Social and Applied Science Liaison Report prepared by Nick Ceh

The unit level assessment project for the Social Science Department (SSD) was introduced to the department's faculty via email in early February 2016. It should be noted that the SSD encompasses six disciplines: Anthropology, History Economics, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. The Applied Science Department (ASD) merged with SSD in the fall of 2017, further expanding the department. After consultation with Dr. Domenico Ferri, chair of the SSD, the decision was made to start the assessment with history. Because several fields of history are taught (U.S. History, African American, Latin American, African, and World), the challenge was to create an assessment tool and rubric that would apply to all history courses.

It was also decided that the best way to proceed was to form a small informal steering committee composed of faculty representing some of the various fields of history taught at HWC. Two faculty members, Nick Ceh (World History) and Stephen Burnett (U.S. History) volunteered to serve on the committee with the Unit Level Liaison, Janette Gayle.

Adapting an assessment tool developed by history faculty at four-year colleges, the steering committee identified five essential skills it is important for students to be able to demonstrate at the end of any history course: the ability to (1) craft a thesis statement; (2) distinguish between primary and secondary sources; (3) use primary and secondary sources to support an argument; (4) understand and identify the factors that cause change and continuity over time; (5) demonstrate knowledge of specific historical content and context.

Focusing on the first three skills, the steering committee created a rubric to determine measureable outcomes. For example, see the rubric below:

History Assessment Rubric

Skill	Exceeds Expectations 3 pts	Meets Expectations 2 pts	Emerging Skills 1 pt	Does Not Meet Expectations 0 pt
Demonstrates the ability to craft a thesis statement	Crafts a strong, well-developed thesis statement that can be argued pro	Crafts a thesis statement	Crafts a weak thesis statement – a claim that can	Does not craft a thesis

			be answered yes or no	
and con using sophisticated language				
Demonstrates the ability to distinguish between primary and secondary sources and to properly cite both using Chicago Manual of Style (CMS)	Consistently distinguishes between primary and secondary sources and cites correctly using CMS	Distinguishes between primary and secondary sources most of the time	Inconsistently distinguishes between primary and secondary s⟨	Does not distinguish between primary and secondary sources
Demonstrates the ability to use primary and secondary sources to support an argument	Consistently uses primary and secondary sources and analyzes them to support an argument	Consistently uses primary and secondary sources to support an argument	Inconsistently uses primary and secondary sources to support an argument	Does not use primary and secondary sources

The pilot assessment project was launched in the second half of the spring 2016 semester and the rubric was used to assess students' final essays in the following courses:

- History 111 Sections D and WW2 (Online) (American History to 1865)
- History 112 sections C & E (US History Survey II)
- History 115 sections K & Q (African American History Survey II)

III. Data Analysis:

History Writing and Research

Unfortunately, results are only based on four class sections rather than the six as listed above. Two sections of data were lost when an adjunct history instructor failed to complete an analysis of their class results.

There was a total of 67 student papers analyzed and of that number 39 were male and 28 were female. The mean age of students was 24 (rounded up). For 55 students it was the first history course they had taken. The number of students completing English writing classes prior to writing their history research paper is presented in the chart below:

| Eng 101/102	Count			
			English 101 Only	2	
			English 101/102	22	
			English 102 Only	2	
			Neither	6	

The average total score for students based on the rubric was 5.09. The maximum total points was 9 and the minimum is 0. The table listed below shows the distribution of scores.
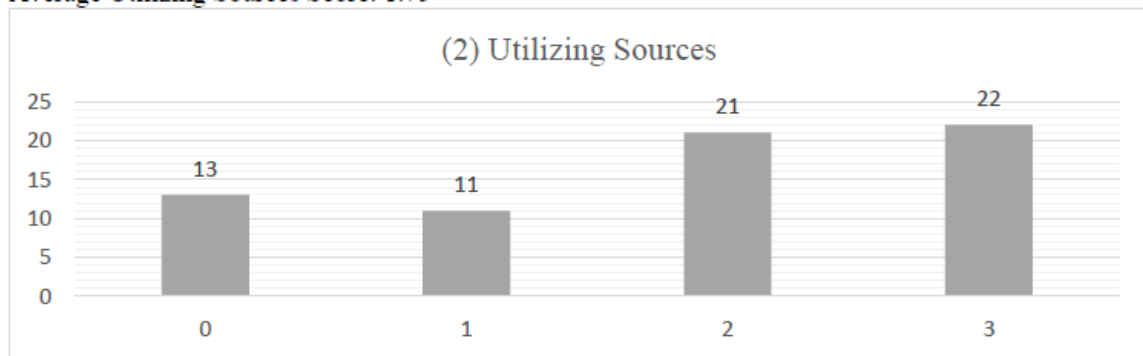

