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**COLLABORATING TO ASSESS TEXAS CORE OBJECTIVES:  
DEPARTMENT TEMPLATES AND SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENTS**

# Why use a template for core assessment ?

- In 2013 SFA required that departments develop a single assessment assignment for use in all sections of a core class. That is, all 15-20 sections of HIS 133 (1301) were to use the same assignment.
- These assignments had to be approved by a university-wide committee. They cannot be changed without going through a new approval process.
- Some departments use the same assignment verbatim in each section, while others, including History, created template assignments to give more flexibility to individual instructors.
- Separate university-wide committees developed assessment rubrics for each core objective, using the VALUE rubrics as a starting point.
- Each semester all students in classes scheduled to be assessed upload their assessment assignments to Live-Text. A sample of these assignments are scored by a university-wide assessment committee, which includes one historian.

You can do this!

If you can get a Ph.D. in history, you can design an assignment that achieves your own goals, your department's goals, and the state's assessment goals. In that order.

The key is planning. Start with the rubric...

# Written Communication

	Capstone 4	...	Beginning 1
<b>Audience, Context, and Purpose</b>	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is wholly responsive to the assigned task(s) and applied consistently through all elements of the work.		Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task(s).
<b>Content Development</b>	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content and ideas that illustrate the writer's command and deep understanding of the subject, skillfully shaping the whole work.		Uses appropriate and relevant content to accurately develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
<b>Sources and Evidence</b>	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the assignment.		Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the assignment.
<b>Organization and Presentation</b>	Demonstrates consistent, skillful, and thoroughly detailed attention to organization, presentation, and stylistic choices as appropriate to the assignment.		Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation as appropriate to the assignment.
<b>Syntax and Mechanics</b>	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is nearly error-free.		Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

Full rubric: [http://www.sfasu.edu/acadaffairs/documents/FINAL WRITTEN COMMUNICATION RUBRIC 11 14 13.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/acadaffairs/documents/FINAL_WRITTEN_COMMUNICATION_RUBRIC_11_14_13.pdf)

# Critical Thinking

	Capstone 4	...	Beginning 1
<b>Identification and explanation of issues</b>	Issue/problem to be considered is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.		Issue/problem to be considered is stated without clarification or description.
<b>Collection of information</b>	Information taken from source(s) is sufficient to develop a comprehensive analysis and synthesis.		Information taken from source(s) is insufficient to develop any analysis and synthesis.
<b>Recognition of context and assumptions</b>	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts before presenting a point of view.		Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts before presenting a point of view.
<b>Evaluation and Synthesis of information</b>	The evaluation of information is thorough, taking into account the complexities of an issue, while acknowledging limits and synthesizing other points of view.		The evaluation of information is simplistic, obvious, or has limited relevance.
<b>Conclusions and related outcomes</b>	Conclusions are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives in priority order.		Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

# Social Responsibility

	Capstone 4	...	Beginning 1
<b>Cultural Self-Awareness</b>	Recognizes complexity among the elements and biases in one's own culture or subculture.		Shows minimal awareness of the elements and biases in one's own culture or subculture.
<b>Cultural Worldview Frameworks</b>	Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of other cultures.		Demonstrates a minimal understanding of the complexity of other cultures.
<b>Civic Responsibility</b>	Identifies patterns of engagement in civic life, social interaction or politics and recognizes complexity among those patterns.		Shows minimal awareness of patterns of engagement in civic life, social interaction or politics.
<b>Understanding one's role in Regional, National, and/or Global Communities</b>	Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the roles of individuals in regional, national, or global communities.		Demonstrates a minimal understanding of the roles of individuals in regional, national, or global communities.

# Personal Responsibility

	Capstone 4	...	Beginning 1
<b>Ethical Self-Awareness</b>	Student assesses in detail core beliefs and analyzes the origins of the core beliefs with greater depth and clarity.		Student demonstrates an emerging awareness of their core beliefs.
<b>Ethical Issue Recognition</b>	Student can recognize ethical issues and explain cross-relationships among ethical issues in greater detail.		Student can recognize basic ethical issues but fails to grasp complexity or interrelationships.
<b>Ethics in Different Contexts &amp; Settings</b>	Student fully considers the implications of context in relation to ethical issues.		Student incompletely recognizes the importance of context in relation to ethical issues.
<b>Application of Ethical Perspectives</b>	Ethical perspectives are applied persuasively to an ethical question, and how the ethical perspectives relate to the question is fully considered.		Student applies ethical perspectives to an ethical issue, but the analysis is incomplete and/or there are inaccuracies in describing the perspectives or issue.
<b>Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/ Concepts</b>	The student is able to recognize and evaluate different perspectives with greater depth and clarity.		The student recognizes a limited range of different perspectives.

Full rubric: [http://www.sfasu.edu/acadaffairs/images/FINAL\\_PERSONAL\\_RESPONSIBILITY\\_RUBRIC\(1\).pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/acadaffairs/images/FINAL_PERSONAL_RESPONSIBILITY_RUBRIC(1).pdf)

# The “DBQ” template question for core assessment of *all six* history surveys at SFA

**Directions:** The following question requires that you construct a 3-4 page, double-spaced essay utilizing the document excerpts provided on the following pages, as well as your knowledge of the period, to inform your analysis.

Compose your essay in the text box provided at the end of this document. Keep in mind the following questions:

Instructors provide their own documents and an overarching prompt, plus template questions relevant to the core objective being assessed:

- What do these sources teach us about what people valued and the responsibilities that men and women had within this society?
- In what ways were the authors of these documents putting ideas of “civic responsibility” into practice?
- What elements or values in the worldviews of the various individuals and groups might have contributed to their perspectives on the issue?
- Are the conclusions that you have drawn tied logically to your source materials? Have you included an analysis of the implications of this historical event?
- Since historical analyses should not include the beliefs and ethical perspectives of the historian, briefly discuss your own beliefs and how they may differ from those of the historical actors.

