

# COMPREHENSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM REVIEW

History Discipline  
Spring 2011



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Web Resources:

<http://www.rccd.edu/administration/educationalservices/ieffectiveness/Pages/ProgramReview.aspx>

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## **Discipline of History**

### **Riverside Community College District Program Review Spring 2011**

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#### **A. Mission and Relationship to the College(s)**

The discipline of history supports the mission of Riverside Community College District in its “dedication to the success of our students.” By providing the courses and faculty expertise that our students need and will benefit from, the history faculty aims to meet the Student Learning Outcomes of the general education program of the district. 61% of RCCD students have an indicated goal of transfer, AA/AS or certificate completion. History courses are required for AA/AS and transfer programs. While not all RCC students transfer to a four-year college or university, all but one of the history courses in our curriculum are transfer-level GE courses (History 53 is the exception). Our courses fulfill general education requirements for transfer to California State University, University of California, and other public and private higher education institutions.

Course outlines in our discipline all include the stated learning objective that “students will demonstrate the ability to think independently, assess historical information reflexively, and reason logically.” This statement aligns with the district-wide general education learning objective of “critical thinking.” Our discipline has committed to refining our curriculum, through incorporation into current course offerings and through future course development, the opportunity for our students to become engaged in the ideas of world civilizations and peoples and to become aware of the contributions of various cultures around the world in the evolving course of history. This principle aligns with another of the district’s general education learning objectives of developing students’ “global awareness.”

## **B. History**

Since the previous program review in the 2006 academic year, the three campuses in the district have become separate colleges. The history discipline still gathers annually at district day, however, the change in district structure has, in some sense, lessened the cohesion of the district's history discipline faculty. All three colleges have unique identities and different administrative styles--further eroding the common purpose and pursuits of RCCD history discipline faculty. That is not to say that the integrity of the discipline has been compromised in any way. However, some faculty at any one of the three colleges may feel more compelled to first follow their own college's administrative policies than to consider the district-wide disciplinary impact of any such policies. Others ascribe to a philosophy of intellectual and teaching autonomy that is rooted in our disciplinary training. Neither of these positions is wrong because we are all experienced professionals dedicated to our teaching and experts in our fields. Ultimately, we know to do what is best for our students.

## **C. Data Analysis and Environmental Scan**

1. *Students who take history courses at RCC and who are in need of remediation simply do not succeed. The statistics bear this out:*

### Success Rates District Wide

As already stated, our history courses meet the standards to transfer as general education courses to University of California, California State University and most private colleges and universities as well. Either History 6 or History 7 is required to graduate with an A. A. or A. S. degree. Our history courses also fall within the Area of Emphasis structure in two categories: the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Our overall course success rates have increased by 9% since our last program review. In 2006, district wide success rates in history were 52%. That number is as of Fall 2010 is now 61.1% with 83.4% of students retained in history classes. However, these rates vary from campus to campus. Success rates at Riverside City College, for example, have remained on average, 52%--unchanged over the past five years:

### Comparing Success Rates at each College

Success rates at Norco College and Moreno Valley College are substantially higher than at Riverside City College. At Moreno Valley College success rates have averaged 67%, also more or less stable since the last program review, yet there was a big increase in success rates from Fall 09 to Fall 10 of 7.9%. At Norco College, the average success rate of 71% over the last five years is the result of a 5% jump from Fall 07 to Fall 08 and has remained in the low 70s ever since. This is a 10% higher success rate than at Moreno Valley but an astounding (almost) 20% higher rate than at Riverside. What accounts for this wide gap in student success, while retention rates are much closer, although still disparate, across the three colleges in the district? Retention rates at Riverside averaged, 80%; at Moreno Valley, 85.6%, and at Norco, 87.3%.

One explanation could be the higher reliance on part time faculty associates who may have more time constraints than full time faculty thus limiting them in efforts to require the types of assignments that entail a significant commitment of time for grading. Norco College has a ratio of Full Time to Part Time instruction of 1:3.3. At Moreno Valley College the ratio is 1:2.6. And at Riverside City College the full time to part time teaching ratio is 3.2:1.

