

Assessment Rubric for Senior Thesis in History

Student Name: _____
 Reader Name: _____
 Term: _____

This rubric investigates how well the papers of seniors majoring in History demonstrate the achievement of several of the goals for history majors identified by History Department Faculty.

Please note that there are 12 categories that can receive between 1 and 4 points each. If the category is completely unaddressed, it you could grant 0 points. Although you do not have to use this to help you determine grades, you may find it helpful as our grading scale is also on a 12-point scale. If you would like to use this to calculate your thesis grade (or to justify it), the total points for each letter grade would be:

- A = 45-48 points
- A- = 41-44 points
- B+ = 37-40 points
- B = 33-36 points
- B- = 29-32 points
- C+ = 25-28 points

- C = 21-24 points
- C- = 17-20 points
- D+ = 13-16 points
- D = 12 points (1 in each category)
- Below 12 points D- and below

The gray rows correlate with our Departmental Student Learning Objectives (SLO) for assessment and serve as umbrellas for the more specific categories used to assess the thesis.

Components of the thesis.	Capstone (Very High Pass) 4	High Milestone (High Pass) 3	Milestone (Pass) 2	Benchmark 1	Score
1. Basic understanding of the historical world					
Focal Question, problem, or hypothesis	Significant and/or insightful and/or creative focus	Clearly stated, at an appropriate level of complexity	Stated, but unfocused, too broad, or simplistic	Not clearly stated	
2. The intellectual breadth to choose a viable thesis topic					
Rationale/motivation for thesis	Persuasive and original/creative rationale	Rationale makes clear why topic is worth investigating	Some rationale presented, begins to motive the work	No clear rationale or a weak rationale for the project	
3. Understanding of historical time, sequence, context					
Approach/Methodology	Creative, original, and/or sophisticated methods	Clearly described and justified, well-chosen and properly executed	Approach is generally appropriate for the topic	Not clear what was done or why, or an inappropriate method	
Scholarly Context and Historiographical Awareness	Author situates own work in a way that makes a contribution or identifies a new direction for investigation; the historiographical landscape is discussed thoughtfully and in relation to the thesis	Author demonstrates broad awareness of the literature, including works presenting other perspectives and understands historiographical differences in cited sources	Author demonstrates some awareness of a range of relevant literature, but does not place thesis in historiographical context	Author over-relies on too few sources or inappropriate sources or sources without proper citation and reference (e.g. leans heavily on Wikipedia or one or two basic textbooks without acknowledgement)	

4. Ability to read sources					
Use of Evidence	Fully exploits the richness of the data/ evidence/ sources/ ideas, and is persuasive in use of above	Feasible evidence appropriately selected and not over-interpreted	Some appropriate use of evidence but uneven and/or uses evidence simply to narrate	Mostly relies on assertions or opinions rather than evidence, or evidence not clearly presented or evidence overly simplified	
Quality of Research	Has found and read a broad and deep variety of sources (or amassed a full body of data), clearly relying on primary sources, original data and materials. May have located unusual or hard to find or archival sources not available online	Has used both primary and secondary sources, but perhaps has relied primarily on online resources	Has used some primary materials, but relies mostly on secondary sources or general characterizations	Has used very few or no primary sources	
5. Ability to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources					
Analytical Insight	Develops insightful connections and patterns that demonstrate intellectual creativity	Brings together related data or ideas in productive ways, discusses implications of material	Begins to establish connections and perceive implications of the material	Treats related ideas or data as unrelated, or vice versa, or draws weak or unfounded connections	
6. Demonstrate research capabilities that lead to effective historical interpretation and insight.					
Argument	Arguments both well supported and genuinely compared to conflicting explanations	Main arguments valid, systematic, and well supported	Some arguments valid and well supported, some not	Weak, invalid, or no argument, perhaps a simple assertion	
7. Communicative skills					
Organization	Structure enhances the argument; strong sections; seamless flow	Structure supports the argument, clearly ordered sections fit together well	Structure is of inconsistent quality, may have choppy transitions, redundancies, or discontinuities	Needs significant reorganization	
Grammar, spelling, usage	Virtually no errors	Some minor errors	Frequent or serious errors	Significant errors that impair readability	
Documentation and citation	All sources clearly and fully cited, carefully distinguishing primary sources vs the quoting of primary sources in other secondary sources; all sources cited in notes appear in bibliography; bibliography may include more works than those specifically quoted or cited in text; images, tables, charts, and maps properly captioned and sourced	All quotes, claims based on readings or other data, pictorial evidence, charts, etc. are cited in notes and/or bibliography	Materials all cited, but perhaps without precision, specificity, or consistent citation styles	Mistakes or absences in citations; improper or inconsistent citation style	
Clarity, Style, Readability	Mastery of the genre, including elegant style, established voice	Effective prose style, follows relevant scholarly conventions, emergence of voice	Style is inconsistent or uneven	Style or lack of style impedes reading for content	