Adopted May 2014

The History Department has developed specific student learning outcomes for its majors that enable the department to measure whether students are learning history and acquiring historical skills. The following guide has been developed as a resource to help you meet departmental expectations.

SLO #1: The student will understand historical research within its historical context.

It is important that the history you are writing uses evidence correctly and shows that you have discerned their relevance to your research interest.

History is not a random set of facts unrelated to each other but rather is ordered according to chronology, topic, culture, group, etc. As you pursue your research, it is important that you learn and know the facts concerning your topic but also that you be able to connect the dots of the many facts related to your topic. Look for patterns and themes that come to the surface as you learn and interact with the information.

The evidence also needs to be placed and understood within the larger historical context.

Writing a history paper requires more than simply gathering the evidence that relates to your topic. You also need to find out information concerning the historical background of your topic, because you have to situate your argument and evidence correctly in time and space. You have to examine and evaluate the past through the lens of the past, because our viewpoints today would (often) not be familiar to the contemporary actors at the time you are writing about. As L. P. Hartley pointedly stated in his 1953 novel *The Go-Between*: "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there."[1] Rutgers historians Matt Matsuda and John Gillis assert that every piece of historical writing has to first establish the correct setting. They explain that "the historical context refers to the moods, attitudes, and conditions that existed in a certain time. Context is the 'setting' for an event that occurs, and it will have an impact on the relevance of the event."[2]

In addition to establishing the correct historical context, you need to familiarize yourself with the historiographical debate surrounding your research topic. The term 'historiography' refers to the ongoing debate among historians about a certain topic. The perspectives of historians change over time and each era sees the past in a different light and interprets it differently. You will have to review the existing published secondary literature that relates to your topic and demonstrate how your proposed work will build on existing studies while offering a new or improved interpretation. This website explains how to write a historiography that has to be part of the introduction of your paper:

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[1] L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953).

[2] 'Writing Historical Essays: A Guide for Undergraduates', Department of History, Rutgers, accessed 3/17/2014: http://history.rutgers.edu/component/content/article/52/106-writing-historical-essays-a-guide-for-undergraduates.

http://www.trentu.ca/history/workbook/documents/HowtoWriteaHistoriography.pdf.

This website can help you begin to understand some of the schools of interpretation that have developed over the years.

http://ibatpv.org/ib/histo.html.

SLO #2: The student will conduct historical research.

An aspect of conducting research is formulating a question.

When trying to formulate a question, the first thing to remember is that there are types of questions, some more useful than others for getting started on a research project. For instance, a question that can be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' likely will not lead to other questions that would contribute to a fuller answer. Sometimes, questions contain an answer and/or a major assumption. For instance, the question 'Why was it a good idea for Richard to go on crusade?' assumes that crusading was a good idea when in fact it might be debated.

In contrast, a question that demonstrates knowledge of the historical context will probably result in a better conceptualized question. For instance, let's consider this question: 'given that Richard I was almost never in England, the kingdom over which he was king, how should he be evaluated as a monarch?' That in turn might lead to further questions such as, 'what were the expectations of a medieval English monarch?', 'how does his role as duke and count of continental holdings factor into the consideration?', and 'were there indications of his subjects' opinions during his lifetime or shortly after?'

Background reading on the topic should help you begin to formulate a question. This can consist of encyclopedic sources, both in print and online, lecture materials, and books that are assigned for your class. Remember that this is not the point in the process where you have a final answer or thesis. Arriving at firm conclusions and a thesis comes as a result of research and the on-going analysis of the information you have collected.

Once you have a question, how do you identify sources that promise to be useful?

There are several strategies for identifying sources that will likely address your question. From your background reading, peruse the bibliographies of your sources. Sometimes, articles have abstracts that will give a brief overview of the argument contained in the piece. Book prefaces and introductions can also be valuable places to skim to understand the thesis and direction the author intends to take. Also, the table of contents and index can provide some guidance as to the value of a book for the research. Finally, do not forget how helpful reference librarians can be!

What sources will be used is influenced by the research question, but it is important to remember that research questions are shaped by the availability of sources. There have been great questions which could not be answered because the sources are nonexistent or

inaccessible. It could be that the sources that you have explored have raised another question of greater interest to you than the original one. These types of developments will require that you rethink your question in light of available source materials.

The organization of the information that you gather is key to understanding the topic and formulating a thesis based on the data collected.

Organization can begin by keeping careful track of your sources' bibliographic information, namely author's name, source title, and page number. As the research nears completion, you should review your data and try to discern larger themes or overarching concepts that address your question. These can serve as the basis for an outline. Once you have that, you can then place the remainder of your information into the outline that you have developed. Ask yourself whether the outline makes sense in how it moves from point to point.

