**Advice on Formulating Learning Outcomes for History Courses**

For each course you teach, you need to provide on the Syllabus the course objectives and the student learning outcomes (what you expect students to do and learn). There are two groups of these.

First, all courses need course Objectives and Learning Outcomes directly connected to those objectives. Objectives in a history course should align in general with our approved BA and BS degree [program outcomes](http://www.grad.ncsu.edu/program_review/ObjectivesOutcomes.aspx?ID=1053):

**History Program Objective 1:** Students will strengthen their historical perspective.

1. Graduates should demonstrate historical perspective by being able to pose historical questions about the problems that run through human history and about historical continuities and discontinuities.
2. Graduates should demonstrate historical perspective by being able to show how the past is connected to the present by applying a critical perspective to their own place in history.

**History Program Objective 2:** Students will strengthen their ability to apply sound historical reasoning and research skills.

1. Graduates should demonstrate historical reasoning and research skills by being able to pose a significant research question about history.
2. Graduates should demonstrate historical reasoning and research skills by being able to locate relevant primary and secondary sources for investigating a research question.
3. Graduates should demonstrate historical reasoning and research skills by being able to critically evaluate primary sources in terms of credibility, authenticity, potential biases, and value for answering the research question.
4. Graduates should demonstrate historical reasoning and research skills by being able to critically evaluate secondary sources in terms of interpretive stance, quality of sources used, validity of argument, and value for answering the research question.
5. Graduates should demonstrate historical reasoning and research skills by being able to marshal the evidence from the research to support a historical argument in answer to a research question.

**History Program Objective 3:** Students will strengthen their competence to produce historical arguments in forms appropriate to the discipline.

1. Graduates should demonstrate historical expression by being able to produce written forms of communication appropriate to the discipline of history.

You don’t need *all* of these for a course. Three to five objectives is typical: some particular historical knowledge, particular materials and engagement with them, some historical skills expected. Make them specific to your course material.

General advice on formulating learning outcomes from Professor Mike Carter, one of the campus assessment experts, is to

describe what students are expected to do in order to demonstrate what they have learned. The learning outcomes required for course syllabi are presented in a list:

By the end of this course, the students will be able to:

1. Outcome 1

2. Outcome 2

3. Outcome 3

4. Etc.

Because learning outcomes describe an action that is observable and measurable or produces something that is observable and measurable, they always begin with an active verb that describes the action, such as *analyze*, *create*, *critique*, *summarize*, *evaluate*, *demonstrate*, *define*, *synthesize*, or *apply*. You can observe and measure how well students can perform these actions.

It is best practice to avoid verbs that describe actions that are not observable and measurable, such as *know*, *be familiar with*, *gain knowledge*, and *appreciate*. If you have such verbs in your outcomes, ask yourself what students will do to demonstrate that they know or are familiar with something. That action is what you should describe with a verb.

Second, most of our HI course fulfill the Humanities component of the General Education Program (GEP) graduation requirements. That requires fitting the university-defined, category-specific objectives. Course-specific learning outcomes should map directly to those objectives. These objectives and outcomes are required on the Syllabus.

**Humanities Category Objectives**:

Each course in the Humanities category of the General Education Program will provide instruction and guidance that help students to:

1. Engage the human experience through the interpretation of human culture and
2. Become aware of the act of interpretation itself as a critical form of knowing in the humanities; and
3. Make academic arguments about the human experience using reasons and evidence for supporting those reasons that are appropriate to the humanities.

**Humanities Category Learning Outcomes:**

An example of *generic* language for a regional course –

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. identify and explain the impact of major historical forces and events that shaped *the region*.
2. evaluate, critique, and interpret primary and secondary historical sources.
3. organize and write an interpretive historical argument, supported by specific, appropriate historical evidence.

Another *generic* example –

Students will :

1. engage in the human experience by analyzing and explaining the impact of major historical forces and events that shaped *the region*, using evidence from the past situated in geotemporal context.
2. become aware of the act of historical interpretation itself, through which historians use varieties of evidence to offer perspectives on *change over time for the region*.
3. make academic arguments about *the region’s* history using reasons and evidence for supporting those reason that are appropriate to the historical discipline.

For your course, you’ll need to turn the *generic* parts into course-specific details, such as the region studied, the types of sources, the historiographic issues, etc.

As an example, here’s Nancy Mitchell’s HI 354. Again, you don’t have to have all 5 of the objectives. And notice that she was able to use similar language in both HUM-GEP and *course* objectives and outcomes – because naturally history fits the Humanities category:

**HI 354 (Rise of American Empire)**

Course Objectives:

*Students will :*

1. strengthen their scholarly, critical perspective on the complicated stages of the rise of the United States to global superpower – focusing not just on wars and military interventions but also on the roles played by technology, "soft power," and covert operations;
2. strengthen their ability to apply sound historical reasoning to analysis of how – and why – the United States is perceived as it is by other nations;
3. strengthen their ability to apply sound historical reasoning to assess the costs and benefits – for Americans and others – of the growth of US power;
4. strengthen their ability with historical research skills to confront the complexity of history by doing research with primary documents;
5. strengthen their critical thinking skill and sharpen the ability to judge which sources (including websites) are most reliable, and why.

Learning Outcomes:

*By the end of the semester, students will be able to:*

1. describe and analyze the complicated stages of the rise of the United States to global superpower – focusing not just on wars and military interventions but also on the roles played by technology, "soft power," and covert operations;
2. critically examine the underlying historical reasons for how – and why – the United States is perceived as it is by other nations;
3. integrate course information to assess the costs and benefits – for Americans and others – of the growth of US power;
4. use standards of historical evidence and reasoning to evaluate the reliability of sources (including websites), and why.