- When you look at only the four most enrolled survey courses, HIS 1, HIS 2, HIS 6, HIS 7—these ratios change considerably at Moreno Valley College and remain basically the same at Norco and Riverside.
  - At Moreno Valley, full time to part time instruction in these four surveys is 1:4.6 while success rates are: 71.9% in these four courses—higher than the rates for all history courses combined.
  - At Norco, the teaching ratio for the four courses are essentially the same, 1:3 as are the success rates for just these four courses: 71.6%.
  - At Riverside, the full-time to part-time instruction ratio is the same for these four courses, 3.2:1 as it is for all history courses offered; and the success rate is 52.8%.

### **Possible Reasons/Explanations for Outcomes**

- a) Could it be that Moreno Valley College and Norco College have students with higher GPAs or perhaps fewer Basic Skills students enrolled in their history courses? This is also worth investigating.
- b) Could it be that a higher proportion of full-time faculty, as at Riverside, makes a significant difference in (upwards of 20%) in outcomes for students?
- c) Are the full time faculty members “too tough?” Are part time faculty “too lenient?”

We will have to investigate to determine what is causing these disparities in success and retention rates in all history courses across the district.

2. Successful completion of history courses, overall though, is on the rise over the past five years throughout the district, yet remains consistently lowest at Riverside City College.

The nature of our disciplinary “beast” is that in our survey courses we have to deliver a lot of content as outlined on our Course Outlines of Record. This, in turn, lends itself to a traditional classroom instruction method--Socratic lecture—and the expectation that students read, take notes, study, and understand what is being discussed and presented in class so that they can be assessed on an objective exam (true/false, multiple choice) with an essay question or two or on a fully-written exam (fill-ins, short identifications, short or long essays). This is a fairly standard expectation and practice. But what our students don’t know about history is that they will be encouraged to think about the historical past in ways that they haven’t had to up until they enter college. We will ask them to pose historical questions, to dispute conventional understandings, to evaluate evidence, to think “historically.”

Our RCCD students, generally, have not had sufficient training to be successful with this form of pedagogical instruction nor even with the more traditional lecture format. They are used to being told what is important, what to write down, what to study, and to regurgitate discrete facts on an “objective exam.” We need to work in concert with our colleagues in counseling and registration to address these skill level issues. And also, perhaps, to do some outreach with history faculty in local high schools as well. Since our courses have all been articulated to meet the very high IGETC standards, we are not advocating making our courses less rigorous. We must, however, consider how we do what we do in the classroom—are there ways of generating the same level of rigor while addressing the skills that students bring to our classrooms? Nevertheless, we must also respond at the point of course enrollment to this very startling data.

## D. Programs and Curriculum

The Discipline of History currently has twenty-five Course Outlines of Record in the college course catalogue. We typically offer twelve or so of these each semester (see Appendix I for a complete list of History Courses).

We have a wide variety of offerings meeting graduation requirements and general education requirements. We have a good mix of survey courses and specialized courses. Some new courses are being considered, for instance Latin American History, while others may soon be deleted, such as History 30, because it overlaps considerably with History of Mexico, HIS 25. World Civilizations I and II (HIS 1 and HIS 2 respectively) are offered much more frequently than Western Civilizations, and will likely continue that pattern for the foreseeable future. It may be worth considering, however, to revise the Western Civilization courses to a more accurately named European History course—however we currently have no history faculty with expertise in this area. Asian History and African History are also topics that should be covered in semester-length courses in our curricular offerings. Most likely, future hires should have disciplinary expertise in one or more of these content fields:

