**Assessment Plan Graduate Certificate in US History Certificate, History Department, University of Colorado Denver, Submitted by: Christopher Agee**

Required Courses for the US History Graduate Certificate:

1. HIST 6013: Introduction to the Professional Study of History
2. HIST 6989 Graduate Research Seminar or HIST 6931 Graduate Readings Seminar
3. Additional graduate course in US History (complete list on website)
4. Additional graduate course in US History (complete list on website)

Educational Purpose:

This graduate certificate will allow students to learn professional research and writing skills in History and to obtain greater knowledge in United States History. Such study can benefit high school teachers wishing to continue their professional development and also those working in museums, government, and the arts who are seeking professional development and/or facing accreditation or promotion requirements.

Learning Outcomes from the Graduate US History Certificate:

1. Inquiry and Analysis – Graduate US History Certificate students will

• develop a creative, focused, and manageable question for historical research in US History

• synthesize evidence representing a variety of perspectives

• explain the challenges of constructing historical narratives using incomplete and

contradictory evidence

• formulate a thesis and conclusion substantiated by primary and secondary source analysis

• critique alternative conclusions

2 Critical Thinking – Graduate US History Certificate students will

• identify and analyze the central issues, arguments, and points of view in primary and secondary sources pertaining to US History

• evaluate authors’ arguments and assess their evidence and conclusions

• critique their own and others’ assumptions and the contexts in which they develop those assumptions

• use the concept of historiography, in order to compare and contrast a variety of

scholarly texts

• analyze the ways the histories historians write are products of particular historical contexts

3. Written Communication – Graduate US History Certificate students will

• establish the context, audience, and purpose of their written assignments

• master the conventions of historical writing, including: clear paper organization

(thesis, evidence, conclusion); logical paragraph organization; clear, direct, and

engaging language; proper citation methods, using Chicago style

• compose papers employing narrative, descriptive, and analytical writing to convey their historical knowledge and analytical skills

4. Information literacy – Graduate US History Certificate students will

• determine the types of sources that are relevant to a research question in US History

• locate and evaluate appropriate materials for historical research, using book

catalogs (Skyline, Prospector, WorldCat), article databases (particularly America:

History and Life, Historical Abstracts, and JSTOR), and interlibrary loan

• demonstrate understanding of the ethical and legal issues surrounding the use of

published and unpublished materials, including what constitutes plagiarism and how to cite sources

The History Department will assess these four learning outcomes in the required HIST 6013 and both HIST 6989 and HIST 6931. These three graduate courses are designed to allow students to pursue concentrations in either US or Global History.

Curriculum Map

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | HIST 6013: Intro to Professional Study | HIST 6989: Research Seminar | HIST 6931:  Readings |
| Outcome 1 | Analytical Essay | Research Paper | Analytical Essay |
| Outcome 2 | Analytical Essay | Research Paper | Analytical Essay |
| Outcome 3 | Analytical Essay | Research Paper | Analytical Essay |
| Outcome 4 | Analytical Essay | Research Paper |  |

Description of the Assignments

HIST 6013 Analytical Essay: Students will write a 20-page historiographical essay in US History, tracing the evolution of scholarship on a topic of his or her choosing. Students are required to submit rough drafts of their essays around week 12 of the semester. After receiving peer feedback and comments from the professor, students submit revised papers during finals week. The Assessment Committee will use the students’ final drafts to evaluate learning outcomes for the course.

HIST 6989 Research Paper: A 20-30 page research paper on a topic in US History. Students find primary and secondary sources on their chosen topic and use those materials to develop a historical question, a historical narrative, and a historical argument. Students are required to submit rough drafts of their essays around week 12 of the semester. After receiving peer feedback and comments from the professor, students submit revised papers during finals week. The Assessment Committee will use the students’ final drafts to evaluate learning outcomes for the course.

HIST 6931 Analytical Essay: An essay analyzing one or more secondary sources on a topic in US History. Students select the secondary source/s for this assignment from readings assigned by the instructor.

Assessment Schedule:

The History Department already assesses the analytic essay in HIST 6013 for the four learning outcomes described above as part of its annual Department assessment. The Department will continue to do so. The History Department already rotates on an annual basis its assessments of HIST 6989 and HIST 6931 using the assignments and learning outcomes outlined above. The Department will continue this rotation.

