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Model Course/Program Outcomes Guide

May 2009

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Directions: Please complete this form to document your progress toward improving student learning. For each item, indicate your progress and your anticipated next steps. Thank you!

Course/Program Title: History 101

Course/Program Team: Andrew Keyser, Tom Clemens

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1) Identify and evaluate primary and secondary source materials and demonstrate an understanding of their historical context and relevance; Recognize bias and its impact upon the value of the source; Extract valid and valuable information from the source.
2) Recognize important trends and themes in human cultural, economic, political and ideological development; Identify and evaluate the impact of these historical trends upon global development.

Assessment

A series of critical analysis quizzes associated with primary source readings were designed and administered throughout the semester. The primary goal of these quizzes was to assess the first learning outcome, but the second outcome could also be assessed because of the content of the readings. Average scores on each quiz were collected for each section and the data was analyzed to determine general student progress throughout the semester.

Validation

The validation for this assessment was internal. Questions were designed to assess the first outcome, but validation was provided through the results and student feedback. Questions that a majority of the class failed to answer correctly were analyzed for clarity. Student feedback after the quizzes were administered also aided the process of identifying unclear or potentially invalid questions. No external validation was sought as the assessment method was seen as a temporary way to obtain data that would be useful in furthering the course's transition.

Results

The periodic assessments that were administered during the semester produced mixed results. For example, in one section there was a steady increase in score (with the exception of one quiz) ultimately representing an increase from an average of 66% correct answers to 82% correct answers. In another section, however, there was no consistent scoring trend and the final quiz

actually reflected a decrease in average scores as compared to the first quiz. It was determined that this method is not an appropriate assessment of student outcomes at the course level (although it is appropriate for assessing individual student achievement). It was revealed in the midst of the semester that there was no method for insuring consistency of quiz difficulty from quiz to quiz or, for that matter, insuring consistent levels of reading difficulty.

Follow-up
Although the same quiz format is still being administered, quizzes are no longer being used as a common assessment tool. The course is in the process of being further developed to insure skill development throughout the semester. A new common assessment is being designed and will be launched in the Spring of 2010. This assessment will utilize the same basic format as the quizzes, but will be administered at the beginning and the end of the semester. The reading and questions will remain the same for both assessments which should result in valid data.

Budget Justification
The design of appropriate assessments to evaluate critical analysis and critical thinking skills is difficult. Professional development money will be necessary for conferences and support materials that will aid in this process.