

UAF History Department
Outcomes Assessment class of 07-08

The History Department met on 22 September 2008 to hold a discussion regarding the Outcomes Assessment for the graduating class of 07-08. It was the first time that the faculty could complete its new assessment procedures based on the update in 2006. The faculty found that it got all of the necessary information from the professor's comments about progress made by students in HIST 475 and 476 (Historiography and senior Thesis) and from the exit statements of graduating seniors. In the future, the department will no longer include lower division student endeavors (HIST 275) in its assessments. Overall, History graduates demonstrated success in the expected outcome goals. This success is reflected in their statements and in the classroom and written work performed during their capstone courses.

A common student suggestion to improve the History Department's program centered on the limitations in the breadth of courses currently offered. Students tempered their suggestions with the recognition that there were only so many different types of courses that the limited number of faculty could offer. Indeed, the number of History majors continues to climb since the year 2000, but the number of faculty lines has not kept pace with this growth. It is growing clearer every year that as the demand for this major continues to expand that it will be necessary to add more faculty lines soon.

John Heaton, Chair
UAF History

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT CLASS OF 08

Graduating History Student Exit Statement

CLASS OF 08

1) What general impressions do you have of your educational experience as an undergraduate student in the UAF History Department?

11 Responses

11 Positive/0 Negative

Main impressions: dept. provided different perspective, challenging curriculum, well organized, knowledgeable and helpful professors.

Some concern with lack of range in course offerings, especially Russian and African History, but understanding for the limits of small dept.

2) How would you characterize your ability to identify an historical problem?

11 Responses

Ranging from good to excellent/confident

3) How would you characterize your understanding of different and changing historical interpretations?

11 Responses, most expressed confidence in abilities.

Comments:

** 275/475 helpful, but this issue not covered enough in other history courses.*

** "Lacking" Not covered until 475*

** After 275/475 "I am able to tell the difference between the different periods of historical analysis..."*

** "It shocked me to find out how drastically interpretations of history changed over time.*

** "...I began seeing history as one single story...inevitably, my classes showed me there are multiple perspectives...."*

4) What is History?

11 Responses

6 were sophisticated in their expression of the notion that history is interpretive and "perspectival."

5 were simplistic in their expression that it was change over time or the study of the past.

5) What is it that Historians do?

11 Responses

Most of these were sophisticated in their recognition of selection and interpretation of documents and the influence of the present and personal experience on what we do.

6) Does History Matter? Why? Why Not?

11 Responses

A mixed bag: some simplistic “doomed to repeat the past” references; some more sophisticated “shaping of identity” and “tool of the powerful” references.

UAF History Department
Outcomes Assessment: Department Meeting
May 2009

The History faculty met to discuss the Outcomes Assessment for the graduating class of '09. We talked about the students, their experiences in the capstone and other courses, their exit statements, and the state of the program.

The faculty concluded the following:

- * to continue the current outcomes assessment program
- * to encourage advisees to take Hist 275 as soon as possible
- * to continue the current balance between content and theory in History courses
- *to continue the current level of emphasis on research method and writing in History courses

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT CLASS OF 09

Aggregate of Graduating History Student Exit Statements

CLASS OF 09

1) What general impressions do you have of your educational experience as an undergraduate student in the UAF History Department?

9 Responses

6 Positive

1 Negative

2 Neutral

Main impressions: History faculty challenged students and helped them move beyond rote memorization of names and dates to understand key concepts and approaches.

There was some concern that there were not enough electives offered and that the department needed more faculty members to increase the breadth of course offerings and expertise.

2) How would you characterize your ability to identify an historical problem?

9 Responses

8 Positive

1 Negative

0 Neutral

Main impressions: Several students stated that they found the capstone course to be especially helpful on this outcome.

3) How would you characterize your understanding of different and changing historical interpretations?

9 Responses (most suggested confidence in their understanding of this concept)

The responses tended to be brief on this question—several mentioned that the combination of Hist 275 and 475 were very helpful.

