

Historical Awareness Subcommittee Report--Revised

Date: 11/7/19 (revised 11/15/19)

To: General Studies Council

From: Historical Awareness Subcommittee

Julie Holston, Chair

Julia Sarreal

Re: Recommendations for Course Proposals (H designation)

Recommend for Approval

Overall:

As per the rationale and objectives, submissions should include:

- Syllabus;
- Readings (Table of Contents for assigned books is sufficient);
- Sample assignment(s); and,
- To make the materials easier to evaluate, the text that specifically addresses the H-criteria should be highlighted in yellow.

From ASU:

HST 302 Ancient Law and Society

Ultimately the subcommittee agreed that the four criteria are met by the learning objectives, topics, and readings, and the course was thus approved. However, there were concerns that the submitted syllabus does not clearly show how the assignments will engage students in systematic historical analysis throughout the course, as the overview of the designation specifically calls for. The syllabus lists the assignments as a midterm exam and a final exam (both consisting of short IDs and an essay), two quizzes with short IDs only, and two discussion boards. Without some indication of the essay topics and/or discussion prompts, it is not clear whether the “systematic historical analysis” directive is being met by the assignments. In terms of submitting a complete proposal, the introduction to the designation states “The justifications for how the course fits each of the criteria need to be clear *both in the application tables and the course materials.*” Upon further examination, it was noted by the subcommittee that examples of the two discussion prompts are provided in the application tables. Thus, the primary element lacking in the proposal is an example of a question or prompt for the essay exams, which would clarify the nature and extent of the historical analysis being asked of students.

HST 302 History of Money

Criterion 1 is clearly met by this course, and the weekly learning outcomes are aligned with the intent of the Historical Awareness designation. The course was approved for the designation on the basis of this, but there were some unresolved concerns in the discussion among committee members. Specifically, the designation requires that a course “embed systematic historical analysis in the core of the syllabus, *including readings and assignments*.” It was not immediately clear from the descriptions of the two assignments in the course that this directive is accomplished. The final paper is a book review, which the instructor defined as “a description, critical analysis, and evaluation on the quality, meaning and significance of a book...A book review analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of a book, and evaluates how well the author has succeeded in defending his or her main argument.” It is not clear how the Historical Awareness criteria are addressed in this assignment. The midterm research paper asks students to “choose any country, region or people in history (ancient, medieval, or modern) and trace their development of money and credit over the course of at least two centuries...” Such a description could be interpreted as “the history of a field of study” (an exclusionary criterion) or the examination of a single human institution (rather than human institutions as specified in Criterion 3.) Upon further discussion, it was noted that the assignment instructions prompt students to discuss “change over time” and to “Consider the interplay of currency with social and cultural change, politics, and economic progress...”. This addressed the committee’s concerns about the assignment meeting the criteria for the designation, but the statement was initially missed by some of the committee members because it was located in what appeared to be writing format guidelines rather than content requirements. In future applications, it would be helpful if evidence for the criteria were highlighted in yellow throughout the syllabus and sample assignments.

HST 303 China, Japan, and East Asia in World History

The course description and learning outcomes are aligned with the designation criteria, and the discussion prompts listed in the syllabus encourage historical analysis throughout the course. With an understanding that the course meets the spirit of the Historical Awareness designation, the course was ultimately approved. It was believed that more clarity was needed, though, as to the nature of the essay exams. Their purpose is stated as “to work on how to analyze a primary source critically and thoroughly.” This does not make clear how these essays address the criteria in the designation. An example of a topic or essay prompt might help clarify how the assignments engage students in meeting the goals of the historical awareness designation.

From MCCCCD: (none)

Recommend for Revise/Resubmit

From ASU: (none)

From MCCCCD: (none)

Recommend for Deny

From ASU: (none)

From MCCCCD: (none)