



Defining What We Do:

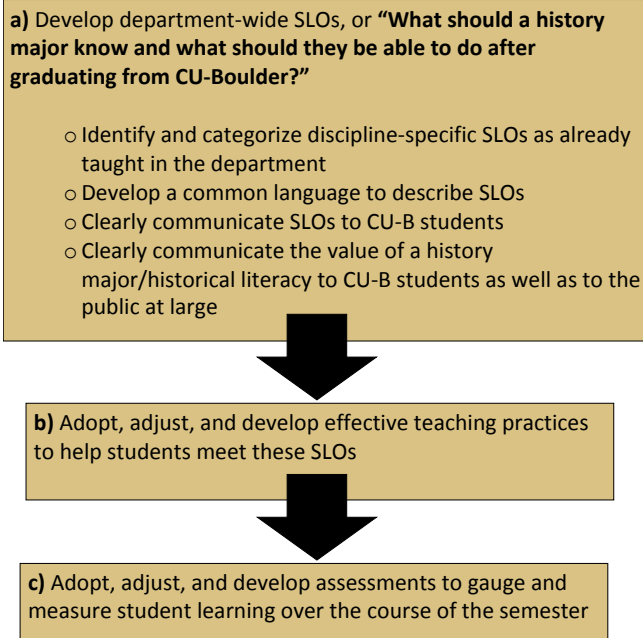
*Early Work in the History Teaching & Learning Project (HTLP)
in the Department of History at the University of Colorado, Boulder*

Natalie Mendoza, PhD
Postdoctoral Research Associate, 2017-2018
University of Colorado, Boulder
Department of History | Research and Innovation Office
Contact: natalie.mendozagutierrez@colorado.edu

Long-term goals for the HTLP at CU-Boulder:

- 1) to create vertical alignment (curricular alignment at the departmental level—see gold boxes below at left): **a)** develop a set of student learning outcomes (SLOs); **b)** develop effective teaching practices to support those SLOs; and **c)** use assessments that best measure student learning.
- 2) to reconfigure the major pathway by embedding the SLOs in the course sequence, with the express purpose of scaffolding SLO instruction across courses and in ascending levels of sophistication over several semesters of major coursework.

GOAL 1: Creating Vertical Alignment in the Department



Preliminary work toward goal 1a: Data-gathering

- **Syllabus Checklist:** The purpose is to read the most current syllabi to identify and categorize existing SLOs across faculty. Also one way to assess course-level alignment (SLOs→instruction→assessment)
- **1-1 faculty meetings:** The goal is to learn about challenges each faculty member feels they face in teaching, what they think the “point” of their courses are, how they teach, and what they think a history major should know upon graduating.
- **Undergraduate surveys:** The idea here is to gain a sense of what students think it means to study history, what skills they think they can acquire, and what real world value it holds for them (i.e., beyond earning their BA or BS).

Preliminary outcomes from the syllabi and 1-1 meetings:

- The CU-Boulder History faculty hold a common set of SLOs—whether or not they state them explicitly—as follows: **content**, **historical thinking concepts**, and **historical thinking skills**. These can be further broken down, and vary in emphasis, depending on field of study (e.g., US versus Japanese versus global history).
- One common **challenge** faculty feel they face in teaching is a gross misunderstanding among students—and the public, generally—about precisely what historical study entails. They feel this is reflected in the declining enrollment departments are facing across the country, and is indicative of the larger challenge the humanities disciplines face as a whole.

Next steps for developing department-wide SLOs (goal 1a):

- **November faculty meeting (all faculty welcome):** During this meeting, I will share my preliminary findings before asking faculty to discuss in groups the first draft of SLOs I’ve compiled from the syllabi and 1-1 conversations. They are to consider the following questions: “What do we want students to learn?” and “How can we scale up our SLOs from our classes to the department level?”
- **HTLP Workshop & Discussion (all faculty welcome):** The purpose of the W&Ds is to bring in expert guests to share their experiences with developing SLOs in history. Our first guest was Dr. Anne Hyde, who discussed her work with the American Historical Association’s Tuning History Project. This was successful in jumpstarting the conversation at the department level. For the next W&D, our plan is to bring in Dr. David Pace from Indiana University to talk about how his department pursued some of HTLP’s same goals with their History Learning Project.
- **HTLP Faculty Working Group (volunteer faculty):** The HTLP working group is tasked with investigating teaching challenges and practices more deeply than their colleagues, by: thinking about how students learn history before entering college, engaging with the Scholarship of Teaching in History, and devising teaching strategies and assignments that best support SLOs.