

History Program Assessment Plan (Spring 2016)

Mission Statement for the History Major

A cornerstone of a liberal arts education, history is the study of continuity and change over time. The history major at Wells College helps students acquire an understanding of the richness, diversity, and complexity of the human experience over time and space. As students examine historical questions, they learn how historians have approached and interpreted the past, they gain an appreciation of the contested nature of historical knowledge, and they engage issues that raise ethical questions and provoke historical debate. Students learn to think critically and creatively, as they interpret historical evidence and construct well-reasoned arguments.

History Program Goals

The HIST program trains students to:

- Think historically by cultivating a sense of change and continuity over time.
- Embrace new ways of knowing by recognizing connections between the past and the present and locating both self and others in time and space.
- Develop an appreciation of difference and diversity by cultivating a sense of shared humanity.
- Develop analytical skills to enable students to become well informed, critical, and active citizens.
- Develop writing skills to enable students to compose well-reasoned historical arguments and interpretations.
- Develop technological and research skills that enable students to access, critically evaluate, and utilize information effectively.
- Develop expertise in the discipline of history.

History Program Learning Objectives

Students in the HIST program shall:

- Read actively and critically.

- Analyze primary and secondary sources.
- Compose well-reasoned and well-organized written arguments.
- Demonstrate oral communication skills.
- Conduct original research in a variety of sources.
- Demonstrate understanding of the intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural history of the United States, Europe, and at least one “Non-Western” area.
- Demonstrate understanding of historiography and the constructed and interpretative nature of historical scholarship.

Measurable Outcomes of the HIST Program

- Students demonstrate skills in critical reading and the analysis of primary and secondary sources through:
 - Reading reflections
 - Discussion questions
 - Informal writing exercises
 - Quizzes
- Students learn how to construct arguments and develop writing skills through:
 - Position papers and short critical responses
 - Medium-length interpretive essays
 - Research papers
 - HIST 401 (Senior Essay) & HIST 402 (Senior Seminar)
 - Formal peer-editing exercises
- Students demonstrate research skills through:
 - Research projects
 - HIST 401 (Senior Essay) & HIST 402 (Senior Seminar)
- Students demonstrate oral communication skills through:
 - Classroom discussion & debate
 - Group work
 - Role-playing activities and simulation games
 - Formal presentations
- Students demonstrate mastery of concepts and understanding of the history of different areas and periods through:
 - Quizzes
 - Examinations
 - Interpretive Essays
 - Written comprehensive examination at the conclusion of the senior year
- Students demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of history through:

- Interpretive and historiographical essays
- Success in HIST 375 (Writing History: Theory and Practice)
- Active participation in HIST 402 (Senior Seminar)
- Internships in museums, historical societies, archives, and schools
- Written comprehensive examination at the conclusion of the senior year