

BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Assessment Report for (Department and/or Program): History & Geography

Academic Chair: Keith Chu

Assessment Period: 2010-2012

Submitted by: (The following report has been extracted from Tk20. It has been rearranged to fit this temporary format and to be more readable. A final format for assessment reports will be developed by the Learning Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate.)

The report in Tk20 was originally submitted by Sarah Shurts.

1. Intended Outcome (Goal):

Students will analyze and explain historical events and movements and their significance for World, Western, and American society.

2. General Education Requirement(s) to which the intended outcome relates:

1. Historical Perspective – (History)

Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.

3. Section(s) of the Strategic Plan to which the intended outcomes relates:

Goal 1: We will improve student engagement and student success.

1.1 Take steps to increase student retention and student progression through academic programs.

4. Means of assessment, sources of data, and desired result:

Entry level (100 level) history courses taught by full-time faculty members in the History & Geography Department were used in this plan.

Students will write analytical essays using historical primary and/or secondary sources. These papers will address one of two departmental goals: to state the causes of a major historical event

and analyze the impact of that event on a nation or civilization; or to demonstrate how writers' interpretations of historical events are influenced by their time, culture, and perspective.

The desired pass rate was:

- 60% of the students will score a total of 15 or above out of 20 possible points on the departmental essay rubric
- 60% of the students will score 3 or 4 on the "introduction and thesis" category of the rubric
- 60% of the students will score 3 or 4 on the "use of documentation" category of the rubric
- 60% of the students will score 3 or 4 on the both the "evaluation and analysis" categories of the rubric

5. Summary of Results:

299 papers were collected

- Total papers with scores 15 or over– 142
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on "introduction and thesis" - 161
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on "documentation" - 167
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on both "evaluation & analysis" - 160

48% of the students achieved a score of 15 or above.

The overall goal of having 60% of our students achieve a score of 15 out of 20 on their paper was not met in the fall of 2010. The sub-goals of achieving scores of 3 or 4 out of 4 components including introduction/thesis, documentation of evidence, and evaluation and analysis were also not met although the success rate for these was somewhat higher. These results could provide our department with some indication that if paper grades do not reflect the distribution of final grades, in other words, if our students score poorly on essays but still have high final grades, we need to reconsider our approach to instruction and assessment.

6. Recommendations for improvement:

If we wish to see increased student success rates in written work, we must make written expression and historical analysis a significant aspect of our instruction. This could be accomplished in different ways but might include requiring drafts of papers, periodic check of progress on papers, more in-class instruction in writing theses and documenting evidence, and providing examples of exemplary past papers. At the minimum, professors in the department should encourage students to make use of the writing center and tutoring services available on campus and provide links/access to style manuals for documenting sources (MLA or Chicago style documentation of evidence).

7. Results of Pilot Study on Proposed Recommendations for Improvement:

A pilot study was conducted in Fall 2011 to help the department begin the process of selecting the recommendations for improvement they wish to implement. The pilot was run on a History 101 class with 23 students in which three of the proposed recommendations had been implemented during the Fall semester. The three changes made to the instruction of writing were: in-class instruction in writing thesis statements, in class discussion of documenting evidence, and reading drafts of thesis statements and introductions (this was optional for students).

The results of the pilot study:

23 papers were collected

- Total papers with scores 15 or over– 12
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on “introduction and thesis” - 13
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on “documentation” - 19
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on analysis” – 13
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on evaluation-- 11

52% of the students achieved a score of 15 or above. However 56.5% scored a 3 or 4 in the category of “thesis and introduction” and 82.6% of students achieved a score of 3 or 4 in the category of “documentation.” These were the two categories affected most directly by the changes implemented. The results seem to suggest that in class instruction is beneficial for improving certain areas of student writing.

The results of the pilot study will be shared with the department in early Spring 2012. The department will then select one or two recommended changes to implement on a department-wide basis for the Fall 2012 semester.

Appendices:

- a. Rubric for statewide objective C with total number out of 23 who achieved a 3 or 4 in each category
- b. Powerpoint slides for in class instruction on thesis statements and organization of papers and documentation of evidence

Proposed Changes to instruction based on Assessment data for the History Department

The History Department has considered the data collected from last academic year 2010-2011 and from the pilot study done in Fall 2011 and has decided on a course of action to improve student learning for the coming academic year 2012-2013. The department considered many possibilities of actions that could improve student learning and success in writing in our discipline, including recommend use of the writing center, showing students how to use the citation guides on the library homepage, in class instruction on proper citation, in class instruction on thesis construction, library instruction on research methods, requiring drafts of theses or full drafts of papers, and providing examples of exemplary papers from previous semesters. After discussion, the department has decided that in 2012-2013 we will all agree to recommend use of the writing center to all our classes and provide in class instruction on thesis construction. We believe these two reforms to our current instruction will improve the quality of

the work we receive from history students. Improvement in these two areas can also be effectively measured against last year’s scores on our department rubric for writing in the discipline in the two categories of thesis and written expression. We hope that providing these two changes to our instruction will result in dramatic improvement in these two assessed areas of student learning in history.

