INTRODUCTION: SEVEN YEARS OF WEC IN THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Writing is fundamental to the discipline of history, and the History Department has always considered teaching good writing to be a central component of its mission both within the College of Liberal Arts and across the University of Minnesota. Because of this commitment, in 2007-08 our faculty embraced the opportunity to sign on as a pilot department in the very first cohort of the Writing Enriched Curriculum. Having now entered our seventh year as a participant in the WEC program, we therefore have a wealth of accumulated experience that we are happy to share as we present our final revised WEC writing plan.

The longevity of the department’s relationship with WEC is of particular significance as it coincides with an extended period of upheaval at the university, prompted by the 2008 financial collapse, the subsequent state budget crisis and, most recently, a dramatic drop in enrollments at the College of Liberal Arts. While few units of the university have been left unaffected by these challenges, in many ways the history department is one of those which have felt their consequences especially acutely. As a result, the years of our collaboration with WEC have also been years of dramatic and often unsettling change for our department and our major, as we have struggled to deal with funding cuts, the loss of both faculty and students, and a series of ongoing administrative and institutional reforms that have fundamentally altered our position within the College of Liberal Arts and the University as a whole.

Inevitably, the teaching of writing in the History Department has been deeply influenced by these changes. Immediately after the submission of our first revised WEC writing plan in 2009, in which we reported the preliminary outcome of an extensive series of WEC-based reforms to our curriculum, the department
was faced with the necessity of once again radically reforming its major requirements and its curricular offerings, this time to address cuts to our instructional budget and the problem of an acute drop in enrollments. Specifically, between fall 2010 and the present semester, the History major has eliminated or is in the process of eliminating entire categories of courses at all levels of instruction, including the introductory 1000- and 3000-level WI “survey courses,” the 3959 “How to Do History” requirement and even the Hist 4961 Major Paper. These have been replaced with a new set of WI “foundation courses,” a new series of 1000-3000 “Visions of the Past” courses, and a new 4010 Research Seminar that will replace the major paper as the departmental capstone experience.

In the midst of so many changes, the History Department’s participation in WEC has in some respects proven an asset—not despite, but precisely because it has coincided with a period of challenge, self-reflection, and rapid curricular reform. In fact, in more than one instance our participation in WEC has proven instrumental in our efforts to identify problems with our curriculum and develop responses, including one case in which our WEC-funded writing assessment led directly to a major reform of our senior capstone project. This and other instances of WEC-driven and WEC-inspired reforms are outlined in more detail in Section 3.

On the other hand, our participation in WEC also created serious challenges for the department, the most pressing of which relate to the question of how to keep our writing plan relevant and effective in a time of both rapid change and declining resources. This was especially the case since reforms to our departmental curriculum began at precisely the moment in which financial and other forms of support from WEC began to be phased out. Now, as we look ahead to a future in which the full burden for assessing, revising, and re-implementing our Writing Plan will fall our department, our experience leaves us with serious concerns about the long-term sustainability of WEC. These concerns are discussed in more detail in Section 5 (in addition to other places throughout the writing plan).

**SECTION 1: DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC WRITING CHARACTERISTICS (What characterizes academic and professional communication in this discipline?)**

History faculty members are unanimous in their understanding of the importance of writing to the study of history; as a colleague stated simply, “It is inseparable. Doing history means writing history.” The best scholarly writing in the professional discipline of History is thus characterized by both substantive and stylistic elements as listed below, without change from the 2007-08 Writing Plan:

- Examination of the beliefs, practices, and relationships that have shaped human experience in temporal context, focusing on sequences of events and changes over time.
Critical awareness of the qualities, value, and limitation of historical sources, as well as the necessarily interpretive and mediated nature of historical analysis.

Argument that begins with a question and offers in answer an interpretation of the past that takes into account and is supported by full range of appropriate evidence.

Acknowledgement of and response to existing historical scholarship.

Accessible, clear prose and logical organization that enables readers to retrace the writer’s steps and follow development of the argument.

SECTION 2: DESIRED WRITING ABILITIES (What should students be able to do in and with writing by the time they graduate?)

Our goal is to help all students in History courses become well-informed and thoughtful about historical knowledge, familiar with at least the basic processes by which historical knowledge is produced, and practiced in the multiple functions of writing involved in that production. In doing so, the History Department provides an important service to the University by offering general writing instruction not just to History majors but to a much larger number of students from many programs. Indeed, our experience corroborates the observation of Dr. Bill Condon, professor of English at Washington State University and UMN WEC grant external evaluator and consultant, that more Washington State undergraduates satisfy their general University writing requirements with History courses than with courses from any other single department except English.

We also find that, at the University of Minnesota, writing instruction in History courses functions for students less as training in a rigidly discipline-specific mode of communication than as a fundamental element of undergraduates’ liberal education. Our courses provide students with a broad introduction to scholarly analysis, interpretation, and expression as well as communication, and our designated WI courses offer students repeated opportunities to practice and reinforce these skills in their own thinking and writing. Our pedagogy thus addresses the different needs of two constituencies, the large number of undergraduates in History courses and the smaller number of History majors.

Recognizing the different needs of these two separate constituencies, our Writing Plan identifies two corresponding levels of desired writing abilities: first, a minimum set of writing and writing related skills and perspectives expected of all students at the completion of any writing intensive History course, and second, the set of writing and writing-related abilities we expect History majors to have.
acquired by the end of their major program and completion of all eleven required and elective History courses.