How to cite sources used in the research.

a. Why footnote? On many levels, footnoting is the right and honorable thing to do. It is your responsibility to give credit to the person(s) who did the work from which you are benefiting. It also provides the reader with proof that what you have presented as evidence actually exists, and it also gives your reader the information needed to investigate further. Footnoting is so important in scholarly endeavors that improper footnoting is an infraction of the Honor Code.

b. What to footnote? Views, ideas, facts, charts, statistics, etc. that are not your own and that you learned from the work of another. Footnoting is not restricted to direct quotations. A simple test is to ask yourself two questions, 1) did I know this before I read it in this source? If not, footnote it. If so, 2) ask if it is appropriate to acknowledge this person's work. If so, footnote it. If in doubt, footnote it.

c. Paraphrasing is more than taking an idea or statement and putting in synonyms, and it is more than changing a couple words but leaving the remainder as found in the source. Both of these methods constitute plagiarism. Instead, reformulate the idea in your own words and provide a footnote. Your goal is to retain the original idea but express it differently and uniquely and cite it correctly.

History papers employ footnotes or endnotes and use superscript numbers as shown below. The citation is placed at the end of the sentence. You will find the best resource in how to create footnotes and bibliographies at the website of the Chicago Manual of Style. Historians use the Chicago style because it is the most precise of the various formats, making it clear to other scholars seeking further information.

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Footnotes are placed at the end of the sentence which contains the material associated with the source. You will find helpful directions for using Microsoft Word's footnoting tool at the following website:

http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/insert-or-create-footnotes-and-endnotes-HA101854833.aspx

SLO #3: The student will analyze historical research.

A component of analyzing historical research is being equipped to evaluate the sources that will provide the evidence you gather and from which you will draw your conclusions. Below is a recommended approach to evaluating sources, first primary followed by a set of questions for secondary sources.

a. Primary Sources:
Who wrote this document? Written historical records were created by individuals in a specific historical setting for a particular purpose. Until you know who created the document you have read, you cannot know why it was created or what meanings its author intended to impart by creating it. Nor is it enough simply to learn the name of the author. It is equally important to learn about authors as people: what social background they came from, what position they held, to what group did they belong.

Who is the intended audience? Identifying the intended audience of a document will tell you much about its language, about the amount of knowledge that the writer is assuming, even sometimes about the best form for the document to take. The relationship between author and audience is one of the most basic elements of communication and one that will tell you much about the purpose of the document. Think of the difference between the audience for a novel and that for a diary, or for a law and a secret treaty. In each case, knowing the intended audience informs your view of what to expect from the document.

What is the story line? The next question has to do with the content of the document. To learn the story line, you must take some notes while you are reading and underline or highlight important places in your text. The more often you ask yourself, "What is going on here?" the easier it will be to find out. No matter how obscure a document appears at first, deliberate attention to the story line will allow you to focus your reading.

Why was this document written? Everything is written for a reason. You make notes to yourself to remember, you send cards to celebrate and sympathize, you correspond to convey or request information. Understanding the purpose of a historical document is critical to analyzing the strategies that the author employs within it. A document intended to convince will employ logic. A document intended to entertain will employ fancy. A document attempting to motivate will employ emotional appeals. In order to find these strategies, you must know what purpose the document was intended to serve.

What type of document is this? The form of the document is vital to its purpose. You would expect a telephone book to be alphabetized, a poem to be in meter, and a work of philosophy to be in prose. The form or genre in which a document appears is always carefully chosen. Genre contains its own conventions, which fulfill the expectations of author and audience.

What are the basic assumptions made in this document? All documents make

assumptions that are bound up with their intended audience, with the form in which they are written, and with their purpose. Some of these assumptions are so integral to the document that they are left unsaid; others are so important to establish that they form a part of the central argument.

Can I believe this document? To be successful, a document designed to persuade, to recount events, or to motivate people to action must be believable to its audience. Every author has a point of view, and exposing the assumptions of the document is an essential task for the reader. You must treat all claims skeptically.

What can I learn about the society that produced this document? All documents unintentionally reveal things that are embedded in the very language, structure, and assumptions of the document that can tell you the most about the historical period or event that you are studying.

What does this document mean to me? In other words, so what? Other than for the practical purpose of passing the course, why should you be concerned with historical documents? What can you learn from them? Only you can answer these questions, but you will not be able to answer them until you have asked them. You should demand the meaning of each document you read: what it meant to the historical actors – authors, audience, and society – and what it means to your own society.[3]

b. Secondary Sources:
Evaluating these sources utilizes some of the same questions. For instance, you will want to discern the author's purpose in writing. In addition, consider also the following:

Did the author make good use of adequate evidence? What types of sources were used and were they the best available? Did the author analyze the sources critically or simply reflect the positions/conclusions of the sources?

