

Student comments on rubrics: HIST 3750

I am a very conscientious student. If a teacher provides me with a rubric for tests and/or essays, I will use it. When I am studying for an exam or writing an essay, I usually only look at the first column on a rubric because that is what I am aiming for. After I have received my grade for a piece of work, I look back over the entire rubric. Looking back over the rubrics is helpful because I can see which I areas I am good at and which ones on which I need to work.

I do, however, have one significant problem with the rubrics. Although I can see which areas I need to work on, I have a difficult time determining the areas of my essay where I went astray regarding that particular learning outcome. Let me explain. Some mistakes, such as spelling or mechanics, are easy to identify within an essay. Other mistakes, such as pertinence of the argument, are more difficult to identify in a returned essay. I think the rubrics would be more helpful if you made it clear which outcome the particular mistake violates. Perhaps numbering the outcomes would be beneficial because you could simply circle the mistake and write a number next to it.

Anyway, I had a lot of confusing thoughts, so I wasn't sure if this made sense. I hope this helps you.

I think the rubrics are a good way for the student to understand not only what you are looking for when you are grading a paper, but also a good "gold standard" to compare our work to and therefore improve our writing skills in general.

As an example, I reviewed the rubric once before I wrote my term paper, and took note of areas that I may need to pay special attention to. Then I put the rubric away and wrote my paper as I normally would. After completing the first draft, I pulled the rubric back out and, while reading my paper to myself, compared it to the "ideals" outlined in the rubric. In doing this I noticed several areas where the paper, as written, needed improvement. So I put the rubric away and focused on those areas. Then took the rubric back out and went through this process again. I did this three times. I think the most significant part of this is that I absolutely made more corrections and improvements to my paper (in essence, I did a better job editing) than I would have done otherwise.

In short, I relied heavily on the rubrics while writing the papers we've been given so far. While I am not an amazing writer, I think that they really helped me- especially in the "editing" portion of writing which I think so often gets neglected by students.

A lot of this will be a repeat of what I have written for the 2700 course, being that I think it applies equally to both your courses. Again, I personally feel that, for this class, the grading rubric was a very helpful tool in my testing preparations. The test for this class requires good preparation and a specific form in order to earn a good grade. I followed the rubric for the first test and received an 84%, which I was better than I had honestly

expected. While working the essay I referred to the rubric and the notes you had made on the first exam in order to fix my weak spots and hopefully when you hand the essays back I'll have earned a good grade. This course is difficult and I feel like the rubric has helped to give some direction to the exercises and helped to alleviate some of the anxiety I have felt going through this course. As I said for the 2700 course, maybe the rubric just meshes well with my thought processes, but I think that it is also the best means for running your written exercises in this class. Again, I hope this was helpful to you.

One aspect I like about the rubrics is explains very easily what I did good or bad on the exam. I'm currently taking a class by a professor just today before our third exam finally clarified how he'd like us to answer his questions on exams. The class as a whole is doing pretty bad; his syllabus was only one page and contains no information about a rubric for exams. If there had been a rubric explaining what he wanted from his students, I have no doubt our test scores would have been higher thus far. The rubrics not only help review for exams, but also am I thinking even more helpful upon their return. It clearly shows what I'm doing right and what I'm doing wrong. The graded rubrics help me understand what I need to improve on. How can I expect to improve if I don't know what I'm doing wrong. I also like the breakdown the rubric uses, it's specifies each area and shows the value of each one, making it easy to understand the grade received. I feel that rubrics not only help the students, but also make grading easier by judging each aspect of the assignment. I wish all my professors used them; I don't see any negative effects from explaining what is expected from students. In many classes it takes half the semester just to figure that out what is expected, putting a lot of stress on finals week trying to make up for the early misunderstandings.

I find the learning outcomes rubrics to be very helpful. Having three separate sections (Historical Knowledge, Historical Thinking, and Historical skills) as well as the subsections inside help identify where exactly the student is struggling. The student can identify whether it is the construction of their argument that is lacking, if their analysis is weak, or if they just didn't understand the material. It has really helped me to understand where I need to improve, as well as set my mind at ease about the things I need less improvement on. The fact that you underline or circle the exact areas that the work falls under helps to discern where improvements are needed as well.

