

**Texas A&M International University  
Core Curriculum Institutional Effectiveness Review (CCIER)**

**Core Curriculum Academic Discipline: SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**Assessment Period Covered: Sept. 1, 2011 to May 31, 2012**

**Discipline Coordinator (Preparer of Report):**

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**The Core Curriculum Institutional Effectiveness Review supports the following imperative of the Texas A&M International University 2011-2015 Strategic Plan:**

***Imperative 3: Teaching and Learning-- Enhance the educational environment by promoting excellence in teaching and learning.***

**Institutional Mission**

Texas A&M International University, a Member of The Texas A&M University System, prepares students for leadership roles in their chosen profession in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society ... Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service, Texas A&M International University embodies a strategic point of delivery for well-defined programs and services that improve the quality of life for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities.

**Core Curriculum Mission**

At Texas A&M International University, the Core curriculum introduces students to academic disciplines which form the foundation of human thought: mathematics, science, history, language, literature, the arts, and social and behavioral sciences. Our Core is conceived to open new areas of learning for our students and to foster skills necessary for success in higher education.

As they move through this course of study, students are encouraged, as their knowledge increases, to develop the capacity to articulate and support a thesis, to think critically, to synthesize their observations and to perceive analogies and relationships between seemingly diverse ideas and intellectual pursuits.

**Provide summary of the last cycle's use of results and changes implemented:**

*The statement should include a concise analysis of the assessment data collected during the previous year, a brief explanation of actions taken to address specific outcomes, an evaluation of how these actions contributed to the improvement of the program, and any recommendations formulated.*

Last year the social science faculty that teach courses in American National Government, PSCI 2305, and Texas State government, PSCI 2306 assessed the following learning objectives.

3. To use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.

6. To comprehend the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, the constitutions of the U.S. and Texas, federalism, civil liberties, and civil and human rights.

The conclusions reached by the social sciences faculty were as follows. Average students performance improved by approximately 17 percentage points from a pre-test to post-test. These results were about equal to or slightly better than our expectations. The program concluded that increased faculty participation was need in an effort to give the results better validity.

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Exemplary Educational Objectives for the following academic discipline:**

**SOCIAL SCIENCES**

1. To employ the appropriate methods, technologies, and data that social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition.
2. To examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods, social structures, and cultures.
3. To use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.
4. To develop and communicate explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues.
5. To analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural and global forces on the area under study.
6. To comprehend the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, the constitutions of the U.S. and Texas, federalism, civil liberties, and civil and human rights.
7. To understand the evolution and current role of the U.S. in the world.
8. To differentiate and analyze historical evidence (documentary and statistical) and differing points of view.
9. To recognize and apply reasonable criteria for the acceptability of historical evidence and social research.
10. To analyze critically, assess, and develop creative solutions to public policy problems.
11. To recognize and assume one's responsibility as a citizen in a democratic society by learning to think for oneself, by engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining

- information through the news media and other appropriate information sources about politics and public policy.
12. To identify and understand differences and commonalities within diverse cultures.

### Section I: Planning and Implementation

**Outcome(s):**

*From the list above, identify the outcome(s) that will be focused upon this year. (It is recommended that academic disciplines rotate through their entire set of Exemplary Educational Objectives over a multi-year period. Thus, disciplines are encouraged to focus only on a few outcomes each year.) To facilitate the completion of this report, please refer to the Core Curriculum Matrix completed for each academic discipline.*

8. To differentiate and analyze historical evidence (documentary and statistical) and differing points of view.

☐ Please indicate if the outcome(s) is (are) related to writing (*Write On, TAMIU!*).

**Methods of assessment to be used:**

*The explanation should identify and describe the type of assessment(s) that will be used (e.g., survey, questionnaire, observation instrument, test, rubric to evaluate performance, standardized examination, action research, interviews, etc.), who will provide the information, and how the data will be obtained.*

To assess objective 8, a pre-test and post-test will be delivered to five (5) sections of HIST 1302 (U.S. Survey since 1877). In total, we are anticipating that at least ninety (90) students will participate in this process. The 12-question sequential multiple choice tests (written by Drs. Blackwell and Duffy) will be developed based on a series of primary sources selected from the course reader entitled, *Reading the American Past*, by Michael P. Johnson. Questions will be standardized and uploaded onto ANGEL through a repository. Questions will stimulate analysis, encouraging students to think critically about the points of views evident in each source and their targeted audiences.

**Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:**

The pre-test will be administered in the first two weeks of the Spring 2012 semester, and the post-test will be administered at the end of the Spring 2012 semester.

**Criteria/Benchmark(s) for assessing students' progress in meeting the exemplary objective(s) selected:**

The pre-test will largely serve a diagnostic purpose, highlighting any areas of concern that might need to be addressed throughout the course. It also establishes a starting point from which we will be able to assess student development over the course of the semester. The outcome of the

post-test, however, will provide the data necessary to ascertain whether our goal of an average score of 80% between all of the sections of the course has been reached.

## Section II: Analysis of Results

### **What were the results attained?**

*Describe the primary results or findings from your analysis of the information collected. This section should include an explanation of any strength(s) or weakness(es) suggested by the results.*

Of the 150 students who took the HIST 1302 pre-test in Spring 2012, the average grade was 67 percent. Of the 137 students who took the HIST 1302 post-test in the Spring 2012 semester, the average grade was 78 percent (2 percent short of the goal of 80 percent). See Microsoft Excel documents labeled “Appendix A” and “Appendix B” for detailed results.

### **What were the conclusions reached?**

*Include a brief description of the conclusion(s) based on the evidence collected and describe the process used to disseminate the information. Use the Meeting Minutes template found at: <http://www.tamtu.edu/adminis/iep/resources.shtml>. Once completed, submit the minutes to [integrate@tamtu.edu](mailto:integrate@tamtu.edu).*

Although the overall average of 80% across all sections of HIST 1302 was not reached, the overall results of this CORE curriculum assessment showed positive results for student performance. An 11 percent increase in overall scores reveal that while students might be able to read historical documents, their ability to 1) understand what is being said, and 2) identify their significance, are issues that require continued attention.

### **Describe the action plan formulated:**

*Based on the conclusion(s), describe the action plan to be implemented to improve or maintain student learning in the core academic discipline, including a timeline for implementation.*

In light of the above findings, it is proposed that course assignments continue to focus on further developing students’ ability to analyze, contextualize and comprehend primary historical documents.

For example, an instructor might assign a primary source document for the class to review each week of the semester. To help the student engage with written documents, for example, the following questions can be posed:

1. What type of written document is this? (newspaper, letter, memorandum, telegram, press release, advertisement, census report, ...)
2. When was the document written/recorded?
3. Who created the document and what is his/her/their background(s)?
4. Why do you think the document was written?
5. What evidence in the document reveals why it was written?

6. List three things the document tells.
7. What questions are left unanswered by the document?

The instructor can then explore some of the responses each week, highlighting the different perspectives that might develop when examining the same source. In turn, students will develop skills that encourage them to be critical in both the way they read historical documents and how they approach the field of history.

### Section III: Resources

**Resource(s) to implement action plan:**

*Describe the resources that will be needed to implement the action plan. Also indicate if the resources are currently available, or if additional funds will be needed to obtain these resources.*

**Funding**

- ☐ New Resources Required
- ☐ Reallocation of current funds

**Physical**

- ☐ New or reallocated space

**Other**

- ☒ Primarily faculty/staff time
- ☐ University/rule procedure change only

**Provide a narrative description and justification for requested resources (include linkage to Strategic Plan):**

History faculty need to continue to design course assignments in a manner that will expose students to an increased number of primary documents, in turn fostering their ability to view historical concepts and events through a range of perspectives. Please refer to the example provided in the preceding section.

**Date Report Submitted:**

May 17, 2012