Any University student who successfully completes a WI History course will have received appropriate instruction and been provided the opportunity to:

- Demonstrate understanding of societal change over time
- Demonstrate awareness of the particular nature, value, limitations, and incompleteness of historical sources
- Use writing to further their thinking and develop their own ideas
- Use writing to communicate ideas effectively in lucid, accessible prose
- Engage in critical and persuasive analysis of an interpretive problem
- Make a persuasive and logically organized argument that answers a question
- Articulate this argument in a thesis statement
- Use and cite evidence appropriately and accurately to support argument
- Revise appropriately in response to feedback and resubmit written work

*In addition*, by the time undergraduate History majors complete their major programs, they should be able to:

- Explain the broader significance and context of historical events
- Identify and summarize the main argument, evidence, and historiographical context of a scholarly article and/or book on a historical topic
- Formulate viable historical research questions and hypotheses, and express these effectively in written form
- Make productive reference to relevant historical scholarship and, where appropriate, utilize “Chicago style” citations
- Offer constructive feedback on work written by peers
SECTION 3: PLANS FOR INTEGRATING WRITING INTO UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM (How do and how should both writing and writing instruction integrate into the unit’s undergraduate curriculum?)

Virtually all History courses require students to write in genres ranging from informal in-class “free writes,” blog entries and short response papers to substantial scholarly essays based on original research. At the same time, in contrast to many more technical or vocational disciplines, history’s major is not built around a progressive sequence of required courses or prerequisites. In fact, the history major as currently configured has no required courses at all before the senior capstone. Instead, it is constructed around a series of distribution requirements that present multiple paths to completing the major.

From the practical perspective of WEC implementation this means that, in contrast to many other participating departments, it is impractical for History to develop a coherent WEC program by focusing on writing instruction in just a few key required courses. Rather, the structure of our major demands that we take a comprehensive approach, based on a critical review and overhaul of entire categories of courses from the 1000 to the 4000 level.

With this in mind, in our department’s original writing plan we chose to build our WEC program around the pre-existing structure of designated writing intensive (WI) courses. Given the flexible nature of our major, we determined that this was the best way to regulate the place of writing within our curriculum, to introduce certain uniform standards, and to maintain coherence between different levels of writing instruction.

With regard to implementation, we proceeded in the following manner: After first identifying a set of concepts, skills, and practices that constitute successful scholarly historical writing, we determined the level and type of course in which specific concepts, skills, and practices would be taught most effectively, and incorporated explicit instruction in those concepts, skills, and practices into the appropriate WI History courses. We began offering explicit and focused writing instruction in designated 4-credit WI survey courses at both the 1000- and 3000-levels, in 3010W research seminars, and in the Hist 4961W major paper. We also offered a small number of WI freshman seminars and more advanced topical courses at the 3000- and 4000-levels. Finally, we took measures to ensure that our WEC curriculum reached both of our principal constituencies of students (i.e. majors and non-majors). For our majors, we introduced a requirement that they take two WI history courses in addition to the Major Paper. Meanwhile, we recertified all of our 1000-level introductory surveys as WI, as these are the highest enrolling classes among non-majors.
Overall, we have been satisfied with this basic structure and have maintained it in the revised departmental Writing Plan offered here. That said, the considerable changes to our curriculum over the past few years have necessitated substantial revisions to the particulars of its implementation, as outlined in detail below. What we have not interfered with is the basic organization of WI-based courses categorized by level of instruction. Entry-level courses are streamlined to allow student mastery of essential basic skills, while more specifically disciplinary concepts and skills, intended primarily for History majors, are incorporated sequentially in more sophisticated form at more advanced levels of coursework.

**REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF WRITING INSTRUCTION**

**In History Courses, By Level and Type of Course**

1000- and 3000-level Writing Intensive “Foundations Courses”:

The category of “Foundations Course” represents the most recent innovation to the History major, being a change approved just this year by the departmental faculty and still awaiting approval from CLA and the Board of Regents. If approved, it is scheduled to go into effect starting fall 2014. It replaces the previous category of “Survey Course,” and is a change that is designed (alongside other goals) to serve as a gateway for the WEC experience for both majors and non-majors in a more effective way.

The full justification for the change can be found in Appendix I. But for the purposes of WEC, what is important to note is that the previous category of “Survey Course” lacked coherence within the existing curriculum. It included some classes that were writing intensive and others that were not, some 4-credit classes and others with only 3 credits, some with attached discussion sections and others without them, and some that represented broad areas of study and others that were comparatively narrow.

The new category of “Foundation Course” eliminates this ambiguity. All Foundation courses are Writing Intensive, 4-credit courses, taught by regular faculty members in the department, with attached lab or discussion sections. The purpose of these courses is to combine the delivery of historical content with small group activities that expose students to the fundamentals of working as practicing historians, thereby serving as introductory courses for non-majors as well as courses that prepare majors for advanced work in upper-division classes and the 4010 research seminars (the new capstone course for history).

Because research in post-secondary writing and History pedagogy, corroborated by our own experience and observation, show convincingly that writing instruction is most effectively implemented in small group interaction, the History Department has also made a commitment to reduce the size of WI discussion sections from 26 to 24. In reality, at the time of our original writing plan discussion sections for all WI courses offered in CLA were capped at 22, but were subsequently raised by the college to 26 due to budget constraints. As of
last year, however, CLA devolved control of its instructional budget to individual departments, and our department is proud of its commitment to this aspect of its writing plan.

