

# History MA / American History Certificate

## Goal: Enhancing the Visibility of the MA Program

### Goal Description:

The Department of History shall strive to increase the visibility of its online MA in History program within Texas, the United States, and the historical profession at large.

**Providing Department:** History MA / American History Certificate

**Progress:** Ongoing

### RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

### Performance Objective: Enhancing the Visibility of the MA Program

#### Performance Objective Description:

The faculty of the Department of History will participate in the development of new promotional activities and recruitment tools.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

### KPI #1: Enhancing the Visibility of the MA Program

#### KPI Description:

The MA in History program shall work to enhance marketing and promotional materials to highlight its curricular innovation, faculty research strengths, and recent career outcomes.

#### Target Description:

The MA in History program shall develop a new promotional video highlighting the faculty research strengths, curricular innovation, and student outcomes.

#### Results Description:

The MA in History program successfully developed (and published to its website) a new promotional video highlighting faculty research strengths, curricular innovation, and student outcomes. The video is available at the following link:

<https://www.shsu.edu/academics/history/mah/>

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

### Action: Enhancing the Visibility of the MA Program

#### Action Description:

The program conducted an online marketing campaign last summer. It shall now pivot to a more targeted recruitment effort by increasing outreach to local school districts. The program shall develop an e-mail communication to be sent to the leadership of social studies departments in local school districts. It should also identify districts in which undergraduate and MA program alumni are teaching.

## Goal: Historical Literacy

### Goal Description:

The MA in History at SHSU serves three student populations: (1) students who wish to pursue a doctoral degree in the discipline; (2) students who wish to gain certification to teach dual-credit or two-year college courses in History; and (3) general interest learners who wish to enrich their knowledge of history and understanding of the past. The MA program prepares students to critically analyze historical events; to assess major interpretive problems and historiographical debates; to weigh and interpret conflicting evidence; to assess change over time; to evaluate the complexities and contingencies of the past; and to gain an appreciation of the texture and diversity of the human experience. Students who complete the MA

degree should be able to make and sustain a historical argument in professional prose; to situate those arguments in larger interpretive frameworks; to evaluate the merits of an historical argument; and to pose good questions, both about the past and their own particular moment. Students with the MA degree should be equipped to pursue doctoral studies in the discipline.

**Providing Department:** History MA / American History Certificate

**Progress:** Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Learning Objective: Historical Research Skills**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Before graduating, students will be able to locate, evaluate, and interpret textual and non-textual historical evidence; articulate the significance of their work by positioning original research in larger historiographical conversations; and present findings efficiently and effectively, both orally and in writing.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Indicator, Criterion, and Findings: Historical Research Skills**

**Indicator Description:**

Non-thesis students in the MA in History program are required to take HIST 6394: Seminar in History during their penultimate or final semester in the program. The object of this capstone seminar is the production of an original, article-length interpretive essay rooted in primary sources. Each semester, the department's Graduate Affairs Committee shall collect a randomized sample of the writing artifacts produced across all sections of HIST 6394: Seminar in History for purposes of evaluation.

**Criterion Description:**

The department's Graduate Affairs Committee shall assess the thesis, evidence, organization, and mechanics of a randomized sample of writing artifacts produced in the capstone seminar course using the attached rubric. The department will consider it a success if all writing artifacts scored by the committee obtain a minimum score of "meets expectations" on the attached rubric.

Attached Files

 [HIST 6394 Rubric.pdf](#)

**Findings Description:**

All writing artifacts scored by the committee achieved the minimum score of "meets expectations." It is not unreasonable, however, to demand that a greater number of students "exceed" expectations, especially within individual categories (e.g., analysis of evidence, engagement with historiography). Indeed, the departmental criterion may have been artificially low. To that end, the program shall assess another randomized sample of writing artifacts in Fall 2023. The results of this assessment shall inform a departmental discussion about standardized learning objectives at the graduate level.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Action: Historical Research Skills**

**Action Description:**

The department shall once again assess the thesis, evidence, organization, and mechanics of a randomized sample of writing artifacts produced in its capstone seminar. The department will also revisit the criterion for success and present the findings to the full departmental faculty.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

### **Learning Objective: Historiographical Literacy**

#### **Learning Objective Description:**

Before graduating, students will demonstrate their ability to evaluate major interpretive problems; engage in historiographical debates; and identify recent trends in historical literature. Students will likewise be able to distinguish the range of methodological tools and approaches that historians use to access the past.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

### **Indicator, Criterion, and Findings: Historiographical Literacy**

#### **Indicator Description:**

All students are required to take HIST 5301: Methods in History during their first semester in the program. This course, which evaluates different methodological tools and analytical approaches, is designed to hone historical thinking skills necessary to undertake the MA degree. The program shall administer a pre- and post-semester assessment to all students in the course. This assessment shall gauge the acquisition of historical thinking skills and knowledge of various analytical tools and methodological approaches.

