

HISTORY GRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN – SPRING 2017

LEARNING OBJECTIVES (FALL 2015)

In Fall 2015, the History Dept. faculty articulated the following learning objectives for the graduate program.

History M.A. and M.S. Objectives: The main objectives of our graduate program are to advance students' specialized knowledge and skills in historical study beyond the bachelor's degree. The program focuses on three core elements: knowledge of a historiographical tradition, including major themes and narratives; understanding of various theories of historical study; and development of the ability to conduct original research and to present conclusions both orally and in writing.

Student mastery of these three elements is typically measured through course grades, particularly in required courses HIST 6000 and HIST 6010; the creation of a sound and defensible Thesis Proposal; mastery of content and historiography in the student's field as determined by the Thesis Advisor and committee members; and the successful defense of the Master's Thesis or Plan B project.

Since Fall 2015, the History Department has been considering how best to implement assessment methods for individual students within the graduate program's larger learning goals.

STUDENT FEEDBACK AND TRACKING (SPRING 2016)

In order to determine student perceptions about whether they achieved these goals, the History Dept. took the following steps:

1. Created an exit survey for graduate students.
2. Attempted to more closely track the career paths of our alumni.

STRATEGIC PLANNING (SUMMER 2016)

In Summer 2016, the History Dept. GPC participated in a Strategic Planning Session with other department representatives to consider the following issues within the graduate program.

Short-Term Goals

1. Simplify and clarify the degree requirements (Handbook)
2. Strengthen the distinctions between Plan A (thesis) and Plan B (professional)

Long-Term Goals

3. Increase the number of applicants (Recruit individually, social media, gradschoolmatch)
4. Improve graduation rates (Research seminar; public proposal defense in February/March of first year)
5. Explore the possibility of a Public History Concentration (15 credits)

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES (2016-2017)

1. The GPC created a Graduate Student Handbook listing all the policies and procedures for the History Department Graduate program and program options (MA/MS, Plan A/Plan B). The Handbook is online and available to students and faculty.
2. The department increased its stipend from \$7500 to \$10,000 per year for funded students.
3. The Department hired a Public Historian to teach Public History courses (undergraduate and graduate; to serve on thesis committees and guide graduate level research in public history; to manage and guide graduate level internships; to advise graduate students). Dr. Rebecca Anderson will take up her duties in Fall 2017.
4. In recruiting for Fall 2017, the GPC more actively engaged in recruiting efforts by working with the School of Graduate Studies to create a marketing flyer, using gradschoolmatch.com, and participating in the SGS first Welcome Weekend. The student who attended the Welcome Weekend chose to attend our program with additional financial incentives.
5. First year students were offered funding for research travel in Summer 2017 if they defended their thesis proposal by March 2017. Eight of the twelve students (67%) enrolled in HIST 6000 in Fall 2016 defended their proposals in Spring 2017. This is a dramatic improvement.
6. Graduating students will participate in the exit survey.

ASSESSMENT PLANS (2017-2018)

1. In order to improve graduation rates, the History Dept. created a new required course (Research Seminar) for all students entering their second year. This class will be offered for the first time in Fall 2017. The goal is to provide students with structured class time to write a chapter of their thesis or Plan B paper. The department will assess the effectiveness of the new course in Spring 2018.
2. Data measuring student achievement of learning outcomes will be collected in our required courses (HIST 6000, HIST 6010, and HIST 6030) in 2017-2018.
3. At the department's fall retreat in August 2017, the department will discuss possible assessment measures for individual students, (such as an assessment rubric for thesis committees to complete as part of the final defense). This conversation is ongoing.