



“TUNING” AT UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Contents of packet:

- History Department’s original statement of goals
- Tuning process: seven “learning outcomes” for the Department of History
- Learning outcomes rubric, Department’s senior capstone course
- Learning outcomes rubric, Department’s U.S. survey course for majors
- “Degree Profile,” distinguishing skills and competencies for bachelors and masters programs
- Web resources for “learning outcomes” and “rubrics”

Where the Department started:

Original statement describing goals of a History degree:

- 1. To train undergraduates to research, analyze, synthesize, and communicate accurate conclusions about change over time by using the historical method.*
- 2. To prepare history majors to succeed in history-related fields of endeavor such as museum curation, archival curation, heritage tourism, cultural resource management, or any other field that requires information retrieval and analysis skills.*
- 3. To inculcate cultural literacy by giving students a broad familiarity with the past.*

How the History Department now describes its goals:



Seven "Learning Outcomes" for the Department of History

HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. (Range of historical information)

Pursue coursework that examines a broad range of historical experience through:

- surveys of pre-modern, modern, and U.S. history, as well as
- upper-division classes that provide greater focus and analytical rigor in specific subject areas,
- leading up to a capstone course focused on the construction of a senior thesis.

The coursework explores: how change occurs over time; the complex issue of historical causation; the influence of political ideologies, economic structures, social organization, cultural perceptions, and natural environments on historical events; and the ways in which factors such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, region, and religion create "histories" rather than a monolithic past.

HISTORICAL THINKING

2. (Recognize the past-ness of the past)

The ability to understand how people have existed, acted, and thought in the always-different context of the past. History often involves encountering and sensing the past's otherness and of learning to understand unfamiliar structures, cultures and belief systems. These forms of understanding also shed important light on the influence which the past has on the present.

3. (Emphasize the *complex* nature of past experience)

The appreciation of the complexity and diversity of situations, events and past mentalities. This emphasis is central to history's character as an anti-reductionist discipline fostering intellectual maturity.

4. (Emphasize the complex and problematic nature of the historical record)

The understanding of the problems inherent in the historical record itself:

- awareness of a range of viewpoints; appreciation of the range of problems involved in the interpretation of complex, ambiguous, conflicting and often incomplete material; a feeling for the limitations of knowledge and the dangers of simplistic explanations.

HISTORICAL SKILLS

5. (Develop skills in critical thinking and reading)

Critical thinking: a recognition that statements are not all of equal validity, that there are ways of testing them, and that historians operate by rules of evidence which, though themselves subject to critical evaluation, are also a component of intellectual integrity and maturity.

Critical reading: The ability to read and analyze texts and other primary sources, both critically and empathetically, while addressing questions of genre, content, perspective and purpose. Primary sources include visual and material sources like topographical evidence, paintings, coins, medals, cartoons, photographs and films.

6. (Develop research skills)

Intellectual independence: a history program is not simply or even primarily a preparation for research in the subject, but it *should* incorporate the general skills of the researcher, namely the ability to set tasks and solve problems. This involves:

- bibliographic skills; the ability to gather, sift, select, organize and synthesize large quantities of evidence; the ability to formulate appropriate questions and to provide answers to them using valid and relevant evidence and argument. It should develop reflexivity, i.e. an understanding of the nature of the discipline including what questions are asked by historians, and why.

7. (Develop the ability to construct reasonable historical arguments)

In written and oral form, drawing on and presenting all the above skills. Such argument should have structure; it should be relevant and concise. In the case of written argument it should be expressed in clear, lucid and coherent prose. Orally, it should involve the capacity to sustain a reasoned line of argument in the face of others, to listen, to engage in sustained debate, and amend views as necessary in the light of evidence and argument.