Like the “surveys” that they replace, “foundation” courses are offered at both the 1000 and 3000 levels, with correspondingly different instructional goals within the WEC program. These are outlined below, and are unchanged from our previous writing plan.

1000-level WI Foundation Courses include specific instruction re:

- Introduction to the concept of historical interpretation and scholarly argumentation
- Analysis of primary sources
- Development of a thesis statement
- Short response papers and/or analytic essays that make an argument, totaling at least ten pages of formal writing (not including in-class exams) over the course of the semester.
- Revision in response to feedback and resubmission of at least one written take-home assignment
- Distinction between appropriate reference to scholarship and plagiarism; concept of scholarly citation concepts and practices; definition of academic dishonesty.

3000-level WI Foundation Courses include specific instruction re:

- Concept of historical interpretation and evidence-based argumentation
- Concept of historiography
- Distinction between primary and secondary sources
- Analysis of a primary source
- Longer analytic essays and/or response papers, totaling at least ten to fifteen pages of formal writing (not including in-class exams) over the course of the semester
- Revision in response to feedback and resubmission of at least one written take-home assignment
• Distinction between appropriate reference to scholarship and plagiarism; concept of scholarly citation concepts and practices; definition of academic dishonesty

3000-level WI LECTURE COURSES:
In addition to our Foundation courses, the History Department also offers a number of upper-division lecture courses that are certified as Writing Intensive (8 as of fall 2013). These courses offer intensive writing instruction within the context of focused examinations of historical topics at more advanced levels. They are particularly important for history majors, all of whom are required to take at least two WI history courses in addition to their capstone project. Ordinarily, this would involve one Foundation course, followed by an upper-division WI lecture course, before finally enrolling in a 4010W Research Seminar.

In accordance with our writing plan, all 3000 WI lecture courses include specific instruction re:

• Concept of historical interpretation and evidence-based argumentation
• Concept of historiography
• Longer analytic essays, response papers, and/or research papers, totaling at least ten to fifteen pages of writing (not including in-class exams) over the course of the semester
• Revision in response to feedback and resubmission of at least one written takehome assignment
• Distinction between appropriate reference to scholarship and plagiarism; definition of academic dishonesty

4010 RESEARCH SEMINARS
Since 2012, the History Department has undergone an extensive reform of its capstone experience, including the decommissioning of two previously required classes (Hist 3959 How to do History, and Hist 4961W Major Paper) and the creation of a new capstone course, the Hist 4010 Research Seminar. Since this reform was in many ways the outcome of our WEC experience, and fundamentally changed both the History major itself and the basic architecture of our Writing Plan, it merits detailed description here.

For many years, the History Department’s capstone experience consisted of the Hist 4961W Major Paper course. Offered in multiple sections each semester and capped at 30 students, Hist 4961W seminars were taught exclusively by full-time members of the history faculty. By the end of the semester, students were expected to formulate, research, analyze, and write their own works of historical
scholarship, generally a 20-30 page paper based on original research in primary and secondary sources on a topic of each student’s choice.

Each section of Hist 4961 was organized as an “open content” research seminar, in the sense that students were responsible for coming up with their own research topic, and were free to choose to write on any topic regardless of whether or not it corresponded with the research expertise of the faculty instructor. Yet while this “open” format offered several advantages, and seemed to fit in well with the flexible structure of our overall undergraduate curriculum, over time there were certain aspects of the class that became a source of frustration for both students and instructors. In particular, a consensus began to emerge that students needed more guidance in choosing feasible topics for their papers, identifying a body of sources, and formulating a realistic plan for research and writing—particularly in cases in which the students’ interests lay far beyond the expertise of the faculty instructors.

As a result, the History Department took advantage of its participation as a pilot program in WEC in 2007 to introduce a new required course, designed to offer students a more structured preparation for the senior paper before they actually enrolled in Hist 4961W. This was Hist 3959, “How To Do History,” in which History majors acquired the methodological skills and research experience needed to complete their senior projects. By the end of the semester, Hist 3959 students were expected to have a completed and approved prospectus for their senior paper, which they would then research and write once enrolled in Hist 4961W.

Unfortunately, this new course met with only limited success, as several problems with its format soon became apparent. The first was a simple staffing problem: the department had difficulty finding enough full-time faculty members to teach multiple sections of the class each semester, meaning that the course became too large (typically between 70-80 students per section) to give students the kind of individualized attention necessary for its goals. Second, and more importantly, the department found that it could not enforce its expectation that students should enroll in Hist 3959 during the semester immediately before Hist 4961. Instead, while some students did take the two courses in sequence and entered 4961 with a prospectus in hand, many others took Hist 4961 two or even three semesters after Hist 3959, meaning that by the time they actually entered the class they often had entirely different interests and different research topics in mind. As a result, faculty instructors in Hist 4961 routinely noted that the disparity in the Major Paper class between students who were properly prepared to begin writing and those who were not became even greater than it had been before instituting the Hist 3959 “How to do History” course.

These impressions were confirmed empirically in 2010 and 2012, when the department conducted two external writing assessments of the major paper as part of our original WEC plan. That review examined samples of student writing,
drawn from the pool of senior theses completed that year in two sections of Hist 4961, and also surveyed instructors of the course. Members of the Undergraduate Studies then reviewed the results.

The outcome of this review was that the determination that the Hist 3959 – Hist 4961 sequence fell short of our desired outcomes for student writing in several critical respects. In particular, the results suggested that students had problems with formulating their research question clearly, with building an argument based on multiple primary sources, and with critical engagement of the sources (see Appendix II).

