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Assessment Pilot Assignment

History 1060 Introduction to Islamic Civilization

Debra Baldwin

Identified learning outcome/objective:

Student: Developing informed awareness of Islamic concepts, culture and thought.

Teacher: To explore ways of making online learning a more visceral and tangible experience.

Description of assignment:

In order to understand the significance of the emic meanings behind Islamic patternism within Islamic historical contexts, students choose an Islamic geometric pattern and recreate it on a 3-D personal item. Their assignment submission includes a photo and self-evaluation of their experience.

Description of results:

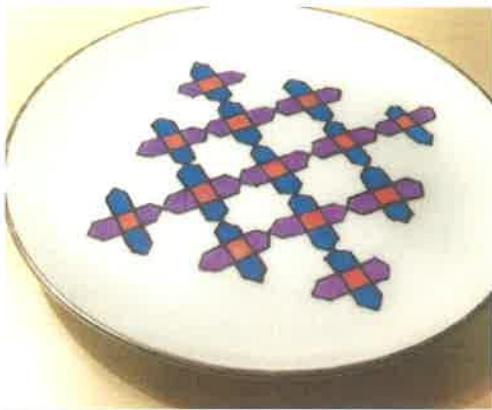
Out of 20 students who completed the assignment, all mentioned in their self-evaluations that it brought a new dimension to their learning and many said they enjoyed it as something different for an online class. They all stated that they gained an appreciation of the skill and effort Islamic craftsmen needed to create these patterns historically. On the final course evaluation, half of them specifically mentioned this assignment as a very enjoyable part of the course. Here are sample comments:

- I also loved Chapter 5, I enjoy the concept of art overall and it was fascinating to learn more about that and the patterns.
- If I took the course over again, I would probably want to have more assignments like the hands-on Islamic art assignment.
- What I truly enjoyed doing the most was working on my Islamic art project. I was first extremely apprehensive about making it because I didn't think I have enough artistic skills to justify Islamic art. However, after seeing the end product I felt like I gained a new appreciation for Islamic art.
- I enjoyed the Arabic Art assignment paired with chapter 5 the most. It was a fun change of pace, but still educational.

Evaluation and reflections from faculty:

The assignment and assessment was a huge success. It allowed students to get away from a virtual classroom environment and use another learning modality than just the normal visual and auditory ones that online courses incorporate. It also allowed them a chance to do some self-reflection instead of having assessments always be teacher-based. I will keep this assignment as a permanent part of my course content and try to design similar types of tactile learning exercises for other assignments in the course when it is up for redevelopment in the near future.

Samples of student work from the assignment are below.



Julia Gossard
“Food in the West” Assessment
HIST 1110: Foundations of Western Civilization, Fall 2017

In Fall 2017, students in HIST 1110: Foundations of Western Civilization: Modern were assigned a digital timeline project. Titled “Food in the West” this timeline served as the main research component of my survey-level course. The digital history assignment encouraged students to develop the same skills they would with a traditional research paper. For example, using USU’s library resources and the web, students located, assessed, and analyzed primary as well as secondary sources. They also identified and explicated historical significance with an eye to historical causation. In addition, with this project, they tuned their digital skills using TimelineJS and developed media literacy skills.

In thinking about transferable skills, one of the biggest learning objectives I set for this assignment was “Historical Skills: Assess the credibility, bias, and usefulness of primary and secondary sources.” Each entry had to draw on at least two primary or secondary sources, one of which had to be a printed, peer-reviewed source such as a historical monograph, scholarly article, or even a scientific research paper. We spent a good deal of in-class time discussing reliable and unreliable sources, especially on the web. I also built in a mandatory “library instruction day” with Jennifer Duncan. To further aid students with evaluating sources, I had them use a source evaluation worksheet.

The results were very positive. In terms of meeting the objective of media literacy, students were able to recognize credible sources from those that lacked credibility. The quality of their sources improved from previous semesters when I assigned this project. It seemed that they had better control over source evaluation which helped them in their analysis. Overall, for many of my students, this project truly engaged them in the study of history through a lens that was previously unfamiliar to them. A student commented on an end-of-semester evaluation that the project helped them see the many deleterious effects and impacts of war on civilian populations, something they missed by only studying conflict through a political lens. The timeline project also helped another student take an introspective look at the sustainability of certain food processes in the present era. Getting students to think historically and critically about something as commonplace as food was a very rewarding aspect of this project. The food timeline will continue to be a cornerstone of my Western civilization course as it provides historical, analytical, and digital skills to survey-level students

History Department Assessment Exercise

James E. Sanders

For HIST 1500: Pre-Modern World History, Fall 2017

In this large, survey-level course, I have developed in-class discussion sessions, to “flip” the classroom and give students a chance to directly engage with primary sources—to begin to do history instead of just to study history. I have long received positive feedback from students about the discussion sessions; however, I have never assessed them directly (beyond evaluating students’ performance).

Therefore, after discussion sessions on the nature of piracy (October 16 and October 18), in the next class session I asked students to evaluate what they had learned. My goals for the session directly echoed the courses learning outcomes: to impart “basic historical knowledge” about pirates and to develop “critical thinking and reading” skills. As a historian, I opted for a qualitative approach, asking students two open-ended questions to assess the discussion sessions’ success in regard to these learning outcomes. I then categorized the 61 responses as positive, negative or equivocal.

- Did the past discussion session increase your knowledge about and understanding of pirates? How so?
Positive 56 (91 percent), Negative 1 (2 percent), Equivocal 4 (7 percent)
- Did the past discussion session help improve any of your intellectual skills?
Positive 47 (77 percent), Negative 7 (11 percent), Equivocal 7 (11 percent)

The complete answers are available upon request. For the first question, students emphasized how the discussion sessions changed their understandings of pirates: “I always thought of pirates as sleazy criminals, but the reading we did showed a different view. I learned that pirates were heavily organized and, compared to life aboard other ships, piracy was probably quite appealing;” “It showed me that they are an actual working society and advanced democratic system;” “I did not know of the promotion of egalitarianism within piracy;” “before this discussion session I know virtually nothing about pirates other than the typical Pirates of the Caribbean stereotype;” and “the discussion helped separate fact from fiction.”