GEP Humanities Learning Outcomes:

Each course in the Humanities category of the General Education Program will provide instruction and guidance that help students to:

1. Engage the human experience through the interpretation of human culture and

2. Become aware of the act of interpretation itself as a critical form of knowing in the humanities; and

3. Make academic arguments about the human experience using reasons and evidence for supporting those reasons that are appropriate to the humanities.

Students in HI 354 will

1. describe and analyze the complicated stages of the rise of the United States to global superpower – focusing not just on wars and military interventions but also on the roles played by technology, "soft power," and covert operations; and

2. analyze historians’ arguments and the use of primary documents to place current perceptions in historical context; and

3. identify and use historical evidence to construct and support analytical arguments assessing the costs and benefits – for Americans and others – of the growth of US power.

Another example, for a broader course, is Julie Mell’s HI 307:

**HI 307 (Jewish History)**

Course Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to

1. identify the major historical changes in Jewish history from the ancient to the modern period.
2. distinguish and interpret central historical questions in Jewish history and make historical arguments in response to these questions.
3. apply the intellectual discipline of history as a study of change over time and identify different methods and subfields in the discipline such as political, religious, cultural, institutional, and legal history.
4. refine their critical thinking skills and writing skills.

Humanities GEP Learning Outcomes:

Students will

1. identify the important cultural characteristics of the Jewish religious minority in European, Middle Eastern and American culture, interpreting major events through cultural artifacts/texts of the Jewish experience.
2. demonstrate an awareness of the act of interpretation itself as a critical form of knowing in the humanities through the reading of primary texts and documents each week during the semester. The course will expose them to differing interpretations.
3. make academic arguments about the Jewish experience using reasons and evidence for supporting those reasons derived from texts, documents, images, films, and material artifacts.

Not required on the syllabus, but necessary to provide in the process of approving a new or revised course, are the associated assessment measures for each outcome. That means how you will gauge whether students have achieved the desired outcomes, most clearly demonstrated by providing a sample prompt for an essay or exam question.

Here are Julie’s measures for each of the Humanities outcomes:

1. Students will analyze key texts and documents in Jewish history, culture, and religion. For instance, in the early modern unit, students will be asked to discuss and write papers on Glickl of Hameln's memoirs in relation to the history and position of women, of a minority, and the cultural experience of ever-present death in her early modern world.
2. In the unit on ancient world, for instance, students will encounter varying interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. In class discussions and written assignments or exam essays, students will describe the issues that motivate differing forms of interpretation of the texts.
3. Students will construct a thesis statement and argue it in a 5-page paper on the basis of historical evidence that answers a question, for example, why the conditions of modern life (political, cultural, religious, etc.) provoked a range of responses to Jewish identity stretching from assimilation, to acculturation, to Zionism and cosmopolitanism.

Most of our non-American courses are also suitable for the **Global Knowledge** co-requisite in the General Education Program.

**Global Knowledge Category Objectives:**

Each course in Global Knowledge will provide instruction and guidance that help students to achieve goal #1 plus at least one of #2, #3, or #4.

* 1. Identify and examine distinguishing characteristics, including ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological or scientific developments, and/or attitudes of people in a society or culture outside the United States. And at least *one* of the following:
  2. Compare these distinguishing characteristics between the non-U.S. society and at least one other society.  
     3. Explain how these distinguishing characteristics relate to their cultural and/or historical contexts in the non-U.S. society.  
     4. Explain how these distinguishing characteristics change in response to internal and external pressures on the non-U.S. society.

Here’s Julie’s outcomes for HI 307 (Jewish History):

* + 1. Students identify the distinguishing characteristics of Jewish individuals in societies and cultures (outside the United States) including widely varying cultures across premodern and modern Europe and the Middle East.
    2. Students will compare the distinguishing characteristics (institutions, economics, culture, religion, or education) of Jews in different non-US societies.

And the measures:

* + - 1. Students will be asked to reflect on questions in class discussion, course blogs, and exams that cross varying cultures. For the unit on the early 20c, for instance, students would be asked questions such as: What accounts for what has been called a 'renaissance of Jewish culture in the Weimar Republic'? What are the various factors that contributed to a deterioration of Jewish-Arab relations in the Yishuv? How did the encounter with modernity change the character of Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jews by the 1930s?
      2. Students will write a paper exploring the different cultural and institutional experiences of Jews, such as the question of being a minority in medieval Christian European regions versus their experiences in medieval Islamic regions.

Access to the online course management system, to propose or revise a course:

<https://next-catalog.ncsu.edu/courseadmin/>

Quick Guides to Using CIM system, at

<https://oucc.dasa.ncsu.edu/courseleaf-2/courses/>

Editing-a-Course-in-CIM.pdf

How-To-Create-a-Course-in-CIM.pdf

When entering your information into CIM,

**DO NOT** click on SAVE & SUBMIT

Click on the **SAVE CHANGES** button

and alert Will Kimler that you are finished editing

This allows Will or a Curriculum Committee member to review the proposal for missing pieces, suggested editing, etc. – we cannot edit the proposal at the departmental level once it is submitted. Don’t worry, we still can (and no doubt, will) revise as it moves along the approval process. Those edits just need someone at the college level to assist. The college Undergraduate Committee, in reviewing the proposal, will often help by finding small details to fix, and do those for you. Naturally, we want to be good citizens and provide the best proposal we can. Best means with little to nothing to alter, which moves it through the process without lots of back and forth to you.