

# **Major Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements**

## **Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies**

### **Undergraduate Program AY2008-09 through AY2012-13**

#### **Preface**

The Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies implemented a major revision of the curricula of the undergraduate major and minor in Medieval and Byzantine Studies effective of AY2009-2010. The assessment period of this report covers the last few years of the old curriculum and the first few years under the new curriculum. Major changes in the new curriculum include

- the introduction of a new team-taught gateway course, MDST 201: Medieval Pathways (first offered in Spring 2010);
- the lifting of the limitation of the program to Honors Students only (which was the rule prior to 2010 because the then designated gateway course was limited to UHP students only);
- strengthening the thesis writing and research components by offering a year-long capstone seminar (for 1+2 credits) with close faculty supervision; and
- offering a wider range of options for the course of study in geographical and disciplinary terms.

#### **Assessment Measures**

The Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies uses the following measures to assess departmental learning outcomes:

##### *Direct Measures:*

- Senior theses written in the course of two subsequent capstone seminars (MDST 451+452)
- Course evaluations
- Grades
- Student conference presentations and involvement in extracurricular academic activities (guest seminars, workshops, lectures)

##### *Indirect measures:*

- Grades, course evaluations, and enrollment in capstone seminars (MDST 451+452)
- Grades, course evaluations, and enrollment in gateway course (MDST 201)
- Program review data (most recent review completed and submitted in December 2013)
- Graduate school placement results
- Student program evaluations (part of 2013 program review)

## **Assessment Findings**

### **Preface**

The undergraduate cohort in Medieval and Byzantine Studies is traditionally very small, with usually only one student in the major per year (a total of 2-4 in total) and a total of 10-18 minors across all years. Because of the small data sample, no National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) data can be provided with regard to general education goals. All data charts listed below have been provided by CUA's Institutional Research.

### **Senior Seminar Discussion**

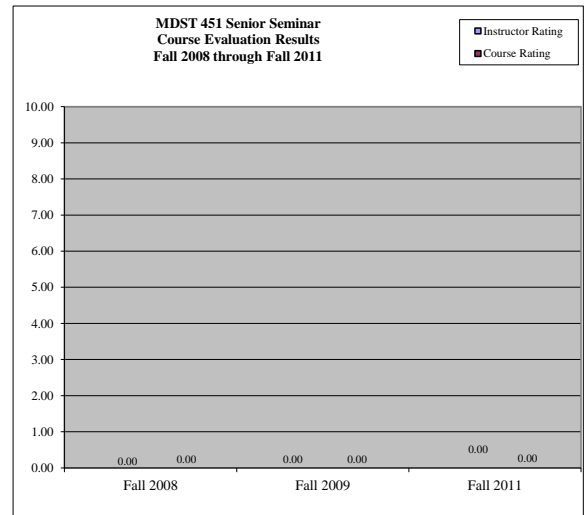
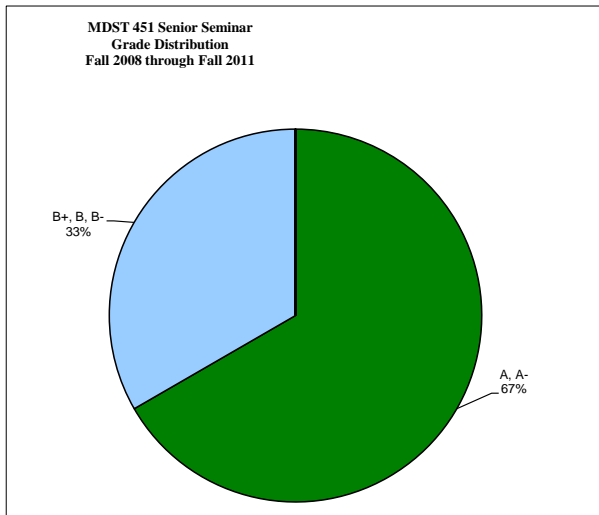
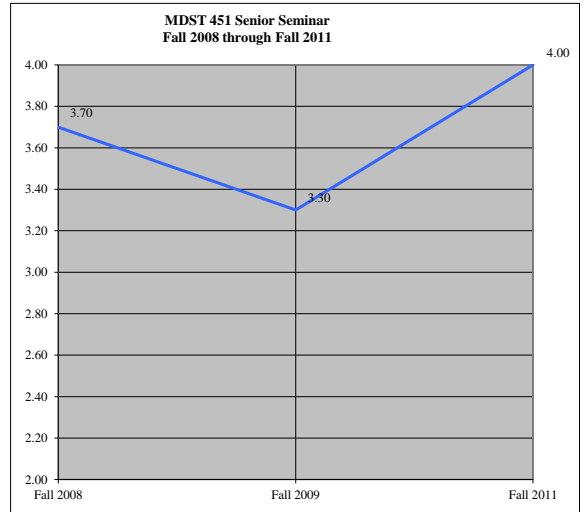
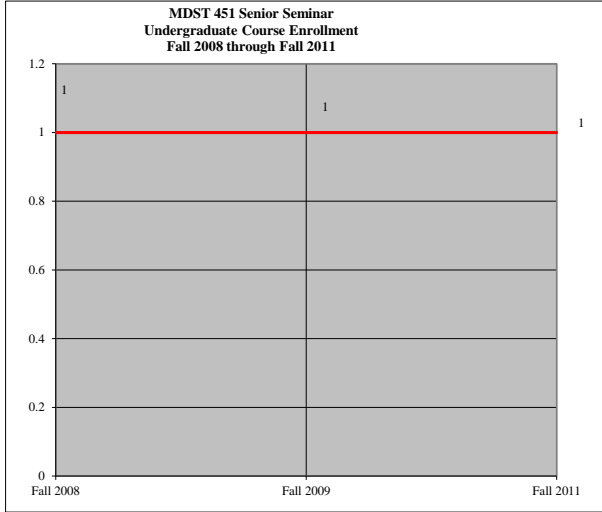
(see Appendix 1 for MDST 451 and Appendix 2 MDST 452 below)

The Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies analyzed course grade, evaluation, and enrollment data for MDST 451 and MDST 452 for a five-year period (Fall 2008 through Fall 2012). During this period, we had an enrollment of a total of 3 students, one or none in each year, which is not surprising for a small program. The small data sample does not allow us to draw wide-ranging conclusions but overall the students have performed well in the senior seminars as well as on their senior theses (part of MDST 452). Again, because of the small data sample, no course evaluation data can be provided without identifying the student evaluating the professor, but anecdotal evidence suggests that students greatly appreciate the intensive one-on-one collaboration with a faculty advisor for an entire academic year. This is a lot more individual attention and guidance than other academic units can normally offer to their seniors.

*Appendices 1 & 2:*

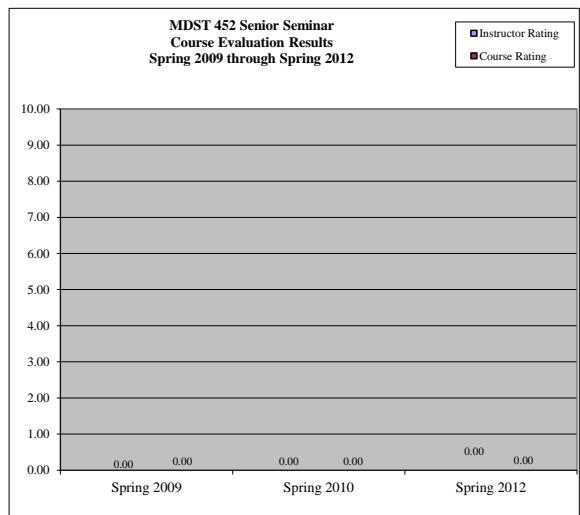
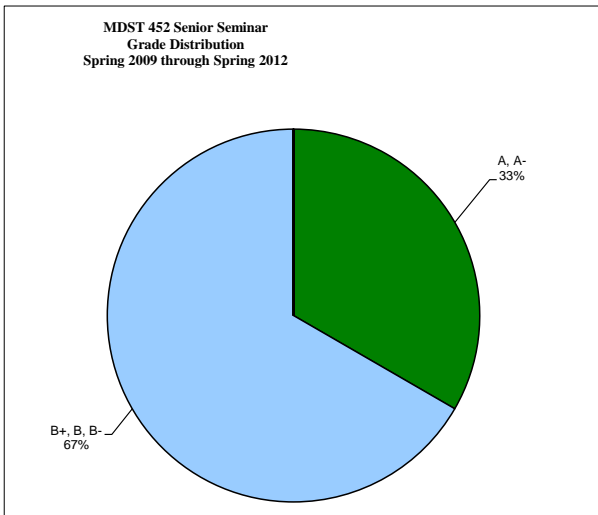
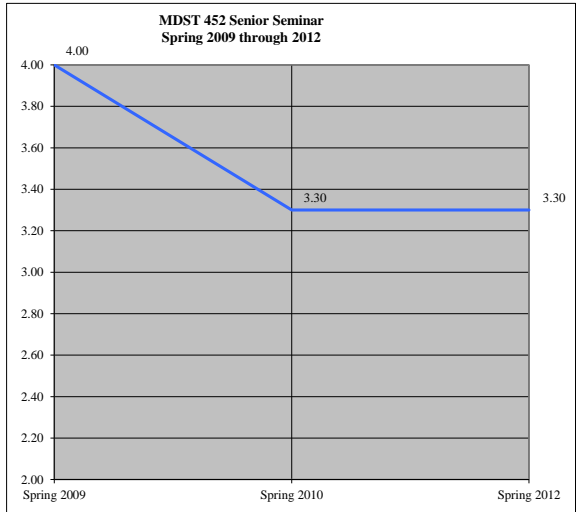
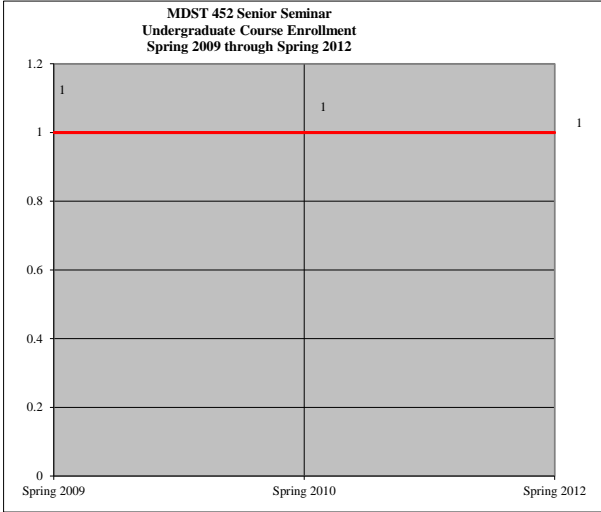
**COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF MEDIEVAL AND BYZANTINE STUDIES  
MDST 451 SENIOR SEMINAR**

Term	Undergraduate Course Enrollment	Course Grades									Course Evaluation Results					
		Course Grade		Grade Distribution						Course Eval.		Instructor Rating		Course Rating		
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	D	F	W	I	#	%	Avg.	StDev.	Avg.	StDev.
Fall 2008	1	3.70	0.00	1							0	0.00%				
