

SAC: History

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### History SAC Learning Assessment Plan, 2009-2010

- During Winter Term, instructors will survey students regarding learning critical thinking: *Do you think your critical thinking skills have been enhanced by taking this class? How?*
- During Winter Term, collect student work from two HST 201 courses and one HST 102 course focused on the topic of "The Enlightenment." Apply the rubric below to all the collected work during Spring SAC meeting.
- Analyze and summarize the data. Determine whether changes need to be made

From **WSU's Critical and Integrative Thinking Rubric**

For each of the three criteria below, assess the work by circling a numeric score. Insert each score in the Overall Rating table below.

**1. Develops, presents, and communicates OWN perspective, hypothesis, or position.**

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Position or hypothesis is clearly inherited or adopted with little original consideration.		Position includes some original thinking that acknowledges, refutes, synthesizes or extends other assertions, although some aspects may have been adopted.		Position demonstrates ownership for constructing knowledge or framing original questions, integrating objective analysis and intuition.	
Addresses a single source or view of the argument, failing to clarify the established position relative to one's own.		Presents own position or hypothesis, though inconsistently.		Appropriately identifies own position on the issue, drawing support from experience, and information not available from assigned sources.	
Fails to present and justify own opinion or forward hypothesis.		Presents and justifies own position without addressing other views, or does so superficially.		Clearly presents and justifies own view or hypothesis while qualifying or integrating contrary views or interpretations.	
Position or hypothesis is unclear or simplistic.		Position or hypothesis is generally clear, although gaps may exist.		Position or hypothesis demonstrates sophisticated, integrative thought and is developed clearly throughout.	

**2. Presents, assesses, and analyzes appropriate supporting data/evidence.**

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of search, selection or source evaluation skills.		Demonstrates adequate skill in searching, selecting, and evaluating sources to meet the information need.		Evidence of search, selection, and source evaluation skills; notable identification of uniquely salient resources.	
Repeats information provided without question or dismisses evidence without adequate justification.		Use of evidence is qualified and selective.		Examines evidence and its source; questions its accuracy, relevance, and completeness.	
Does not distinguish among fact, opinion, and value judgments.		Discerns fact from opinion and may recognize bias in evidence, although attribution is inappropriate.		Demonstrates understanding of how facts shape but may not confirm opinion. Recognizes bias, including selection bias.	
Data/evidence or sources are simplistic, inappropriate, or not related to topic.		Appropriate data/evidence or sources provided, although exploration appears to have been routine.		Information need is clearly defined and integrated to meet and exceed assignment, course or personal interests.	

**3. Identifies and assesses conclusions, implications, and consequences.**

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Fails to identify conclusions, implications, and consequences, or conclusion is a simplistic summary.		Conclusions consider or provide evidence of consequences extending beyond a single discipline or issue. Presents implications that may impact other people or issues.		Identifies, discusses, and extends conclusions, implications, and consequences. Considers context, assumptions, data, and evidence. Qualifies own assertions with balance.	
Conclusions presented as absolute, and may attribute conclusion to external authority.		Presents conclusions as relative and only loosely related to consequences. Implications may include vague reference to conclusions.		Conclusions are qualified as the best available evidence within the context. Consequences are considered and integrated. Implications are clearly developed, and consider ambiguities.	

**Overall Rating**

	Criteria	Score
1.	Develops own position and hypothesis	
2.	Presents and analyzes supporting data	
3.	Identifies conclusions and implications	

April 27, 2010

**Applying the Critical Thinking Rubric:**

- Our SAC examined 11 student papers. These were papers all written on the same topic of the Enlightenment, and they represented participation by two classes rather than the originally

projected three. The permissions were spotty, but we went ahead with them with no names attached.

- A number of us applied the above-mentioned rubric to the papers. Each paper was read by at least two faculty and some by three. With two exceptions, there was a consensus within one point of all the readers on the various papers. Here are the various scoring grades as given by the various history faculty:
  - Criteria #1: 1-4; 2-8; 3-6; 4-6; 5-3
  - Criteria #2: 1-2; 2-8; 3-10; 4-3; 5-2
  - Criteria # 3: 1-6; 2-6; 3-8; 4-2; 5-3
- Conclusions:
  - Based on this sampling, the bulk of students fall within the 2 and 3 range – high emerging/low developing, with a few students moving toward mastery and a few low emerging.
  - While we all aspire to having students at Mastery level, in most cases these are initial survey courses and students are at an initial stage of developing the skills of critical thinking in the history discipline.

#### **Student Surveys:**

- During Winter Term 2010, nine courses (HST 106, 285, 105, 102, 106, 101, 101, 102, 201) asked students some version of this question: *Do you think your critical thinking skills have been enhanced by taking this class?*
  - Students gave explanations in most cases, but the answers can be boiled down to “yes, no, other.” The “other” includes answers such as “Not necessarily, but the course definitely did not detract from them at all! I would say they were enhanced and polished up from the critical thinking skills I have learned in previous courses.”
  - Yes: 112; no : 10; Other: 13
- Certain of the courses were actually distance courses, and of the “nos” – 8 of them were responses from distance courses. We need to investigate why such a high percentage of Distance Learning students reported that their critical thinking skills had not improved.
- Conclusions:
  - Students are generally aware in PCC history courses that they are working on their critical thinking skills.
- Suggestions for improvement:
  - We feel that we just got our feet wet with this Learning Assessment Project. We realize that we need to do a better job of getting student permissions up front, and a better job of collecting student work for assessment. In addition, next time we should have a more organized system for norming our use of the rubric up front; for keeping track of the readings as they are accomplished; and for re-reading when there are discrepancies to resolve them. It has been also suggested that since most of us are not requiring full-fledged research papers in these introductory courses, that we might just stick to the criteria in #s 2 and 3 above.
  - We also agreed that next time, if we decide to ask students whether they believe they are learning critical thinking (or any other core outcome), that our answers might be more specific and valid if we designated more specifically what we are looking for. An example might be: “Have you improved your skills in terms of presenting, assessing, and analyzing appropriate supporting data/evidence?”