- **History 21 and History 22, History of Ancient Greece and Rome**, were added to the curriculum about ten years ago. These two courses are offered regularly at Moreno Valley College by a senior faculty member. These courses are popular and have replaced the Western Civilization offerings there. These two courses, however, are not regularly offered at Norco College or at Riverside City College due to not having faculty with expertise in this field.
  - **History 34, Women's History** is offered regularly at Moreno Valley College by a fulltime faculty member, but is only sometimes on the schedule at Riverside City College and Norco College.
  - **History 19, History of Russia**, will be offered for the first time in a long time at Riverside City College in the Fall of 2011. *History 23, History of the Middle East*, has not been offered in recent years due to lack of discipline expertise. Yet considering the current state of world affairs, we believe this is an important course and would gladly be able to offer it, given the opportunity to hire either a full-time or part-time faculty member with the appropriate expertise. We have maintained these courses, along with History of England, in the catalogue to reflect the discipline's alignment with the principle of Global Awareness and Cultural literacy as a part of its mission.
  - **History 40, Oral History, and His 53, Contemporary American History** are two courses that have particular reasons to be in the catalogue.
- **History 40**: In the summer of 2000, the president of RCC, Dr. Rotella, offered the History, Humanities and Philosophy department at Riverside, a one-year temporary position in U. S. History with an emphasis on Oral History. This was a response to the expressed desires of the community to collaborate with projects by March Air Base and the National Cemetery to

conduct interviews of local war veterans. This one-year appointment was funded for a full-time permanent position the following year. While one of the elements of the job description is to teach oral history and to develop an oral history program for the district, it is also a full-time faculty position with primary emphasis on teaching U. S. history and with no release time to develop a program. Consequently, we essentially hired a faculty member to do a job they have no time to do because of the teaching load. Yet, due to the position announcement and requirements, oral history should be offered, and it is, yet neither a program, nor a focus for this course has been developed. In the past, we have not been able to stimulate enough interest in this course to yield pre-registration numbers any higher than the single digits and consequently, this course was always cancelled. It has not been scheduled at all for the last few years. Yet we are hesitant to suspend this course for a number of reasons:

- 1) Oral history is a valuable historical methodology for conducting research;
- 2) we envision future collaboration with this course and the curriculum in the School for the Arts and possibly with the Honors Program.

- HIS 53, Contemporary American History, is written as an introduction to college history course. It is essentially a Basic Skills course and would work well in our curriculum once we establish prerequisites. We should institute the History 53 course to be automatically paired with anyone taking English 60a or 60b. This class, however, is not for college credit, and students may not want to invest the time and funds to take a course which does not transfer and for which they receive no credit. However, paired with a developmental English or reading course, they might perhaps be more successful once they enroll into one of the required survey course. One consideration is to make it an 8-week module rather than a 16-week course. Counseling and on-line registration would have to be coordinated to block transfer history course registrations for basic skills students.

### **Statement regarding transfer courses:**

All of our history courses, except History 53, currently meet IGETC (Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum) requirements. Our discipline standards, written in 1989, reflect the IGETC standards emphasizing reading and writing effectiveness (See Appendix II). According to Riverside Community College Transfer Agreement regarding IGETC, *“Completion of all of the requirements in the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) will permit a student to transfer from a community college to a campus in either the California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) system without the need to take additional lower-division general education courses.”* Upon successful completion of any RCC history course, our students will be prepared to move on to upper division work once they transfer, therefore we believe that history course offerings at RCC should be no less rigorous than university-level survey courses. This means that the volume of reading assignments should be consistent with university levels and the number and type of writing assignments should be consistent as well. Our learning objectives, methods of instruction and methods of evaluation, then, across all history courses, reflect these principles.



### **Problem of prerequisites:**

We know that students will not succeed in our courses without strong reading and writing skills. Although we would like to have an English 1A course prerequisite, our discipline has chosen to adopt a less restrictive alternative. All of our history courses (except for the remedial History 53) have the advisory that “Qualification for English IA is strongly recommended.” This represents a conundrum: just over 61% of RCCD students are “successful” in our history courses. This proves what we have long known anecdotally—that we are setting students up to fail by not having an English 1A prerequisite. Many students in our courses do not come to RCC with the university level-reading, writing, and critical thinking skills needed to pass a college-level history course. Yet the discipline consistently ranks high in the generation of Weekly Student Contact Hours and Fulltime Equivalent Students. We are one of the top 10 most enrolled disciplines in the district. We believe that the implementation of such an English and/or reading prerequisite will generate significant gains in retention and success rates. Now at a time of increased demand for spaces, this would be an opportune time to implement course prerequisites as well. Additionally, the state has recently changed the requirements for establishing prerequisites to one based on advisory entry skills.