Fall 2020

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| Learning Outcomes | Course | Assessment Technique | Assessment Results |
| #1, 2, 3, 4 | HIST 6013 | Analytical Essay |  |
| #1, 2, 3, 4 | HIST 6931 | Analytical Essay |  |

Fall 2021

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| Learning Outcomes | Course | Assessment Technique | Assessment Results |
| #1, 2, 3, 4 | HIST 6013 | Analytical Essay |  |
| #1, 2, 3 | HIST 6989 | Analytical Essay |  |

**Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4 are accounted for in the following two rubrics.**

**Rubric for Research Papers**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Below Proficient** | **Proficient** | **Above Proficient** |
| **Argument** | The paper lacks a clear thesis. | The thesis is clear, but one or more of the following may apply:   * The thesis is somewhat broad or imprecise. * The thesis is not sufficiently interpretive (i.e. It is hard to imagine alternative arguments) * The larger significance of the thesis is unclear. * The thesis is not very surprising. | The thesis is:   * Interpretive, precisely worded, and appropriately narrow. * Significant because it helps us better understand some larger, more consequential historical issue. * Surprising in one of the following ways: (1) It is inherently counterintuitive or not obvious. (2) It challenges explanations that other historians have offered. (3) It offers an interpretation of events that differs from the ones historical actors themselves offered. |
| **Historiographic Positioning** | Does not offer a convincing explanation of the paper’s contribution to the literature in a designated field. | The author explains the paper’s contribution to the literature on his/her topic, but some of the following may apply:   * The author summarizes individual books and articles without identifying a larger pattern in the literature. * The author’s summary of the literature is not as fair or accurate as it could be. * The author provides a vague explanation of how the paper builds on, challenges, or complicates previous scholarship. * The author does not fully substantiate larger claims about the literature of the field. | The author does all of the following very effectively:   * Identifies at least one larger pattern in the scholarship that helps position the paper’s argument. For example, the author might identify a scholarly debate on the topic, a prevailing consensus in the scholarship, or a change in the way historians have understood the topic. * Cites enough high-quality books and articles to substantiate claims about the literature. * Offers a clear and compelling explanation of how the paper builds on, challenges, or complicates previous scholarship. |
| **Research** | The paper contains insufficient primary and secondary evidence to support the central argument. | The paper demonstrates adequate research, but some of the following may apply:   * The primary source evidence offers only moderate support for the central argument. * The author makes only moderate use of high-quality secondary sources to add context and bolster the central argument. | The paper demonstrates outstanding research.   * The central argument is well supported by evidence from primary sources. * The author makes abundant use of high-quality secondary sources to add context and bolster the central argument. |
| **Composition** | Writing is generally unclear and/or disorganized. | Writing is generally clear, but the paper has moderate problems in some of the following areas:   * Grammar, style, or usage errors. * Unfocused paragraphs. * Topic sentences do not convey the main idea of the paragraph. * Quotes are not introduced properly or fluently integrated into the text. * Footnote placement or formatting errors. | Writing is clear, elegant, and logically organized.   * The paper contains few, if any, grammar, style, or usage errors. * The paper has a clear and logical structure. * Each paragraph is coherent and begins with a strong topic sentence. * Quotes are introduced properly and fluently integrated into the text. * Footnotes are formatted according to *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines. |

**Rubric for Analytical Essays**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Below Proficient** | **Proficient** | **Above Proficient** |
| **Argument** | The paper lacks a clear thesis. | The thesis is clear, but one or more of the following may apply:   * The thesis is somewhat broad or imprecise. * The thesis is not sufficiently interpretive (i.e. It is hard to imagine alternative arguments) * The larger significance of the thesis is unclear. * The thesis is not very surprising. | The thesis is:   * Interpretive, precisely worded, and appropriately narrow. * Significant because it helps us better understand some larger, more consequential historical issue. * Surprising in one of the following ways: (1) It is inherently counterintuitive or not obvious. (2) It challenges explanations that other historians have offered. (3) It offers an interpretation of events that differs from the ones historical actors themselves offered. |
| **Source Analysis** | Overall, the paper provides a superficial or unpersuasive analysis of available source material. | The paper provides some effective source analysis, but some of the following may apply:   * The paper would benefit from more supporting evidence. * The paper would benefit from a deeper, more critical analysis of the source material. * Evidence in the paper does not always match the author’s conclusions. | The paper provides a thorough and sophisticated analysis of available source material.   * All key points are well supported with quotations or other evidence from primary and/or secondary sources. * The author analyzes each source critically, paying close attention to point of view, historical context, intended audience, and the document’s form and content. |
| **Composition** | Writing is generally unclear and/or disorganized. | Writing is generally clear, but the paper has moderate problems in some of the following areas:   * Grammar, style, or usage errors. * Unfocused paragraphs. * Topic sentences do not convey the main idea of the paragraph. * Quotes are not introduced properly or fluently integrated into the text. * Footnote placement or formatting errors. | Writing is clear, elegant, and logically organized.   * The paper contains few, if any, grammar, style, or usage errors. * The paper has a clear and logical structure. * Each paragraph is coherent and begins with a strong topic sentence. * Quotes are introduced properly and fluently integrated into the text. * Footnotes are formatted according to *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines. |