

In the Fall of 2005 the History Department began discussing whether or not our current curriculum was preparing its History Teaching Emphasis students to teach the remodeled state social studies core. A committee, chaired by Dan McInerney, undertook the job of making recommendations to the Department. In order to understand the problem the committee surveyed a group of graduates, asking for their opinions. Here is Prof. McInerney's report.

SURVEY OF HISTORY TEACHING EMPHASIS GRADUATES:

I e-mailed 25 people who have gone through our History Teaching Emphasis requirements to find out what they think of the program's strengths and weaknesses.

I wish the number of individuals involved in the survey was higher; but it proved tricky to figure out how to contact graduates. After they leave USU, we don't seem to have reliable records of their new e-mail accounts. Student opinion about the program is difficult to track for another reason: the pedagogical capstone courses don't conduct exit surveys.

-We do have exit surveys of graduating seniors in other HIST courses. I think we should bear in mind that those surveys raise very few concerns about the History Teaching Emphasis. (Norm gave me two stacks of exit surveys. If you'd like to go through them, just let me know.)

The response to my e-mail survey has been disappointing. I've received only 4 replies – after sending out two requests. (One of the four commentators didn't complete the teaching program; but I think the person's remarks are still worth considering.)

With such a shallow pool of survey data, we may not be able to come to clear and convincing conclusions. I've tried to sort the responses neatly into "yes / no" categories. That may be convenient, but I realize the approach flattens out nuanced arguments. So I encourage you to read through the full comments (attached to this e-mail in a Word document). I hope I have not misrepresented the opinions these four individuals expressed. Oh . . . yeah . . . I keep referring to them as "individuals," and "commentators." Remember, I promised them that the surveys would be confidential, so I've taken their names off the attached documents.

With all that in mind, here's an overview of the comments offered so far:

1. The Department should require both halves of the American survey?
4 "yes" votes (1 offered with several conditions)
2. Does the Department offer adequate preparation in American government?
3 "no" votes; 1 response difficult to categorize
3. Should the Department keep its pedagogical capstones?
3 "yes" votes; 1 "no"
4. Should the Department leave the regular History major as is?
2 "yes" votes; (other responses didn't address the issue)

5. Thoughts on the structure of the existing History Teaching Emphasis?

-1 supported the existing range of courses (US/Europe/World)

-1 addressed concern over the number of credits required -- and the time it takes

to complete degree requirements

-1 addressed concerns about workable and manageable approved minors

6. Are students adequately prepared for Praxis exam?

-1 "yes"; (other responses didn't address the issue)

7. Problems the Department should recognize?

-ADVISING: problem indicated in one letter didn't involve the complexity of the

teaching emphasis but spoke instead of confusion over the applicability of AP credits

-SECONDARY ED COURSES: described as ridiculous and mind-numbing (again, courses taught in Sec Ed, not our department)

Using the survey and other inputs, the History Teaching Committee discussed the situation and made recommendations to the Department. Here is their report.

"History Teaching Emphasis"

▪ Issues that came up for discussion:

-required credits

-advising

-BOTH halves of American survey (2700 and 2710)?

-preparation for teaching "civics" in public school classrooms?

-Should we add a Political Science requirement?

-pedagogical courses: retain? / eliminate?

-Allow students to take MULTIPLE upper-division pedagogical courses?

-raise minimum GPA for majors with teaching emphasis?

-survey graduates to learn what they think of the existing requirements

▪ Revision proposed by Peter:

-have ALL majors (regardless of emphasis) follow same type of program

-all students would follow US / Europe / World course distribution

-change lower-division course structure

▪ Survey of graduates: (25 e-mails sent out; 6 replies)

-Should we have the SAME requirements for the History major and the History teaching emphasis?

-NO

-Should future teachers be required to take BOTH halves of the American history survey course?

-strong YES

-Should the senior, capstone course for future teachers focus on pedagogical issues / a research topic / an alternative subject?

-KEEP existing capstone

-Are future teachers receiving adequate preparation for classroom assignments in American government?

-strong NO

-Does our program prepare students adequately for the PRAXIS exam?

-weak YES

-Do we need to make any changes in our advising so that students more clearly understand our requirements?

-clarify which courses qualify as US / Europe / World

-1 supported the existing range of courses (US/Europe/World)

-1 concerned about number of credits required -- and the time it takes to complete degree requirements

-1 concerned about workable and manageable approved minors

-1 concerned about better coordination between HIST & SEC ED

-1 spoke instead of confusion over the applicability of AP credits

-2 described SEC ED courses as ridiculous and mind-numbing

▪In the end . . .

1-The students who responded do not see significant problems in our existing requirements.

2-The committee passed two motions:

a -require both halves of the American survey

b -allow students to count ONE pedagogical capstone

3-Other suggestions from the committee:

a-require exit surveys in pedagogical capstones

b-clearer advising guidelines for faculty

c-discuss how the Department can address topics in American government

At the Department meeting on April 6, 2006 the Department voted to adopt their two motions as policy. Beginning in Fall 2007 all History Teaching Emphasis students, both majors and minors, will be required to complete both Hist 2700, US to 1877, and Hist 2710, US since 1877. All majors, whether or not they are History Teaching Emphasis, may only count one of the three pedagogy courses toward their major.

An Exit Survey was developed for students who take the Teaching Capstone courses.

For the moment, it is agreed that we will advise, but not require, History Teaching Emphasis students to take courses that prepare them to teach American government.