### **Trends in pedagogy**

- a. The history discipline was one of the first to adopt long distance education via telecourse in the mid-1980s. We continue that tradition with History 1, 2, 6, 7 being taught online and in hybrid format.
- b. Other trends in the discipline include the continuation of an emphasis on social history, an all-inclusive approach to historical study and teaching emphasizing the actions, reactions and contributions to the unfolding of history by all peoples in all societies, e.g. labor and management, small producers and large corporations, self-sufficient peasants and wage earners, the military and social movements, the wealthy and the poor, notions of rights and liberties, liberalism and conservatism. Social history is portrayed effectively through primary texts in addition to conventional history survey textbooks. The discipline is committed to the use of primary source documents-- whether through readers or excerpts of the actual documents themselves—in all our course offerings.
- c. Finally, the discipline appears to be moving in a direction where trans- border history and comparative history are becoming a prevalent component of contemporary research. In United States History, for instance, new research on the colonial era increasingly presents the "Trans Atlantic World" as a theme in order to develop an explanation for and description of the interaction of Europe, Africa, and the Americas in the process of the European colonization in the Western Hemisphere. This emphasis depicts a dynamic or fluid interaction rather than a simply static chronological historical picture. In courses such as World and Western Civilizations, Latin American, U. S., California, Military, and African American history— trans-border studies is a useful teaching paradigm.

## **E. Student Outcomes Assessment**

### **Learning objectives:**

- 1) demonstrate the ability to think independently, review and analyze historical information reflectively, and reason logically based on review (reading) and interpretation (writing) of historical information.
- 2) identify the various sources of historical information and research methodologies and explain the nature of historical processes;
- 3) recognize, cite, and evaluate primary historical documents;
- 4) describe and interpret contemporary events in light of their roots in the past.

In addition, our course outlines have content specific objectives related to gaining knowledge and understanding of the chronology and origins of political, economic, and social movements particular to the themes/topics of each course's content areas.

## **F. Collaboration with other Units**

The history discipline faculty has been consistent in their contribution to the District mission, as the following list demonstrates:

- a) Historians have held leadership and participant roles in the RCC/CTA Faculty Association, and district and campus academic senates, and have been appointees to campus and district-wide committees including Diversity, Equity, and Compliance.
- b) History faculty are campus club advisors for Ujima Club, Karate Club, Progressive Student Alliance and the California Community College honor society, Alpha Gamma Sigma.
- c) Six of nine full-time history faculty have been honored as RCC's Distinguished Faculty Lecturer.
- d) Historians have been student-selected as best teachers of the year on all three of the District campuses, as well as by other community organizations like the Latter Day Saints, Latino Educators of Tomorrow, NAACP, and Riverside County Office of Education.
- e) Discipline Faculty have taught in the District's Study Abroad program at Oxford and Florence. Discipline faculty also regularly teach in the District Academic Honors program.

## **G. Outreach**

RCC historians have not stinted in their professional contributions to their respective cities, the county and professional organizations. A partial accounting includes:

- a) The discipline's two-decade support of Riverside County School's History Day, which includes judging middle and high school historical essays and donating cash and prizes;
- b) Individual public presentations given to civic organizations like the Rotary Club, the National Archives Regional Records Center, A.K. Smiley Library, local high schools
- c) Attendance at annual professional meetings such as the American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, American Association of State and Local Histories, and the American Association of University Women, California World History Association, World History Association, and regional history associations as well
- d) Service on Boards of Directors at community organizations like the Community Settlement Association and on public commissions such as the Riverside County Commission for Women; volunteers for the United Way, service with community religious institutions.

