I. Mission statement, Student Learning Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

1. Mission Statement:
The History Department at Westmont believes that the study of the past is foundational for a thoughtful and compassionate life. We invite students to examine people, periods, and places that are very different from those they are familiar with, helping them to see how people are shaped by particular contexts. This process enables students to engage people and societies in the present with the sort of humility, empathy, and compassion to which Scripture calls us. The Perspectives on World History course is the core of our program for engaging the whole student body in this way of thinking, while our majors receive more detailed instruction on the practice of history and a deeper and broader understanding of global history. They also develop skills in reading, research, and writing that equip them for a range of careers. We want all our students to be fascinated by the past and to become more curious about the world, past and present.

2. Student Learning Outcomes (not revised since last report)

1. Historical Skills
   
   1. Reading:
      
      1. A History graduates should know how to read a primary source historically and critically. More particularly, they should be able to ask basic questions of the source; assess how their own background shapes their interpretation; and draw conclusions about the reliability and usefulness of the source.
      
      2. Graduates should be able to read books and articles by historians with confidence and competence. More specifically, they should be able to classify a secondary source; summarize it; identify its main thesis or argument; engage in informed criticism; and make a final assessment of its value. These skills are important not only for written assignments, but also for class discussions.

   2. Research: To be effective historical researchers, graduates must be able to select and appropriate research topic; locate relevant sources; and determine the character of the existing historiography on their topic.

   3. Writing: To write a good history paper, graduates must be able to develop an argument; make use of different forms of historical writing; write in an appropriate manner; and provide the requisite scholarly apparatus.

   4. Critical skills: Students will exhibit a balance of healthy skepticism and interpretive confidence in their historical work.
2. Historical Content

1. **Chronology:** Students will develop the ability to place important people, patterns and events in their proper chronological contexts. Understanding distinctions between ancient, medieval, early modern and modern periods while critically assessing such divisions of historical time are part of this skill package. The ability to locate such developments as agricultural and industrial revolutions, print media, empires and “ages” of imperialism, Reformation, Enlightenment, charismatic leaders, and the emergence of modern nation states are vital to a student’s grasp of historical chronology.

2. **Geography:** Through the study of maps and other descriptions of physical space, students will acquire an understanding of the physical world, its principal divisions (continents, territories, and other demarcations of land masses), and their unique characteristics as these have evolved over time. Students also will develop a sense of how geography has influenced the unique characteristics of human societies.

3. **Genres:** Students will understand the different types or approaches to history. This includes both content oriented and theoretical distinctions. Familiarity with important works in political, social, religious and economic history, as examples, acquaints students with wide ranging emphases in history, recognizing the contribution that each approach makes to the field. Exposure to imperialist, “whig,” feminist, post-colonial, Marxist, and/or postmodern approaches to historical writing is vital to understanding the different lenses through which historians examine the past.

3. Christian Orientation

1. **Faith and History:** Students will understand the value of historical study for Christians. In particular, they will consider the differences their Christian faith makes for their study of the past.

2. **Virtues:** Within and beyond the classroom, students will cultivate virtues essential to the study of history, including honesty, humility, and empathy.

3. **Christian Vocation:** Students will develop a sense of Christian vocation, drawing connections between their historical study and their responsibilities in the world.

4. **Life-Long Learning:** Students will develop into lovers of learning for the rest of their lives, certainly for their own sake, but also for the benefit of those around them, and ultimately, for the kingdom of God.

While the goals stated are clearly discipline specific, they are connected to several institutional learning goals.
For the connection between the departmental goals and the institutional learning standards, please see the chart provided at the end of this report.

II.  Data and Interpretation

During the 2008-2009 academic year, the History Department assessed two courses, our General Education course, History 10, and our capstone course, History 198. These two courses provide ideal venues for assessing student learning outcomes for a) all Westmont students, who are required to take History 10, and b) History majors, who are required to take History 198. The assessment of these courses occurred through a series of meetings in the spring and fall of 2009, in which the Department created assessment rubrics, employed them in their assessment of the two courses, and discussed the results together. An external reader, Dr. Paul Wilt, assisted us in the assessment of the best History 198 paper. In the future, we intend to invite an outside reviewer, perhaps from a History Department at a sister institution, to offer his or her perspective on our program and its strengths and weaknesses. We have discussed having a visitor from Wheaton College, or an historian visiting campus in connection with various lecture series such as the Erasmus Lecture or the World Christianity lecture series.