Fall 2009	1	3.30	0.00		1						0	0.00%				
Fall 2011	1	4.00	0.00	1							0	0.00%				



**COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF MEDIEVAL AND BYZANTINE STUDIES  
MDST 452 SENIOR SEMINAR**

Term	Undergraduate Course Enrollment	Course Grades									Course Evaluation Results					
		Course Grade		Grade Distribution						Course Eval.		Instructor Rating		Course Rating		
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	D	F	W	I	#	%	Avg.	StDev.	Avg.	StDev.
Spring 2009	1	4.00	0.00	1							0	0.00%				
Spring 2010	1	3.30	0.00		1						0	0.00%				
Spring 2012	1	3.30	0.00		1						0	0.00%				



## **Intermediate Course Data**

The Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies does not offer courses on its own, except for the gateway course (MDST 201) and the senior seminar sequence (MDST 451-452) designed specifically for our majors and minors. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the program, all other courses (all medieval in their topics) are listed by other academic units of CUA and are counted towards the MBS degree according to our own curriculum. Therefore, there is no intermediate course data available.

## **Introductory Level Course Data (Gateway Course)**

(Appendix 3 for MDST 201)

The Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies analyzed course grade, evaluation, and enrollment data for MDST 201, its gateway course to the major and the minor. The course was first offered in Spring 2010 as part of the revised curriculum, so no data is available for the period before that.