#### **Criterion Description:**

The program shall develop a scoring rubric to evaluate the pre- and post-semester assessment administered to all students who enroll in its HIST 5301: Methods in History course.

#### **Findings Description:**

Owing to the launch of a new MA in History and Political Studies, the program did not complete this work. It will become a top priority in the 2023-2024 academic year.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

### **Action: Historiographical Literacy**

#### **Action Description:**

The department shall develop and administer the pre- and post-test assessment for students enrolled in its HIST 5301: Methods in History course.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

### **Performance Objective 1: Quality Instruction**

#### **Performance Objective Description:**

In response to the quinquennial program review conducted in February 2020 and in an effort to ensure continued student success, the Director of Graduate Studies will work with the departmental faculty to clarify the graduate catalog and curriculum. The unit shall engage in substantive conversations about the content and contours of the three thematic tracks the organize the curriculum: (1) Rights & Identity; (2) War & Violence; and (3) Encounters & Exchanges. The program shall seek to lend greater coherence and clarity to the tracks by developing narrative descriptions of each track and its animating concerns/questions.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

### **KPI #1: Quality Instruction**

#### **KPI Description:**

The program shall consider it a success if the departmental faculty engages in a series of substantive conversations about the thematic tracks and produces new narrative descriptions of each thematic track. These descriptions shall be added to the academic catalog, posted to the program's webpage, and included in the MA in History Student Handbook.

#### **Target Description:**

The department shall expand and improve its MA program website so as to include thematic track bibliographies and animating questions. The department shall also enhance and expand the MA in History Student Handbook.

**Results Description:**

The department formed working groups that developed thematic track bibliographies and animating questions. These bibliographies and questions (attached) have been published on the program's website.

Attached Files

 [MA Program Bibliographies and Animating Questions.pdf](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Action: Quality Instruction**

**Action Description:**

The department shall enhance and expand its MA in History Student Handbook.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**KPI #2: Quality Instruction**

**KPI Description:**

To further clarify its capstone requirement, the departmental faculty shall adopt a revised set of guidelines, policies, and procedures for the MA in History Portfolio process.

**Target Description:**

The program shall consider it a success if the department adopts new guidelines that clearly establish the goals of the portfolio process, the timetable for completing the portfolio process, and the rights and responsibilities of both faculty and students.

**Results Description:**

The department developed new guidelines and statements about the portfolio process for students and faculty (attached).

Attached Files

 [Portfolio Committee Instructions.docx](#)

 [Crafting a Successful Portfolio.docx](#)

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Action: Quality Instruction**

**Action Description:**

The department shall engage in a discussion about how to promote academic community engagement at the graduate level. The program shall also consider as a part of this discussion how to increase the number of graduate students who engage in internship experiences.

**Goal: Quality Instruction**

**Goal Description:**

To ensure quality instruction, the department will build on the success of its recent curricular reforms by working to clarify the three thematic tracks that organize its MA program.

**Providing Department:** History MA / American History Certificate

**Progress:** Completed

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

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## **Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item**

### **Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):**

#### **Closing Summary**

The MA in History program shall strive to recruit new and more diverse students through greater outreach and program marketing. The graduate director shall work with Marketing and Communications to develop a summer advertising campaign. The program shall also consider new venues and vehicles for outreach, including a more conscious effort to recruit from SHSU's undergraduate population.

The program shall develop a set of standardized learning objectives and then develop new and consistent methods of measuring them. In particular, the department needs to create an evaluation instrument to measure the effectiveness of HIST 5301, the required historical methodology seminar. The standardized learning objectives should reorient the faculty and create more consistency across coursework.

The program should place a renewed emphasis on conducting original research. The program director shall work with the departmental faculty to embed enhanced training in the conduct of archival research into the curriculum.

#### **Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

The graduate director worked with Marketing and Communications to develop a summer advertising campaign. Digital ads were developed and deployed across several social media platforms and Google. The department will continue to weigh new venues and vehicles for outreach.

The program shall continue work on a set of standardized learning objectives, as well as new consistent methods of measuring those objectives. The need for more consistency across coursework remains urgent.

The program shall also continue to discuss how to incorporate more hands-on experiences with original research. While the program has begun conversations about enhancing student research opportunities, it needs to take tangible steps in the coming year.

## **New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item**

#### **Closing Summary:**

The MA in History program shall devote significant energies to recruiting students for its new MA in History and Political Studies degree. This will mean leveraging connections with local school districts and increasing alumni outreach. The program can and should do a better job of marketing and outreach with local school districts. Alumni outreach shall be a strategic priority for the program in 2023-2024.

The MA in History program shall also seek to enhance opportunities for academic community engagement. In particular, the program shall seek to increase the number of students who participate in hands-on internship experiences at the graduate level. This almost certainly means leveraging the alumni network. The department will need to consider how internship and public history experiences fit into the existing thematic tracks. The program may also explore a graduate micro-credential in public history.

The MA in History program shall also seek to interface with other new history department initiatives, including the Medical and Health Humanities minor and the forthcoming oral history program.