HIST 4990: Senior Capstone
Learning Outcomes Rubric

Name _____
Date _____

LEARNING OUTCOME	Excellent mastery 5.0-4.5	Good mastery 4.4-4.0	Some mastery 3.9-3.5	Minimal mastery 3.4-3.0	No mastery 2.9-0
HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE					
Student demonstrates an understanding of the key historical events related to the thesis 10%	The paper displays: clear chronological understanding of events; complex grasp of causation; analyzes a range of factors shaping the sequence and outcome of events; situates issues within larger contexts; reflects on larger themes informing specific events.	Sound chronological framework; good grasp of causation; omits some key informing factors shaping events; some effort at contextualizing the question; proposes a sufficient range of larger themes.	Some chronological confusion; weak causal analysis; narrow range of informing factors in the discussion; weak contextualization; little discussion of broader themes.	Many chronological errors; simplistic causal analysis; few informing factors tied to the discussion; little to no discussion of wider context of events; thin discussion of wider themes.	Paper explores its subject in a historical vacuum with little commentary on causation, context, and larger themes
HISTORICAL THINKING					
Student frames historical questions in a thoughtful, critical manner 10%	The paper addresses a clearly-stated and significant historical question. Focuses on critical analysis rather than mere description. Key terms defined. Student clarifies the significance of the question. The question is of manageable scope, logically formulated, and precisely stated.	The paper addresses a significant historical question that is clearly stated. Focus rests largely on critical analysis. Key terms usually defined. Question is of manageable scope, posed with minimal logical flaws in framing of the question; offers evidence for claims.	The paper addresses a historical question that can be identified with some difficulty. Focus shifts between critical analysis and mere description. Some key terms left undefined. Significance of question unclear. Lapses in logical framing of the question. Vague, unsupported assertions.	Significance of question not demonstrated; commentary is largely descriptive rather than analytical; key terms often undefined; the central question in the paper is of inappropriate scope or illogically presented; frequently relies on sweeping generalizations	No identifiable historical question; paper offers broad, unsupported generalizations
Student evaluates and analyzes primary sources 15%	Demonstrates thorough awareness of origins, authors, contexts of all primary sources; consciously employs verification strategies as needed; complex analysis of sources	Demonstrates some awareness of contexts of primary sources; employs some verification strategies; sound analysis of sources	Offers partial evaluation of primary sources; spotty verification; at times departs from subject's historical context; not all claims supported by the evidence	Little evaluation of primary sources; no verification; imposes contemporary judgments on historical material; sources usually do not support interpretive weight placed upon them	Demonstrates little to no awareness of need to evaluate, verify, or contextualize sources; "evidence" offered does not support interpretive weight placed upon it.
Student evaluates and analyzes secondary sources, demonstrating an awareness of interpretive differences 10%	Demonstrates careful reading from all relevant historiographical traditions; thorough, fair-minded, and informed assessment of historiography, summarizing main ideas clearly and accurately; places his/her own work within the historiography; raises historically legitimate critiques concerning the strengths/weaknesses of the studies.	Has read widely in several historiographical traditions; assesses and summarizes those read; places his/her own work within the historiography; at some points, critiques either inappropriate or unsubstantiated	Cites at least two different interpretations; makes an effort to place his/her own work in reference to these two interpretations; critiques often unfair, irrelevant, or misinformed	Minimal discussion of interpretation in secondary works. No effort to place his/her own work within historiography; critiques commonly unfair, irrelevant, or misinformed.	No awareness of interpretive differences.