The History 10 class fulfills the “Common Contexts” requirement of the GE curriculum, specifically, “World History in Christian Perspective.” The course is designed to further the three goals of our department, the cultivation of skills, mastery of content, and the engagement of Christian perspectives in the study of history, with an emphasis on broad general content and Christian Orientation. History 198, the capstone course for History majors, thus far has focused more extensively on the skills aspect of our goals.

A. Assessing Grasp of “Christian Liberal Arts” in History 10

In three sections of History 10, we assessed the students’ grasp of the Christian Liberal Arts. We did so by way of a “free write” exercise, which posed two questions: 1) What is a Liberal Arts education, and 2) Why is a Liberal Arts education fitting for a Christian? The three History 10 professors met on two occasions in March 2009 to arrive at an instrument for measuring the students’ grasp of the Christian Liberal Arts. After arriving at the above instrument and conducting the free write exercise, we met again (September 2009) to arrive at a rubric for measuring the results. For the first question, we measured how well students addressed: a) Breadth, interdisciplinary thinking, appreciation of different views, and b) Cultivation of the whole person, preparation for life, vocation, self-knowledge. For the second question, we measured how well students addressed: a) Creation: All truth is God's truth. Knowing God better through all dimensions of His creation, importance of the disciplines toward this end, and b) Redemption: Preparation for Christian service/involvement through Evangelism and working for social justice. For a) and b) of each question we classified student responses according to the following scale: “No mention,” “Mention,” and “Shows understanding.”

Results

Note: The three numbers in each box correspond to numbers of student responses in each of the three sections of History 10 (Example: 1, 0, 3 = 1 for Section 1, 0 for Section 2 and 3 for Section 3). The totals combine results from the three classes.

1. What is a Liberal Arts education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 1</th>
<th>Section 2</th>
<th>Section 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>
2. Why is a Liberal Arts education fitting for a Christian?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not mentioned</th>
<th>Mentioned</th>
<th>Showed Understanding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation: all truth is God’s; knowing God better through disciplines</td>
<td>14,17, 16 Total =47</td>
<td>8, 13, 15 Total =36</td>
<td>23, 1, 0 Total =24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redemption: preparation for Christian service; justice, evangelism</td>
<td>12, 13, 11 Total =36</td>
<td>14, 18, 24 Total =56</td>
<td>20, 0, 0 Total =20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation of Results**

**Summary**: Under question #1, students clearly demonstrated greater grasp of the interdisciplinary aspect of the Liberal Arts than factors relating to personal cultivation. Under question #2, students identified more strongly with the “redemptive” aspect than the “creation” one. This is somewhat ironic, because part of the “redemptive” aspect pertains to personal cultivation, which is the very aspect that they were less attentive to in the first question.

What these results suggest is that History 10 instructors should exercise more deliberate care in providing balanced treatment of the Christian Liberal Arts. Instructors should encourage students to appreciate not only the fact that they are studying broadly and synthesizing knowledge from multiple fields, but also that many aspects of their personhood are cultivated through their curriculum at Westmont. Moreover, instructors should find ways of fleshing out with students, connections between the Liberal Arts and the Christian doctrines of creation and redemption. This encompasses discussions of vocation and calling, clearly an area that required more development in student responses.

**Question 1: What is a Liberal Arts Education**

**Comments from Instructor for Section 1:**

- I was surprised not to see more on the applicability of a liberal arts education to life, in terms of transferable skills, vocation etc.
- Students seemed to have little sense of how their education was changing them as people. Answers tended to focus on a breadth of subjects, with little sense of why that might be of practical import.
- I was pleased to see that students had a strong sense of the interconnectedness of different subjects in a liberal arts education.
- I clearly need to do more to help students think more carefully about the ways that their education is shaping them as people.
Comments from Instructor for Section 2:
The rubric provides some interesting perceptions of History 10’s relationship to the Liberal Arts. First, students readily define a Liberal Arts education as “broad” and “interdisciplinary.” A number of students who “showed understanding” offered examples of how the course interacted and engaged with other courses reflecting a good understanding of the concept as well as an appreciation of its effect in their studies overall. Second, it is surprising that very few students tied the Liberal Arts to vocational skills though the number does increase when considering question two.