Were the author's biases, prejudices, and values evident? What were they? Do they seem to have distorted the account and analysis, or did the author successfully present a reasonably balanced work of scholarship?

The word 'bias' deserves some consideration for it has much negative baggage today, but bias is not necessarily a bad thing. Everyone sees the world through lenses that have been shaped by values, beliefs, and experiences, and these inevitably affect how a historian interprets evidence. Be aware that a historian's specialty is itself a bias. For example, a social or cultural historian will ask different questions and use different sources than a political or military historian.

What contribution does the work make? Does it provide readers with something important and new in either findings or interpretations? How does the work fit into larger historiographical debates? Does it provide an argument for or against a scholarly interpretation? Does it move debates in new directions?

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[3] Kishlansky, Mark A. *Sources of World History*, Volume 1, Third Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson, xv-xviii.

What might be done by the author or another historian or you to fill the obvious gaps, take the next logical step in the argument, or rectify failings in the work? This step involves both identifying an author's failings and indicating a direction for future research. Think how answers to these questions can inspire or inform your own research.

Note: Identifying an author's failings or weaknesses is trickier than it seems at first. You should move beyond superficial stylistic concerns ("The book was too difficult/ boring) and identify more substantive issues. In addition, when the author clearly indicates that sources are not available, it is not adequate to say that he/she should have used those sources. You are evaluating the work as a historian, with reasonable expectations about the limits of a historian's task.

Another aspect of analyzing your research data involves being able to synthesize the information, perspectives, and sources that you have collected.

History is a vast field of study that incorporates the facts and views of many people across many different chronological and cultural boundaries. As you begin to consider how you will present your research, it is important that you bring these many different facts and views together in a unique and fresh, yet credible way. Many times, students will record what the different authors have said which amounts to little more than stitching together book reports. Good synthesis considers how the facts relate to each other and pulls the information together in a manner never seen before.

Analyzing the data brings you to the point where you formulate conclusions.

You have collected information, you have discerned themes and patterns, you have evaluated your sources, you have considered how the pieces fit together, and you are ready to answer your question. Look yet again at the question, and using your research and analysis of the information, propose an answer. To what conclusion do the facts point?

SLO #4: The student will develop arguments based on historical research.

Now that you have conducted a good bit of research on your topic, and have consulted the primary and main secondary sources related to your topic, the next step is to develop an answer to your research question.

This begins by formulating a thesis.

Remember, as a student of history, you are not simply rehashing what has already been said about your topic (historians are not fact mongers, but interpreters of the past). Instead, insert yourself into the debate about your topic and take a position that establishes your point of view. Your thesis should be presented clearly and concisely in the introduction of your paper, and it should answer your research question. It should arise from the research that you have done; allow the evidence as you have, know, and understand it to dictate the outcome.

The thesis needs to be supported.

The body of your paper will be the place where you introduce evidence to support your thesis, and it is also where you will mostly be considering your primary sources. Ultimately, a successful paper is one in which you effectively demonstrate a successful defense of his/her thesis. Some things to consider:

1. All assertions that you make to defend your thesis should be accompanied by relevant, significant, and quantitatively sufficient evidence.
2. Be sure to keep your essay focused, with your thesis the constant and dominant consideration. Extraneous details and a rambling, unsupported/unfocused narrative will only come across as so much fluff.
3. Be honest. If you come across evidence that calls your thesis into question, do not discard it or pretend it does not exist. Instead, consider it carefully, and use it to help you rethink your original thesis. Seldom do we find simple answers to historical questions.

SLO #5: The student will demonstrate advanced communication skills.

Now it is time to share what you have learned and what you have decided to be true given the evidence that you have collected. A lot of good research is lost because the historian does not communicate well his/her findings.

You need to convey complex ideas and information in written form.

Coherent writing is written communication which develops and conveys ideas and knowledge in a lucid and organized manner. As 18th-century English cleric John Chapman said, "For a text to be recognized as a text rather than a haphazard collection of sentences, it must have an orderly and cohesive construction." For historical writing, this means having unity and purpose throughout your paper. You should begin with an appropriate introduction which captures the attention of the reader. It should also identify the subject and purpose of the paper and indicate why it is significant, placing it into a historical context. The introduction should also include your thesis. As for the structure of the body of the paper, there should be a logical organization which develops your thesis throughout. Each paragraph of your paper should focus on developing a specific element/theme of your thesis and begin with a topic sentence that argues the point to be made in the paragraph. To finish, there should be a distinct conclusion which wraps up your argument and recapitulates your thesis in some form. Throughout the paper, there should be smooth, coherent transitions between sentences and paragraphs. In terms of style and mechanics, writing should be concise and error-free in terms of grammar, spelling, and formatting.