LEARNING OUTCOME	Excellent mastery 5.0-4.5	Good mastery 4.4-4.0	Some mastery 3.9-3.5	Minimal mastery 3.4-3.0	No mastery 2.9-0
HISTORICAL SKILLS					
Student employs a range of primary sources appropriate to the informing thesis of the paper 15%	Makes thorough use of all relevant online and print databases to identify primary source literature; all available primary sources identified. All sources in bibliography used thoroughly in text.	Makes good use of relevant online and print databases; some gaps in primary source base. A few sources in bibliography not fully used.	Makes some use of online or print databases; significant gaps in source base; paper based on only a few of cited sources.	No evidence of using databases to establish source base; source base very limited. Major sources unknown or not employed. Little evidence that author has used works listed in bibliography.	No evidence of using databases; sources entirely insufficient and inappropriate to paper topic.
Student employs a range of secondary sources appropriate to the informing thesis of the paper 10%	Makes thorough use of all relevant online and print databases to identify secondary literature; uses classic and most recent secondary literature; no major secondary sources omitted. All sources in bibliography used thoroughly in text.	Makes good use of relevant online and print databases; some gaps in secondary source base. A few sources in bibliography not fully used.	Makes some use of online or print databases; significant gaps in source base; paper based on only a few of cited sources.	No evidence of using databases to establish source base; source base very limited. Major sources unknown or not employed. Little evidence that author has used works listed in bibliography.	No evidence of using databases; sources entirely insufficient and inappropriate to paper topic.
Organization of argument 10%	Thesis announced --and argument previewed for the reader -- at the start of the paper in a succinct and comprehensible manner; clear framework for analyzing the thesis; argument unfolds through a logical sequence of points; excellent transitions.	Statement of thesis --and preview of argument -- are clear, but do not appear in the opening of the paper. Structure of the argument is sound, understandable, and appropriate to the project. Good transitions.	Thesis stated, but not at the start of the paper. Argument previewed; but the paper moves in a different direction. Difficult to detect a logical sequence to the points raised in the paper. Weak transitions between parts of argument.	Difficult to determine the meaning, appropriateness, or significance of the thesis. No clear preview of the argument's direction. Sequence of points raised in the argument remains episodic, confused, puzzling.	Thesis either severely flawed or simply not offered; organization of argument remains incomprehensible
Well-substantiated argument; proper citation of evidence 10%	The writer correctly and thoroughly cites sources using Chicago Manual of Style format in footnotes or endnotes; the paper includes a separate bibliography listing all sources consulted for the paper.	Cites sources using Chicago Manual of Style format in footnotes or endnotes and provides separate bibliography; gaps in citation, errors in their construction, and inaccuracies in the bibliography.	Offers partial evaluation of primary sources; spotty verification	Offers little to no evaluation of primary sources; no verification.	Is not aware of need to evaluate or verify sources.
Mechanics 10%	Spelling, punctuation, grammar all correct; proper sentence and paragraph construction	Occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence & paragraph construction; not severe enough to hinder an understanding of the paper's main points.	Weaknesses in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence & paragraph construction make sections of the paper unintelligible.	Problems in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence & paragraph construction make sections of the paper unintelligible.	Problems in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence & paragraph construction so severe as to make the paper unintelligible.
TOTAL:	500-450 points: "A" range 500-485: A+; 484-465: A; 464-450: A- 449-400 points: "B" range 449-440: B+; 439-415: B; 414-400: B- 399-350 points: "C" range 399-385: C+; 384-361: C; 360-350: C- 349-300 points: "D" range 349-340: D+; 339-315: D; 314-300: D- 299- 0 points: "F" range		exs.: 475 pts. equivalent to 95 / A 425 pts. equivalent to 85 / B 375 pts. equivalent to 75 / C 325 pts. equivalent to 65 / D 275 pts. equivalent to 55 / F		
LETTER GRADE:					

