

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 a 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 1000-level surveys, to the 4000-level capstone class:

History 1030 and 1040 (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. (1030 and 1040 are taught by Carl Dyke and Karen Kletter.)

History 2010 and 2020 (U.S. History Series): Three 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 3000 (Class in research and methodology): Five-to-ten shorter papers, consisting of article summaries, book reviews, research summaries/narratives, and annotated bibliographies, usually 3-5 pages; final research paper, minimum 10-15 pages. Average cumulative percentage from writing assignments: 75% (Dyke, O'Neil, Kletter).

History 3700 (Contemporary World History, a requirement for Social Studies Licensure): Two short papers (3-5 pages) and one long paper (10-15 pages). Average cumulative percentage from writing assignment: 60-75% (Dyke)

History 4550 (Senior Capstone Course): Three-to-five shorter papers (approximately 3-5 pages, including book reviews and article summaries), and a 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 writing assignments are indispensable to 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: workshopping 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 method of assessment provides individual instructors with information about teaching writing effectively.

Part 3: Style Guide:

Historians typically use the Chicago Manual of Style; that is our fallback guide for research papers. However, professors may ask students to use another standardized citation method according to the professor's preference.

Part 4: 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 assessment method.

HISTORY ESSAY RUBRIC/EVALUATION MATRIX

1) Content and Concept	2) Argument/ Analysis	3) Organization	4) Evidence	5) Source Handling/Citation	6) Writing
5 – Topic is well-defined, fully described and richly understood. Shows awareness of perspectives and historical contexts; develops reflective interpretation relating specific facts and situations to bigger patterns, ideas and dynamics.	5 –Features an interesting point, clearly asserted in the thesis, that is amply developed and supported with appropriate reasoning and evidence. Logical and persuasive overall.	5 – Thesis and introduction are clear, concise and address the assignment. Each paragraph has a clear, focused purpose and coherent relation to the whole.	5 - Broad spectrum of appropriate sources found and effectively used. Accurate evidence directly supports the analysis. Sources are assessed for bias and placed in larger historical context.	5 – Every point and statement of fact is reliably attributed. Every fact, paraphrase and quotation derived from any other source is completely and helpfully documented.	5 – Reliably clear and correct. Mastery of appropriate vocabulary. Fluid and perhaps even elegant.
4 – A little less than 5, a little more than 3.	4	4	4	4	4
3 – A little fuzzy or off track. Particular ideas or events may be adequately described but poorly understood; or broad perspective may be attempted without adequate foundation in specifics.	3 – Too much summary or assertion, too little supporting analysis or evidence.	3 – Structure is evident but inconsistent. A little difficult to follow; may be jumpy, clumpy, choppy, rambly.	3 – Contains relevant evidence but lacks breadth, context or persuasive focus.	3 – Citations are mostly complete, but some are sloppy. There is some confusion about the source of ideas or information.	3 - Mostly correct. Some minor errors, but generally at college level.
2 – A little less than 3, a little more than 1.	2	2	2	2	2
1 – Simplistic; narrow; without context, perspective or interpretive depth.	1 - Lacks a clear point and coherent reasoning.	1 – Lacks logical structure and flow; random or disjointed;	1 - Lacks relevant evidence, reveals incomplete knowledge	1 – Elements of the paper meet the definition of plagiarism.	1 - Major pattern of errors or many sloppy errors.

		makes little sense.	and/or contains inaccuracies.		
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