Expected Outcomes: Historical Research
Graduates will demonstrate a level of mastery appropriate to the undergraduate degree in the historical skills of research, analysis of primary and secondary historical sources, and clear and concise writing.

Assessment Method: Faculty Review of Capstone Projects
A panel of faculty reviewers review senior capstone projects submitted in the Spring semester of odd numbered years utilizing the rubric attached. The goal of the assessment is to determine the degree to which students are able to develop a research problem, marshal appropriate historical knowledge in support of an argument, identify and analyze primary sources, and communicate their arguments on these topics to readers. The rubric (attached as Appendix A) was revised for 2011, meaning there are now two sets (2011 and 2013) of data to review.

Findings:
The compiled scores for all students show some slight improvements over some categories (Context & Purpose, Content Development, Genre & Disciplinary Conventions, and Syntax & Mechanics). These improvements may be the beginning signs from changes to the curriculum sequence and structure of courses preceding HIST 4950 (in which this capstone project is produced) since 2011. But the faculty focus more on the slight downturn in results in the categories regarding analysis and interpretation of both primary and secondary sources. These are key skills to the discipline, and thus should be a focus of our efforts for improvement.

How did you use findings for improvement?
Based on the data from this evaluation, added to assessment conversations in previous years, the department changed the curriculum map for the BA in History in an effort to improve student performance in all these categories. Specific changes include: as of Spring 2013, majors must take HIST 3800 (Historian’s Craft) before they can enroll in 5xxx level history courses. This is intended to force majors to take this introductory/methods course earlier in the program, thus exposing them earlier to a focus on the use of historical sources and context for interpretation. We believe this should aid the curriculum in at least two ways: (1) introducing these key concepts earlier in the coursework in the major and allowing future classes to reinforce and build on the concepts instead of having to reteach them to some students and introduce them to others, and (2) allowing more time for development between introduction of the concepts in HIST 3800 at the sophomore level and the student’s primary opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the objectives in the capstone courses (HIST 4950: Senior Thesis) in the senior year.

It is too early to see the effects of this change in the curriculum, but we will watch eagerly for the effects in future student cohorts. In the meantime, the department remains focused on the relatively poor performance on these categories of the rubric and will alert instructors of HIST 3800 and subsequent courses on the need to make these skills a point of emphasis in instruction and student evaluation.
**Expected Outcomes: Oral Communication**
Graduates will be competent in communicating the results of their research via oral presentation.

**Assessment Method: Faculty Panel Review of Oral Presentations of Senior Thesis Projects**
Faculty are invited to the end-of-semester presentations of Senior Thesis projects and score the presentations on a common rubric (attached). This rubric is new for 2014, thus making comparisons to previous years’ data problematic if not impossible. Two major developments with this rubric:

- a. It is now scaled 1-4 (with 4 being best) while the previous version was 1-5.
- b. The new rubric has descriptors for each score, making it more likely that assessments will be more consistent among reviewers and across the full sample of presentations evaluated by each reviewer.

The Assessment Committee then reviews the results of the rubrics scored in the Spring semesters of even years and develops a proposal for improvements based on the evidence collected.

**Findings:**
The most recent results of this assessment method come from the Spring 2014 presentation of senior thesis projects and are not easily comparable to previous assessments because of the changes to the rubric. Still, the results can give some potentially useful information on student strengths and weaknesses. The detailed results are attached. But to summarize, and highlight a few elements, students seem strongest in the categories of Organization and Language choice and weakest in those categories (“Central Thesis” and “Supporting Materials”) that are more closely related to the design, conduct, and conclusions of the research project that forms the subject of the presentation.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
After several years of using the same rubric, one of our major interventions was to develop a new rubric that we believe better reflects what we think is important about the senior thesis presentations in history. The process of developing the rubric was a helpful exercise of expectation setting for the faculty, and better aligned expectations with assessment methods. Also, the new rubric provides descriptive statements for each item score; this should translate into more consistent and thus reliable information coming from the reviews to feed into future assessment processes.

The newness of the instrument and lack of comparability to data from previous years is, however, a limiting factor for what can be done in this year. Still, looking at the results finds students strongest in the organization and delivery of the presentation. This may be a result of the greater emphasis placed in recent years in preparatory classes (especially HIST 3800) of students giving presentations to class on historical topics. Still, the results are lowest in those categories (“Central Thesis” and “Supporting Materials”) that get to the heart of this historical argument being presented.
These results are being presented to the Curriculum Committee, who will make recommendations to the full faculty in Fall 2014 on interventions into HIST 3800 and other courses at the 5xxx level that might improve student abilities in these targeted areas.

**Expected Outcomes: Historical Knowledge**
Graduates will acquire knowledge in the diverse fields of historical inquiry represented by the B.A. degree in history and will be able to demonstrate that knowledge to support interpretation in their particular fields of concentrations in history.

**Assessment Method: Faculty Review of Capstone Projects**
Described: A panel of faculty reviewers review senior capstone projects submitted in the Spring semester of odd numbered years utilizing the rubric attached. The key indicators on the rubric for this learning objective are “Content Development,” “Analysis & Interpretation of Secondary Sources,” and “Use of Primary Sources.” The goal of the assessment is to determine the degree to which students are able to marshal appropriate historical knowledge in support of an argument.

