

HIST 396 Essay Grading Rubric

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	Poor
Overall Impression	Author directly addresses main question or issue, and adds new insight to the subject. He/She is able to synthesize this knowledge in new ways and relate to material not covered in the course.	Author competently addresses main question or issue, but does not add much new insight into the subject. That said, it is clear that the author has learned a great deal and is able to communicate this knowledge to others.	Author attempts to address main question or issue, but fails. The author has retained some information from the material researched, but does not fully understand its meaning or context and cannot clearly convey it to others.	Essay does NOT address main question or issue, and it is obvious that author has not understood or retained much of the material researched.
Argument	Essay contains a clear argument—i.e., lets the reader know exactly what the author is trying to communicate.	An argument is present, but reader must reconstruct it from the text.	Author attempts, but fails, to make an argument (e.g., starts with a rhetorical question/statement or anecdote that is never put into context).	No attempt is made to articulate an argument.
Evidence	Provides compelling and accurate evidence that convinces reader to accept main argument. The importance/relevance of all pieces of evidence is clearly stated. There are no gaps in reasoning—i.e., the reader does not need to assume anything or do additional research to accept main argument.	Provides necessary evidence to convince reader of most aspects of the main argument but not all. The importance/relevance of some evidence presented may not be totally clear. Reader must make a few mental leaps or do some additional research to fully accept all aspects of main argument.	Not enough evidence is provided to support author's argument, or evidence is incomplete, incorrect, or oversimplified. Information from lectures and readings is not effectively used.	Either no evidence is provided, or there are numerous factual mistakes, omissions or oversimplifications. There is little or no mention of information from lectures and readings.

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	Poor
Counter-Evidence	The author considers the evidence, or alternate interpretations of evidence, that could be used to refute or weaken his/her argument, and thoughtfully responds to it.	Author acknowledges that counter-evidence or alternative interpretations exists, and lists them fully, but does not effectively explain to reader why his/her argument still stands.	Author acknowledges some of the most obvious counter-evidence and alternative explanations, but is not comprehensive in this task. There is little or no attempt made to respond to them.	No acknowledgement of counter-evidence or alternative interpretations.
Sources	Evidence is used from a wide range of sources.	Evidence is used from many sources, but author relies heavily on a more limited set of sources. If outside sources are used, they are primarily non-scholarly (i.e., intended for a general audience) and/or web-based.	Uses only a few of the sources provided, or does not go beyond what has been provided in the lectures.	Does not use sources, only minimally uses sources provided by instructor, or relies exclusively on non-scholarly outside sources.
Citations	All evidence is properly cited in footnotes or endnotes.	All evidence is cited in footnotes or endnotes, but there are some minor problems with completeness or format of some citations.	Some pieces are unreferenced or inaccurately referenced, and there are problems with completeness and format of citations.	No attempt is made to cite evidence.

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	Poor
Organization	<p>Essay contains an intro, main body, and conclusion. Introduction lays out main argument and gives an outline of what the reader can expect in the essay. The conclusion brings everything together, acknowledges potential shortcomings of the paper, and gives the reader a sense of what further work might be done to advance the subject matter described in the paper.</p>	<p>Essay contains an intro, main body, and conclusion. The introduction lays out the main argument but gives the reader little idea of what to expect in the essay. The conclusion nicely summarizes the main argument and evidence, but does not move beyond what has already been presented in the paper.</p>	<p>Essay contains an intro, main body, and conclusion. The introduction gives the reader an idea of what to expect in the paper, but does not effectively lay out the main argument. It may begin with a set of rhetorical questions, or an anecdote that is never fully explained. The conclusion does little more than restate the problematic introduction. Intro and/or conclusion may be too wordy or short.</p>	<p>Essay has no clear organizational pattern.</p>
Clarity and Style	<p>All sentences are grammatically correct and clearly written. No words are misused or unnecessarily fancy. Technical terms, words from other languages, and words from other historical periods are always explained. All information is accurate and up-to-date. Paper has been spell-checked AND proofread (ideally by you and somebody else), and contains no errors.</p>	<p>All sentences are grammatically correct and clearly written. An occasional word is misused or unnecessarily fancy. Technical terms, words from other languages, and words from other historical periods are usually, but not always, explained. All information is accurate and up-to-date. Paper has been spell-checked AND proofread, and contains no more than a few minor errors, which do not adversely affect the reader's ability to understand the essay.</p>	<p>A few sentences are grammatically incorrect or not clearly written. Several words are misused. Technical terms, words from other languages, and words from other historical periods are rarely explained. Not all information is accurate and up-to-date. Paper has been spell-checked AND proofread, but still contains several errors. Reader's ability to understand essay may be compromised by these errors.</p>	<p>Paper is full of grammatical errors and bad writing. Several words are misused. Technical terms, words from other languages, and words from other historical periods are rarely explained. Not all information is accurate and up-to-date. Paper has not been spell-checked or proofread, and contains numerous errors. Reader has a difficult time understanding essay because of errors.</p>

Based on a rubric developed by Professor Jay Aronson, Carnegie Mellon University