Comments from Instructor for Section 3:
Few of my students “showed understanding” of the Liberal Arts, in connection to either the interdisciplinary or the “whole person” aspect of the first question. This most likely is due to inadequate discussion of the topic through the course of the semester. But of the aspects of the Liberal Arts that came through most clearly in student responses, the “breadth of learning and interdisciplinary” aspect seemed to be strongest. They demonstrated a weaker grasp of the Liberal Arts as it pertains to the cultivation of the whole person.

Question #2: Why is a Christian Liberal Arts Education Fitting for a Christian?

Comments from Instructor for Section 1:
• Many students talked about how a liberal arts education can foster love for God and deepen their theological knowledge, something that did not feel easily into our categories.
• Related to that, students talked more about how their education shapes their spirituality than about how it shapes their work.
• When they did talk about “redemption,” they frequently used the word “kingdom.” Few mentioned justice or evangelism specifically: students tended to talk more generally about service in the world.
• Many students had a good sense of how God as Creator calls for a liberal arts education.
• Very few, however, talked intelligently about the redemption of all things, which was a major theme in Plantinga’s book that we discussed in detail in class.

Comments from Instructor for Section 2:
That students would connect vocational choices to their faith remains, in my mind, a positive thing. [Third], the most surprising element of the rubric, however, is the high number that appears under the “nothing” category associated with “redemption.” Most troubling is the reality that not one student mentioned his or her “responsibility track” (poverty, peace making, and gender equality) [note: this is an important aspect of this instructor’s course, built into the syllabus] as a connecting point for the Liberal Arts to Christian practice. … students who mention the conception of redemption often simply use the term “evangelism” or “sharing their faith” with no broader connections to justice,
Comments from Instructor for Section 3:
Students clearly associated the Christian Liberal Arts more strongly with redemptive activity in the world than with the doctrine of creation. In fact, the number of “no mentions” in the “creation” category is striking. With regard to redemption, however, their responses were largely limited to the issue of evangelism, with little or no references to the redemption of social structures and institutions. A pattern that can be observed among my students is a tendency to score more highly on the more “objective” interdisciplinary knowledge aspect of the first question and lower on the “whole person” aspect. In the second question, they clearly scored higher on the “redemption” side of the question, but did not typically apply this to their vocations.

B. Assessment Strategy for History 198 (Fall 2008)
The history department reviewed collectively 13 papers from the HIS 198 course from the fall of 2008. The papers were read according to a grading rubric assessing six aspects of each paper: thesis, use of evidence, use of secondary literature (historiography), structure, logic of argumentation, and writing mechanics. The rubric employs four levels of quality: superior, good, needs help, and really needy.

Results
Here is a numerical summary of how the 13 papers were assessed in each of the six categories:

A. Thesis: 4 superior; 6 good; 3 needs help; 0 really needy
B. Use of Evidence: 3 superior; 7 good; 2 needs help; 1 really needy
C. Use of Secondary Literature: 6 superior; 3 good; 4 needs help; 0 really needy
D. Structure: 3 superior; 8 good; 2 needs help; 0 really needy
E. Logic and Argumentation: 3 superior; 6 good; 4 needs help; 0 really needy
F. Mechanics: 4 superior; 4 good; 4 needs help; 1 really needy

Interpretation of Results
A. Thesis: A high percentage of students included a plausible, workable thesis. But even among many of them, as well as with the weaker papers, the clarity of that thesis was often veiled. The inclusion of more clearly and crisply stated theses might be a goal for future HIS 198 papers.
B. Use of evidence: Most students were generally effective in using appropriate examples to support their arguments. Finding and using adequate numbers of primary sources for certain topics (especially non-Western ones) remains a challenge for 198 students. Most of these students proved able to incorporate quotes effectively into their essays.
C. Secondary literature: Almost half the students performed at a superior level in this category, demonstrating a strong ability to understand and integrate discussion of the historiographical conversation on their topics. This likely reflects the instructor’s strong emphasis on this component of the research and writing
process. That said, almost a third of the students still need considerable help in identifying key works and conceptualizing the relation of their work to some larger body of literature.