You need to convey complex ideas and information in an oral form.

Last is the presentation of your research to the public. This is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in a listener's attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors. An effective public presentation will be organized and coherent. You should begin with an appropriate introduction which grabs the attention of the listener. It should also identify the subject and purpose of the paper and indicate why it is significant, placing it into a historical context. After the introduction, you should have a precisely stated thesis. This thesis should become the central message of the presentation and be appropriately repeated and strongly supported throughout the presentation.

As for the structure of the presentation, beyond the introduction and thesis, there should be a logical organization which develops your thesis throughout. There should be smooth, coherent transitions between topics. Language should aim to be imaginative, memorable, and compelling, with the intent of enhancing the effectiveness of the presentation. However, language must be appropriate to the audience. Delivery techniques, such as posture, gestures, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness, should make the presentation compelling. You should appear polished and confident. In terms of evidence and supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities), you should make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports your thesis. Your presentation should finish with a conclusion.[4]

Following the conclusion of your presentation, you should invite questions from the audience. These questions may include points of clarification, counterpoints, or may ask you to speculate based on your findings. Regardless, you should formulate a direct answer to the question and provide support/explanation for your answers. In cases where you do not know the answer, it is advised to admit to that fact rather than manufacture some bogus response.

Your oral presentation needs to demonstrate technological literacy.

An essential component of the public presentation of your research is the use of technology. More often than not, this will take the form of PowerPoint though other platforms may be utilized. The following are excerpts from Gary Chapman of the LBJ School of Public Affairs on effective use of PowerPoint:

1. PowerPoint, when displayed via a projector, is a useful tool for showing audiences things that enhance what the speaker is saying. It is a useful tool for illustrating the content of a speech, such as by showing photos, graphs, charts, maps, etc., or by highlighting certain text from a speech, such as quotations or major ideas. It should not be used as a slide-show outline of what the speaker is telling the audience.
2. Slides used in a presentation should be spare, in terms of how much information is on each slide, as well as how many slides are used. A rule of thumb is to put no more than eight lines of text on a slide, and with no more than eight to ten words per line. In most cases, less is more, so four lines of text is probably better.

[4] See Oral Communication VALUE Rubric, http://www.in.gov/che/files/All_VALUE_Rubrics.pdf

3. Unless you're an experienced designer, don't use the transition and animation "tricks" that are built into PowerPoint, such as bouncing or flying text. By now, most people roll their eyes when they see these things, and these tricks add nothing of value to a presentation.
4. Above all, use high-contrast color schemes so that whatever is on your slides is readable. Unless you are a talented graphic designer, use the templates that come with PowerPoint or Keynote, and keep it simple—high concept design in a slide presentation doesn't help in most circumstances, unless you're in the fashion or design fields. If you use graphics or photos, try to use the highest quality you can find or afford—clip art and low-resolution graphics blown up on a screen usually detract from a presentation.
5. Rehearse your PowerPoint presentation and not just once. Don't let PowerPoint get in the way of your oral presentation, and make sure you know how it works, what sequence the slides are in, how to get through it using someone else's computer, etc. Make sure that you can deliver your presentation if PowerPoint is completely unavailable; in other words, make sure you can give your speech without your PowerPoint presentation.
6. Concentrate on keeping the audience focused on you, not on the screen. You can do this by using slides sparingly, standing in front of the audience in a way that makes them look at you, and, if possible, going to the screen and using your hand or arm to point out things on a slide. If you expect to be using PowerPoint a lot, invest in a remote "clicker" that lets you get away from the computer and still drive your presentation. If you don't have one of those, it's better to ask someone to run the presentation than to be behind a screen and keyboard while you talk.
7. If you show something on a computer that requires moving the cursor around, or flipping from one screen to another, or some other technique that requires interaction with the computer itself, remember that people in the audience will see things very differently on the projection screen than you see them on the computer screen. Keep motion on the screen to a minimum, unless you're showing a movie or a video. It's better to show a static screenshot of a Web page, embedded on a slide, than to call up the Web page in a browser on a computer. If you want to point out something on a Web page, go to the screen and point at it—don't jiggle the cursor around what you want people to look at: their heads will look like bobble-headed dolls.
8. Don't "cue" the audience that listening to your speech means getting through your PowerPoint presentation. If the audience sees that your PowerPoint presentation is the structure of your speech, they'll start wondering how many slides are left. Slides should be used asynchronously within your speech, and only to highlight or illustrate things. Audiences are bored with oral presentations that go from one slide to the next until the end. Engage the audience, and use slides only when they are useful.[5]

[5] http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/21cp/syllabus/powerpoint_tips2.htm