Midterm Essay Examination Instructions

Instructions: Your midterm examination will require that you write an analytical essay that answers the question below with specific, concrete historical data drawn from class readings, lecture notes and primary sources.

Question: Why do you feel there were both American proponents and opponents of the Mexican-American War? Be sure to provide an explanation of the positions of American politicians such as James K. Polk, Abraham Lincoln and John C. Calhoun among others on this war in your answer. Along with making reference to the assigned course readings and course lecture notes, be sure to incorporate the primary sources provided below in in the body of your answer.

Opponents of the Mexican-American War

"This war is waged against an unoffending people, without just or adequate cause, for the purposes of conquest; with the design to extend slavery; in violation of the Constitution, against the dictates of justice, of humanity, the sentiments of age in which we live, and the precepts of the religion we profess. I will lend it no aid, no support whatsoever. I will not bathe my hands in the blood of Mexico, nor will I participate in the guilt of those murders which have been and which will hereafter be committed by our army there. For these reasons, I shall vote against the bill under consideration and others calculated to support this war"

Congressman Joshua Giddings, Debate on the Mexican-American War, House of Representatives, Washington D.C., May 13, 1846

Abraham Lincoln’s view on James K. Polk and Mexican Territory

On January 12, 1848 Abraham Lincoln, a Whig
A congressman from Illinois, gave a speech questioning the Mexican-American war that he believed was “unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced.” A month earlier, Lincoln, as a freshman member of the House of Representatives, introduced the “Spot Resolutions” that asked President Polk to submit evidence that the initial cause and the first battle of the war was indeed fought on American territory. In his speech Lincoln presented the President’s evidence and proceeded to analyze it. His speech primarily focused on six of his original resolutions dealing with whether the causality occurred under the territory of the government of Texas or the United States. In Lincoln’s opinion, “there is not one word in all the President has said which would either admit or deny the declaration.” After analyzing every piece of evidence President Polk was willing to submit, Lincoln calls on him again to “answer, fully, fairly, and candidly.” Lincoln wanted the President to “answer with facts and not with arguments.” On January 3rd, the House of Representatives, controlled by the Whig party, passed an amendment faulting the President for beginning a war that was unnecessary. Lincoln having voted for this legislation stated to the President that if he proved that blood was indeed shed on United States soil he would happily reverse his vote. Despite Lincoln’s willingness to change his vote, he still believed that President Polk was not “satisfied with his own positions.” Lincoln also stated that “his mind is tasked beyond its power” and Polk who believed the war would only last three to four months, cannot show his people a light at the end of the tunnel.

"This war is nondescript . . . . We charge the President with usurping the war-making power . . . with seizing a country . . . which had been for centuries, and was then in the possession of the Mexicans.... Let us put a check upon this lust of dominion. We had territory enough, Heaven knew... " Whig Party leader Robert Toombs of Georgia

“We have never dreamt of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race—the free white race. To incorporate Mexico, would be the very first instance of the kind, of incorporating an Indian race; for more than half of the Mexicans are Indians, and the other is composed chiefly of mixed tribes. I protest against such a union as that! Ours, sir, is the Government of a
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| white race . . . .” Senator John C. Calhoun, 1848. | **Assessment Method:** Essay/Written Assignment  
**Standard and Target for Success:** Standards Rubric | **Rubric Results**  
Thesis = 3.32  
Organization and Argumentation = 3.06  
Historical Content = 3.02  
Sources and Evidence = 2.98 | 12/09/2015 - There are several actions, or interventions, that can be adopted to re-enforce to students the relevance and necessity of source incorporation into in-class essay examinations. One is to dedicate more class time to connecting the sources to the concepts that are being covered and to follow-up this instruction with in-class paragraph writing that re-enforces the use of source content. Practicing this several times before the midterm essay examination will help prepare students fulfill the assessment's requirements. |

**ECC: HIST 122 - United States Social History: Cultural Pluralism in America - SLO #1**  
Developing and Arguing a Persuasive Historical Thesis - Upon completion of United States Social History: Cultural Pluralism in America, students will be able to develop and persuasively argue a historical thesis in a written assignment that identifies and explains major social, economic, political and/or cultural historical themes or patterns in the history of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States and apply appropriate historical methods to analyze and use primary and/or secondary sources as evidence to support the thesis.  

