

Dalton State College

Detailed Assessment Report

2015-2016 HIST 3780

As of: 8/15/2016 09:25 AM EDT

(Includes those Action Plans with Budget Amounts marked *One-Time, Recurring, No Request*.)

Course Description

Cold War America: Surveys the political, social, economic, diplomatic, and intellectual history of the United States from the end of World War II to the early 1990s.

Prerequisites: HIST 2112 and HIST 3000.

Program Outcomes

PO 1: Historical Knowledge

Students will demonstrate a broad knowledge of history and its role in society.

PO 2: Critical Thinking

Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically by analyzing and interpreting situations, events, practices, or historical texts.

PO 3: Writing Skills

Students will demonstrate competence in written communication, producing well-organized writing that meets conventional standards of correctness, exhibits appropriate style and awareness of audience, and presents substantial material.

PO 4: Presentation Skills

Students will demonstrate competence in oral communication, presenting ideas, perspectives, and arguments in an effective manner.

Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

Outc. 1: Historical Developments

Students will comprehend the major historical developments in the United States from the mid-1940s to the mid-1990s.

Relevant Associations:

Standard Associations

SACSCOC 2012* Principles of Accreditation

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. (College-level competencies)

General Education Goals Associations

6.1 Students will articulate an understanding of major forces and events, influences, or ideas that have shaped history and society.

9.1 Students will analyze, evaluate, and provide convincing reasons in support of conclusions and arguments.

9.2 Students will use technology and gather data to conduct research from various sources, including electronic media, and demonstrate an understanding of plagiarism by acknowledging and citing informational sources correctly.

9.3 Students will demonstrate an ability to evaluate observations, inferences, or relationships in works under investigation.

Institutional Mission Associations

1 Dalton State provides broad access to quality higher education for the population of Northwest Georgia, thereby enhancing the region's economic vitality and quality of life.

2 Dalton State offers targeted bachelor's degrees, a full range of associate's degrees and career certificate programs, and a wide variety of public service activities.

Related Measures

M 1: Graded Exams (Mergel-FA14)

Assignment Description: Students will take two exams during the semester. These exams will assess student familiarity with the themes, events, and interpretations of American history in the late twentieth century. They will consist of multiple-choice questions and short answer identifications. Grading Criteria: Student evaluation will be based on whether the students correctly answer the questions; partial credit will be awarded. See sample questions and responses for more information.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Connected Document

[Hist 3780-Exams-FA14-Mergel](#)

Target:

A minimum of 70 percent of students will average an 80 or better on their exams.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Action Plan for Historical Events (Mergel-FA14)

Established in Cycle: 2014-2015

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Fall 2014 Semester, students

failed to meet the t...

M 4: Graded Exams (Mergel-SP16)

Assignment Description: Students will take two exams during the semester. These exams will assess student familiarity with the themes, events, and interpretations of American history in the late twentieth century. They will consist of multiple-choice questions and short answer identifications. Grading Criteria: Student evaluation will be based on whether the students correctly answer the questions; partial credit will be awarded. See sample questions and responses for more information.

Source of Evidence: Writing exam to assure certain proficiency level

Connected Documents

[Hist 3780-Exams-SP16-Mergel](#)
[Hist 3780-Syllabus-SP16-Mergel](#)

Target:

A minimum of 70 percent of students will earn an 80 or better on their exams.

Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Not Met

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Spring 2016 Semester, 65.2 percent of students (15 out of 23) averaged an 80 or better on their two exams throughout the semester. Therefore, 34.8 percent of the students (8 out of 23) did not meet the target. The average overall score on the exams was 82.0 percent. The percentage of students who met the target stayed the same from the last time I used this exam format for Hist 3780 (Fall 2014). I based these findings on reviewing the student averages for the two exams in the grade book. For the first exam, students had 75 minutes to answer twenty-five multiple-choice questions and seven identifications. For the second exam, students had 90 minutes to answer thirty multiple choice questions and nine identifications. Three weeks before each exam, I provided a paper and electronic review sheet with terms related to the reading and lecture material. Students who missed more classes and/or took fewer notes during class tended to have lower averages on the exams, especially on the multiple choice questions. Students who attended class regularly and took notes beyond just writing down what the slides said tended to do better on the exams, especially the multiple choice questions. For the identification portion of the exam, students who scored lower usually could identify the term as well as some key details about the terms. However, students with lower scores tended not to include any reflection on the historical significance or bigger picture related to the term.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Action Plan for Major Historical Developments (Mergel-SP16)