Based on these findings, the Undergraduate Studies Committee was charged with developing a strategy to improve the efficacy of the capstone project. The eventual outcome was a proposal to replace the Hist 3959 – Hist 4961 sequence with a new single-semester capstone course, the Hist 4010 W Research Seminar (see Appendix III). Rather than the “open format” of the previous Hist 4961 Major Paper, Hist 4010 seminars are envisioned as small (20 students max), faculty-led “closed content” seminars, in which students are introduced to advanced research practices within the context of a theme chosen by the faculty instructor and drawn from her/his area of expertise. While each student in these courses will still be expected to develop an original research project based on her/his own interests, and to produce an original research paper of 20-30 pages at the conclusion of the semester, it is hoped that this “closed” format will help address some of the shortcomings of the Hist 3959 – Hist 4961 sequence.

This proposal was accepted by a departmental faculty vote in May 2013, and was approved by the CLA curriculum committee and the Board of Regents in fall 2013. The first Hist 4010 seminars are scheduled to be offered in Fall 2014.

In conformity with the guidelines of our original WEC writing plan, once implemented all Hist 4010W research seminars will include specific instruction re:

- Concept of historical interpretation, including the complexity of an author’s standpoint and what can be at stake when writing history
- Concept of evidence-based argumentation, including the varied uses of sources and the relationship between object and context in the writing of history
- Synthetic review of historical scholarship on an aspect of the seminar topic, such as an article, chapter or book summary that assesses the argument and use of evidence
- Distinction between primary and secondary sources
- Distinction between appropriate reference to scholarship and plagiarism;
definition of academic dishonesty

- Discipline-specific citation practices (Chicago Manual of Style)
- Formulation of historical research questions that are feasible, and meaningful Identification of appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Development and writing of a historical research proposal, including a synthetic literature review, a research plan, and an annotated bibliography
- Revision in response to feedback and resubmission of at least one written take-home assignment
- Research paper (20-30 pp.) on an issue relating to seminar topic and utilizing both primary and secondary sources

SECTION 4: PLANS FOR ASSESSING UNDERGRADUATE WRITING (What plans does this unit have for communicating its writing expectations to students? How should student writing be assessed in individual courses and/or the program?)

In our original writing plan submitted in 2007, a considerable portion of the resources provided by WEC were allotted to the twin tasks of communicating the department’s writing expectations to students and assessing the outcomes of individual courses and the program as a whole. As we look ahead to a future in which such resources will no longer be available, the present plan outlines a series of measures that we consider feasible on a continuing basis.

To begin with, in the absence of a dedicated WEC TA, the primary responsibility for communicating writing expectations to students will lie with individual faculty. As of 2009, all syllabi for all departmental WI courses had been reviewed by the WEC liaison and revised to conform to the guidelines of our WEC writing plan. It is expected that faculty members, as they develop new courses in the future, will ensure that their syllabi conform to the same standards through consultation with the WEC liaison.

As for the assessment of writing at the individual student level, this too will be primarily the responsibility of individual faculty instructors. According to a survey administered by the WEC project team in September 2007, instructors in the History department employed one of three basic techniques to assess and grade writing assignments: 38% assign grades based on a single, thorough, careful reading; 33% assign grades based on multiple readings; and 37% assign grades based on a rubric or list of criteria, weighed individually for a composite score. With the exception of Hist 4961W (Major Paper), to be replaced next year by Hist 4010W (Research Seminar), all History courses are open to any University student in good standing, and History majors and non-majors are held to the same assessment standards within each course. These practices have proven
generally effective, and methods of assessing and providing feedback on student writing within courses will remain at the instructors’ discretion.

As for programmatic assessment, during the first two years of WEC participation (2008-2010) the WEC faculty liaison and WEC TA collected and reviewed the syllabi for all WI History courses and conducted a series of small-group meetings each semester with all TAs and RGs of WI courses in order to discuss WEC strategies and resources, solicit open-ended feedback, and survey the state of writing instruction in the undergraduate curriculum more generally. They then submitted reports to the faculty based on their findings. Subsequently (as discussed in Section 3 above), in 2010 and 2012 the department conducted two WEC-funded external writing assessments of the capstone experience for history majors. Each review examined samples drawn from the pool of senior theses completed that year in two sections of Hist 4961, and also surveyed instructors of the course. Members of the Undergraduate Studies Committee then reviewed the results.

The outcomes of these assessments, and the important impact they have had on the curricular development of the department, have already been discussed in the preceding section. But without WEC funding, it will be impossible to continue such efforts in their existing form. Instead, the History Department proposes to use the newly mandated S.L.O. annual assessment as a replacement for the WEC programmatic evaluations in the future.

Unfortunately, a full elaboration of this proposal is impossible at present, as the CLA guidelines for the S.L.O. departmental assessment were still in the process of being formulated as of fall 2013 (see section 7 below). But our basic departmental template calls for the annual assessment of two 3000-level Writing Intensive courses on a rotating basis, as well as the 4010 Research Seminar capstone course. The results will be shared annually with the WEC liaison, who will review them in consultation with the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

Finally, the department’s Undergraduate Academic Advisor (a full-time P&A staff member) will continue to conduct confidential exit interviews with all History majors cleared for graduation. One series of questions asks about the students’ experience with the writing intensive capstone course, and yields information about the History majors’ perceptions of the writing instruction and support they receive in the capstone course. A second series of questions asks about students’ experiences with writing instruction in other writing intensive History courses. These results too will be shared annually with the WEC liaison, who will review them in consultation with the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

SECTION 5: PLANS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT/SUPPORT (How should discipline-specific writing instruction be supported within individual courses and/or the program?)
A section devoted to plans for future instructional development and support provides an opportunity to outline some of our department’s most pressing concerns about the long-term sustainability and unsupported costs of the WEC program going forward. As indicated above, the central place of writing in virtually every History class, combined with the flexible structure of our major, demands that we take a comprehensive approach to instructional development and support, based on a continual updating and redevelopment of courses across our curriculum.

