduate Studies Committee shall consist of the Director of Graduate Studies and four faculty of the History Department, elected by the faculty of the Department in accordance with Department procedures at the beginning of the fall semester.

Learning Outcomes (DLOs)

There are four desired learning outcomes for students earning the MA in History:

- Students will demonstrate ability to present and support extended oral arguments about important ideas and concepts of history. This implies the ability to:
    - Discuss diverse time periods, peoples, situations, and societies;
    - Perceive past events and issues in an appropriate historical context;
    - Comprehend the interplay of change and continuity;
    - Grasp the complexities of historical causation.
    - Effectively communicate historical arguments to non-specialists.

- Students will develop skills in both the mechanics and structure of writing to effectively and skillfully present historical research and argumentation. This implies the ability to:
    - Write clearly and effectively about complex ideas;
    - Effectively use narrative to tell important stories;
    - Follow proper rules of grammar and syntax;
    - Use proper Turabian (Chicago Style) forms of citation.

- Students will construct original historical arguments based upon competent research in primary materials and present these arguments effectively in a final Thesis or Non-Thesis Project. This implies the ability to:
    - Work successfully in archives and other repositories of primary materials;
    - Construct convincing interpretations based upon secondary and primary sources and place those interpretations within the historiography of the subject;

[1] This document was created by Prof. Sandy Peacock, Prof. Michelle Haberland, Prof. Jon Bryant, and Prof. Bill Allison. It draws from assessment concepts from various history programs, including Illinois State University, the University of Baltimore, Duke University, and others. The Department gratefully acknowledges the work of these programs in developing model assessment plans.

- Present historical interpretations and arguments in a well-organized, readable, and logical manner;
- Complete a thesis or other project that reflects the best practices of historians.

- Students will demonstrate orally an understanding of the historiography and theory relevant to a thesis or non-thesis project research, and an ability to place work within those historiographical and theoretical frameworks as shown by a Thesis or Non-Thesis Project. This implies the ability to;

    - Explain clearly the process or framework used to reach conclusions;
    - Place conclusions within a larger historical and historiographical context;
    - Defend conclusions reasonably when challenged;
    - Consider openly new points of view.

Assessment Points

There are three focused assessment points for students in the MA program, though every class is also an assessment point. All classes will be assessed through final grades, which must average a B or better to graduate from the program. The three focused assessment points are found at the beginning of the program in Historian's Craft, in the middle of the program at the end of coursework when students must complete an Oral Comprehensive Exam, and at the completion and defense or presentation of the student's thesis or non-thesis project.

1. HIST 7630 Historian's Craft

    This course is required at the beginning of the MA student program. It immerses students in the skills, traditions, and culture of professional historians. Students engage the various methodologies and techniques of historical research and writing. Students also engage general historiography, and are introduced to archival research. Students produce books reviews, oral presentations, teaching materials, and other essays. The professor will grade student work, complete an assessment form (see Appendix B) for each student that goes into the student's file, and collect a writing sample produced in the course for the student file.

2. Oral Comprehensive Exam:

    The purpose of the exam is to assess student progress at the end of their coursework and before the thesis or non-thesis project is completed. Three faculty members who have taught the students in graduate level courses make up the Exam Committee and examine the student orally to insure they are developing the desired skills and level of understanding required for a Masters degree. This exam typically last one to three hours, and is assessed by both a Graduate School "Report on Comprehensive Exam" form and by a short narrative account of the exams written by the Exam Committee chair. Both assessments go into the student file.

3. Final Thesis Defense or Presentation of the Project:

    If the student produced a traditional Thesis, they will defend that thesis before a Thesis Defense Committee of at least three faculty members knowledgeable about the field. This defense will be reported on a Graduate School "Report on Thesis Defense" form

and with a brief narrative of the defense by the advisor with a rating of the thesis defense according to the Assessment Rubric. Both go into the student file. If the student has completed an alternative Non-Thesis Project, that project will be presented in an appropriate way (i.e., Museum Exhibit, Poster in the Department, Paper Presentation, or some other mode of presentation appropriate to the nature of the project). The major professor will write a brief report of this presentation, which will include where the project rates according to the Assessment Rubric, to go into the student file.

Learning Outcomes Assessment Map

1. Students will demonstrate ability to present and support extended oral arguments about important ideas and concepts of history.
2. Students will develop skills in both the mechanics and structure of writing to effectively and skillfully present historical research and argumentation.
3. Students will construct original historical arguments based upon competent research in primary materials and present these arguments effectively in a final thesis or non-thesis project.
4. Students will demonstrate orally an understanding of the historiography and theory relevant to a thesis or non-thesis project research, and an ability to place work within those historiographical and theoretical frameworks as shown by a thesis or non-thesis Project.

