

History Assessment Plan 2016-17

Our assessment plan for 2016-17 ties in with our curricular reform process. We have convened a team of three TTF faculty to lead the department through a process of developing a new, required methods course at the 300 level that will become a requirement for graduation and create a common base of experience for majors prior to the senior capstone 407 research seminar. One aim is to give faculty a greater ability to count on History students having a given skills set prior to the start of 407.

Since History majors take a variety of paths through the major, the first day of the 407 seminar (which most students take in senior year) is the best time to assess the skills that students have developed *prior* to the senior research seminar. The success of the 407 seminar particularly depends upon students' abilities in the last two of our learning outcomes:

- Learn how to read primary sources and analyze them critically. Expectation is that students will be able to define a historical problem, identify primary sources relevant to that problem, and develop a research strategy to address a historical question.
- Learn how to synthesize information from a variety of sources, construct cogent arguments, and express them in clear, convincing prose.

Yet anecdotally, faculty feel that such skills are often uneven on entrance to 407. Furthermore, students often comment in evaluations that many of the skills taught in 407 would have been more beneficial had they been introduced sooner in the program. We therefore envision a three-step assessment process, the first two steps of which will take place in 2016-17.

- 1) A Qualtrics survey of faculty who have taught/are teaching 407 in the current AY. This survey will break down the above learning objectives into discrete skills and ask faculty for their observations of the quality and consistency of students' preparation in those areas. It will also give faculty the opportunity to freely respond regarding their students' preparation for 407.
- 2) A Qualtrics survey of students who *completed* 407 in Winter and Spring 2017. This survey will ask students to reflect on their own preparation for 407 and to detail specific skills within the above learning objectives that they wish they had been taught prior to the start of 407. It will also give students the opportunity to freely respond regarding their own preparation for 407.

These surveys will give us a starting point to identify specific skills that are lacking among students as they enter 407. Based on this, the next step of the assessment plan will establish a baseline by assessing the quality of spring-quarter juniors' coursework in those specific areas; alternately, we may design a short assessment mechanism to be taken by students during the first week of 407. As the new 300-level course is implemented in the future, we will hope to repeat the assessment and find that students' abilities in these particular areas improves over time.