Indeed, this is exactly what our department undertook during the first phase of its participation in WEC, as we reconfigured our curriculum around categories of Writing Intensive classes at various levels of instruction, revised our major requirements accordingly, and then launched an initiative to review all relevant courses and to retrain instructors according to new guidelines outlined in our writing plan. The following excerpt from our first revised WEC plan gives a good sense of the extent of these efforts:

“The WEC faculty liaison and the WEC teaching assistant contacted and consulted with instructors of all WI History courses at or before the beginning of each semester in 2008-2009 and reviewed the WEC Plan’s writing instruction requirements with them. Over the course of the year, we also provided instructional resources such as boilerplate descriptions of WI requirements, expectations for syllabi, sample assignments and grading rubrics, and student hand-outs summarizing writing tips and practices. The WEC faculty liaison and the WEC teaching assistant also reviewed all WI syllabi to determine if and how University and departmental WI guidelines were met. We also met in small groups with all TAs and RGs in WI History courses to talk about effective methods of writing instruction and ways to incorporate these into discussion section pedagogy and grading, as well as to assess the effectiveness of initial WEC implementation. Finally, the WEC TA provided several in-class writing instruction workshops, at the request of faculty, graduate instructors, and TA section-leaders.”

As should be obvious from the above excerpt, all of this required a considerable investment of time and effort, and was possible only because of generous financial support from the WEC program, whose resources allowed us to fairly compensate both the WEC faculty liaison and the WEC TA for their work. But since then—and in large measure as a result of our continued commitment to the goals outlined in our original WEC writing plan—the History Department has once more completely revamped its curriculum, eliminated entire categories of courses and creating new ones at all levels of instruction.

Given the scale of these changes, the only credible way to ensure the continuing efficacy of WEC would therefore be to conduct another broad-based instructional review and retraining program along the lines of the one carried out in 2008-09.
This, however, would require a similar reinvestment of effort and resources at a time when our funding from WEC has expired.

In this respect, the History Department’s experience thus points to an unresolved and, to a certain extent, unacknowledged tension at the heart of the WEC program and its goals. A good illustration of this is to be found in the assertion—regularly repeated at official WEC instructional sessions and in its explanatory literature—that the WEC is a “voluntary and fully funded program” rather than an unfunded mandate. In reality, since all teaching units in the university are expected to participate in WEC sooner or later, it is “voluntary” only with respect to “when”, not “if.” Moreover, unit participation is expected to continue indefinitely once it has begun, even though units can expect to receive funding from WEC only for an initial start-up period. This leaves individual departments permanently responsible, without external support, for running self-assessments, reviewing course content, retraining faculty and graduate students, and updating their writing plans in response to changes both to their major programs and to the administrative and financial regime surrounding their teaching.

Moreover, this reality needs to be understood within its larger institutional context, for the WEC program is one of a series of centralized, university-wide initiatives that have all increased the administrative burden on departments in analogous ways in recent years. The “Liberal Education” curriculum, which now requires bi-annual recertification of all Lib Ed courses, and the S.L.O. self-assessments, which beginning this year are scheduled to be held annually in perpetuity, are two other obvious examples. Like WEC, these too are well-intentioned and, in their own way, intellectually sound initiatives. But as experienced by individual departments (or individual instructors), their cumulative effect is to divert time and faculty resources that would otherwise support basic teaching and research, to encroach upon the intellectual and administrative autonomy of departments and faculty members, and to create barriers to the development of new courses and other kinds of innovation through ever greater levels of bureaucracy.

With all of this in mind, the History Department is reluctant to commit to any future WEC-related instructional development and support above and beyond what has already been outlined in our previous writing plans, even as it acknowledges the desirability of a broad-based review and retraining program along the lines of the one carried out in 2008-09.

Instead, the History Department proposes to continue including basic instruction for all TAs and RGs in the teaching of writing and in teaching with writing in the annual, mandatory four-day TA Orientation before the beginning of each fall semester. In consultation with WEC, the Department also hopes to be able to offer, as it has in past years, an additional workshop in the orientation week that included a general introduction to WEC and to student writing support and resources within the Department and at the University, as well as concurrent
sessions for instructors of specific courses to meet and review course syllabi, writing assignments, and pedagogical strategies. In past years, the WEC faculty liaison and WEC TA have also held meetings with TAs and RGs in WI courses to discuss WEC implementation and writing instruction more generally. But looking forward, this will no longer be possible given the absence of a WEC TA or other resources for the faculty liaison.

Additionally, for faculty instructors of WI courses, the WEC faculty liaison will continue to assist by disseminating information on University WI guidelines and departmental WI expectations prior to the beginning of each semester. Depending on demand, the WEC faculty liaison may also organize academic-year sessions on specific teaching with writing topics for History faculty and instructors, utilizing Center for Writing staff as appropriate.

SECTION 6: DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS USED TO REVISE WRITING PLAN
(This section will describe the process used to create and gain consensus on the revised departmental Writing Plan.)