HIST 2700: American History to 1877
Learning Outcomes Rubric

Name _____
Date _____

LEARNING OUTCOME	Excellent mastery 5.0-4.5	Good mastery 4.4-4.0	Some mastery 3.9-3.5	Minimal mastery 3.4-3.0	No mastery 2.9-0
HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE					
<p>Historical soundness of the argument (student demonstrates an understanding of the key historical events related to the question)</p> <p>15%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -statements are correct, verifiable, and precise -clear chronological understanding of events -complex grasp of causation -analyzes a range of factors shaping the sequence and outcome of events -reflects on larger themes informing specific events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sound chronological framework -good grasp of causation -omits some key informing factors shaping events -proposes a sufficient range of major themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -some factual or chronological errors -weak causal analysis -narrow range of informing factors in the discussion -little discussion of broader themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -many chronological errors -simplistic causal analysis -few informing factors tied to the discussion -thin discussion of wider themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -multiple factual or chronological errors -essay explores its subject in a historical vacuum with little commentary on causation and larger themes
<p>Pertinence of the argument</p> <p>15%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all of the material in the essay directly relates to — and <i>fully</i> covers — the central issues posed in the question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -some parts of the essay digress from the central focus of the question -good coverage of the historical material relevant to the question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -several parts of the essay digress from the central focus of the question -fair coverage of the historical material relevant to the question (gaps in evidence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -many parts of the essay digress from the central focus of the question -major omissions of historical material relevant to the question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -material offered in the essay has no discernible bearing on the question asked -no coverage of the historical material relevant to the question
HISTORICAL THINKING					
<p>Explanation of the argument (student responds to historical questions in a thoughtful, critical manner)</p> <p>40%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -full explanation of the problem under review -essay defines and explores key terms / concepts / issues / ideas related to the question -situates issues within their distinctive historical context -essay clarifies the significance of the issue under review by answering the “why” and “because” questions -essay reflects the complexity and depth of the material under review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -some key parts of the historical issue omitted -most key terms defined -some effort at contextualizing the question -some gaps as the essay explores the meaning and significance of major issues -at some points, critiques either inappropriate or unsubstantiated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -several key terms left undefined -vagueness in response -essay <i>mentions</i> (but does not <i>explain</i>) key issues -weak contextualization -<i>significance</i> of the material presented remains unclear -critiques often unfair, irrelevant, or misinformed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key terms often undefined -broad, sweeping, imprecise statements -little to no explanation of key issues -little to no discussion of wider context of events -essay <i>raises</i> more questions than it answers -critiques commonly unfair, irrelevant, or misinformed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -omission of key information -omission of key <i>explanations</i> -fails to analyze issues within their distinctive historical context -critiques misplaced, inappropriate, or ahistorical

Utah State University (USU) History Degree Profile

UNIVERSITY OVERVIEW

Utah State University fulfills a unique role in the Utah System of Higher Education as the state's land-grant and space-grant university. The land-grant designation makes Utah State responsible for programs in agriculture, business, education, engineering, natural resources, sciences, and the traditional core of liberal learning—humanities, arts, and social sciences. The university gives particular emphasis to programs involving the interaction of land, people, and the environment. USU is a “Doctoral Research University / high research activity” institution as designated by the Carnegie Foundation, providing doctoral and master’s level education and supporting significant research efforts by its faculty.

The institution has 850 faculty who provide education for more than 23,000 undergraduate and graduate students, including 10,000 in its continuing education sites located throughout the state of Utah. The University has seven colleges, more than 200 majors, and 130 research-related classes. USU also has 3 branch campuses and Extension offices in all of Utah's 29 counties. Utah State is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

At Utah State University, the Department of History’s primary mission is to train undergraduates to research, analyze, synthesize, and communicate accurate conclusions about change over time by using the historical method. At the same time we aim to inculcate cultural literacy and provide the knowledge necessary for informed decision making by citizens of Utah, the United States, and the world.

On the undergraduate level, the History Department serves the campus through general education, general interest courses, the History major, the History Teaching major, minors in History and Classics, and interdisciplinary programs, all of which give our students crucial work skills as well as enriching their lives. History offers BA/BS degrees, with a general history emphasis and a History Teaching emphasis. It offers minors in the same programs, along with minors in Classical Civilization, Latin, and Greek.