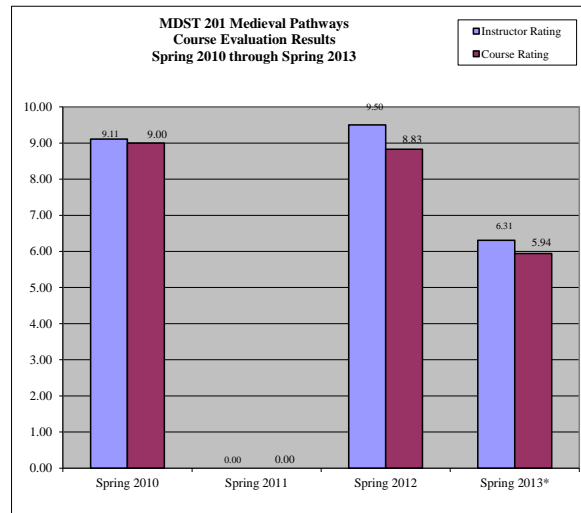
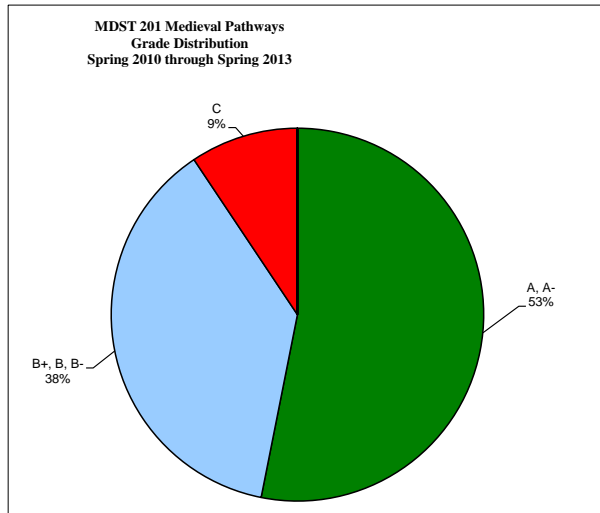
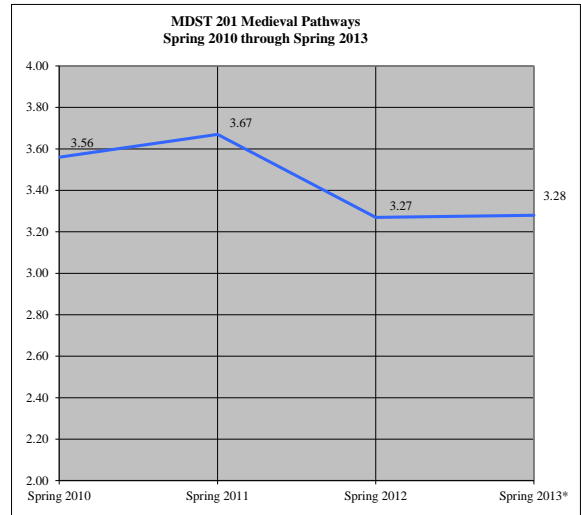
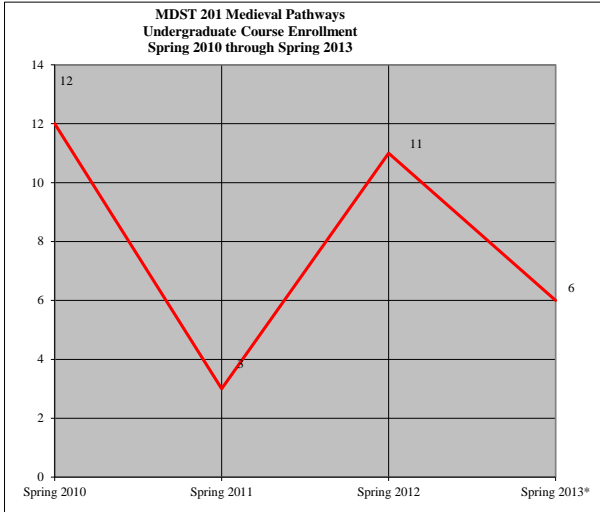
Please note, that MDST 201 is a bound course with ENG 250, so the indicated enrollment does not cover the total enrollment in the courses. However, the course only counts as a gateway for the MBS major and minor if the student registers under the MDST 201 number. The charts below thus indicate partial enrollment for the courses.