The rubrics also help because they are easier to read than notes written on the paper. While specific notes on the paper are helpful, many times it is difficult to make out what word that scribble is supposed to be, but the rubrics can help clarify those notes (as well as vice versa).

I cannot think of a thing I would change on the rubric. It outlines which parts affect your grade in what percentage and explains where improvements are needed very well.

I can honestly say that I think the rubrics for the class are helpful; they give the students a chance to see what is most important when writing for your class. This is especially helpful for people that are new at writing. However, since I'm a senior, I've seen rubrics like this repeatedly, and I actually haven't taken the time to look through them. All analytical writing should follow those guidelines, and I already know that.

What would help me the most is to see an example of writing that would receive a good grade. If I can see that, I'll be able to see how much discussion should happen in relation to the quotes cited, how many quotes are appropriate, and how in-depth we should go into each subject. Because I have never had an exam that focused solely on writing essays in a short amount of time (generally they've been take home exams), I flopped. I had done the reading and attended every class, but I didn't have any examples of a well-written exam essay to see how I could do. Having examples won't work for every student, but it certainly would help me.

HIST 3750 has been the first course I have taken at Utah State University that extensively utilizes learning outcome rubrics. They have helped me by providing guidance on what specific expectations my Professor has for essay exams and the comparative essay. In studying for the midterm, I could review how my grade would be structured before I ever began the test. In addition to preparation, using the rubrics has helped me pinpoint areas in which to improve my writing and analysis. When I receive feedback on an essay, I can look at the corresponding rubric and verify what learning outcomes for the course I am doing well with and what areas I am struggling in.

I cannot see any parts of the rubric forms that should be changed, revised, or eliminated. The structure of the form is particularly good – as a student I can see what learning outcomes are expected of me (categories of Historical Knowledge, Organization of The Argument, etc.) and what constitutes levels of mastery within a specific category. The forms are easy to analyze and the descriptions of mastery levels are concise and understandable. These rubrics, combined with in-class discussions of expectations, have helped me understand the standards that govern written exercises in the course. I wish that more Professors would utilize this system.

In most college courses when writing an essay the student plays guess what is in the teacher's head. By using the learning outcome rubrics there is no guess work. The teacher has taken the time to spell out clearly what is expected in an "A" paper, a "B" paper, etc. so the student while writing the essay knows what work is expected to get a certain grade. This can further be helpful if, for example, a student needs a certain grade on the essay in order to pass the class then they know exactly how much effort needs to be put into their writing to pass. Another way this is helpful is students can, prior to handing the essay in, give themselves a grade and then compare that grade to what the teacher gave them. This is helpful to a student because it makes them think more analytically about their paper and helps to further their writing skills.

One of the hardest things as a college student is to figure out exactly what the teacher wants and expects of you in an assignment. The Learning Outcomes Rubric is very explicit and outlines every area of the assignment that will be looked at. You know what areas your teacher wants you to focus on and where points can be lost. This helps to guide and direct a student throughout the course. On the other hand there are important areas of a paper that are lost with the Rubric. The individualism of a paper can be lost and a writer starts to write with the teachers' restrictions rather than how he/she truly feels.

Dividing the Rubric up into three major and five minor areas, gives the student the exact areas to focus on and include in their papers. The student can easily identify where the majority of the points will be given and can proportion his/her time accordingly. The student can be organized and guided to accomplish what the instructor is looking for. When the student receives a paper and rubric back, they know exactly where to look for areas of improvement in the papers, because they are individually marked.

A problem that I have found is that a student is given a two-page assignment to write a comparative essay and then they also have a two-page rubric that they have to be focused on as well. You have a total of four complete pages of instruction that you need to take into affect when writing the paper. I enjoy it more when a student receives a simple and concise assignment that they can enjoy rather than studying the four pages. It is a lot of information to focus on and try to incorporate into an assignment. The topics are justified, but less can be more when it comes to instructions.