Our total enrollment of majors and minors, including Religious Studies and Classics, is 426. Of these, 353 are History majors and 25 are History minors; Religious Studies has 13 majors and 3 minors; Classics enrolls about 35 students. The number of History majors has grown rapidly. In 2005 there were 249 majors; by Fall 2009, the number increased 47% to 366 majors in History/Religious Studies. Nearly 80% of the students we teach are not “declared” in the department. Gen Ed accounts for many of these, but our upper division courses are taken by people from all colleges. A significant portion is for other majors that require our courses, such as International Relations and American Studies.

On the graduate level, the History Department prepares MA and MS students to research, teach, edit, and administrate by further enhancing their ability to ask hard questions, research them, and communicate their conclusions clearly. In addition we emphasize the acquisition of the skills of open inquiry and debate as well as team work and collaboration. Each year, we

admit 10-12 new graduate students into our program. Most work with the department as graduate assistants as they pursue their coursework and research.

History participates in American Studies major and minor, and in the Folklore minor, as well as the British and Commonwealth Studies minor and the Latin American Studies Program. The Religious Studies Program (administratively connected to the department) offers the BA/BS in Religious Studies, with a minor; the program began enrolling students in the fall of 2006. Both of the endowed chairs connected with the Religious Studies Program will hold tenure in History.

History has 20 tenure-track faculty on its Logan and RCDE campuses along with one senior lecturer. All have PhD's and offer a wide range of courses. With a standard load of 2/2 on the Logan campus (one large survey, one small seminar, and two upper division courses), faculty members teach a mix of courses that are defined geographically, chronologically or thematically. The Department has its greatest depth and strength in the modern American West, the classical world, and early modern Europe.

BACHELORS DEGREE (BA, BS)

The History Department models its work with undergraduates on seven critical learning outcomes. As students move from survey courses, through upper-division classes (with a more focused chronological, regional, or thematic structure), to their senior capstone class, they develop competencies . . .

in terms of ***Historical knowledge***:

- (1) pursuing coursework that examines a broad range of historical experience

in terms of ***Historical thinking***:

- (2) recognizing the past-ness of the past and appreciating the unfamiliar structures, cultures, and belief systems of historical actors
- (3) understanding the complexity and diversity of historical situations, events, and past mentalities
- (4) recognizing the complex, problematic, and constructed nature of the historical record itself

and in terms of ***Historical skills***:

- (5) developing skills in critical thinking and reading
- (6) developing research skills
- (7) developing the ability to construct reasonable historical presentations that are carefully structured, clearly expressed, and persuasively argued

Students in the History major complete their work in a capstone class that focuses on the creation of a senior thesis based on primary source evidence and readings in major secondary sources. Students with a History Teaching Emphasis complete their capstone experience in a class that focuses on pedagogical theory and practice; in addition, they take the Praxis exam to demonstrate their mastery of a wide range of historical subjects.

EMPLOYMENT: While pursuing undergraduate studies, our majors may apply for various types of employment in the department as: undergraduate teaching fellows, rhetoric associates, supplementary instructors, and academic tutors. Students who complete the bachelors degree

with a History major report that they are most likely to seek employment after graduation (71%) while 42% will pursue further education in graduate or professional school. Three-quarters of graduates report employment in areas related closely or somewhat closely to their degree. Roughly 60% state they will be working in business, 25% in education, and 8% in government. Most plan to work in Utah.

MASTERS DEGREE (MA, MS)

In line with the recommendations of our discipline's key professional organization (the American Historical Association), our masters program focuses on five essential learning outcomes:

<http://www.historians.org/projects/cmd/2005/Report/index.cfm>

Historical knowledge

(1) A base of historical knowledge, combining both a breadth and depth of knowledge, a familiarity with more than one historiographic tradition, and the ability to synthesize different types of historical knowledge (such as might be required to construct a survey course). Master's programs should incorporate a comparative, if not a global, perspective on history. Program graduates should be "educated history generalists."

Historical thinking

(2) Learning to think like a historian, which includes "historical habits of mind" and "historiographic sensibilities" (i.e., a critical and self-conscious approach to the constructed nature of historical knowledge).