D. Structure: Organizationally, all but two papers were rated as good or superior. Most all of the students were able to construct reasonably coherent paragraphs and link them together with solid transition sentences.

E. Logic and Argumentation: Compared to other categories, students showed somewhat weaker abilities in logic and argumentation. The typical deficiencies were overly simplistic arguments, a failure to address or imagine counter arguments, and illogical or inadequately developed arguments.

F. Mechanics: Students distributed themselves evenly quality-wise across the superior, good, and needs help categories in their writing mechanics. Where there is weakness, it tends to be of two varieties – carelessness in proofreading and citation style, and more seriously, weak sentence structure and inadequate grammatical understanding.
### Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Christian Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                           | 1. Reading  
  1a. Primary source  
  1b. Secondary source  
  2. Research  
  3. Writing  
  2. Geography  
  3. Genre | 1. History and the Christian Faith  
  2. Virtues  
  3. Vocation  
  4. Life-long learning |

### Where are the Learning Outcomes met?

| Where are the Learning Outcomes met? | Introduced: History 1  
  Developed: Upper-division history classes  
  Mastered: History 198 | Introduced:  
  1 and 2: History 10  
  3: History 1  
  Developed and mastered: Upper-division History classes | Introduced:  
  1, 2 and 3: History 10  
  1 & 2: History 1  
  Developed: Upper-division History classes  
  Mastered: History 198 |

### How are they assessed?

| How are they assessed? | History 10: Pre and post tests (for goals 1 and 2)  
  3. to be determined | History 198 (1-4): Presentations (Fall 2006)  
  Final essays (Fall 2007 and 2008)  
  History 10 (2-4): Papers (fall 2007, Spring 2008)  
  Journals (fall 2007, Spring 2008)  
  Free Write (Spring 2009) | To be determined |

### Benchmark

| Benchmark | The department wanted to see at least 75% of the students enrolled in History 198 use primary sources that are “reasonably available” in their final project | On the history 10 test, students will improve … by… | To be determined |

### III. Using the Results and the Next Steps

The History Department is encouraged by the progress of its majors in the use of primary and secondary sources and the structuring of the thesis for History 198. However, we feel that more intentional care needs to be devoted to helping students formulate a clearer thesis and engaging in historical argumentation. Two steps than can be taken would be to require students to craft a compelling thesis earlier on in the course, perhaps even as a prerequisite for moving forward with the project. A second recommendation would be to collaborate with Writers Corner or the English Composition Department in finding ways to support our History majors in their efforts to formulate a thesis and support it through reasoned and well-documented argumentation.

The History Department is also aware of the scope for improvement that exists in helping students acquire a better grasp of the Christian Liberal Arts in the History 10 course. Greater results across the History 10 sections can be achieved by incorporating to a greater extent the theme of the Christian Liberal Arts into the course, and creating exercises or venues in which students reflect more directly upon the various aspects of the rubric.
The History Department looks forward to assessing History 198 with an eye to seeing if the above areas have been improved. It also looks forward to extending its assessment into new areas, particularly that of historical content. Here again, the broad General Ed courses (e.g., History 10 or Thinking Globally courses) would offer suitable venues for assessing student mastery over basic historical events, concepts and patterns. Toward this end, the Department will meet in September and October of 2009 to arrive at clear goals for its assessment for the year.

IV. Data for Program Review
During the Fall and Spring of the current academic year (2009-2010), the Department will be gathering data that will help us complete its Program Review, scheduled for 2012.

V. Time-line for completion of the 6-year report
Between now and 2012, the History Department needs to do the following:
   a. Meet to decide on what goals have yet to be assessed between now and the Program Review.
   b. Deciding on the means of conducting those assessments (i.e., the rubrics, exercises, courses, etc.).
   c. Collecting Alumni information, specifically what they are doing, how their History major has affected their vocational choices, and whether they are pursuing graduate studies or intend to do so. If so, where.
   d. Collection of c.v.’s of all full time and adjunct faculty.
   e. A delegation of specific aspects of the Program Review to each member of the department, including whomever we hire full time next year to replace Dr. Richard Pointer.
   f. Designating outside reviewers, coordinating their visits, and incorporating them into our Program Review.