It is expected for teachers to be looking in a specific direction, but with too much instruction and guidance it turns into the student writing as the teacher rather than for themselves. Overall the areas on the rubric are very reasonable and I have no doubt what areas you will be grading,

I feel that the learning outcomes rubrics have been a valuable asset while writing my papers and preparing for my essays. It guides me in my construction of my writing and allows me at the same time to know exactly what the professor is looking for when he grades it. The rubric is the most detailed I have used in writing papers/essays in any of my classes. Knowing exactly what constitutes a grade of A, B, C, etc. is very convenient to have. Whenever I have wondered about something pertaining to the structure of my paper/essay, I can look at the rubric and the answer is outlined there. One thing I would consider adding to each rubric is how many points each section is worth along with the percentage. Having the points shown would make it much easier for students to understand how the grade is calculated. With that one exception, I believe that the learning outcomes rubric is very useful in helping students prepare and understand what is expected of them in their writing assignments.

The learning rubrics are an easy way for a student to know what is expected of them in their writing. It is a good outline to judge off of for teachers and it is helpful for the students to know what a teacher expects of them. For me having a rubric is like having a clear outline of what makes an A paper compared to an F paper. This helps me to know

what it is I need to do in order to have a quality paper. The learning rubrics provide a basis of what is expected and what a person can do to get a better grade.

In some ways I do not like learning rubrics because they impersonalize a paper so that I feel like it does not reach to every persons need. Circumstances are different and I feel limited in some ways. I do not see a better way to help students understand the standards that govern written exercises in class though. When grading massive amounts of papers, and with the large class sizes in college, I believe that this learning rubric is the best way to govern writing and to provide a basis of what makes a good paper.

As a student and an aspiring teacher myself, I have analyzed the benefits of using rubrics. In my own experience as a student, I have found it very helpful to be given a rubric, especially before a writing exercise. It is very helpful to know what exactly the instructor is looking for and how the various components of the assignment or essay will be weighted. There are no surprises and I know what to pay particular attention to.

As a teacher, I can only imagine that giving students a rubric could help not only the student, but the instructor as all expectations are laid out on a material sheet of paper and nothing is left to debate after the fact. It also makes grading easier. The teacher has a fair standard that all students must adhere to and the teacher doesn't have to wonder if their grading has been biased based on teacher-student relations or past works from students. Instead there is a calculable score based on a pre-formulated scale that is used to fairly distribute a grade.

First of all, the rubrics have helped me to understand the main purposes of the assigned writing. The percentages make the historical thinking section the most valuable. This puts an emphasis on what I think the courses should really be about - learning to think critically, putting ourselves into the context of the history we are studying, and coming to meaningful conclusions based on actual evidence. That has been helpful in focusing my writing and worrying first about the most important tasks.

A second thing the rubrics do is to help me understand why I received the grade I did on a writing assignment. It is a refreshing alternative to the vague "83% " that appears on most papers, lacking any real explanation. The rubric allows the professor to give meaningful feedback without having to meet with every student in the classroom personally.

My only problem with them is that they are long and wordy. It's a task to read through it, and I feel like many students don't - I didn't carefully until after receiving my first exams back. I feel it would be more useful to simplify the sections.

Overall, I value them greatly and hope more professors adopt the use of them.

The “learning outcomes rubrics” are beneficial to the students. In my experience, the rubric served as a guide during the writing process at least to know what was expected of my paper. But I found that the real value of the rubric came when I received my grades back from the essay. Any student knows that he should have a thesis, evidence, and analysis of that evidence. Yet for some reason writing is something that we all seem to fumble around with. What the rubric did for me was help me to see where I was fumbling around. Rather than just being a paper filled with pen marks from a professor who has his idea of better diction and argument, the rubric gives me specific visual criticism. When I get my papers back and I see it all marked up I read the comments and *maybe* take the time to think “oh yeah, that might’ve been a better word”, “maybe I shouldn’t have used that word”, etc... and then the thought leaves me anyway. But when I got my term paper back and found that I scored high on the rubric in every category except for “citations”, I thought to myself “You know what Andy? You don’t seem to know how to cite very well”. Then I looked into the paper and find out where and why. I came to learn that beyond direct quotations and paraphrasing, I cannot simply state evidence from the book without at least citing where I got it from. The “learning outcomes rubrics” helps the student to actually *see* more than markings all over the paper correcting diction and grammar coupled with the occasional: “perhaps a better thought would’ve been...” The rubric helps us to *see* what exactly we need to work on.