Course or Activity	LO 1 Assessment	LO 2 Assessment	LO 3 Assessment	LO 4 Assessment
HIST 7630 Historian's Craft	X	X		
Comprehensive Exam	X			
Final Defense or Project Presentation	X	X	X	X

Assessment Rubric

The Assessment Rubric is attached in Appendix A.

Indirect Assessments

- Graduate Program Exit Survey (online at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=g1T_2bFKL9nPdBgT6FZ2mdkw_3d_3d)

Evidence of Changes or Improvements Made Based on Analysis of Results

Each fall semester, the History Graduate Studies Committee will review the files of graduate students who were active the previous academic year. The Committee will create a summary of their review of the previous year's data. The Director of Graduate Studies will upload appropriate reports, examples, and data into the Sharepoint data warehouse by October 15 of each year based upon the Committee's report of the previous academic year. The Committee will reexamine outcomes and standards on any area that falls below a combined rating on adequate and target of 70% and recommend changes to the Department. The Graduate

Studies Committee's summaries of the previous year's results will be reviewed by the Graduate Studies Committee every three years to examine emerging patterns of strength and weakness, satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The Department as a whole will have access to the Graduate Studies Committee's reports and will act on the Committee's recommendations.

Annual Report to CLASS Dean

The Director of Graduate Studies will submit a brief report to the CLASS Dean's Office based upon the annual review mentioned above by October 15 of each year.

Appendix A – Rubric for MA in History

Learning Outcome	Unsatisfactory	Adequate	Target
1. Students will demonstrate ability to present and support extended oral arguments about important ideas and concepts of history	Poor understanding of diversity in history; use of context is absent; failure to address interplay of change and continuity; insufficient grasp of historical causation; argument is orally communicated in incoherent manner.	Sufficient understanding of diversity in history; satisfactory use if context; interplay of change and continuity evident; basic grasp of historical causation; argument is orally communicated in satisfactory manner to relay basic concepts.	Excellent understanding of diversity in history; Insightful use of context; interplay of change and continuity clearly exhibited; strong grasp of historical causation; argument is orally communicated with concise clarity and strong supporting evidence.
2. Students will develop skills in both the mechanics and structure of writing to effectively and skillfully present historical research and argumentation	Writing suffers from lack of clarity and coherence, making basic argument difficult to discern; inadequate use of evidence; narrative lacks flow and engagement; major errors in grammar, syntax, and Turabian.	Writing offers sufficient clarity and coherence to understand basic concepts of argument; use of research evidence is satisfactory; narrative has only minor flaws; grammar, syntax, Turabian have minor errors.	Writing is clear, concise, and engaging, relaying coherent and insightful arguments, with effective use of research evidence, to discuss complex historical ideas. Use of narrative, proper syntax and grammar, and proper use of Turabian. Possibly publishable.
3. Students will construct original historical arguments based upon competent research in primary materials and present these arguments effectively in a final thesis or non-thesis project.	Fails to research and utilize appropriate primary materials; interpretation unconvincing and historiography absent; thesis is poorly presented.	Use of primary materials is satisfactory; interpretation is convincing and placed in basic historiographic context; thesis satisfactorily presented.	Use of primary materials is outstanding; interpretation is excellent and shows clear historiographic context; thesis is well-written, clearly organized, and possibly publishable.
4. Students will demonstrate orally an understanding of the historiography and	Fails to orally communicate basic knowledge of thesis project; inability to	Orally communicates adequate knowledge of thesis/project, including satisfactory	Orally communicates superior knowledge of thesis/project, including exceptional ability to

theory relevant to a thesis or non-thesis project, and an ability to place work within those historiographical and theoretical frameworks as shown by a Thesis or Non-Thesis Project.	explain framework or basic concepts; lacking context; conclusions insupportable; unacceptable handling of challenges; not open to alternative viewpoints.	ability to explain framework, approach, use of sources, main ideas, and historiographic context, and conclusions; handles challenges without great difficulty; open to alternative viewpoints.	explain framework, approach, use of sources, main ideas, historical and historiographic context, and conclusions; handles challenges with intelligence and insight; seriously considers alternative viewpoints.

Appendix B – HIST 7630 (Historian's Craft) Student Evaluation Form

Student Name _____

Course Term _____ Student Grade _____

Can the Student prepare and deliver an oral report or argument?

Excellent Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory
Comments:

Can the Student conceptualize and understand the historiography of a topic?

Excellent Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory
Comments:

Can the Student conceptualize and write an analytical review?

Excellent Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory
Comments:

Can the Student write competently with proper syntax and grammar and proper citation?

Excellent Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory
Comments:

What is the overall caliber/promise of this Student?

Excellent Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory