I. Statement of Departmental Mission: In an integrated fashion, students will develop and refine expertise in historical research skills and knowledge of the Americas, East Asia, and Europe.

II. Statement of integrated Departmental Learning Goals:

   a. Students will learn to think critically about the nature of historical knowledge.

   b. Students will build and master a foundation of knowledge about specific places and societies over time.

   c. Students will develop, refine and master disciplinary research skills.

The objectives related to this goal include:

   i. The ability to conceptually understand and critically evaluate arguments within historical scholarship and ways of pursuing historical scholarship.

   ii. The mastery of disciplinary writing skills in making persuasive responses to arguments.

III. Learning Goal to be assessed: The mastery of disciplinary research skills.

In academic year 2010-2011, we will investigate the mastery of disciplinary leading up to and culminating in the senior research experience, History 400a and 400b. History 400a focuses upon researching the senior thesis and 400b focuses on writing it. During this year, we plan on conducting three surveys, one at the beginning of 400a, one at the conclusion of 400a and one at the conclusion of 400b. These surveys will measure our effectiveness in fulfilling our departmental goals in coursework prior to 400a, in 400a and after 400b and the conclusion of the senior research experience.

   a. Assessment Loop #1: Learning Objective 1: The ability to understand and critically evaluate historical scholarship

      i. Mastery involves three components related to the construction of historical arguments.

      1. Conceptualization--were the concepts and insights at the heart of the analysis clear, perceptive, well thought out, surprising, original?

      2. Evidence--does the author question the nature of evidence and demonstrate
knowledge of the evidence relevant to the issue(s) discussed, and does the author successfully use the relevant evidence, even when it apparently contradicts her/his line of argument?

3. Synthesis and Integration--does the essay integrate concepts and ideas into a well-reasoned and forcefully presented whole?

   ii. Strategies: revised curriculum, close readings of primary sources, writing assignments on those primary sources, engagement in historiographical debates.

   iii. Measures

1. Direct: development of departmental rubric to articulate the expectations and evaluation criteria for the Senior Capstone project, specifically related to the components of strong historical arguments.

2. Indirect:

   a. survey items to rate the effectiveness of specific assignments/coursework in developing historical arguments and assumptions (among other research skills).

   b. Focus groups/exit interviews with majors to assess effectiveness of courses/assignments in developing and rethinking historical arguments (among other research skills)

   iv. Link to planning

1. Evidence will be analyzed and discussed at departmental meetings to inform curricular adjustments for furthering student research skills.

   b. Assessment Loop #2: Learning Objective 2: Writing within the Discipline and reimagining arguments.

   i. Mastery of disciplinary writing is assessed by level.

1. Basic/introductory: summarize and respond critically to a scholarly argument, writing short papers (2-8 pages) with a concise thesis, systematic use of evidence and coherent argument.

2. 200-300 levels: deeper analysis and organization of more complex writing assignments, culminating in an approximately 50-page senior thesis written in accord with disciplinary and interdisciplinary conventions.
3. All levels: students progress in their evaluative work with primary and secondary sources, advancing skills in critique and synthesis. Also, students demonstrate an ability to carry knowledge across courses and make connections between them.

   ii. Strategies: assignments and feedback throughout the curriculum.

   iii. Measures.

1. Direct:

   a. Introductory/intermediate levels: each faculty member will select an exceptional, an average, and an insufficient paper for anonymous discussion (one set of papers for each level). In departmental discussion, the characteristics of each level of writing will be noted to assist faculty in providing more detailed and departmentally consistent feedback to students.

   b. Senior Capstone project: a component of the evaluative rubric under development will specifically address the writing of the project. Writing scores will be monitored over time and brought into departmental discussions of student accomplishment.

2. Indirect:

   a. survey items to rate the effectiveness of specific assignments/coursework in developing writing (among other research skills).

   b. Focus groups/exit interviews with majors to assess effectiveness of courses/assignments/departmental initiatives in developing writing (among other research skills)

   iv. Link to Planning

1. Evidence from these exercises will inform our ongoing discussions about writing.

IV. Institutional Support.

1. Assistance in conceptualizing and revising appropriate assessment mechanisms such as surveys will be useful. In addition, collecting and compiling data in ways that can be effectively discussed at department meetings will also be helpful.