

# Annual Assessment Report

Academic Year: 2013-2013

Department: History and Philosophy

Program(s): History

Assessment reports are to be submitted annually to report assessment activities and results by program. The reports are due every summer with a deadline of September 15<sup>th</sup> each year.

The use of this template is entirely optional.

*Note: These reports have been required by MSU policy since 2004.*

## 1. What Was Done

Based on our assessment plan, we evaluated program learning outcomes 1 and 6 this year.

1. Our graduates will be able to present a clear thesis statement.
6. Our graduates will be able to cite sources according to the conventions of the discipline.

## 2. What Data Were Collected

1. 20 papers were randomly collected by the department's student services coordinator from three HSTR 499R courses that took place during AY 2012-2013. A faculty committee of three read the papers and evaluated them according to the following rubric:

**Evaluation rubrics for Learning Outcome 1** ("be able to present a clear thesis statement).

**Excellent:** There is a thesis statement that is original and/or creative in its presentation of an argument about a historical phenomenon. It is forcefully or persuasively presented in well-written language. It previews the argumentative line of the essay and the evidence that will be used.

**Good:** There is a thesis statement that takes a clear position on an arguable point. It is written in grammatically correct language. It demonstrates an effort to interpret a historical phenomenon.

**Acceptable:** There is a thesis statement that takes a position on an arguable point, but it may not be fully developed. It is largely free of grammatical errors.

**Unacceptable:** There is no recognizable thesis or it is unintelligible due to grammatical errors.

6. 20 papers were randomly collected by the department's student services coordinator from three HSTR 499R courses that took place during AY 2012-2013. A faculty committee of three read the papers and evaluated them according to the following rubric:

**Evaluation rubrics for Learning Outcome 6** ("be able to cite sources according to the conventions of the discipline").

**Excellent:** citations meet journal standards of accuracy, consistency and punctuation.

**Good:** citations are consistent, with full bibliographic information that permits traceability; there may be errors of punctuation.

**Acceptable:** citations have full bibliographic information that permits traceability; there may be inconsistency in style and errors of punctuation.

**Unacceptable:** incomplete bibliographic information that does not permit traceability; so many errors in style and punctuation as to make information unusable.

### 3. What Was Learned

1. Learning Outcome 1: be able to present a clear thesis statement

Excellent	15%
Good	20%
Acceptable	55%
Unacceptable	10%

Total “Acceptable” and better: 90%. This result meets the goal of 75% of our majors being able to write an acceptable, clear thesis statement. However, the committee noted some areas that warrant improvement.

6. Learning Outcome 6: be able to cite sources according to the conventions of the discipline

Excellent	0%
Good	40%
Acceptable	50%
Unacceptable	10%

Total “Acceptable” and better: 90%. Again, this evaluation met the department’s goal. Notably there were no citations that met the criteria for excellent. Papers showed a heavy dependence on on-line sources. While the nature of the sources seemed sound, in several cases the citations were incomplete. It also appeared that many of the internet sources were accessed through the first available, and very general database, Academic Search Complete.

### 4. How We Responded

1. **Faculty recommendations:** While we found thesis statements in the majority of papers, in essays from each of the various classes, thesis statements did not show up until page three or four, making it difficult for the reader to know early on just what the essay was arguing. Many thesis statements were also overly general, making it difficult to then develop a coherent argument. All classes in which students write papers of historical analysis should focus on training students to write sharper, more cogent theses and make them evident early in the paper’s argument.

6. **Faculty recommendation:** There are many other more advanced databases for historical research, and Google book and Google Scholar are making more and more key texts and primary sources available for researchers. We have no problem with students accessing sources via the Internet, but we need to teach students to dig deeper and to make sure they have full citations. Faculty should avail themselves of the services of Prof. Jan Zauha, reference library liaison to the department, who is willing to do library research workshops with students. A more tricky problem to solve is the fact that until the capstone course, students do not get a great deal of research experience because upper-division history courses typically have 40 students, making it almost impossible to monitor and develop research papers with integrity.

Submitted by: History faculty