For the second question, I was very pleased with how many students, unprompted, mentioned how the sessions improved their critical thinking and reading skills: “I love the discussion sessions because I feel like they help my critical thinking skills;” “helped me to compare and contrast two arguments;” improved my ability “in detecting bias in sources;” “help to further skills using evidence to support arguments;” “I learned to see and detect biases;” enabled them to “ask questions about the text;” “it helped me to find evidence of an argument and be able to put that argument into words;” “it helped me learn to gather information more efficiently;” “it helped me find the main point of a reading and how to incorporate what I read into discussion;” “Improved much of my critical reading skills for I realized I was not interpreting as much of the information as I initially thought I was;” “The discussion sessions improve my ability to read a source closely as well as pull together a central thesis from multiple sources;” “Yes, it helped me learn to pick apart historical documents I wouldn’t have understood otherwise;” and “It helped me to draw out arguments and evidence from the documents.”

The weakness of this assessment is that it measures students’ perception of learning outcomes, perhaps not actual learning outcomes; however, having students understand their own skills is important as well. The results show overwhelming success in “basic historical knowledge” and good results in building intellectual skills. The few negative reactions tended to focus on students’ discomfort with discussion sessions and speaking in public, confidence they already had mastered critical thinking, or preferring lectures.

Learning Outcome Report for HIST 1510 (Ahmet Izmirlioglu, Spring 2018), 5/14/2018

Learning Outcome Description: The learning outcome I wanted my students to achieve in HIST 1510 was an improvement in their written articulation of causal connections among historical phenomena. I hoped that immediately deliberating the large amount of information presented to them during each lecture would augment their ability to both assort and retain the historical connections. Following each lecture, I created an environment for the students to use teamwork as leverage to pursue the desired learning outcome throughout the semester.

Assignment Description: I assigned discussion questions (3-4 questions per class) at the end of most lectures, and gave the students approximately 8-10 minutes to exchange ideas about possible answers to these questions within their own group. (Sample questions are provided at the end of this report.) The students were informed that the majority of their participation grade (10% of their total grade) would be assessed through this assignment.

During the discussion time for the individual groups, each student was responsible for taking notes and writing answers to these questions in their own words. Then, the questions (along with some variations on them) were opened to discussion in the class. This stage of the assignment ensured sharing of original ideas among the entire class, and gave the students a chance to assess their progress compared to their peers in other groups. The answers and notes compiled by students were collected twice during the semester (at the time of the midterm and final exams.)

Results: The learning outcome was achieved by most students, measured by both the quality and quantity of the answers submitted at the final exam compared to the answers submitted at the midterm. With many students, answers that resembled vague notes and disjoint thoughts earlier in the semester became significantly more coherent and detailed by the second half of the semester. Especially students who underperformed at the beginning of the semester, and who switched groups following the midterm, showed significant improvement in their performance.

Out of 95 students who received a final grade (SRFG) in the course, only 32 (33.6% of the SRFG) had received a full score in the assignment at the time of the midterm exam. By the final exam, 62 students (65.3% of the SRFG) had received a full score, nearly doubling the success rate from the initial assessment at the midterm.

A number of the students confirmed that the assignment was useful in helping them organize and understand the large amounts of complex information they were exposed to during the course. Students expressed three primary benefits of the assignment. First, the assignment reinforced the learning process by requiring students to engage the material immediately at the end of each lecture. Second, the assignment allowed the students to see other perspectives and implications of the material through discussions with their peers. Finally, many students mentioned that the assignment helped prepare them for quizzes and exams by helping them review the relevant material through the answers to the discussion questions.

Possible improvements to the assignment include reassigning underperforming students to groups with two or more high-performing students after the first month of lectures. This might simulate the positive impact shown in the performance of students who switched groups after the midterm, among the students who failed to show such initiative.

Sample Discussion Questions (this set was assigned to students following lectures on the Industrial Revolution in Europe, and imperialism in South East Asia):

1. Compare Asian responses to the challenge of Westernization.
2. What was the connection between Westernization and Indian nationalism?
3. How did Southeast Asians respond to the growing European presence in their region? Account for (if any) variances in the responses.

HIST 2700, Section 001, Fall 2017
Prof. Daniel McInerney
Pre-test and post-test

In my U.S. history survey class for General Education, I began the first class of the semester with an unannounced “quiz.” The exercise was made up of short answer questions taken from the citizenship test given by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office. The U.S.C.I.S. office requires a candidate to receive a minimum of 60% on the exam in order to qualify for citizenship. I selected 10 questions from the exam that covered the same period as the class: 1500-1876. The questions review basic points about the events, documents, and political culture of the American colonies and republic. On the penultimate class meeting in December, I gave the same students the same quiz again. I wanted to see if the pre- and post-tests revealed any interesting patterns. Did the students gain more content information over the semester about the history of the U.S., information deemed critical to qualify for citizenship by the U.S.C.I.S. office? In particular, how many of the students would NOT meet the minimum number of correct answers (6) and how many WOULD receive citizenship?

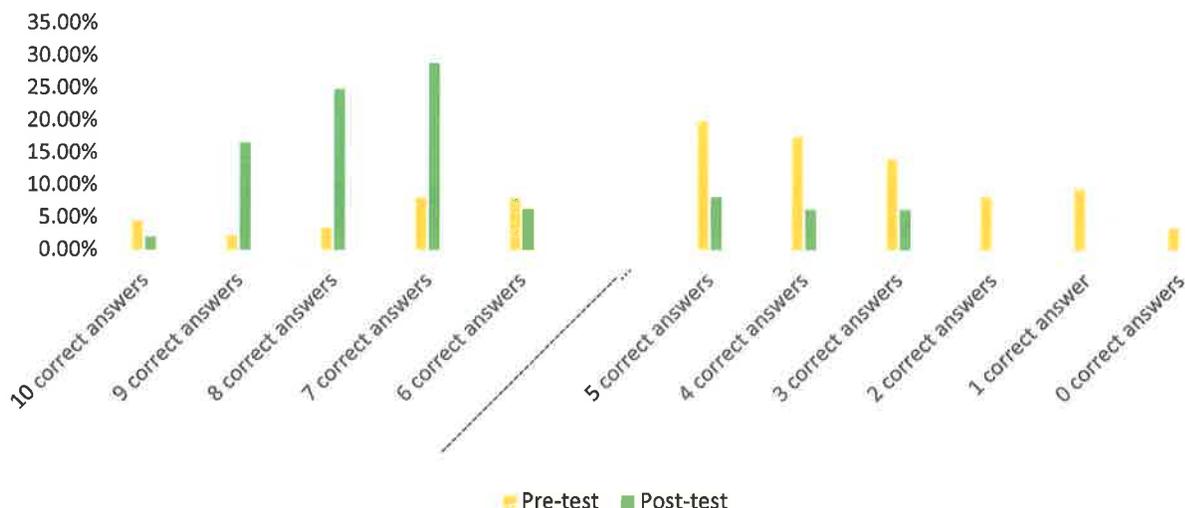
The questions:

