

## **Assessment Guidelines: ENG 2535 (American Gender History)**

The exam consists of two parts:

1. A term paper. You are required to write ca. 7 pages (+/- 10%). (60%)
  - This is an analysis of primary sources (documents) from Sheehan. A general reporting of what scholars or textbook writers say will not be acceptable and will not pass.
  - Students will choose 3-10 documents (primary sources) from the Sheehan book to analyze a specific question of their choice. The number of documents ranges so broadly because some are very short and others are longer. Some give limited information to write about, while others are dense. Because of this, the specific number you choose will not determine your grade, on its own. Choose an appropriate number of documents to construct and support a good argument.
  - Students should present a one-paragraph abstract of their research question by the beginning of class September 28<sup>th</sup>. Include a list of the documents you plan to analyze. You may submit this early if you wish.
  
2. A 2-hour written exam at the end of the term. (40%)
  - The written examination is conducted in the digital examination system Inspira. You will need to familiarize yourself with the digital examination arrangements in Inspira.

A pass mark is required on both parts. Both exam parts have to be taken in the same semester. The exams will be graded separately with a combined final mark. The term paper counts towards 60% of the grade and the 2-hour exam counts towards 40%.

### **Additional information on Term Paper**

- All students had the opportunity to meet with me privately to approve their research question and the choice of sources. A few were given permission to add other sources, in addition to limited choices from Sheehan. This is especially, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* documentary. Even these students need to have documents from Sheehan.
- It is essential that their analysis is based on the primary source documents, with other readings providing support to help them understand the primary sources. (Primary sources are documents written at the time, by people participating or witnessing the events. – the historian’s definition.)
- In answer to student concerns about the length of the paper, especially if they are half a page short: My stand is that this is an estimate. I will not penalize someone for being a bit short, if the answer is good. I will also not give credit for 20 pages that are really a 10-page paper in hiding. The important thing is to focus on writing a good analysis of a question using a set of primary sources.
- Drafts will receive feedback from me. Additionally, each draft will receive two peer reviews during the final class meeting.

Note that both the analysis and the language/presentation are important. Perfect grammar that says nothing is useless. On the other hand, poor writing can bury excellent analysis. Either poor writing or poor analysis can cause failure.

I believe (and tell the students) that as humanities students, critical analysis and writing are the transferable skills that they bring to the jobs they get after they finish school. That makes writing more public than in lower levels, which is one of the reasons for peer review. Additionally, they learn to see things in their own work by reviewing others' work.

## **Exam**

Students have been informed orally that the exam will consist of two parts. Part A is Term Identification. This part will be worth 40% and include 4 Term ID's. Likewise, Part B, which is a short essay, is worth 60%.

Each term is, therefore, worth 10%. Each term is to be graded separately. I use a specific scale that allows for quality assessment within a grade range. Then the 4 terms are added together with the rest of the exam points. I can provide the scale I use or the other grader can use their own. The point is that for fairness, everyone has the same number of points attached to each answer.

Students have been informed that I believe in choice. They will choose 4 term IDs from a total of 8 choices, and 1 short essay from three choices. I specified that all choices are equally valid and that they should choose the options that they believe they can best answer.

I taught them to use the 5 W's (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) to answer a term ID. I specified multiple times orally that having Who, What, When, and Where gets at best a low C or D. To earn a higher grade on a Term ID, Why is essential. That includes why it happened the way it did and why the term is important.

Students have been encouraged to allot their exam time according to the percentage of each question on the exam. This means 12 minutes per term ID, with the rest for the essay, with any breaks subtracting from this.

I have encouraged students to use a mechanical introduction, in which they rewrite the question as a statement as their introduction. They do not have time to write a creative introduction and this format will help them focus and keep on track better. This is culturally different from many colleagues. I have promised them that this form of introduction will NOT count against them. The second grader needs to honor this.

Students must answer the question that is asked. Not answering the question is grounds for failure. There is room for interpretation and analysis within each question option. However, essays that essentially write an AIK (All I know and please have mercy. The answer's in there somewhere, I hope) are unacceptable. I teach this in the context of future work related writing requirements, in which having actual, relevant answers matters.

I have encouraged students to separate the processes of creating and editing in order to avoid writer's block. They should use the last few minutes to proofread, even if they have limited time for full editing and revision.

Throughout all parts of the exam, writing and language matter. However, perfection in that does not override a lousy answer or an irrelevant one. With a timed exam, there is more room for language mistakes than in the paper, though a certain level of competence is essential for communicating ideas fully. There is often a need to balance inconsistent levels of language and analysis. I prefer to grade in terms of how they will be judged professionally after graduation. This means that a good answer and analysis is of primary importance, as long as language provides the ability to communicate that answer well. Poetic writing that says nothing (or says nothing true) will be penalized in their future jobs.