# Example: Critical Thinking and Communication

Use the primary sources in chapter 11 of *Thinking Through the Past* to test Loren Baritz's hypothesis that "false assumptions rooted in American culture" presented a serious obstacle to Americans success in the Vietnam War.

Your essay should begin with a 1-2 paragraph summary of Baritz's argument in "God's Country and American Know-How." What ideas/values/beliefs in American culture put the US at a disadvantage in the Vietnam war, in his view?

Then write a 3-4 paragraph analysis of the primary documents. Do you see those same values there? Did they prevent or limit US effectiveness in Vietnam, so far as you can tell from the documents? Use at least four of the six primary sources.

## Example: Personal and Social Responsibility

Below are excerpts concerning the African American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. In what ways do they agree or disagree on the meaning of rights, freedom, liberty, and how to achieve it (or not)? If the legal system favors discrimination and bigotry, such as segregation, should all obey the law or disregard it? Use specific examples from these authors to support your conclusions.

The sources are 2-3 page passages from :

- Letter from Birmingham Jail
- “The Ballot or the Bullet” speech
- Black Panther Party Platform
- LBJ commencement address at Howard University

## Example: Personal and Social Responsibility

In the late 1700s the collapse of the tobacco market and the ideals of the American Revolution led many people to assume that slavery would quickly die out in the new nation. Instead slavery increased in both its economic importance and its intensity. How and why did white Americans justify the existence of slavery in a democracy? How did slaveholders go from describing slavery as a necessary evil to a positive good? What arguments were made against slavery?

In the first 2/3 of the essay, focus your attention on the moral justifications developed to defend slavery. In the last third of the essay, consider the moral criticisms of slavery made by abolitionists and former slaves.

# Revision: Personal and Social Responsibility

The 1845 publication of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* electrified the American public and proved to be a turning point for the abolitionist movement. Write a 1000-word essay that explains how Douglass refuted pro-slavery arguments and contributed to the anti-slavery argument of the abolitionist movement. Why was the book so important to the debate over slavery? Include the following elements:

- An introductory paragraph with a thesis statement about the book's historical importance.
- A brief overview of pro-slavery arguments, based on analysis of at least four the primary sources at the end of these instructions. (about 1/3 of paper)
- An analysis of Douglass's challenge to these pro-slavery arguments. How did he prove that their claims about slavery were wrong? Also include a discussion of any other ideas in the book that you believe would have encouraged readers to support the abolitionist movement. (2/3 of the paper)
- A concluding paragraph that summarizes your argument about why the book was important.

# SoTL + DBQ = Mind Blown!

Clark, Jennifer. "What Use Is SoTL?: Using the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to Develop a Curriculum for First Year University History Classes." *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice* 6, no. 2 (2009).

- Assignment #1: Answer a question using 2-3 short primary sources. Goal is to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information.
- Assignment #2: Draw a conclusion based on 5 medium primary sources and present a brief argument. Goal is to synthesize multiple sources and reconcile conflicting info from multiple perspectives.
- Assignment #3: Summarize a secondary source article chosen by the instructor. Goal is to identify the argument and supporting points—and to demonstrate awareness of the historian as the creator of a historical interpretation.
- Assignment #4: Use 5-8 short primary sources to evaluate competing interpretations in excerpts from secondary sources. Goal is to bring all previous skills together and demonstrate historical reasoning.

## SoTL + DBQ = Mind Blown!

Assignment #4: To what extent was slavery dehumanizing? After considering the primary sources, which of these historians do you think has the strongest argument on this question? Who do you think has the weakest argument?

Choose from: Elkins, Blassingame, Fogel & Engerman, Baptist, and White. Defend your choice with evidence from lecture and at least 5 primary sources.

This student argued that Blassingame had the strongest argument, Elkins the weakest.

One other discrepancy between Blassingame and Elkins is the personality the slaves had within their community. Elkins never addressed the slaves to have minds of their own, communal behaviors. The slaves were able to keep a sense of sanity in result of discovering ways to express themselves as a suppressed people. They played tricks on their masters without their knowledge and benefitted the other slaves through this trickery. Solomon Northup, for example, was able to pull this off effectively. He gained the trusted position of a driver and was told to whip the slaves if they were lacking in anything. Northup was pressed between the two relationships of his fellow slaves, and his master. Northup found a compromise within this trust triangle and used his position to fool the master by acting like he was whipping the slaves when in actuality he was cracking the whip next to them while the slave played along. These were the type of things that the slaves did not only do to survive a painful whipping, but to get back at their master through this moment of freedom.

# Resources to get you started

- SFA Core Curriculum Assessment: Policies, guidelines, and rubrics.  
<http://www.sfasu.edu/acadaffairs/114.asp>
- VALUE Rubric project from the AACU and LEAP.  
<https://www.aacu.org/value>
- Indiana University's History Learning Project: An early version of "Decoding the Disciplines." Very helpful for scaffolding and separating 100/200 level tasks from 300/400 level tasks.  
<http://www.iub.edu/~hlp/beta/curoverview.html>
- Clark, Jennifer. "What Use Is SoTL?: Using the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to Develop a Curriculum for First Year University History Classes." *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice* 6, no. 2 (2009). A fabulous introduction to SoTL literature in History—with practical advice for implementation.
- The March issue of the JAH always includes a section on pedagogy.

# LUMBERJACKS MAKE GREAT HISTORIANS



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