## **H. Long Term Major Resource Planning**

(none at this time )

### **I. Summary**

#### **Recommendations:**

With the full support of the district these are some recommendations that could be put into place immediately:

- a) Institute college level reading and writing as history course prerequisites.
- b) Reduce class sizes enabling more interaction between faculty and students and to facilitate the opportunities for instructors to assign and grade more rigorous coursework.
- c) Hold modular workshops in conjunction with the English lab instructors on topics such as 1) how to read historical texts; 2) how to learn and understand history; 3) “vocabulary to communicate”; 3) how to take essay exams; 4) note-taking/student study techniques.
- d) Require ILA 800 courses for students enrolled in history classes who test below college-level reading and writing. Incorporate an ILA 800 course automatically into every full time history instructor’s teaching assignment, so that they will be expected to provide a certain amount of outside of class tutoring/study group facilitating for students enrolled in their courses.

#### **In addition, near and long-term recommendations to institute include the following:**

1) Remediation should be required. We do not want students to fail, so we must put in place a process for them to succeed. If they are not eligible for English 1A, they should not be able to register for any history course! They should have qualifying reading scores—college history requires a high level of reading comprehension. We should institute the History 53 course to be automatically paired with anyone taking English 60a or b—this is an introduction to college history.

This class, however, is not for college credit, and students may not want to invest the time and funds to take a course which does not transfer and for which they receive no credit. Perhaps we can make it an 8-week module rather than a 16-week course--but they must take it if they test into remedial English. Counseling and Datatel/Web Advisor must be coordinated to block history course registrations without these standards having been met.

2) Subsequently, qualifying for English 1A should be an absolute prerequisite.

3) English as a Second Language (ESL) students should also be required to meet the same course enrollment standards—students who have difficulty speaking, reading, and writing in

English will not succeed in our history classes which have heavy emphasis on those skills.

4) International students are also a category of students at risk of not succeeding in our history courses. If the college does not consider these students ESL students, it should, because often international students with limited English proficiency may not be remedial in terms of academic ability, but language barriers are not easy to overcome in a course with heavy amounts of reading and writing assignments and delivery of lectures all in English. There is another concern regarding this particular category of students, as well as recent immigrants—they often lack the foundational understanding of American history—perspectives, commonly understood terminology, political processes and scope of government, that many American students and longtime residents do not necessarily know factually, but do know intrinsically, due to having been acculturated in American society and educated in U. S. schools. Perhaps we should explore the idea of developing a section of the United States history survey courses (history 6 and 7) with a greater emphasis on themes of American Civilization that would be highly recommended for international and immigrant students (see recommendations for modular offerings, also Humanities 16 below and following). Or perhaps have all international students take HIS 53 before they take any other US history course.

5) The history discipline faculty needs to explore new historical teaching pedagogy. Thematic/topical presentation of material in the history survey courses in addition to the conventional chronological method might be considered. Teaching the courses in modules might also be an interesting approach. With some students, the ability to focus on just a few themes or time periods, rather than hundreds of years of linear content might foster better success.

Community colleges are changing to create more flexible curriculum choices for students. Students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are coming to college with an orientation toward using chunks of time in different ways rather the traditional linear, chronological orientation towards time. Students have more responsibilities; full-time students do not have the ability to live “the life of the mind” in the conventional higher education paradigm.

### **What can we do to address this?**

Within the constraints of articulation we cannot radically alter the way our courses are structured because we agree to teach a specific set of topics over a specific number of hours in order for the student to receive credit for having completed a history survey course. Can teaching in modules fall within these parameters? Teaching in 6-week modules might be an interesting approach to both teaching and learning history. The modules could be thematic or chronological. Students would have to complete a certain number of modules in order to fulfill the general education or graduation requirement.