**Findings:**
Written theses are reviewed after the Spring semester of odd years, so the current analysis is based on Spring 2013 examples. The department developed a new rubric in time for the 2011 reviews, giving us two cycles of evidence for context. The attached chart gives more detail across all categories, but I will highlight the relevant measures:

a. Content Development shows a slight increase over 2011
b. Analysis & Interpretation of Secondary Sources shows a slight decrease from 2011
c. Use of Primary Sources shows a slight decrease from 2011

Given the small sample size and narrow range of scores we must be cautious about drawing too strong a conclusion, but the faculty are concerned with the apparent decrease relating to the selection, analysis, and interpretation of secondary sources. Given the reality of historical knowledge being too large and diverse for any student or teacher to fully master, the goal is to have the ability to identify and effectively utilize the appropriate sources on a chosen topic.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
Based on the data from this evaluation, added to assessment conversations in previous years, the department changed the curriculum map for the BA in History in an effort to improve student performance in these categories. Specifically: as of Spring 2013 majors must take HIST 3800 (Historian’s Craft) before they can enroll in 5xxx level history courses. This is intended to force majors to take this introductory/methods course earlier in their program, thus exposing them earlier to a focus on the use of historical sources and context for interpretation. This should benefit majors in at least two ways:

a. introducing these key concepts earlier in the coursework for the major, allowing future classes to reinforce and build on the concepts instead of having to reteach them to some students and introduce them to others.
b. allowing more time for development between introduction of concepts in HIST 3800 at the sophomore level and the student’s primary opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the objectives in the capstone course (HIST 4950: Senior Thesis) in the senior year.

It is too early to see the effects of this change in the curriculum (students assessed in 2013-14 would still be under the old curriculum map), but we will watch eagerly for the effects in future student cohorts. In the meantime, the department remains focused on the relatively weak performance on these particular aspects of the rubric and will alert instructors of HIST 3800 and subsequent content courses on the need to make these skills a point of emphasis in instruction and student evaluation.

From the rubric, key item would seem to be “Content Development” though results in “A&I of 2ndry Sources” and “Use of Primary Sources” could contribute to understanding here.

Working from 2013 results, but show slight improvement in Content Development offset by slight declines in the other categories.
# Evaluation Rubric for Written Senior Thesis in History

Adapted from AACU Written Communication VALUE Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Capstone</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context of and Purpose for Writing Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task.</td>
<td>Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task and focuses all elements of the work.</td>
<td>Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).</td>
<td>Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and the assigned task (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Development</td>
<td>Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre and Disciplinary Conventions Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in history.</td>
<td>Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to history and this writing task, including: organization, content, presentation, formatting, citations, and stylistic choices.</td>
<td>Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to this discipline and writing task, including organization, content, presentation, citation, and stylistic choices.</td>
<td>Follows expectations appropriate to this discipline and writing task for basic organization, content, citations, and presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis and Interpretation in Context of Secondary Sources</td>
<td>Demonstrates skillful and critical engagement with the most appropriate, high-quality, relevant secondary sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for an original research project in history.</td>
<td>Demonstrates consistent and critical engagement with relevant secondary sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for an original research project in history.</td>
<td>Demonstrates an attempt to use relevant secondary sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for an original research project in history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Primary Sources</td>
<td>Demonstrates skillful and critical use of high-quality, relevant primary sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for an original research project in history.</td>
<td>Demonstrates consistent and critical use of relevant primary sources to support ideas that are appropriate for an original research project in history.</td>
<td>Demonstrates an attempt to use relevant primary sources to support ideas that are appropriate for an original research project in history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of Syntax and Mechanics</td>
<td>Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.</td>
<td>Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language has few errors.</td>
<td>Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Capstone</td>
<td>Milestones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization. Specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions</td>
<td>Organization, clearly and consistently observable, is skillful and makes the content of the presentation cohesive.</td>
<td>Organization is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central Thesis.</td>
<td>Central thesis is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)</td>
<td>Central thesis is clear and consistent with the supporting material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting Materials.</td>
<td>Supporting materials make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</td>
<td>Supporting materials make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language.</td>
<td>Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.</td>
<td>Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delivery techniques.</td>
<td>Delivery techniques make the presentation compelling, and speaker appears polished and confident.</td>
<td>Delivery techniques make the presentation interesting, and speaker appears comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to extemporize.</td>
<td>Impressive extemporaneous performance, drawing on a high level of knowledge, providing comprehensive answers to more sophisticated questions, and relating answers skillfully back to the presentation.</td>
<td>Comfortable speaking extemporaneously, demonstrating a good level of knowledge, and answering more sophisticated questions with explanations and useful elaboration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Auburn University History  
Department Evaluation Form For Senior Thesis (HIST 4950) Oral Presentations, Spring Semester 2014

Instructor name: ______________________  
Student Name: ______________________  
Evaluator Name: ______________________  
Date of Evaluation: ______________________  
Presentation Title: ______________________

Score: ____________  
Capstone: ____________  
Milestones: ____________  
Benchmark: ____________
Auburn University History
Department Evaluation Form For
Senior Thesis (HIST 4950) Oral
Presentations, Spring Semester 2014

Instructor name: _______________________
Student Name: _______________________
Evaluator Name: _______________________
Date of Evaluation: ____________________

Presentation Title ________________________________________________________________

Additional Comments:
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### History BA Assessment
#### Oral Communication Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organization of Presentation</th>
<th>Preparation &amp; Topic Knowledge</th>
<th>Clarity of Speech</th>
<th>Ability to Handle Questions</th>
<th>Use of A/V &amp; IT</th>
<th>Overall Impression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### NEW RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Central Thesis</th>
<th>Supporting Materials</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Delivery Techniques</th>
<th>Ability to Extemporize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Historical Research Rubric Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Context &amp; Purpose</th>
<th>Content Development</th>
<th>Genre &amp; Disciplinary Conventions</th>
<th>Analysis &amp; Interp. of Use of Primary Sources</th>
<th>Syntax and Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
</tr>
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