**Course SLO Assessment Cycle:**  
2014-15 (Fall 2014)  
**Input Date:** 12/12/2013  
**Course SLO Status:** Active  

**Assessment Method Description:** Midterm Examination:  
Please read the question below carefully. The question in a single essay format using supporting evidence from the course content. Your answer must have an introduction, body and conclusion. Make sure that you apply appropriate historical methods to analyze question content and use course primary and/or secondary sources as evidence to support the thesis. Make sure you follow the essay format provided in last week’s prompt essay.  

This course surveys the role and contributions of ethnic groups and racial minorities to United States history. Emphasis is placed on these groups’ cultural interaction with the American way of life from colonial times to the present. In your in-class persuasive essay please identify and explain what you believe are some of the major social, economic, political and/or cultural historical themes or patterns in the history of ethnic and racial minorities that have impacted the colonial period in United States history.  

**Assessment Method:** Essay/Written Assignment  
**Standard and Target for Success:** Based on Rubric it is expected that 60% of students will score 4 or above on this SLO.  

02/09/2015 - Course SLO Rubric  
Thesis: Thesis fully, clearly and accurately explains the central argument and is presented early in the written assignment.  
Organization and Argumentation: Introduction explains the pertinent historical context and states the thesis. Paragraphs are organized in a logical way that supports the thesis, either chronologically or topically. Each paragraph fully discusses one main idea (stated in the topic sentence) that helps argue the thesis.  
Historical Content: All appropriate historical time periods and topics are thoroughly and accurately incorporated into the thesis and the argument throughout the written assignment.  
Sources and Evidence: The student makes effective and accurate use of appropriate and well-selected (when applicable) primary and/or secondary sources in order to prove the thesis and central arguments.  

4 = Excellent  
3 = Good  
2 = Satisfactory  
1 = Less than Satisfactory  

Rubric Results  
Thesis = 3.32  
Organization and Argumentation = 3.06  
Historical Content = 3.02  
Sources and Evidence = 2.98  

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The results of the assessment reveal that overall the students enrolled in History 122 had achieved an expected level of proficiency in completing the most of requisites of midterm examination with an average of 3.26. However, when this average is broken down it becomes clear that the one area that students experienced some challenges was in the incorporation of sources and evidence into the body of their essays. There are several factors that may be contributing to this. The most obvious is related to their high school preparation. I have found from conversations with students that historical thinking and historical knowledge construction are formally instructed at all the local high schools where most of the focus is on content. This content-based training can create epistemological and and procedural challenges for students when asked to reconstruct the past in a written in-class essay. In this case, it was being able to incorporate course sources into their work. Another factor may be just simply a lack of practice source analysis and inclusion into assessments that have time constraints attached to them. In other words, a lack of practice or experience dealing with in-class essay examinations that require the citation of supporting evidence taken from primary and secondary sources.

**Standard Met?**
Yes

**Semester and Year Assessment Conducted:**
2013-14 (Spring 2014)

**Faculty Assessment Leader:**
Jose Arrieta
students will be able to develop and persuasively argue a historical thesis in a written assignment that identifies and explains major social, economic, political and/or cultural historical themes or patterns in Mexican history and apply appropriate historical methods to analyze and use primary and/or secondary sources as evidence to support the thesis.

**Course SLO Assessment Cycle:**
2014-15 (Fall 2014)

**Input Date:**
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**Course SLO Status:**
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<td>examination that requires knowledge of the subject matter and the ability to organize this knowledge into a coherent set of arguments. The essay will require that students include a thesis, a solid body of analysis and evidence, effective argumentation and organization and a firm conclusion based on what has been written.</td>
<td>Based on a rubric it is expected that 60% of students will score 7 or above on this SLO.</td>
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