An example of a chronological modular series for what currently is the U. S. History 6 (Early America: History 6 a-d) course might look like this:

- i. Module I (History 6a): Colonial period
- ii. Module II (History 6b): Revolution and New Republic
- iii. Module III (History 6c): Antebellum era

iv. Module IV (History 6d): Civil War and Reconstruction

This is essentially the same eras covered in the current History 6, but in modules rather than one 16-week format, the students would have the opportunity for depth, could retake a module, if necessary, rather than an entire course, and could slow the pace at which they take the course. Or a thematic example of the U. S. history survey would have modules to cover any/all time periods in U. S. History. An example might look like the following:

- i. Module I: U. S. Presidential Administrations I and II
- ii. Module II: U. S. Military and Foreign Relations I and II
- iii. Module III: U. S. Social Movements I and II
- iv. Module IV: U. S. Capital and Labor I and II
- v. Module V: U. S. Immigration and Ethnic Studies I and II
- vi. Module VI: Themes in American Civilization: Politics, Government, Economics, Culture, and Law (recommended for international students)

This example shows how a student could take one module twice (I and II) indicating that within the overall theme of Presidential Administrations, different topics and time periods would be covered. Part II of any module would be reserved for students who had already taken Part I. With this example, students would have more options than the History 6 example. For instance, perhaps students could be required to take four modules overall, so they could do American Revolution I, Military and Foreign Relations I and II and Immigration and Ethnic Studies I. There are of course, lots of questions, how do we articulate a structure like this. How many modules must they pass? How much time should they have to complete the modules? What would the record keeping processes entail? How could we ensure enough module offerings in addition to the traditional 16-week surveys?

## Appendix I

The courses of record for the Discipline of History are the following:

History 1 and 2:	sequences in World Civilizations
History 4 and 5:	sequences in Western Civilizations
History 6 and 7:	sequences in U. S. History
History 8 and 9:	sequences in History of Americas
History 11 and 12:	sequences in Military history
History 14 and 15:	sequences in African American history
History 19:	History of Russia
History 21:	History of Ancient Greece
History 22:	History of Ancient Rome
History 23:	History of the Middle East
History 25:	History of Mexico
History 26:	History of California
History 28 and 29:	sequences in Native American history
History 30 and 31:	sequences in Chicano history
History 34:	Women's History
History 35:	History of England
History 40:	Oral History
History 53:	Modern America (remedial)

## Appendix II

### **Standards for Teaching Transfer History Courses at Riverside City College**

A primary goal of instruction in courses in history is the enhancement of students' ability to engage in "rigorous and reflective thinking" through reading accurately and writing effectively. Mastery of language is characteristic of educated people; it is also necessary for success in the academic environment.

While a strong emphasis upon reading and writing in the teaching of history courses is essential for the intellectual growth and academic success of students in general, it is of especial importance in the teaching of transfer courses. The need to prepare students so that they can succeed in upper-division courses is basic, of course, but there are other reasons. One of them is the academic reputation of RCC, which is largely determined by the performance of the students who transfer to four-year schools.

These considerations indicate a need for some minimum requirements for reading and written work in all transfer history courses at RCC. The following standards are designed to meet that need.

- 1) Reading requirements should be both challenging and informative. Specific assignments should be made to guide and pace students' reading, and the texts and supplementary reading selected should be sophisticated and comprehensive enough to be considered university-level. The volume of reading should also be consistent with the requirements of any standard freshman or sophomore history survey course that is offered at any UC or CSU campus.
- 2) Written assignments could take a variety of forms but they should emphasize the use of analysis and interpretation of historical data for the purpose of developing students' critical thinking skills. Recommended assignments include essays written in class, take-home essays, book reviews, and term papers, or any combination of these. In addition to examinations, there should be at least three written exercises per semester in every transfer history course.
- 3) Examinations also could take various forms, but they should conform to this recommended general pattern: there should be at least three examinations for each semester-length course; and most, if not all, of the examinations should contain essay work. Topics to be covered in each examination, especially the essay portion thereof, should be reviewed before it is administered and recapitulated when the results are conveyed to the students.