1. What is the supreme law of the land? _____
2. Name the 3 branches of the federal government. _____
3. What territory did the United States buy from France in 1803? _____
4. Who was President during the Great Depression and World War II? _____
5. Who did the United States fight in World War II? _____
6. We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years? _____
7. In what year was the Constitution written? _____
8. How many amendments does the Constitution contain? _____
9. *The Federalist Papers* supported the passage of the U.S. Constitution. Name one of the writers. _____
10. The idea of self-government is expressed in the first three words of the Constitution. What are the document's first three words? _____

The results:

% of students taking the exam in:	August 2017	December 2017	with
10 correct answers	4.7%	2.1%	
9 correct answers	2.4%	16.7%	
8 correct answers	3.5%	25.0%	
7 correct answers	8.2%	29.0%	
6 correct answers	8.2%	6.3%	
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5 correct answers	20.0%	8.3%	
4 correct answers	17.6%	6.3%	
3 correct answers	14.1%	6.3%	
2 correct answers	8.3%	0.0%	
1 correct answer	9.5%	0.0%	
0 correct answers	3.5%	0.0%	

HIST 2700 Assessment
August 2017 pre-test / December 2017 post-test
% of students with 6+ correct answers / 5- correct answers



The comparison between the two quizzes – and the gain in content knowledge -- was quite striking.

Not qualifying for citizenship:

- On the test given in August, 73% of students could answer only 0-5 questions correctly.
- On the test given in December, that number shrank to 20.9% of students who had 0-5 correct answers.

Qualifying for citizenship:

- On the test given in August, only 27% of students answered 6-10 questions correctly.
- On the test given in December, a full 79.1% of students answered 6-10 questions correctly.

In other words, the categories essentially flipped:

- At the beginning of the course, roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of students did so poorly they would not pass the citizenship test.
- At the end of the semester, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of students did so well that they would qualify for citizenship.

I realize that the assessment focuses primarily on the acquisition of historical content. But it is worth noting two points about the material covered:

1. The content in question serves as the key “metric” to determine if immigrants to the U.S. can become citizens.
2. All of this takes on special meaning in HIST 2700 because the class satisfies the State of Utah’s “American Institutions” requirement, a category of courses purposely designed to help students “demonstrate reasonable understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States.”

The assessment given to students provides evidence that HIST 2700 satisfied Utah’s clear *civic* purpose for “American Institutions” courses.

Seth Archer
Assessment of an Assignment
May 2018

For this exercise, I've chosen the first part of the second of four in-class exams in HIST 2700. This exam was split over two 50-min class sessions. In the first session, students were presented with the following prompt:

HIST 2700 Exam #2 Part 1 (identifications)

Define and identify the significance of five (5) – and only five – of the following key terms. Remember to address *who*, *what*, *where*, *when* and *why the term is important*. Your answers need to be written in clear handwriting. If we can't read it, your grade may suffer.

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| -Indian slave trade | -Gen. James Wilkinson |
| -yellow fever | -Lord Dunmore |
| -Georgia Trustees | -Bacon's rebellion |
| -New Lights | -Toussaint Louverture |

I had graded identifications in the past but never assigned my own. (Exam #1 was essay-only.) One week before Exam #2, the excellent Frankie Urrutia-Smith (UTF) had prepared a helpful ten-minute demonstration on how to answer historical identifications effectively. She demonstrated with two "key terms" from my lectures that would not appear on the exam. Frankie and I offered students the option of answering either in paragraph or bullet form (*who, *what, *where, etc.); for the latter, students could either write phrases or complete sentences. After the demonstration, I provided students with a study guide of thirty-some key terms from the first half of the course.

While a handful of students aced the identifications, about fifteen students (out of 50) earned a C- or lower. Most of these had failed to prepare all thirty terms, with some apparently expecting they would be able to recall pertinent information. Others simply had no idea what the terms meant. (Many of these latter had skipped multiple lectures.)

In the end, I have mixed feelings about identifications. On the one hand, they require memorization and encourage cramming of names and dates—the variety of history that so many students deplore. Historians don't work this way, so why should university students? On the other hand, identifications reward diligent students who show up to lecture, review their notes, and study for the exam. Identifications also provide an opportunity to earn points for students whose essay-writing is not up to snuff. As the vast majority of students in this course are non-majors, perhaps this is a reasonable concession.

For next semester, I've made one small change, which is to prompt students to answer "who" *or* "what" rather than both. I'm also leaning toward requiring either short paragraphs or the bulleted format, rather than let students choose, as some choices actually hurt student performance. Eventually, I may discard identifications and move toward a short-answer format. A related change is to administer three unannounced (pop) quizzes on assigned reading throughout the term. Too many students skipped lecture this semester, and this was reflected in their performance on identifications. Attendance is a choice, of course, but non-majors in a breadth course may benefit from a structure that provides clear consequences for non-attendance.

Rebecca Andersen
Spring 2018 Assignment Assessment

An important objective for my History 2710 class is that students demonstrate the ability to form historical arguments/interpretations that are supported by primary source evidence.

This year I had students read *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents* edited by Jo Anne Argersinger and *Freedom Summer: A Brief History with Documents* edited by John Dittmer, Jeff Kolnick, and Leslie Burl McLemore. Responding to essay prompts, students then wrote two documentary analysis papers based on the contents of each book. The first paper was due at the beginning of the semester; the second paper at the end. This allowed me to see if student writing and the ability to craft an evidence-based argument improved over the course of the semester. Each semester, I spent one class session discussing the contents of the reader and going over the assignment. One of the drawbacks I found to this assignment was that students seemed to have trouble understanding historical events/periods/movements just by reading primary source documents, despite each reader's well-written introduction. Some of the Fall semester students relied extensively on the reader's introduction for their papers, rather than drawing evidence from the documents themselves. This indicated to me that they were spending most of their energy trying to understand "what happened" instead of analyzing primary source documents. It also meant that I needed to do a better job of scaffolding the assignment.

For Spring Semester, I found two excellent documentaries on each event (the Triangle Fire and Freedom Summer) and planned my schedule so we that we watched the documentary the period before having a discussion about the document reader and essay prompts. I thought a strong narrative coupled with visuals, interviews, etc. would help students contextualize the event so that they could focus their energies on primary source analysis. In looking at the results, average scores for the papers went up for Spring Semester, but only by a percentage point or two. (This could have easily been the result of different grading styles of my TAs).