The History Department’s Revised WEC Writing Plan was drafted primarily in the fall of 2013, with final revisions made during the 2013-14 winter recess. The Director of Undergraduate Studies, as the designated departmental WEC liaison, had primary responsibility for writing the plan. It was then submitted to the Undergraduate Studies Committee for comment and revision, and was finally submitted to the faculty for approval via electronic ballot.

This process was of course complicated by the ongoing reforms to the department’s major, which even at the time of the final submission of this plan were yet to be finalized in their entirety. Meanwhile, a second complicating factor resulted from rapid turnover in the position of WEC liaison. In 2009, the faculty member who spearheaded our participation as a pilot WEC department (and authored our first writing plan) stepped down as WEC liaison, and has subsequently begun phased retirement. Since then, the office has rotated from one faculty member to another every 1-2 years. The current WEC liaison began his term in Fall 2013, and did not become involved in any aspect of WEC until after 2010, when RA funding and other support from WEC had already expired and the individual graduate RAs involved in the project had all left campus. The same is true of all current members of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, the advisory body for departmental WEC functions, none of whom were directly involved in WEC during early phases of implementation.

Of course, to at least some extent the History department’s experience in this regard could to be attributed to simple bad timing. But given the rhythms of the academic calendar and the realities of a constantly evolving faculty, it seems unlikely that other departments have not faced similar problems. This raises further questions about the sustainability of WEC as we look to a future without funding or other institutional support.
SECTION 7: STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE WRITING PLAN (This section will describe the ways that the ideas contained in the revised departmental Writing Plan address the University’s Student Learning Outcomes.)

Much like the ongoing curricular reforms to our major, the place of “Student Learning Outcomes” in our WEC writing plan represents something of a moving target because of the timing of the university-wide implementation of S.L.O. assessments. In the case of CLA, the first announcement of the college’s participation in this initiative was made to individual departments only after the beginning of the fall 2013 semester, with many details regarding implementation still unclear by the end of the calendar year.

That said, the History Department’s original WEC Writing Plan’s “Required Elements of Writing Instruction in History Courses, by Level and Type of Course,” described above in Section 3, correspond directly to and will support at least five of the University’s seven Student Learning Outcomes or SLOs.

Our approach to embedding writing instruction within the study of History depends upon teaching all of the students in writing intensive History courses both how historians write and how to write like historians. Through careful reading of documentary sources and historical scholarship – closely examining both what such written sources say and how they say it – we teach students the concepts of historical interpretation and scholarly argumentation. In other words, in each WI History course, we show the students explicitly how the discipline of History “identifies, defines, and solves problems” (SLO#1). We then provide them with guided opportunities, calibrated by level of course, to develop and practice their own production of historical knowledge through analyzing primary sources to answer historical questions, using writing to develop their own interpretations based on the evidence of those sources, and constructing and expressing their own arguments in written form according to the accepted scholarly conventions of our discipline: in short, to “locate and critically evaluate information” (SLO#2) and to “communicate effectively” (SLO#5).

By the time History majors have completed their programs and produced their capstone senior projects (currently Hist 4961W: Major Paper, and beginning next semester Hist 4010 Research Seminar), they will also have “mastered a body of knowledge and a mode of inquiry” (SLO#3).
Appendix I:
Proposed Change to the “Survey” Requirement in History

Approved in the Department by Faculty Vote on December 2nd, 2013, currently awaiting approval from CLA and the Board of Regents

The history department is proposing the following change to its major:

Currently, out of 11 total courses required for a B.A. in history, students must complete two “survey courses,” at least one of which must be writing intensive (see attachment #1 for a current list of these courses).

We propose that the category of “survey course” be eliminated from the major, and that the requirement to take two surveys be replaced by a new requirement that all students must complete at least one “foundation course.” This new category of course is defined as any 4-credit course (at either the 1000 or 3000 level) that is both writing intensive and has an attached discussion or lab section in addition to lecture meetings. The purpose of these courses is to combine the delivery of historical content with small group activities that expose students to the fundamentals of working as practicing historians, thereby preparing them for advanced work as upper-classmen in the 4010 research seminars (the capstone course for history majors).

This change will in no way affect the total number of credits required for the major, nor will it affect other distribution or concentration requirement.

Justification:

The category of “survey course” is in many ways a vestige of an earlier time when our department’s major was structured in a different way. In their original configuration, the survey courses were designed for three primary purposes:

1) To serve as an introduction to undergraduate departmental “concentrations of study.”
2) To expose students to chronologically and geographically broad sweeps of history, to complement the narrower or more topically defined focus of their other courses.
3) To ensure that students take courses, structured around small discussion sections, in which they are introduced to the fundamentals of working as practicing historians through critical engagement with ideas, the analysis of primary sources, and intensive writing.

However, over the past two decades the history department’s major has gradually evolved in ways that have made the surveys either unnecessary or less
than optimally effective in achieving these goals. Most noticeably, some years ago the department moved away from offering a fixed menu of geographically and chronologically defined “concentrations” (e.g. Early America, Modern East Asia, etc.) that served as the justification for the first of these three objectives. Instead, the department currently allows students to design their own concentrations based on individual interest, by compiling a portfolio of interrelated upper-division history courses in consultation with their undergraduate advisor.