I find the grading rubrics very useful not only in understanding why I received the grade I did, but they also assist me in learning what to do better next time. It is very frustrating to be handed back a paper from a professor and see a grade written on the top in red ink, but absolutely no indication of why that grade was received; and when you go to ask the professor why you were docked points they do not remember exactly or they seem to completely BS an answer to make you go away.

It is also very nice to have a grading rubric while you are working on your paper or assignment so you can form it to better fit the grading style; no two professors grade exactly the same, yet very few tell you their methods of grading until after you screwed the paper up and there is nothing you can do about it. The rubrics are very helpful in making your paper or assignment more custom fit to the grader, as well as allow you to learn specifically what you need to work on to do better on future assignments.

Details on the rubric plainly and specifically outline what is expected from the paper and which grading sections of the paper will be weighted heavier. It is helpful to have the rubric because then the student knows what the teacher will be looking for in the paper, and the teacher is held accountable to grade under those sections of the rubric. The student also knows which areas of the paper will hold more significance, and will make sure that those areas are concise. Because the rubric offers good communication of expectations of the professor, it also provides the student with explicit feedback. The only suggestion I have is that the rubric is slightly overwhelming. Each section requires the student to include, remember, and provide a lot in his/her papers. Writing a well-analyzed paper is fairly overwhelming and takes much time and preparation, and I

have found if there are too many guidelines, I feel the task of writing is much more arduous. I am not suggesting that a professor should lower his standards, but it would be less intimidating if the stipulations were written in just a few sentences or so.

The rubric given with the writing assignments did help to clarify certain points of my writing that needed to be worked on in order to add strength to my test/paper. It was especially helpful when certain criteria were underlined or circled within the rubric so that I was able to see exactly what area of my writing needs work. One thing that I would have liked to do is a smaller paper, or even in-class response so that I could have seen what techniques I needed to improve upon before taking the midterm and writing the comparison paper. I think a small assignment along with the rubric prior to the major assignments would have maximized the help that I was able to obtain from the rubric. But over all, I find the grading rubric to be helpful.

I've found that the rubrics have been very helpful in preparation for tests and papers; it gives the student a set of in-depth guidelines, which basically describe what a good paper is and what a bad paper is, of how to gain points and how to lose them. In many cases a student has only a vague idea of what a certain professor expects until after the first exam or paper has already been returned fully graded for better or worse. I've also found that the grading with a rubrics system is much more helpful for the student, because it reduces the question of "what did I lose points for?" and shows the student the areas he/she did well in, and the areas that can be improved upon.

I seem to think that having a set rubric for papers and exams clarifies and provides guidance for the student. Handing out a set rubric to the class prior to a paper or an exam leaves the student no room for excuses. Having a rubric right in front of you while writing a paper lets you know what the professor is directly looking for. Your rubrics in particular are broad and very detailed. It is obvious what you want on the exam or paper and how you are going to grade it. It is a plus to have all this information, but it can be a little overwhelming. With rubrics, the bar can be set very high and almost difficult to hit all the corners of a well-written paper. This is one of the first classes I have had with such detailed rubrics and I am still getting used to it. I can't complain because you tell us exactly what you are looking for, but it makes writing the paper a little tougher. I am not against having such detailed rubrics; they just take some getting used to.

The rubric guides have given clarification of the grading process for myself. Knowing each part of the writing plays into the grade being broken down showed me where weaknesses were. The Rubrics in particular, are great for improvement in writing in future classes in my opinion.

The downside to the rubrics is that in order to make some of the improvements it would point out the writer needs takes lots of time. Which for the sake of a student hopefully

that individual has. But, from a teachers perspective I think that the rubrics give the student clarity in what is expected. And a student getting that clarity, at least to me, seems fair. Knowing that there is a separation from historical knowledge and historical thinking for example gives the writer an advantage as to what to focus on before the exam.

