

## HISTORY DEPARTMENT WAC PLAN

### Part I: A description of what constitutes good writing in your discipline.

A well-written history essay demonstrates the student's understanding and mastery of the material of a course relevant to the particular topic of the paper. The paper should reveal that the student can identify the relationship between the more focused topic of the paper and the larger chronological framework, concepts, and ideas presented in course materials. The essay must be clearly written, grammatically correct, and well-organized, with recognizable thesis, argument, introduction and conclusion. Supporting evidence for major points of the paper's argument should be skillfully integrated into the paper. A standard form of citation must be used. There should be a minimum number of citations to offer evidence for the paper's points and spur further analysis. Supporting evidence must reveal proficiency in research. If the paper is in response to an assigned topic, it should address the terms of the assignment.

### Part 2:

Requirements for the History major include a broad range of classes, from 100-level surveys, to the 400-level capstone class.

History 103 and 104 (World History Series): A minimum of 15-20 pages spread over 3-4 papers usually 3-5) pages, and smaller assignments, for example, in-class writing assignments. Writing assignments account for 60-75% of the grade. Note: This does not include rewriting/draft and rewriting. (103 is taught by Rebecca Wendelken, Carl Dyke, Karen Kletter. History 104 is taught by Rebecca Wendelken, Carl Dyke, Karen Kletter, Patrick O'Neil, and Peter Murray)

History 201 and 202 (U.S. History Series)

- 3 3-5 page papers worth 20% of final grade each – so 60% of the grade. (Murray)
- Approximately 13 pages of writing spread over three one-pagers and two five-pagers, worth 60% of the course grade. (O'Neil)

History 210 – (Class in research and methodology) 5-10 shorter papers, consisting of article summaries, book reviews, and research summaries/narratives, annotated bibliographies, usually 3-5 pages, final research paper, minimum 10-15 pages. Average cumulative percentage from writing assignments: 75% (Wendelken, Dyke, O'Neil, Kletter)

History 370 (Contemporary World History, a requirement for Social Studies Licensure) - two short (3-5 pages) and one long (10-15 pages) paper. Average cumulative percentage from writing assignment: 60-75% (Wendelken, Dyke)

History 455 (Senior Capstone Course) 3-5 shorter papers (approximately 3-5 pages, including book reviews, article summaries), final research paper, minimum 15-20 pages. Average cumulative percentage from writing assignments: 80%. However, a failing grade on the

research paper means the student fails the class, so there is a way in which writing assignments account for 100% of the final grade).

History Department Writing Improvement Plan: As must be clear, a great deal of the way that we improve student writing is to assign a great deal of it. Department members spend a substantial amount of time giving feedback. Other regular practices: work-shopping longer papers, especially final research papers, peer review sessions, rewriting, encouragement and credit for attending dirty dozen sessions, use of writing center, working with students individually. In addition, our new method of assessment will provide individual instructors with information about teaching writing effectively.

Part 3: Include any rubrics used in the courses listed in part 2.

On the following page is the rubric used by the entire history department. This rubric is also the basis of our new assessment method.

**HISTORY ESSAY RUBRIC**

1) Content and Concept	2) Argument/ Analysis	3) Organization	4) Evidence	5) Source Handling/ Citation	6) Writing
<p><b>5</b> – Shows insight, understanding, awareness of perspectives and historical contexts; develops reflective interpretation relating specific facts and situations to bigger patterns, ideas and dynamics.</p>	<p><b>5</b> – Contains an interesting central point, clearly asserted in the thesis, that is amply developed and persuasively supported with appropriate reasoning and evidence.</p>	<p><b>5</b> – Thesis and introduction are clear, concise and address the assignment. Each paragraph has a clear, focused purpose and coherent relation to the whole. Effective conclusion; logical and persuasive overall.</p>	<p><b>5</b> - Broad spectrum of appropriate sources visibly used. Accurate evidence directly and persuasively supports the argument. Sources are assessed for bias and placed in larger historical context.</p>	<p><b>5</b> – Every point and statement of fact is reliably attributed. Every fact, point, paraphrase and quotation derived from any other source is completely and helpfully documented.</p>	<p><b>5</b> – Reliably clear, correct and appropriate. Reveals a mastery of appropriate vocabulary.</p>
<p><b>3</b> - Particular ideas or events are adequately described but poorly understood; OR broad perspective is attempted without adequate foundation in specifics</p>	<p><b>3</b> - Simple summary or assertion with little supporting analysis or evidence.</p>	<p><b>3</b> – Some important organizational elements are missing, inadequate or garbled. Difficult to follow.</p>	<p><b>3</b> – Contains relevant evidence but lacks breadth, context or persuasive focus.</p>	<p><b>3</b> – Citations are mostly complete, but some are sloppy. There is some confusion about the source of ideas or information.</p>	<p><b>3</b> - Writing is substantially technically correct. Occasional minor errors may be present, but prose is generally at college level.</p>
<p><b>1</b> – Simplistic; narrow; without context, perspective or interpretive depth.</p>	<p><b>1</b> - Lacks a clear point and coherent reasoning.</p>	<p><b>1</b> – Lacks logical structure and flow; random or disjointed; makes little sense.</p>	<p><b>1</b> - Lacks relevant evidence, reveals incomplete knowledge and contains inaccuracies.</p>	<p><b>1</b> – Elements of the paper meet the definition of plagiarism.</p>	<p><b>1</b> - Major pattern of errors or many sloppy errors.</p>