Established in Cycle: 2015-2016

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Spring 2016 Semester, students did not meet the tar...

Outc. 2: Historical Perspectives

Students will analyze the various perspectives and biases found in historical sources on American life in during the Cold War.

Relevant Associations:

Standard Associations

SACSCOC 2012* Principles of Accreditation

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. (College-level competencies)

General Education Goals Associations

6.1 Students will articulate an understanding of major forces and events, influences, or ideas that have shaped history and society.

9.1 Students will analyze, evaluate, and provide convincing reasons in support of conclusions and arguments.

9.2 Students will use technology and gather data to conduct research from various sources, including electronic media, and demonstrate an understanding of plagiarism by acknowledging and citing informational sources correctly.

9.3 Students will demonstrate an ability to evaluate observations, inferences, or relationships in works under investigation.

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Related Measures

M 2: Graded Discussions (Mergel-FA14)

Assignment Description: Students will participate in four group book discussions, in which each student plays a different role to aid in the conversation. The discussions will assess their ability to analyze historical sources by asking them to think about each author's purpose, bias, and experience as well as the book's relevance as a historical source. Grading Criteria: Student evaluation will be determined by the students' scores on their role sheet (used for guiding their aspect of the discussion) and by the students' scores on their peer assessment. See the Instructions and Grading Criteria for the Group Discussions.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Connected Document

[Hist 3780-Discussions-FA14-Mergel](#)

Target:

A minimum of 70 percent of students will average an 80 or better on their group discussions.

M 5: Book Discussions (Mergel-SP16)

Assignment Description: Students will participate in four group book discussions, in which each student plays a different role to aid in the conversation. The discussions will assess their ability to analyze historical sources by asking them to think about each author's purpose, bias, and experience as well as the book's relevance as a historical source. Grading Criteria: Student evaluation will be determined by the students' scores on their role sheet (used for guiding their aspect of the discussion) and by the students' scores on their peer assessment. See the Instructions and Grading Criteria for the Group Discussions.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Connected Documents

[Hist 3780-Discussions-SP16-Mergel](#)
[Hist 3780-Syllabus-SP16-Mergel](#)

Target:

A minimum of 70 percent of students will earn an 80 or better on their book discussions.

Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Met

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Spring 2016 Semester, 81.8 percent of students (18 out of 22) averaged an 80 or better on their four discussions throughout the semester. Therefore, 18.2 percent of the students (4 out of 22) did not meet the target. One student did not participate in any of the discussions so I did not count her when calculating the findings. The average overall score on the discussions was 84.5 percent. The percentage of students who met the target dropped about 12 percent from the last time I used book discussions for Hist 3780 (Fall 2014). However, I am not terribly concerned about the drop because each of the four students who failed to meet the target missed one of the four discussions. For the three discussions they participated in, the students averaged an 80 or better. I based these findings on reviewing the student averages for the four discussions in the grade book. At the same time, the overall average for the discussions dropped about 7 percent, which seems more concerning. Students with lower scores did not come prepared to participate in the discussion. They often completed their role sheet as they participated in the day's discussion. Their role sheets felt incomplete even though their classmates still rated them highly on the peer assessment.

Outc. 3: Historical Interpretations

Students will develop critical thinking skills and formulate individual interpretations of historical events that relate to the Cold War.

Relevant Associations:

Standard Associations

SACSCOC 2012* Principles of Accreditation

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. (College-level competencies)

General Education Goals Associations

6.1 Students will articulate an understanding of major forces and events, influences, or ideas that have shaped history and society.