Average Total Score: 5.09
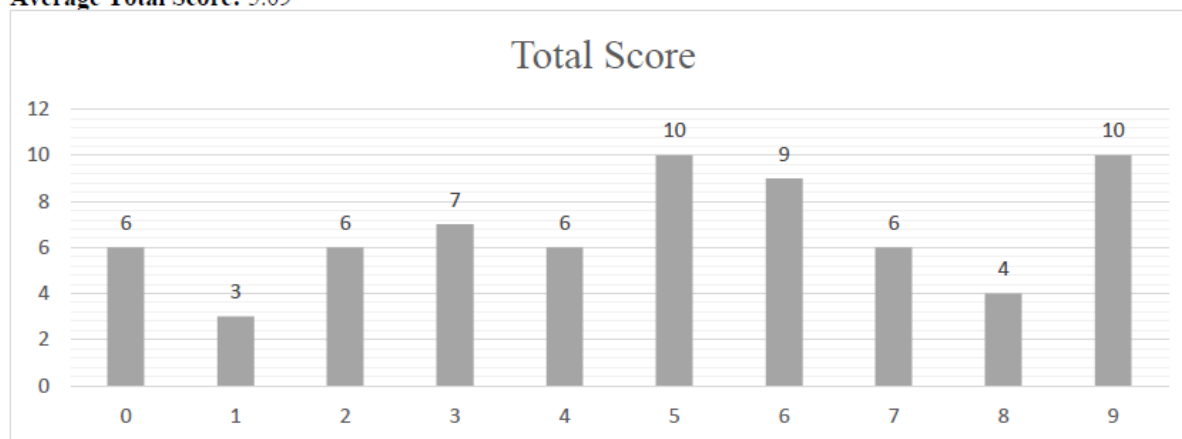
The cumulative average score for crafting a thesis statement. The average score was 1.81.
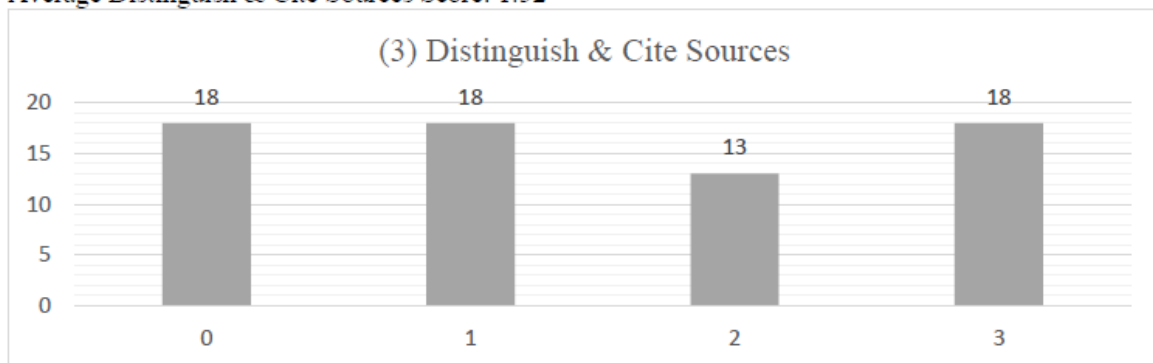
Average Craft Thesis Score: 1.81

(1) Craft Thesis

Score	Count
0	15
1	10
2	25
3	17
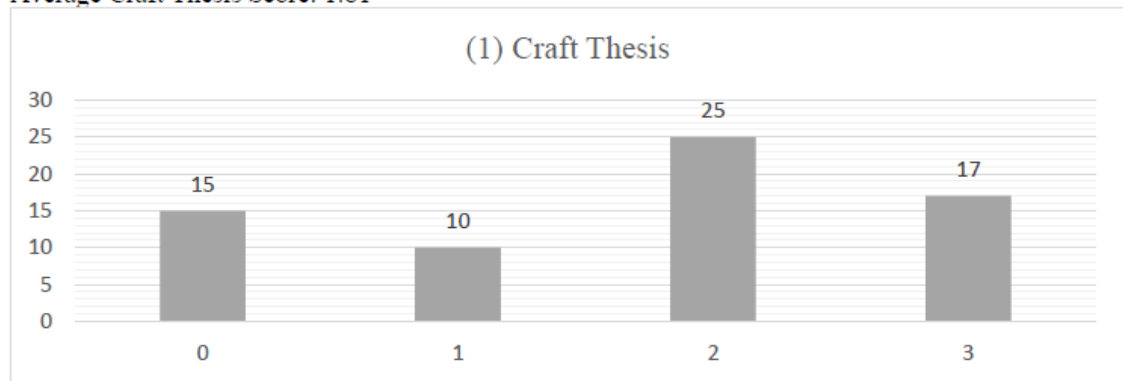
Average Craft Utilizing sources the score was 1.75.

Average Utilizing Sources Score: 1.75

(2) Utilizing Sources

Score	Count
0	13
1	11
2	21
3	22

Average distinguish or cite sources 1.52

Average Distinguish & Cite Sources Score: 1.52

(3) Distinguish & Cite Sources

Score	Count
0	18
1	18
2	13
3	18

Recommendations:
In my opinion, this pilot study cannot be used to determine whether or not students learned the

skills being assessed. There are too many questions still remaining to be addressed. No pre-assessment of student skills was done, so a comparison of the results cannot be made. While the numbers seem to suggest learning was not achieved, without a baseline to make a comparison, the numbers do not add to the understanding of student learning. In addition, there needs to be more papers assessed. Faculty participating in the study did not use similar worksheets to teach the skills assessed. The adjunct instructor's failure to provide any data also negatively impacted the final results.

The history assessment has a strong foundation. The three assessment skills identified are important for success in any history class, however, the design process requires more thought. While these three skills are important in understanding history, they represent only a portion of what is necessary. The three assessed skills should have been tied to a larger skill -- critical thinking. It is recommended the assessment be continued with the following suggestions:

1 Increase the number of student assessed;
2. Faculty should use same instructional guidelines in class to teach skills assessed; and
3. Addition of a category to address counter arguments within the paper could be used to assess critical thinking.