As a result of this change, the category of “survey course” has gradually lost its coherence within the curriculum. To accommodate student interest in a broader and more flexible range of concentrations which they now design for themselves, many new courses have been added to the original list of “surveys”. But not all of these courses have been taught regularly after being approved, and relatively few of the have been approved with attached discussion sections. Moreover, with fluctuations in enrollment and reductions in the number of available graduate T.A.s, some of the original surveys have also begun to be offered less frequently, and in some instances have been forced to drop their discussion sections as well (see attachment #2).

Meanwhile, as the discipline of history (and our department in particular) has developed a greater emphasis on trans-regional and comparative perspectives in both research and teaching, some older surveys that once seemed “broad” in chronological or geographic terms now seem less so (e.g. “Modern Britain”). To address this shift, in 2007 the department introduced a separate “World History” component to the B.A., requiring all undergraduate majors to choose at least one course from a pre-approved list of World History courses. Confusingly, however, while some courses on this list of World History courses also count as “surveys,” others do not.

To sum up, of the three original goals of the survey courses:

1) The need to provide introductory surveys of individual “concentrations” is no longer relevant, since students design their own concentrations in consultation with their advisor rather than choosing from a set menu of options.

2) The need to expose students to chronologically and geographically broad sweeps of history is now addressed by a separate requirement and a separate category of courses in the curriculum (i.e. World History)

3) To need to provide students with courses structured around small discussion sections, in which they are introduced to the fundamentals of working as practicing historians, remains a high priority for the department. But this need is NOT addressed by the current requirement to take survey courses, since many of these courses do not currently have attached discussion or lab sections, nor are they necessarily structured in the manner of a “foundation” course.
Our proposal is therefore designed to reemphasize the importance of courses structured around small discussion sections in which students are introduced to the fundamentals of work as practicing historians through critical engagement with scholarship, the analysis of primary sources, and intensive writing. It does so by introducing a new requirement that explicitly makes such courses an integral part of the student experience for all history majors. In combination with the world history requirement introduced in 2007, this will achieve in a much more effective way the original goals of the “surveys” that are still central to our major, while removing the elements of the “survey” structure that are no longer relevant to our major as currently configured.

In proposing this change, it should be emphasized that eliminating the “surveys” as a category does not imply that any of the classes currently recognized as surveys will be offered any less frequently than they are at present. Instead, some will now be counted as “foundation courses,” while others can continue to be used to fulfill the geographical and chronological distribution requirements for the major and, when relevant, counted towards a student’s “concentration.”

Finally, in addition to making the undergraduate major more coherent and effective, several other benefits are anticipated from this change. These include: 1) A simpler and more transparent description of the major in the course catalogue 2) Easier planning for students in the major, which will ideally reduce their average time to degree 3) Greater predictability in the enrollments of courses with discussion sections.

Implementation:
The proposed change would go into effect in Fall 2014. Students who have already declared a history major prior to the beginning of the fall 2014 semester would have the option of fulfilling their requirements according to the earlier guidelines. As stated above, the change to the major is not expected to influence the availability of individual courses. Because it does not change the overall number of credits required for the major, it is also not expected to influence overall departmental enrollments (although it is hoped that increased transparency and easier scheduling resulting from this change will have a positive effect on the number of our majors over time).
Appendix II: WEC Upper-Division Writing Report for History

History:
Rating upper-division writing of graduating majors
August 2012

Method: A team of three independent raters (three from inside the discipline, and one a writing specialist) scored capstone-level writing collected from this unit. Raters used a two-point criterion-referenced scale, assessing student works as “sufficient” or “insufficient” for capstone-level writing for each criterion provided by the unit (this list is drawn from the unit’s Writing Plan). No cumulative scores were given. Prior to rating student writing, raters were provided a “training” session by a faculty member drawn from inside the unit. During this session, criteria were discussed and anchor papers were rated. After the rating session, raters were debriefed on the student work and rating process.

Results: Where 0 is complete (four-rater) agreement on “Insufficient” and 1 is complete agreement on “Sufficient.” Each rating represents an average of all raters’ scores for all writing samples for each criterion.

Rated: Nine 30ish page papers from 2 sections of HIST 4961W

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>2010 N=7</th>
<th>2012 N=9</th>
<th>2012 HIST raters only</th>
<th>2012 writing specialist only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Demonstrates an understanding of the importance of historical context.</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explains the context of historical events through the use of primary</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.63</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sources.*</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Demonstrates an awareness of the particular nature, value, limitations,</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.38</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and incompleteness of historical sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Formulates and expresses viable historical research questions and</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hypotheses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Engages in critical analysis of interpretive problems.</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engages in persuasive analysis of interpretive problems</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Makes a persuasive and logically organized argument that is supported</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by the evidence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Articulates this argument in a thesis statement.</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Explains the broader significance of the topic.</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Identifies and summarizes some of the main arguments, evidence, and</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>historiographical context of a scholarly work related to the question.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Communicates ideas in compelling and accessible prose.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cites evidence accurately to support argument.</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Uses a consistent citation style.</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responses: History
From RATING SESSION DEBRIEFING

(1) Now that you’ve worked through a significant number of individual writing samples from a specific college/department, what patterns of strength and/or weakness did you notice?

Strengths:
- Generally, students cite using consistent style, although in most cases they fail to adequately cite the evidence they use in their arguments.
- The majority are grammatically and mechanically correct.
- Most made a sufficient stab at presenting a clear thesis idea.
- Students sustained focus and argument over the course of a relatively long paper.