(3) The foundations for a professional identity as a historian, including a familiarity with the historical development of the discipline, an introduction to ethical standards and practices, and an awareness of the multiple contexts of professional practice.

Historical skills

(4) Research and presentation skills, evidenced by the completion of a substantial research project demonstrating content mastery, a familiarity with primary research, and competent historical analysis.

(5) A solid introduction to historical pedagogy, in the broadest sense of the term: the cognitive processes involved in teaching and learning history; appreciating how learners of different ages attain their understanding(s) of history; and understanding how historians present the past to different audiences. Most students work as "graduate assistants," receiving practical training in the "presentation of history to non-specialists."

The Department identifies three particular areas of strength in its graduate studies: U.S. Western history environmental studies, and religious studies.

Masters students pursue either the M.A. or the M.S. degree. The former requires competency in a foreign language (equivalent to having completed two years of a foreign language at the undergraduate level); M.S. students may be required to incorporate computer science, statistics, or environmental or other applied science in their research.

EMPLOYMENT: USU graduates relocate all over the world in a variety of undertakings. Some acquire jobs in historical societies, museums, and publishing. One graduate manages the

architectural archives of the LDS church; another works as the associate director of the Cayman Islands National Museum; a third works for Research and Educational Programs in the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Some pursue careers in high school teaching. One of these has become the Director of Religious Education for the Diocese of Utah. Others teach at the junior-college level. One recent student went from his master's at USU to New Zealand as a Fulbright Scholar. A number of master's graduates choose to go on for their Ph.D.'s. Some have pursued Ph.D.'s at Northwestern University, Georgetown University, Arizona State University, Washington State University, Michigan State University, UCLA, UC-Davis, and the Universities of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Arizona. Among our master's graduates who later completed doctorates are faculty members at the University of Arizona, Kent State University, Brigham Young University, Southern Oregon University, Middlebury College, BYU-Idaho, Case-Western Reserve, and Cal Poly-Pomona. A few of our master's graduates go on to law school.

THE BOLOGNA PROCESS, "TUNING," AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

WEB RESOURCES

AAC&U CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON, DC, 21 JANUARY 2010

AAC&U: issue of *Liberal Education* with essays on the Bologna Process -- strengths AND weaknesses:

http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-fa08/le-fa08_index.cfm

Lumina Foundation material on the Bologna process: "Tuning USA"

http://www.luminafoundation.org/our_work/tuning/

The College of Wooster: Educational Assessment resources:

<http://www3.wooster.edu/assessment/resourcesbydiscipline.html>

North Carolina State University

Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment

<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>

DePaul University: Assessment Resources

http://condor.depaul.edu/~tla/html/assessment_resources.html

EXAMPLES OF "LEARNING OUTCOMES"

From Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin:

literature on assessment:

http://www.alverno.edu/for_educators/publications.html

History Learning Outcomes:

<http://www.alverno.edu/academics/History/history.html>

From Aurora University, Aurora, IL

Learning Outcomes, History:

<http://www.aurora.edu/academics/programs-majors/undergraduate/history/outcomes.html>

From California State University system:

Learning outcomes in all disciplines:

<http://www.calstate.edu/LS/Outcomes.shtml>

St. Mary's College of California

Learning outcomes:

<http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/schools/school-of-liberal-arts/departments-programs/history/learning-outcomes.html>

From The Open University, UK

Learning outcomes:

<http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/qualification/learning-outcome/b01.htm>

EXAMPLES OF RUBRICS

University of North Carolina, Wilmington

-served as the model for Utah State's learning rubric

-<http://www.uncw.edu/cas/documents/Elaboratedcompetencies3.pdf>

Washington State University's "Critical and Integrative Thinking Rubric"

https://my.wsu.edu/portal/page?_pageid=177,276578&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Carnegie Mellon University, Grading and Performance Rubrics

<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/rubrics.html>

Seattle University: Rubrics

<http://www.seattleu.edu/assessment/inner.aspx?id=26032>