4) What is History?

9 Responses (Mostly very brief)

7 were sophisticated in their recognition that history is an interpretive construction that depends in part on the perspective of the historian.

2 were simplistic in their impressions.

5) What do Historians do?

9 Responses

8 were rather sophisticated in their recognition the role of the historian in creating interpretive perspectives of the past.

1 was just cynical.

6) Does History Matter? Why? Why Not?

9 Responses

Most tended understand the discipline in terms of influence on identity and structures of power.

Several referenced the shifting nature of narratives over time in response to cultural changes.

1 was just nihilistic

History Department Outcomes Assessment: Departmental Meeting

The History Department met on May 13 2010 to discuss the Outcomes Assessment for the AY 09-10. It considered the Senior Thesis presentations, Senior Thesis papers, and the Exit Statements of graduating students. The department agreed that students were picking up the philosophical knowledge that it set as a key goal for program outcomes, but that students needed more work on writing, citation, and methods.

Based on the discussion of the Outcomes Assessment data, the department determined to:

- * continue the current Outcomes Assessment process
- * increase efforts to convince majors to take Hist 275 as soon as possible through our advising of incoming and current students
- * offer Hist 275 in both the fall and spring semesters
- * encourage all History faculty and adjuncts to place more emphasis on writing mechanics in their courses

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT CLASS OF '10

Graduating History Student Exit Statement

CLASS OF '10

(The following is an abridgment of the collected comments of the 12 students who took the capstone courses in 09-10. Their full comments can be seen on their individual exit statement forms)

1) What general impressions do you have of your educational experience as an undergraduate student in the UAF History Department?

Want more course offerings
gained breadth of knowledge
challenging—courses well organized/instructed
pleased with what I have accomplished/prepared for grad school/tougher than other schools
favorable, but African/Mid East history would be nice
good, but need more upper division courses
good, but need coverage of Africa, Mid East, Indonesia
great experience
faculty was fantastic
learned a lot/faculty was helpful and enthusiastic
faculty is knowledgeable and mostly engaging
If it is to be respected the department should be both feared and loved—all classes should
prepare students for 475/76

2) How would you characterize your ability to identify an historical problem?

Improved over years at UAF
Slow process that requires months of reading
Excellent
Sharper now
Fairly well developed
It is fairly easy
Depends on available data
Can compare/contrast events and recognize personal bias
Competent/confident
More able to do this
Rather well
I view the world differently now

3) How would you characterize the concept of different and changing historical interpretations?

Views of past are perspectival and changing
Post civil rights effort to get more cultural relativism
interesting
viewing the past through different perspectives
historians affected by the present
numerous perspectives/alternative theories
depends on who does the interpreting
they change with time
human need for story, they change over time to reflect present needs
always changing
unavoidable
all works of history are biased

4) What is History?

Pursuit of better understanding of the past
Recording of events that changes over time
The past studied to determine why events happened
No response
A biased impression
Past events
Written account of areas/culture by people of that culture or interested in that culture
The art of reflection/comparison
The past and the interpretation of the past
The past—gives people a sense of their own place in the timeline
Attempt to make sense of the past logically
everything

5) What do Historians do?

Evaluate the past
No response
Investigative research to support a thesis
Examine events from different perspectives
Articulate an understanding of the past
Seek cause/effect
Interpret primary/secondary sources
Analyze the past to understand the present
Tell the story
Analyze sources and documents to answer their questions
Attempt to guide the analysis of history
Continually reconfigure the past

6) Does History Matter? Why? Why Not?

“absolutely” it is the key to our past, present, and future

“most assuredly” without it one might as well forget their past

“yes” it can prevent tragedies in the future

“whose history?”

“yes” creates a sense of identity

Necessary to understand the past to understand present

“yes” origins of humans

“yes” or doomed to repeat the past

“yes” it is the story of who everyone was and is constantly changing

It matters because it gives people a common identity

Only important if we can apply it and learn its lessons

Without history there is no civilization