Weaknesses:
- Issues related to thesis ideas:
  - Sometimes thesis ideas took the form of, “Here’s what I’m going to show...,” but didn’t always show it.
  - Sometimes the thesis occurred at the end of the paper, which is not where I anticipated seeing it.
  - In the place of theses, some student authors provided questions. Questions are not necessarily debatable.
  - Some student authors presented “something straining toward being a thesis, but not a thesis”
  - Most tried to clearly express their question...but several never answered the question they had posed.

- Issues related to source analysis and use:
  - Lack of critical analysis of sources (criteria 3 and 5) and not knowing how to scrutinize (criteria 5 and 9).
  - Students seemed too reliant on single sources.
  - Lack of critical engagement with both primary and secondary sources. Students know they are supposed to be critical, but were unable to sustain deep critical analysis. Analysis doesn’t propel the argument, which makes their approach” sort of drive-by.” Some students were able to make analytic points, but were unable to get to the ramifications of those points.
  - In some instances, sentences from sources just dropped-in.
Not a lot of originality; arguments seemed derivative, but how much originality can we expect? Can we expect undergraduate writers to make a contribution to the field?

Grammar and mechanic issues:
- Apostrophes
- Tense problems
  - Students were avoiding writing in past tense, which contradicts a discourse convention.
  - Inconsistency of tense throughout papers.

(2) Were any of the items on the rating guide difficult to interpret/use? If so, which were they? What sorts of questions did these items provoke?

**Criterion 2**: Explains the context of historical events through the use of primary sources.
- Students often provided historical context using secondary sources. I had to keep reminding myself that context should be provided by primary sources. This is a little confusing as I think context can be provided by secondary sources but argument must be supported by primary sources.
- Only context or also the main topic?
- Context could be explained/established through other secondary sources, the analysis of other primary sources.
- What, if anything, is the desired use of secondary sources?

**Criterion 3**: Demonstrates an awareness of the particular nature, value, limitations, and incompleteness of historical sources.
- Word “awareness” doesn’t necessarily capture our expectation
- Multiple aspects to this: students could recognize value without attending to limitations.
- It was hard to evaluate as it was rarely dealt with explicitly. One could be generous and say that in some cases it might be implicit(?) I think it needs to be dealt with explicitly to be regarded as sufficient.

**Criterion 9**: Identifies and summarizes some of the main arguments, evidence, and historiographical context of a scholarly work related to the question.
- Why “a” scholarly work rather than plural works?

**Criterion 10**: Communicates ideas in compelling and accessible prose.
- Is “compelling” something you can be merely sufficient in?! Accessible is a competency, compelling is a superlative.

**Criteria 11, 12, 13**: Cites evidence accurately to support argument; Uses a consistent citation style.; Writing is grammatically and mechanically correct.
- I often wondered how many instances of failure to cite and grammatical errors should justify an insufficient ranking. In other words, what is the line between sufficient and insufficient?
- #11 “cites evidence accurately” is a little vague

(3) Did you find yourself wishing that you could address writing issues that were not contained in the rating guide? If so, what were they?

Yes! I was concerned at the amount of derivative writing that quoted too extensively from other scholars, and chained together secondary arguments. Few of these papers attempted their own original argument largely from primary sources. Two possible criteria:

1. Development of original argument
2. Text of paper is largely of students’ own composition
Appendix III: Explanation of Change to History Capstone

Explanation of Changes to the History Major Capstone Experience, submitted to the Honors College, January 2014

The problem that we were encountering with the current system is that students were coming to the major paper class with an ill-defined, or no, topic ready to research or write upon. The task of selecting a topic and engaging with the on-going academic discussion about that topic seemed to be daunting for students. We initiated a precursor course (3959/3959H How to do History and/or 3010W Research Seminar) to allow students more time to think about and select a topic of their choosing. This, too, was an approach that did not meet with great success.

What we are doing with the new requirements for the major is to eliminate the requirement for 3959/3010W and changing 4961V/W from a completely open forum for students to 4010W. The new 4010V/W course will be built around a specific topic selected by the instructor of the course. We plan on offering eight-nine of these 4010V/W sections each year. We will publish (on line—in the class schedule and on our departmental web pages, in weekly newsletters to students, by handouts in the office and by sending topics to the Honors Program) the full year’s schedule of topics along with the following year’s topics (updated as faculty make more firm commitments) so that students can select the section/topic that best fits their individual taste and preparation. With this additional structure and course content, we hope that the process of selecting a specific topic will be easier for the students.

The Honors Program wishes to have a two-term sequence for all of their students. This will enable them, we hope, to produce higher quality theses. In order to accomplish this, there will be a number of options for students. 1) They can take one of the new 4010V/W sections and follow it up with a 4961V/W section. 2) They can take a new 4010V/W section and follow it up with a 5xxx-level course on the same/a similar topic. 3 & 4) They can invert both of these previous options taking 4961V/W or a 5xxx-level seminar first and following it up with 4010V/W of a complementary topic. 5) They can take an honors-worthy course (with appropriate contract) and then 4010V/W. 6) The option of a Hist 3993 (Directed Studies) plus honors contract will always remain. One of the other options will need to be selected; once 4961V/W is no longer offered (scheduled for the last time spring 2016).
Dear Giancarlo,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with members of the Campus Writing Board (CWB) today. I am writing to let you know that the CWB discussed and approved the Writing Plan submitted by you on behalf of the Department of History. Many thanks for your work as a WEC liaison.

Sincerely,

Will

William K. Durfee
Professor, Mechanical Engineering
Chair, Campus Writing Board
wkdurfee@umn.edu, 612-625-0099

CC: Molly Bendzick, Pamela Flash, Tim Gustafson, Jules Thompson