

Guidelines for midterm self-assessment

Now that the semester is almost half over, I would like you to write an assessment of your performance in the course so far. You should write it as an e-mail or, if you prefer, as a word processor document attached to an e-mail.

The e-mail should be sent to ogilvie@history.umass.edu, with the subject line “History 492H self-assessment” (it would be helpful to include the date, but it’s not necessary since the e-mail will have a date and time stamp).

The self-assessment is due on Friday, March 14. (This is a change from the syllabus; I thought you could use an extra day.) It is worth 5% of your final course grade.

Preparation for the self-assessment

Before you write your self-assessment, begin by reviewing your response e-mails from the previous weeks. Reflect generally about what you have put into the course and what you have gotten out of it. Are you especially satisfied or dissatisfied about anything? If you are dissatisfied, is it because of the way the course is organized, me and the other students, or what you have been doing? Is there anything you have learned in this course—not necessarily about the specific subject matter—that you think is especially important or that has changed the way you think about the past or the present?

Once you have thought about these general questions, move on to the specific questions below and write responses.

N.B. You should write responses that you would feel comfortable having read or reported, anonymously, to the class. If you have any responses you want kept confidential, for any reason, please send them separately in an e-mail whose subject line includes the word “confidential.” If you would like to give me anonymous feedback, you can type a note and slip it under my office door.

What to write

1. Books, topics, and themes

Do you think you understand the main ideas and arguments of each of the books we have read so far? If not, is there any book in particular that has been troublesome?

Do you think you understand the important connections between the books we have read so far? Do you see common themes emerging from the readings, or do they seem disconnected from one another?

How do the topics and themes of the books we have read so far compare with your expectations for the course before it started?

2. Group handouts

Have the group handouts been helpful for you?

If your group has prepared a handout, were the research and writing helpful for you, in terms of the material you found or developing research skills?

3. Group presentations

Have group presentations helped you to understand the course readings and themes? Do you have any suggestions for future presentations?

If your group has presented, did preparing for the presentation help you better understand the course material? Did the presentation itself help you better understand it?

4. Class discussions

What are you learning from discussion? Could anything be done to make discussions more profitable for you?

How do you feel about your contributions to discussion? Are you satisfied? Could I do anything to improve your contributions?

5. Term paper

Do you feel confident that you have found a term paper topic that interests you?

6. Library resources and library days

Have you found it helpful to have library resources for the course available on the course web page?

Have you found the scheduled library days helpful? Have they made it easier for your group to plan?

7. Workload

For an upper-level, 4-credit honors course for majors, does the workload seem reasonable? Are you spending more than six to eight hours each week outside of class preparing for it?

8. General comments

Overall, are you satisfied with the course so far? Is there any one change that would improve the second half of the course dramatically?

Assessment and grading

If your self-assessment includes serious responses to all of the topics mentioned above under “what to write,” it will get an A. If it is missing some areas, the grade will be lower.

If your self-assessment is late, I will reduce the grade by one-half letter grade for each day they are late (Saturdays count but not Sundays and holidays).

I will respond to your self-assessment to let you know how it matches with my sense of your performance in the seminar to date.