9.1 Students will analyze, evaluate, and provide convincing reasons in support of conclusions and arguments.

9.2 Students will use technology and gather data to conduct research from various sources, including electronic media, and demonstrate an understanding of plagiarism by acknowledging and citing informational sources correctly.

9.3 Students will demonstrate an ability to evaluate observations, inferences, or relationships in works under investigation.

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Related Measures

M 3: Graded Essays (Mergel-FA14)

Assignment Description: Students will complete two interpretive essays (i.e., a well-reasoned, thesis-driven essay responding to a question from the list provided for each essay) during the semester. These essays will assess the students' ability to formulate historical interpretations based on primary and secondary sources. Grading Criteria: Student evaluation will be on how successfully the student answers the relevant question. More specifically, essay scores will reflect how well students developed a thesis and argument based on quality historical evidence. See the Instructions and Grading Criteria for the Interpretive essays.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Document

[Hist 3780-Essays-FA14-Mergel](#)

Target:

A minimum of 70 percent of students will average an 80 or better on their interpretive essays.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Action Plan for Historical Interpretations (Mergel-FA14)

Established in Cycle: 2014-2015

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Fall 2014 Semester, students failed to meet the tar...

M 6: Research Project (Mergel-SP16)

Assignment Description: Students will work on a research project where they outline a working hypothesis and potential research questions in a proposal statement. Then, students will conduct independent historical research using secondary and primary sources to develop and support a thesis. The purpose of the project is to help students develop critical thinking skills and learn to formulate an interpretation of an historical actor or event. Grading Criteria:

Student evaluation will be determined by how well they developed a thesis and then how well they demonstrated an understanding of the context, supported their argument with specific examples, wrote a compelling narrative, and formatted their paper in the Chicago Style. See the Instructions and Grading Criteria for the Research Project.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Connected Documents

[Hist 3780-Research Project-SP16-Mergel](#)

[Hist 3780-Syllabus-SP16-Mergel](#)

Target:

A minimum of 70 percent of students will average an 80 or better on their research project.

Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Met

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Spring 2016 Semester, 86.4 percent of students (19 out of 22) averaged an 80 or better on their research project proposal and paper. Therefore, 18.2 percent of the students (4 out of 22) did not meet the target. The average overall score on the project was 82.0 percent, with an average of 83.5 on the final paper. One student did not submit a final paper so I did not count him when calculating the findings. I based these findings on reviewing the student scores for the proposal and the paper in the grade book. The percentage of students who met the target increased 23 percent from the last time I assigned a research paper in Hist 3780 (Fall 2012). I am pleased with the increase in the average score. In Fall 2012, I did not require a project proposal; however, I did so in Spring 2016. The addition of the proposal allowed me to provide advance feedback on the topic as well as possible sources students could draw on. Furthermore, students struggled with using appropriate sources for their project in Fall 2012. I significantly revised the instructions for Spring 2016, namely specifying more clearly what types of sources would be acceptable. In looking over the students' bibliographies, while students still used more websites than I would like, they also increased their use of scholarly books and articles. I also noticed an increase in the use of primary source material to help argue in support of their theses.

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Action Plan for Historical Events (Mergel-FA14)

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Fall 2014 Semester, students failed to meet the target of 70 percent of the students achieving an 80 or better on the exams related to the outcome on major historical developments in the United States from the 1940s to the 1990s. This semester 65 percent of the students (11 out of 17) met the target. If one more student reached an 80 average, then the target would have been met (and one student did come close). Nevertheless, in the future I plan to take steps to help students better prepare for their exams. First, when writing the exams I will do more to ensure the multiple choice questions are more transparent and clearly relate to material covered in the course. Sometimes, I think I have covered the material, but students do not quite understand the important nuances related to terms on the list. Second, I will encourage students to take more extensive notes during the lectures instead of just writing down the information from the slides and putting down their pens until the next slide appears. Third, I will provide a few sample multiple-choice questions for students so they will be familiar with the types of questions I ask; moreover, they can see how terms on the review sheet might relate to multiple-choice questions. Fourth, I will try to prepare the review sheet earlier in the semester so students will know which terms in the readings and lectures are important.