I find the learning outcomes rubrics very helpful. The rubric shows which aspects of the essay carry the most importance, as far as percentage of the total grade, and therefore, helps the student know where to focus the most attention. I like how the rubric is divided into sections. It helps students see there is more to an essay than just knowing the information. It takes thinking and writing skills, combined with knowledge to write a good essay. The rubric makes clear what is required for an A, B, C, etc. Each individual section of the rubric outlines exactly what is required for a good grade. It explains how to make a sound argument from historical knowledge and how to explain and support that argument. Then it explains what writing skills are needed to produce a quality essay. The rubric covers every aspect of a quality essay and if used by students can be very helpful. The scoring on the rubric is confusing to me. I don't understand how the scores from the top of the rubric are totaled to get the overall score for the essay. Some verbal or written explanation of the scoring would be helpful.

I feel that this type of rubric may be too complex for high school level students and lower but it is excellent for college students. I find writing very difficult and these rubrics have not only helped me in this class but also with my overall writing skills. There are basic writing tools in these rubrics that would have been nice to know at an earlier point in my academic career.

In response to the grading rubrics I would say that I have greatly appreciated them. I believe that it is a good sign of a dedicated teacher, one who wants a student to succeed. (although I received a D on my paper, just kidding). Which leads me to my next point, I referred to the rubric prior to the essay but I failed to refer to it closer to the time that I wrote the paper. After I received the terrible grade on my paper I looked at the rubric again and realized what I had done wrong, if I had looked at the rubric closer to the time period of my paper I would have noticed that it said to cite where my sources were found and not merely just cite them in my paper. That is why rubrics are so important; they say exactly what is required of the student. I believe that the form provided is sufficient and clear. I don't think that there is anything that needs to be changed! So life lesson learned, when u have a teacher that is dedicated enough to make a rubric, you need to pay better attention to the rubric, and you will not receive a D on a paper and mess up your entire grade for the semester.

Please do not regard this as cynicism, this was a very good lesson for me, a hard lesson, I wish I would have learned this in another way but unfortunately lessons like these are learned in hard ways. I have extremely enjoyed this class, and I sincerely appreciate the

preparation and dedication you provide as a teacher. Thank you for the opportunity to receive some extra credit. (You know I need it)

The rubric is very useful in aiding the student in what is expected of him in writing a clear, concise essay. In my experience essay writing developed from taking 1000 and 2000 English writing classes. Writing a Historical essay, whether it be analytical historical essay is much different than a research or descriptive essay required in these courses. The rubric really helps in showing what is expected to attain a high grade in writing a good historical essay. The rubric provides 5 columns, which allow the student to understand a scale for writing a good and poor essay. Having this rubric helps to improve essay writing as the student can refer to this rubric after an assignment and makes the proper adjustments in subsequent essays. This can really help reinforce the feedback that the professor should already be providing the student on his/her essay.

The one item that I do believe could be added to enhance the rubric is a writing sample of each category in the rubric. Providing an example may be difficult but maybe a few sentences so that an example will be available for a student to analyze and help them to understand what makes a good essay. I really like the rubric as it allows me to understand what is expected of me. With this uniform rubric it allows the student to really focus on becoming an efficient writer and will not cater their essays to individual professors who may demand different standards

I personally feel that the grading rubrics have been very helpful. It is very frustrating to me when I get a paper back with a score and nothing else. I very much like to know exactly where I was strong and where I was weak in the writing of my paper. These rubrics are very precise and let you know exactly the information I would expect from a University professor.

I can't find a whole lot that I would change with the rubrics; unlike a lot of rubrics I have seen in the past, this one is precise down to the last detail. I would suggest them in the grading of any type of University level paper.

Overall I think the grading rubric is very effective. It specifically shows the student the areas in his/her work that are strong or weak. I personally like to be able to know what I need to work on to improve on the next exam and I think this rubric is geared toward that. I like that students' work is divided up into sections that are easy to understand and that those subjects are again divided to show the student exactly how the teacher felt about the work completed. I did however find it difficult sometimes to know exactly what the instructor was looking for in a specific area that he felt I could have better explained or a point that I failed to bring up. A college setting allows students to speak with their instructors on these kind of detailed questions in a one on one setting if the student desires further explanation and help. Just a thought but I think, like I said, that overall it's very helpful and easy to understand. It allows the student to easily see the reasoning behind the grade awarded them on their work and what the professor thought of it and in what areas they can improve.