In future semesters, I have decided to modify the assignment significantly. I still want students to work with primary sources, but I am not sure that document readers are best for lower division students. Perhaps shorter, more frequent primary source document exercises and discussion throughout the semester that build to a final project or paper at the end may work better.

Mark Damen
Learning Outcomes Assessment
4/30/18

Goal: Develop the ability to construct reasonable historical arguments

In my Ancient Near East course this term (HIST 3110) I asked students to follow a standard outline in arguing for or against one side of a debate about the nature of history. At midterm they were given the choice of arguing for the utility of the non-literary arts as a historical medium. They could also choose to argue against the conventional periodization of ancient history or assess the impact of foreign powers on internal developments with a nation (<http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/ANE/projects.htm#midtermessay>).

In measuring their efforts I used a system of rubrics which students had before this been introduced to and had had the opportunity to practice with prior to attempting his essay (<http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/WritingGuide/samplepaper1320.pdf>).

The outcome was that all but one of the students followed the outline form (including the rubrics), producing coherent persuasive essays which stuck to the chosen theme and fielded only facts which were immediately relevant to the question at hand. This is far from the first time I've used this assignment and grading structure because it has proven an effective means of communicating to students the reasons and methods for constructing well-written arguments. One side benefit to this exercise is that in its aftermath in-class questions and debate typically become more professional and articulate, as they did this term. The same holds true for all subsequent written work such as research and capstone papers.

Self-Assessment of Assignment in CLAS/HIST/RELS 3210 - Classical Mythology
by Susan O. Shapiro
Fall Semester 2017

Assignment discussed: Paper 1 and 2 (see Appendix for this assignment)

In the Classical Mythology class, the students must write three papers and take three exams. For the papers, the students choose to write three out of the six assigned papers, but they must choose either Paper 1 or Paper 2, either Paper 3 or 4, and either Paper 5 or 6. There are several reasons for structuring the papers in this way: first, each pair of assignments increases in difficulty, so each student must write one fairly easy assignment (Paper 1 or 2), one slightly more difficult assignment (Paper 3 or 4), and one difficult assignment (Paper 5 or 6). Within each pair, one paper is more structured and the other paper is more creative, giving the students a chance to write the type of paper they feel most comfortable with. Giving the students a choice also allows them to have some flexibility with their schedule, since they all have papers and exams from other classes. And finally, having the papers spread out over the semester (rather than having all 40 papers turned in at the same time) makes it easier for the instructor to grade. For this self-assessment, I will discuss the first pair of papers, which, taken together, form the first paper assignment.

For **Paper 1**, the students use what I call The Story Pattern of the Greek Hero. (Please see the Appendix for a complete description of these paper assignments.) Unlike Joseph Campbell's well-known Story Pattern of the Hero, in which a hero rises from humble beginnings, undertakes a heroic quest and fulfills heroic tasks, and then returns to his people in glory and triumph, almost all the ancient Greek heroes (such as Heracles, Theseus, Jason, Bellerophon Hippolytus, and many others) although they may rise from humble beginnings, undertake a heroic quest and fulfill heroic tasks, they usually end their days in misery and sorrow (often self-caused) and die tragic, unheroic deaths. This pattern, which is repeated over and over again in Greek mythology, seems to run counter to all our expectations of how heroes are supposed to behave, and yet it has many parallels in real life. For Paper 1, students must outline the Story Pattern of the Greek Hero and then discuss the life of a famous person, from any period in history, whose life follows this seemingly unusual pattern.

For **Paper 2**, which is a more creative and less structured assignment, the students must take any well-known Greek myth and re-write it for modern times. In preparation for this assignment, all the students watch the 1959 film, *Black Orpheus*, which is a re-telling of the ancient Greek Orpheus myth set in the favelas of 1950s Rio de Janeiro during Carnaval. The film, which features Samba music and dancing, won the 1959 Palm d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and the 1960 Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. It also inspired the 1960s Bossa Nova music craze in the US. Aside from being an amazing film in its own right, *Black Orpheus*, is a perfect re-interpretation of the Orpheus myth because it keeps some elements of the original myth exactly the same, it modifies some elements of the myth so that they are still recognizable, and it adds some completely new elements that were not in the original myth but are in keeping with the myth's general meaning. In other words, it is a re-visioning and a re-interpretation, not an exact copy. After the class has seen the film, we devote an entire class period to discussing the myth and the film, and the ways that the filmmakers have taken liberties with the original myth while preserving its overall meaning.

This pair of papers serves several purposes. Although Greek myths were created over two thousand years ago, they deal with deep realities of the human condition and can speak to contemporary concerns. Both of these papers lead the students to think about the deeper meaning of these myths, and how, with only minor variations, they can have great relevance for our lives today. The primary purpose of this assignment is to help the students to understand the way these myths address timeless questions in our lives. In addition, Paper 1 helps the students see that our contemporary American understanding of what a hero is may be overly optimistic. The ancient Greek view, while considerably darker, may have a closer relationship to the lives of many prominent people. Paper 2, on the other hand, helps the students to understand how the ancient Greeks viewed their myths. Unlike the Bible, and other sacred texts that many students may be used to, ancient Greek authors felt quite comfortable revising and changing their myths to fit their own intents and purposes. Students often have trouble understanding this; they often become confused by the many variations of Greek myths and frequently ask what the "true" or "genuine" or "correct" version is. In fact, all of the variations are "true"; ancient Greek authors felt free to create new versions of their myths in order to make a particular point, as long as the variations were true to the spirit of the original. By adapting their own myth for modern times, students come to understand this point in a very deep and personal way.

I have used this pair of assignments in previous myth classes and it has proved successful, and this semester was no exception. Most students chose to write Paper 2, even though it was a more difficult assignment, but both sets of papers were very strong.

For Paper 1, one student chose to write about Alexander Hamilton, who rose quickly from humble (and illegitimate) beginnings to become the first Secretary of the Treasury, but died violently in a senseless duel. One student wrote about Ira Hayes, an American Indian and WWII hero who participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima and was one of the soldiers pictured in the iconic flag raising, but who later suffered from PTSD and died a penniless alcoholic. Other students wrote about the singer, Whitney Houston, and Abraham Lincoln. In previous years students have discussed the lives of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcom X, and Janis Joplin. These stories help students see that living in a larger-than-life manner, even when it allows a person to achieve great things, often takes a terrible toll.

