

TO: Michael Conlin, Graduate Director
FROM: Laura Hodgman, 550 Instructor, Fall 2014
RE: Assessment
DATE: 26 February 2015

Conclusions:

Students were not as proficient as I would like to see them be at identifying where to look for specific types of sources. Upon reflection, I think my current practice of introducing them to bibliographic aids throughout HIST 501 (the prerequisite course to HIST 550) confuses them. The next time I teach 501, I will devote a particular course section to introducing bibliographic aids. My hope is that this will help clarify the distinguishing characteristics of finding aids.

Students were much more proficient at citation by the conclusion of 550 than they had been at the beginning. At the conclusion of the course, they had less proficiency in providing correct *footnote* citations than they had a providing correct *bibliographic* information. Bibliography is stressed more in HIST 550 than footnotes are.

Students' self evaluations suggest that they believe the course helped to make them better researchers. This is supported by answers to objective and subjective questions on the assessment instrument.

Basis for Conclusions:

The following SLOs:

1. understand historical studies, including historical methodology and selected aspects of modern historiography;
2. demonstrate factual and bibliographic mastery and the ability to interpret institutional and cultural change in two historical fields;
3. conduct effective library research and write a major graduate research paper;
4. think critically about historical information and historical problems

Results of the "Assessment for HIST 550"—a pre- and post-test. (Attached; I have indicated which SLO is being addressed with each section.)

What is the most important thing you learned by taking this class? (Post-test only.)

- “How to be a better historian. How to be a better researcher.” (SLO 3, 4)
- “How to organize and narrow my topic.” (SLO 3, 4)
- “How to narrow research and conduct specific searches and current scholarly works on *specific* topics. How to search for things related to *my topic* and not just something similar.” (SLO 3, 4)
- “Annotating and constructing a strong bibliography.” (SLO 3)
- Two students did not answer this question.