Between Spring 2010 and Spring 2013, a total of 32 students took the course under the MDST 201 number, that is, as a potential gateway to the MDST major or minor (or as an elective). The majority of them did well (A and B grade range). Both the course and the instructors have received very high evaluations (9+ out of 10 in the old system; 6+ out of 7 in the new system). The team-taught, interdisciplinary course with several field trips offers a unique learning opportunity on campus and is much appreciated by the students.

***Appendix 3:***

**COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF MEDIEVAL AND BYZANTINE STUDIES  
MDST 201 Medieval Pathways**

Term	Undergraduate Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades							Course Evaluation Results						
		Avg.	StDev.	Grade Distribution							Course Eval.		Instructor Rating		Course Rating		
				A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	D	F	W	I	#	%	Avg.	StDev.	Avg.	StDev.	
Spring 2010	12	3.56	0.60	8	3	1						9	75.00%	9.11	1.05	9.00	1.41
Spring 2011	3	3.67	0.58	2	1							0	0.00%				
Spring 2012	11	3.27	0.57	5	4	2						12	109.09%	9.50	1.45	8.83	1.90
Spring 2013*	6	3.28	0.49	2	4							17	283.33%	6.31	0.87	5.94	1.18



\*Spring 2013 was using a new evaluation form where instructor and course ratings were based on a 7-point scale

**Milestone Data (Appendix 4)**

Comprehensive Exams in MBS are substituted by a graded senior thesis in Medieval and Byzantine Studies (developed in MDST 451+452). During the period in question, 2008-2013, a total of 5 students completed this requirement with very good result: 3 received Pass grades and 2 High Passes.

**Appendix 4:**

**UNDERGRADUATE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULTS  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF MEDIEVAL AND BYZANTINE STUDIES  
AY2008-2009 to AY2012-2013**

	Fail		Pass		High Pass		Pass w/Honors		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
AY2008-2009		0.00%		0.00%	2	100.00%		0.00%	<b>2</b>
AY2009-2010		0.00%	1	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	<b>1</b>
AY2010-2011		0.00%	1	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	<b>1</b>
AY2011-2012		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%	<b>0</b>
AY2012-2013		0.00%	1	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>60.00%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40.00%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>5</b>

Note:

- 1) Milestone outcomes were included in the categories High Pass and Pass with Honors if these designations were explicitly indicated in the students' milestone record.
- 2) Category "High Pass" includes both "High Pass" and "Pass with distinction".
- 3) The count in this table is based on the exam outcomes of all attempts in an academic year.

## Curricular Improvements

As noted above, the Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies implemented a major revision of the curricula of its undergraduate major and minor effective of 2009-2010. The revision was prompted by previous assessment reports and intended to increase the number of undergraduates involved in the program. The new curriculum was designed by an interdisciplinary curriculum committee of MBS faculty in Spring 2009. As a result, the number of undergraduate minors jumped from zero or near zero to a total of 10-18 students, with an average of 3-6 students per year. The enrollment in the major remained largely unchanged.

Major changes in the new curriculum included:

- The lifting of the limitation of enrolling in the program to Honors Students only: Prior to 2009-2010, the then designated gateway course (HSHU 102) was limited to UHP students only, which limited access to the major and the minor. The opening up of the program to a wider community was a great success and resulted in increased enrollment in the minor.
- Introduction of a new team-taught gateway course: In Spring 2001, the MBS faculty launched a new team-taught gateway course, MDST 201: Medieval Pathways. It has been a great success ever since and the course has pioneered new ways of collaborative teaching that has since been followed by the European Studies Program in designing their gateway course. The alternative option of HSHU 102 as a gateway (for Honors Students only) has been kept.
- Strengthening the thesis writing and research components by offering a year-long capstone seminar (for 1+2 credits) with close faculty supervision: The former one-semester capstone seminar has been extended to a full academic year to encourage faculty-student collaboration and take some stress of the students of having to produce a quality research paper in one semester only.
- All in all, the new curriculum offers a wider range of options for students in course selection and research both in geographical and disciplinary terms.

The new curriculum has been seen as a great success, although we always keep thinking of introducing changes to improve the learning experience and training of our students. The gateway course has recently been redesigned (Spring 2014) to include even more local field trips, and this change has been welcomed by our students.

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