For Paper 2, one student re-wrote the myth of Athena's and Poseidon's contest as to which one would be the patron of Athens and give their name to the city. In the student's updated version, two rival donors wanted naming rights to a university, but each also wanted the ability to dictate the university's future direction. Another student took the myth of Prometheus, who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to mankind, only to be punished by being chained to a rock and having an eagle devour his liver, and changed it into the story of a young man elected to the state senate who fought corruption and championed the common man so successfully that he was subjected to a series of false investigations and smear campaigns by the governor, which succeeded in ruining his career. Another student chose to write about the myth of Medusa, a beautiful young woman who is raped by Poseidon in Athena's temple and is subsequently turned into an ugly witch with snakes for hair who turns anyone who looks at her into stone. In this student's rendering, Medusa was raped in her workplace and suffered PTSD as a result, neglecting her appearance and alienating those around her. These stories help the students to see that, even though they were written long ago, Greek myths have relevance for our times.

Length: 5-6 typed pages, double-spaced.

Due: Friday, September 29 (This new due date is one week later than the old due date listed on the syllabus.)

The **Story Pattern of the Hero** in Greek myths is a bit different from the lives of the heroes we are used to. The Greek hero usually has an **unusual birth**, and he has to face **early tests** as he is growing up. As an adult, the Greek hero usually has to go on a **difficult journey** in which he must **perform difficult tasks**. What makes the Greek hero so different from other heroes is what happens next: the Greek hero usually has an **unhappy later life, and an unfortunate death**.

As we will discuss in class, we Americans usually prefer our heroes to live happily ever after, but life does not always happen this way. For this paper I would like you to **think of a well-known person whose life seems to follow the Story Pattern of the Greek Hero**, as we will discuss it in class. **The person you choose must be a real person and a person whom we would all know about**, but he (or she) can come from any time in history, ancient times to the present. The person should probably not still be alive, however, since an important part of the Story Pattern is that the hero must have an **unhappy later life and unfortunate death**. There is a possible exception to this criterion, however. If you want to write about a person who is still alive, but whose life has taken a definite turn for the worse, please ask me about it; I will probably agree.

Your paper will be a narrative of this person's life, showing how his or her life follows the story pattern of the hero. If you need to consult any sources about this person's life, you will need to provide footnotes; you may use any standard format. The internet is a great source of information, but, as always, use it wisely and make sure to provide the URL. But don't get too bogged down in gathering information. **You should choose a famous person, and stick to the basic facts of his or her life.**

In your paper you should first outline the Story Pattern of the Greek Hero, explaining the five stages (perhaps with some examples). The main body of your paper will be describing how the life of the person you have chosen fits this pattern.

The point of this paper is to demonstrate that **this person's life followed the Story Pattern of the Greek Hero**. Make sure your paper has an appropriate introduction and conclusion. **Finally, explain why it is significant that a historical person's life fits this pattern.**

Paper 2: A Modern Greek Myth

Due: Friday, October 6

Length: 5-6 pages, double-spaced

For this paper you will re-write a Greek myth for modern times. You can pick any of the myths we have studied so far (except Orpheus), or you can pick any other Greek myth that we have not studied, but would be well known to most people. If you have any doubt as to whether a particular myth would be appropriate, please ask me.

You should use the film, *Black Orpheus*, and our discussion of it as your model. **Be sure to include some elements that are completely the same as the myth, some elements that are similar but different, and feel free to add some elements that are completely different** from the original myth, as long as they fit in well with the plot and characters.

The last page of your paper should be an explanation of your myth and some of its symbolism. You may want to explain some of the changes you made to the original myth, and why you made them.

This paper should be fun to write and will give you an opportunity to be creative. Since it is a creative paper, feel free to use any style of writing that you choose, as long as it is appropriate to your story. For example, street slang might be appropriate for a myth that takes place in the 'hood, while medical terminology might be appropriate for a myth that takes place in a hospital. Also, you can write the paper in the form of a drama or screen play; you don't need to use a traditional narrative form. **Feel free to use your imagination, but remember to make some elements exactly the same as the original myth, some elements similar, and (if you wish) some completely different.**

Please note that a length of 5-6 pages is recommended for this paper, but, since it is a creative paper, you may find yourself writing a paper that is somewhat longer. Don't worry - you won't be penalized for writing a longer paper. Feel free to go wherever your imagination takes you, but if 5-6 pages is long enough, then that is fine as well. **In any case, the last page should be an explanation of your myth and its symbolism.**

Assessing a Class Assignment Exercise

Instructor: Jonathan Brunstedt

Course: HIST 3330 "Modern Russia and the Soviet Experiment"

Identified Learning Objective: HISTORICAL THINKING

Goal: RECOGNIZE THE PASTNESS OF THE PAST:

- **Explain what influence the past has on the present**
- Explain how people have existed acted and thought in particular historical periods

Assignment Name: **Cultural Reflection Paper**

Description of Assignment:

Students will review a work of Anglo-American culture (book, film, documentary, painting) depicting any aspect of modern Russian/Soviet history. You will read, watch, or otherwise consume this work at the beginning of the semester, and then review it again at the end of the semester. You will then write a 1-2-page paper addressing how your experience studying modern Russian/Soviet history has impacted your reading of the work of culture. In short, it asks you to think about your own "Cold-War biases" coming into the class and determine how your perceptions have changed through the close study of modern Russian/Soviet history.

Description of Results:

Results were very positive. The vast majority of students identified and engaged previously unbeknownst personal biases that were largely structured by Cold War-era attitudes. For example, several students read novels or watched films dealing with the revolution, in which the tsarist regime is portrayed romantically, and as a victim of larger forces. After taking the course, however, these students all recognized that, in the words of one paper, "the tsar was an absolute monarch and the various revolutionary groups who opposed the Romanov dynasty were addressing genuine grievances rooted in social, economic, and political factors." Other students looked at examples of American Cold War culture, and were able to identify propagandistic biases in these cultural products. One student reviewed an American cartoon from the postwar period by John Sutherland called "Make Mine Freedom," which highlights the "evils" of socialism and the virtues of capitalism. The student noted that the first time she viewed the cartoon it seemed to confirm her attitude about the Soviet Union. Yet the second screening at the end of the semester had a completely different effect. She writes: "This course gave me further insight into the hidden agenda of some American culture and has made me more suspicious of modern media more generally." Finally, some students addressed current Russian politics. This was the case with a student who watched a highly polemical documentary of Vladimir Putin, which portrayed him as something of an omniscient dictator who "brainwashed" the Russian people by his mastery of the Russian media. By the end of the semester, though, the student recognized "that from the Russian perspective, the failed reforms of Gorbachev, the loss of superpower status, and the chaotic Yeltsin years, opened legitimate avenues for Putin's rise, methods, and popularity."