Established in Cycle: 2014-2015

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Student Learning Outcome):

Measure: Graded Exams (Mergel-FA14) | **Student Learning Outcome:** Historical Developments

Action Plan for Historical Interpretations (Mergel-FA14)

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Fall 2014 Semester, students failed to meet the target of 70 percent of the students achieving an 80 or better on the essay related to the outcome on formulating interpretations of historical events. This semester 65 percent of the students (11 out of 17) met the target. If one more student reached an 80 average, then the target would have been met (and one student did come close). Nevertheless, I can do more to assist students to achieve the target for this outcome. First, I will do more to use some of the primary sources in the class discussions so students see how these documents can be used to support their thesis. Second, I usually provide a sample paper for formatting purposes for all my classes but the paper is not necessarily the same as the assignment the students must complete. Therefore, I will create a sample paper that provides students guidance on the content and the formatting for their essays. Third, I will up the minimum word count on the paper. I set the word count low to allow the students to take more ownership of the essay. Students, though, seemed to target their paper to the word count rather than to effectively answering the question.

Established in Cycle: 2014-2015

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Student Learning Outcome):

Measure: Graded Essays (Mergel-FA14) | **Student Learning Outcome:** Historical Interpretations

Action Plan for Major Historical Developments (Mergel-SP16)

In Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Spring 2016 Semester, students did not meet the target for comprehending the major historical developments in the United States from the 1940s to the 1990s. Only 65 percent of students (15 out of 23) successfully met the target meaning there is room for improvement on this outcome. The last time I taught this course, in Fall 2014, students also did not meet this target. This time, I passed out the review sheet three weeks in advance instead of two weeks in advance. This change did not lead to an increase in the number of students who met the target. However, in comparison to other 3000-level classes with in-class exams, students met the target at a higher rate than in classes where I do not include multiple choice questions. Therefore, the next time I teach Hist 3780, I intend to use a similar format for the exams. I will revise the multiple choice questions, especially the distractors to avoid ambiguity. I will also revise the instructions for the identification portion of the exam. Instead of indicating students should explain what the term means and indicate its significance to American history, I will specify students need to specify who, what, where, when, and why in their response. (Mergel-SP16)

Established in Cycle: 2015-2016

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

What strengths and weaknesses did your assessment results show? In addition, please describe 2 to 3 significant improvements or continuous improvement measures you'll put in place as a result of your assessment findings.

Based on the assessment results for Hist 3780-01, a traditional course taught on the Dalton campus during the Spring 2016 Semester, the strengths outweighed the weaknesses. Students met the stated targets (where 70 percent of students achieved an 80 or better) for two of the three learning outcomes. Students demonstrated they understood how to evaluate perspectives and biases in sources as well as how to use secondary and primary sources to support a historical argument. The strength of this course appears to lie in getting students to think critically about historical sources building upon what they learn in Hist 3000: The Study of History. However, students did not meet the target on the outcome about understanding major historical developments—a key factor in determining whether they understand the course content. Therefore, the weakness of this course centers on student inability to determine what is and is not important in the readings and lectures. Some students refused to take notes, believing the provided outline will be enough to help them remember important information. Moreover, students do not read their textbook. Recently a student told me he relied on what Wikipedia told him about one of the terms on the review sheet since his notes were not complete. I commented his textbook would have been a better source. But more importantly, the conversation shows even good students do not read. Without the background information, the lectures mean less to students because they do not necessarily recognize key people, places, and events that come up during the class. The next time I teach this course, I plan to look for a better textbook—one that is more accessible, more affordable, and more engaging. Perhaps the occasional reading quiz might also encourage students to review material in advance. (Mergel-SP16)