History Department Assessment Rubric for statewide objective c) “Students will demonstrate how writers’ interpretations of historical events are influenced by their time, culture, and perspective”

TOTALS OUT OF 23

	4-- Exceeds (A)	3-- Meets (B)	2-- Approaches (C)	1--Fails to Approach (D or F)	Score
Introduction and Thesis	Provides an informative introduction that introduces the topic and a thesis statement that clearly addresses the purpose of the paper	Provides a reasonably informed introduction and a thesis statement that implies the purpose of the paper but does not state it clearly and concisely	Provides an introduction that addresses the topic tangentially and/or a thesis statement that is limited or not clearly indicative of the paper's purpose	Provides a confused or off-topic introduction and has an unrelated thesis or no thesis describing the purpose of the paper	13
Analysis of authors’ perspectives	Provides detailed analysis of authors’ narratives noting and evaluating their supporting arguments and distinctive perspective (If applicable) makes multiple comparisons and contrasts of authors with opposing perspectives	Provides some analysis of authors’ narratives and distinctive perspective provides a few supporting arguments but also relies on summary (If applicable) can make some comparisons and or contrasts of authors’ opposing perspectives	Provides a summary of authors’ narratives with little or no analysis (If applicable) can make a comparison or a contrast but ignores many	Does not fully address the question of authors’ perspectives fails to provide any analysis, provides no supporting arguments (If applicable) provides no comparison or contrast of author perspective/position	13
Evaluation of author bias and insight into author episteme	Provides critical evaluation of authors’ perspective and distinctive narrative Discusses the effect on the piece of author bias due to time period and culture Demonstrates how the piece can provide insight into the worldview of the time/culture	Provides critical evaluation of the author’s perspective and distinctive narrative. Recognizes importance of bias and insight into the worldview of the culture/time but provides only limited critique	Provides only limited evaluation of the author’s perspective and distinctive narrative. Recognizes importance of bias and insight into the worldview of the culture/time but fails to adequately critique these	Provides little or no evaluation of the authors’ perspective, fails to recognize author bias or insight into worldviews	11
Use of properly cited documentary evidence	Evidence and supporting detail are provided in the form of quotations, paraphrase, and summaries that are properly cited	Some supporting evidence is utilized and is properly cited	Little supporting evidence is utilized and/or the evidence is not properly cited	Little or no supporting evidence is provided and citations are incorrect or absent	19

Written Expression	Writing is clear, concise, well organized Sentence structure, grammar, and spelling are correct	Writing needs some improvement in organization or clarity Sentence structure, grammar, and spelling are correct except for minor mistakes	Writing needs improvement in organization or clarity Multiple mistakes in sentence structure, grammar, and spelling	Writing is unclear and poorly organized Multiple mistakes in sentence structure, grammar, and spelling	15
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12 out of 23 scored 15 or higher as their total score out of 20

WRITING A SUCCESSFUL 101 PAPER

THESIS AND INTRODUCTION

- Introduction
- Should provide basic background on the time, the author, etc
- Thesis statement
- Must explain the purpose of the paper: to analyze a document and explore how it provides modern audiences with insight into the religion, culture, politics, or social structure of the society in which it was written
- Thesis must also let reader know which 2 themes you are looking at and which piece/author you are discussing

ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

- Organize the body of your paper
- – you can do this by theme, ie a section on religion and all the examples of how this piece gives insight into religion organized in this section
- -- or you can organize by plotline etc and comment on each theme within these paragraphs (ie how did the story/dialogue progress and how does each part of the story/dialogue provide new insight into the themes)
- Or any organization that works for you– but it must be clearly laid out!
- Conclusion

SELECT A DOCUMENT AND COLLECT EVIDENCE

- Do not write your paper on the topic for which you led discussion
- Read through the document and determine which two themes (of our four: religion, government/politics/military, social structure, intellectual/cultural life) it best gives us insight into
- Identify as many examples of this insight as possible for both themes
- For each example, select significant quotes that provide evidence

- Quick paragraph summarizing the piece, characters, plot. You can also explain the time period (briefly) and society in which the piece was written
- This should be a brief paragraph– not even a half page

- The important thing to remember is that you are using the document– characters, passages, statements etc to reveal what life was like during the time period.
- Do not write a history of the period, do not write a summary of the piece. Use the piece to talk about life during the time period

CITATION/DOCUMENTATION OF SOURCES

- Citation
 - You MUST use evidence to support your analysis and you must cite that evidence every time
 - Can use MLA, APA, or Chicago Style footnotes but must do it correctly
 - For documents, just need author, title, page since I didn't provide publishing data
 - Any outside source including textbook requires full citation
 - If you do not cite every quote you use, every idea you paraphrase, every fact you borrow, it will be considered plagiarism and you will receive an F for the paper!
-
- How to cite in Chicago Style
 - Chicago style uses footnotes where all the info on the source is included. If you use full footnotes, you do not need a bibliography/works cited at the end
 - http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch10_s1-0001.html
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- How to cite in MLA format
 - http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_s1-0001.html
 - If you use MLA, you need to include a bibliography/works cited at the end of the paper
 - http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_s1-0011.html