Faculty Evaluation/Reflection on Assignment:

This assignment overwhelmingly succeeded in shedding light on the "influence of the past on the present" and in historically contextualizing current attitudes. Next time I will probably limit what students can consume, as a few watched Disney cartoons with little historical value or that had at best peripheral links to Russia and/or the Soviet Union.

Alignment between Learning Outcomes and Assignments

John L. Crow (RELS 1010)

Quality Matters is a rubric detailing aspects an online course should have to be effective in active learning. Rubric item 2.1 states, "The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable." This is elaborated upon in the line item annotation:

The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies form the basis of alignment in a course.

When I design my online courses, I always have alignment in mind. This goes so far as to adding labels to module level objective, reading, and assignment. These labels indicate the alignment pathway. For instance, this is one of the five objectives my science and religion course:

4. Demonstrate an improved ability to analyze and discuss claims and supporting arguments made by those with the domains of religion and science, as well as the general public.

Week 13's learning objective that aligns with this course objective is: *Demonstrate the ability to understand how participants in debates define their position and defend of it using supporting evidence, data, and the ability to counter anticipated arguments. [LO 4]*. The label in square brackets is the label which indicates the course learning objective aligned with this module level learning objective. The assignment created in week 13 that relates to this module objective is an essay in which the student must watch a one of four debates between proponents of scientific and religious viewpoints. It ends, again, noting the learning objectives it is in alignment with. The instructions state:

Pick one of these debate, watch it in full (plan on spending up to two hours watching the video) and then write between 1000 and 1250 words analyzing the debate, the positions the participants took, how they were attempting to meet the claims of their opponents, and what kinds of myths, misinformation, misrepresentations, or distortions the participants used and/or claimed their opponent(s) were using. Also pay attention to the language they use. How they describe events? What dates are included or excluded from the histories and narratives presented? How does their narratives or representations of things, places, events, people, etc. agree and disagree? The goal of this essay is not to declare a winner or loser, but to develop the listening and concentration skills that allow you to pick up on subtle cues, narrations, inclusions, exclusions, etc. that are used within a debate. Remember, this is not about picking sides, it is about analyzing the strategies each side takes in attempting to convince their opponents and/or audience that their position is correct. [LO 2 & 4]

There are two other essays like this, but for them students analyze online news reports about the interaction of religion and science. Overall these assignments have been successful. I have found the students improve their analytical skills as I give detailed feedback and encourage them to read deeper between the lines. Some of the comments I received from students this semester includes: "I have just always thought there was this conflict and now I have an understanding of where it all started and that there does not have to be one. And yes, this class really pushed my ability to critically analyze information I receive and for this I am grateful!" "I particularly like being able to look at debates [*sic*] now and ask 'who is trying to benefit?' What do they 'win' if they 'win' their side of the debate? Very interesting stuff."

The biggest challenge for me is giving detailed feedback early. Time constraints often result in feedback that could go deeper but would take longer. To address this, I think I will push the assignments forward a week or two giving me more time to give feedback and also make better use of Canvas' feedback features by recording feedback versus typing it. The former is a lot less time consuming then the latter.

Eliza Rosenberg
"Media Analysis" Assessment
RELS 1010: Introduction to the Study of Religion, 2017–2018

In two sections of the department's largest breadth-humanities offering, students wrote critical analyses of recent major news articles relating to religion. They were assigned a unit of the course (e.g., Islam or Buddhism) and given a selection of print-, broadcast-, or web-based publications to search for articles. The assignment required them to choose a non-op/ed piece of at least 800 words, published within the last year, that appeared as a result for a unit-relevant search (e.g., "temple" or "denomination"). They were asked to consider what information the article assumed its audience to have; whether the information that it provided was accurate; and what impression, if any, it gave about the religious community, idea, or practice in question. Students were then asked to work these reflections into a 1200-word paper in which they also explained to whom, if anyone, they would recommend the article as is and what changes they would want made, within length and subject parameters, if given the chance to edit the article.

While the assignment contributes to several multiple goals, it does so most directly for that of learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view (IDEA Objective 10). At the outset, it enables students to recognize the command they have gained of new information (IDEA Objective 1) and expand their mastery into applied contexts. In identifying their articles' implicit assumptions about readers' background knowledge, they must consider a number of issues: how readerships are being construed; their own ideas of "general" background knowledge about different religions; common sources of existing (dis)information; the causes and effects of possible misunderstandings; etc. By asking students to explain their own suggestions, it introduces them to possibilities of beyond-the-classroom learning, including learner-to-teacher transitions and critical engagement with media narratives.

The assignment was highly successful in its aims. Although it only asked students to examine a single article closely, many voluntarily reflected on their own media climates or on wider media contexts. This indicates the increase of their information literacy and their ability to identify to implicit perspectives in media and in their own minds. They demonstrated adeptness in making appropriate editorial recommendations, e.g., by considering how much information about Christian denominationalism could be put in a news article about voter identification, and what trade-offs would be involved. In doing so, they articulated their comprehension of appropriate methods for the study of religion and its contexts, another key course goal. In addition, a number of students referred to what they had learned from this assignment in other coursework.

Given the results of the assignment, I look forward to developing it further. Having already expanded it to include two analyses and an article comparison option in spring 2018, I hope to incorporate regular, formal in-class discussion elements to it in 2018–2019. Depending on class size, these would include small-group individual presentations or group round tables and appropriate quantification in overall participation grades.

Learning objective:

Identify and describe how historical and cultural change influences the interpretation of religious ideas, practices, and society.

Assignment: Editing a classmate's first draft—and getting a first draft edited by a classmate in return.

[Ancillary note: Students are required to bring a hard copy of a first draft of an assigned essay to class to be proofread by a classmate—and to proofread a classmate's essay in return. The essay itself requires students to use one chapter from Ninian Smart's *The World's Religions*—chapters there are arranged by geography and historical period; and one of two chapters from Craig Martin's *A Critical Introduction to Religious Studies*. Students are also encouraged to bring a style manual and the relevant textbooks.]

Results: First, more than 65% of the class showed up for this in-class proofreading. Getting them to write a first draft itself is a major success—and across the board students agreed that it helps their overall academic effort.

Second, the act of reading a classmate's essay is an ennobling opportunity to engage in peer-to-peer learning. (the instructor and TA are present for questions.) I use the term *ennobling* because this assignment seem to bring out the best in students, get them to take rigor seriously—they quite literally seemed more studious and serious than usual! Moreover, students reported being intellectually stimulated through exploring a classmates ideas, conventions, and organization.

Third, a majority reported the idea of having their essay read by a classmate to be intimidating. Students reported relief at catching redundancies and getting suggestions about organization. Further, students reported that this was scary by thrilling and, sometime, fun.

Reflection: The Martin chapters available are on *authority* and *legitimation* respectively. Thus, this essay assignment represents a real intellectual challenge for many of my students. Most have never thought about describing religion in the ways I am asking them to. I have realized that, for most students, getting their essays back from me, graded with comments, can often be overwhelming. I am trying, with some success in this context, I think, to obviate these conditions and get my students to relax, engage critical thinking, and begin to see the value of not waiting until the very last minute when one can produce nothing but a hurried essay that does not reflect the students best effort. This assignment successfully drew them into that practice.

Assignment Assessment – Spring 2018

RELS 3990 – Theory and Method in Religious Studies

Ravi M. Gupta

The learning objectives of the Religious Studies Program state that majors should be able to “apply appropriate methods of research and argumentation to questions concerning religion, and communicate their findings in clear, well-reasoned writing.” Furthermore, by the time they complete the major, students should “possess a rigorous foundation for pursuing advanced study in religion or related fields.”

RELS 3990 (Theory and Method in Religious Studies) plays a central role in ensuring that our majors meet these curricular objectives. As such, one of the learning outcomes for RELS 3990, stated on my syllabus, is that students should be able to “recognize and articulate several influential theories of religion,” as well as “distinguish a variety of methods employed by scholars of religion.”

Comprehending and articulating scholarly arguments is a difficult skill to master, and it requires repeated practice over time. In RELS 3990, I assign readings from some of the most influential classical and contemporary theorists of religion. Each week, I ask students to outline the author’s argument in a two-page written document called an “Argument Map.” Students must write 7 argument maps during the semester, and I ask them to accomplish three things in each argument map:

1. Outline the structure of the author’s argument in your own words. Given the two-page limit, determine which elements of the reading are crucial to the author’s argument, and therefore should be included in the argument map, and which elements can be left out.
2. Use perfect English, paying attention to terminology, grammar, punctuation, and clarity of expression.
3. Offer a critical question at the end of the argument map that demonstrates your engagement with the author’s argument.

In order to assess the students’ mastery of these tasks, I created a rubric on Canvas that I used each week to grade the students’ work. The rubric consisted of three outcomes (corresponding to the above items): 1) Line of Reasoning (40 points), 2) English Writing (10 points), and 3) Analytical question (10 points). I set the “Mastery Level” at a “B”, and used a 65% Decaying Average method of calculation (which weights the last submission at 65% of the total).

The results were heartening. With each successive iteration of the assignment, students showed increasing mastery of these outcomes, and the improvement from the beginning to the end of the semester was often dramatic. By the end of the semester, Canvas reported that 21 of the 22 students exceeded mastery level for “Line of Reasoning,” 14 out of 22 exceeded mastery for “English Writing” (while 7 were near mastery), and 18 out of 22 exceeded mastery for the “Analytical Question” outcome. Please see the attached screenshot for a graphic depiction of the results.



Utah State University
Department of History
Assessment of Student Learning / Assignments
Randall Haws – USU 1300 U.S. Institutions

Overview. Every semester Utah State University offers a course titled USU 1300 U.S. Institutions, which meets one of the University's Breadth American Institutions (BAI) requirements for enrolled students. This course, taught by faculty from the History, Economics, and Political Science Departments is geared towards helping University Students gain a better grasp of the United States and the institutions that have formed and shaped it.

Identified Learning Outcome: In Fall 2017 while teaching this course five stated learning outcomes were listed. The foremost of these was to specifically build factual knowledge and a historical understanding of change and development of US institutions (history, government, politics, economics, society, culture, and diversity) over time. While this is possible through the course of reading textbooks, attending lectures and completing assessments, this type of learning provides limited interaction with actual historical documents, information, or events. This limits the students understanding and familiarity with history in general and historical documents specifically.

Description of Assignment(s): In order to help reinforce this Learning Outcome, students were initially assigned 27 primary documents as required readings for the course. These documents transcended a wide diversity of manuscripts from the Mayflower Compact, to the Louisiana Purchase Treaty, to the Keaton-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916, to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964. After the first assessment (exam), it became apparent that students were not widely studying or reading these documents. Hence, it was likely they were not gaining the desired understanding of historical documents, their impact on chronicling the history of the United States, or their value to present and future generations.

To help remedy this, integration of an additional strategy that would help reinforce students understanding of the importance and impact of historical documents and the role they play was put into practice. Implementation of this strategy was during the course of the semester so it was not a mandatory assignment. Its introduction was as a make-up assignment for students who missed an in class quiz but sought an alternate means to make-up points from the missed quiz.

In this Canvas based assignment, students had the opportunity to work as a Citizen Archivist transcribing documents for the National Archives. Students were directed via a web link in Canvas to the National Archives Citizen Archivist homepage where they could register as a Citizen Archivist. They were instructed to transcribe a historical document of their selection, no less than 300 words, and to provide feedback via Canvas of what they learned from transcribing the document. To document their efforts they were required to provide a screen capture of the document they were transcribing, the URL (web link) to the document they were transcribing, and the title of the document that they transcribed.

Description of Results: During the course of the semester 44 students (of 179 enrolled) transcribed a total of 78 documents as Citizen Archivists for the National Archives. These documents were very diverse in nature from manumission documents for slaves preceding the Civil War down to intelligence reports that provided initial insights to the loss of U2 pilot Gary Francis Powers over the Soviet Union in 1960. However most instructive from the assignment was the feedback from the students on what they learned during the transcription process. A few of their comments are in italics below:

Anna A. transcribed part of a news clip from Crusade to Free Cuba. She wrote: "WHAT I LEARNED: I learned more about how Americans at the time thought of communism and countries that were communist. From this television program outline, it seems like Americans were very supportive of Cubans. Although I know they

despised communism, it seems like they really want to help the Cubans. I thought this was apparent in the portion of the film segment notes that said that the American and Cuban flags would be shown or put up together. I thought that was very interesting. I think I would have liked to watch this television broadcast!"

Lauren B. who transcribed a document on **Title: Recent Books: Intelligence and Security: Volume 10, Number 4 of Civil War History, Edited by Robert. R Dykstra** wrote: *"In this article I learned that during the aftermath of the Civil war, Historians often wrote about the Civil war in a romantical [sic] and historically inaccurate light. According to the article, many works during the time were published discussing the daunting lives of spies throughout the civil, however; espionage did not exist yet. War hero's and their female c[h]ampions were often littered throughout stories, glorifying the Civil War times in an overly romantic way. This is not accurate to the poor white, undertrained, male farmers fighting in the gruesome Civil War.*

Furthermore, many have wrote on topography during the Civil War—an Intelligence that simply was not created prior to the Confederacy. Furthermore, according to the article, systematic mapping of enemy states would have benefited the Union but for whatever reason it was not a common practice yet. This is much to the contrary of some Historians writing about topography at the time. Overall, the article was very interesting and corrected false views and beliefs relating to the Civil War."

Emily C who transcribed **Document No. 64: What the U.S. Sanitary Commission is Doing in the Valley of the Mississippi** indicated she learned *"In this letter I learned that hospitals during the Civil War took care of anyone who was injured. It didn't matter which side they were on. The writer of the letter wanted to let donors know that their contributions helped the hospitals a lot. He wanted people to realize that these wounded soldiers were Americans, no matter which state they were from. He ends with a call to unity, which tells me that there were people in the time of the Civil War that just wanted America to be unified and for everyone to be happy and nice to each other."*

Kaycee H who transcribed part of a **Speech by Vice President Harry S. Truman in Buffalo, New York** said she learned *"In this speech by Truman, Truman is addressing people who are concerned for the soldiers currently fighting in World War II. Truman discusses the job opportunities that will be available for when the veterans come home. He discusses the many people who are currently working that will not work once the war is over. These people were woman who had to leave their home in order to provide for their families. These woman often had spouses that were fighting in the war and once they returned, the women would return back home and continue caring for the children. There were people working that were ready to retire but continued working in order to help the nation who was at war. There were also young boys working who would return back to school once the war concluded.*

Truman discussed the job opportunities that would be available to these veterans when they returned home. He talked about the amount of veterans who would return back to school to gain an education and then later on, start working in that profession. He talked about how many veterans would go into the business and servicemen profession and wouldn't be thrown back into the labor force.

Truman also wanted to boost the moral of the American citizens who were listening to his speech. He told the audience that they must be proud of the accomplishments and especially about how much America has become an important factor in the world."

What we learn by doing this is that we have students who have no real understanding of what a historical document is become involved in transcription of the document. They then begin to have a better understanding of the multitude of documents that are out there and are becoming more accessible each day. It significantly enhances their understanding of the role that these documents play in recording our history and how they might be potentially used by current and future generations to have a better reflection of the many facets of American life that have been recorded.

Assignment Documentation: The following is a copy of the assignments from the USU 1300 Canvas Page:

MAKE UP CREDIT for MISSING QUIZ Alternate # 1 - Transcribe a Document from the National Archives

Published Edit

MAKE UP CREDIT for a MISSED QUIZ - Transcribe a Document from the National Archives (10 Points)

If you miss an in class quiz, this provides you with an opportunity to make up the points that you missed. This is only good as a make up for a missed quiz, not as "extra credit" to bolster your grade. You may do this for up to three (3) missed quizzes during the semester.

To make up for a missed quiz, you will transcribe a document from the National Archives as a Citizen Archivist. In order to do this you will need to register with the National Archives as a Citizen Archivist.

- Go to the National Archives Citizen Archivist Start Page - <https://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist> (looks like the image below)



- Click on the link "Register and Get Started"
- Register (you will need to create a **user name**, **password**, and have an **email address** that they can use to send a verification email to)
- Return to the Citizen Archivist Page and click on the Citizen Archivist Mission hyperlink <https://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist/missions>
- Select one of the documents that interests you. This must be a "Transcription" document, not a "Tag" document. There are a myriad of topics for transcription that are available that include transcribing: *Manumission Records, the Panama Canal, Civil War Crimes and Conspiracies, Otae and Ponca Census Cards, Joseph G. Cannon, or my favorite Alvin York (WWI Veteran who won the Medal of Honor).*
- Transcribe the entire document (recommend that you read "Transcription Tips" before you do this at <https://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist/transcribe/tips> - this also gives examples of transcribed documents). The document must have at least 300 words to transcribe to get credit.
- Take a screen capture of your completed transcription. This is what a screen capture might look like when you are done transcribing.
- Also capture the hyperlink of the document you have transcribed (for example the one shown below is <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/57315210/176/public?contributionType=transcription>)



GETTING THE CREDIT: Once you have transcribed the document, have the screen capture of the transcribed document and the url (weblink) then upload those in Canvas (as a jpeg). In addition to the jpeg and the url, include in your submission a brief narrative that includes:

- Upload the jpeg of transcribed document in Canvas
- Include the url (weblink) to the document
- In a text format tell what the name of the document you transcribed was
- Also in a text format tell what you learned from the document (minimum of one paragraph)

DUE DATE: Credit will be awarded after receipt of the uploaded screen capture in Canvas. This must be submitted no later than **8 December 2017 at 11:59 pm**. Any submissions after this will receive no credit.

Points 0
 Submitting a text entry box or a file upload
 File Types pdf, doc, and jpeg

Due	For	Available from	Until
Dec 8	Everyone	Oct 26 at 12am	Dec 8 at 11:59pm

Transcribe National Archives Document

You've already rated students with this rubric. Any major changes could affect their assessment results.



Criteria	Ratings				Pts
Screen Capture of Transcribed Document	6.0 pts Document is over 300 words long	4.0 pts Document is < 300 words but more than 200 words	2.0 pts Document is < 200 words	0.0 pts No document transcribed or attached	6.0 pts
URL / Weblink of Document	1.0 pts URL / Weblink of Document is Provided	0.0 pts No URL or Weblink is provided			1.0 pts
Title of Document	1.0 pts Title of the Document is Included	0.0 pts Title of Document is Not Included			1.0 pts
What You Learned from the Document	2.0 pts One short paragraph on what you learned from the document	1.0 pts One Sentence on what you learned	0.0 pts No Comments On What You Learned		2.0 pts

Total Points: 10.0

Evaluation and Reflections from Faculty: Pending

Future Use: Based on initial use of this as a tool to better help students understand the impact of historical documents and their importance, this assignment will be expanded in future courses. Rather than offer this as an optional item for students who miss quizzes, this will become an assignment for each student in the classroom.

Feedback from students over the course of the semester indicates that this is a successful way to have them develop a stronger grasp on the impact that our National Archives makes on the documents that it holds and the influence that those documents contribute towards historical understanding. It also gives them an enhanced sense of contribution as a participant in helping to document our American History and its institutions.