

Evaluation in HIST 431 A Contract Grading System

There are no major exams, no major term papers. The approach to assignments and grading is much more incremental than that, emphasizing modest assignments, reflective writing, sustained discourse, and experiential learning. This approach spreads the work out over the semester, but it also makes it exceedingly important (for both students and instructors) to **keep up and stay on schedule**.

The basic principle in contract grading is that in order to achieve a certain grade, you need to accumulate a certain number of points in the course of the semester. This means that while those with an aptitude for History may have an advantage, because they should score well on certain required work, those who do not have such specific aptitude for the subject can, to a large degree, make up for it by doing additional work. There are two good things about this basic scheme.

1. It values outcomes, achievement, more than raw talent. That's the way it is in the so-called real world, after all.
2. It promotes a work ethic grounded in personal responsibility.

The table at right stipulates the number of points required to achieve a certain letter grade in the course. Please note there are two types of points.

Contract Grading Scale (700 points possible)	Letter Grade	Points Required
	A	630
	B	560
	C	490
	D	420

1. Hard points: points that have to be earned through performance of a specified, required activity. Nothing else can substitute for hard points.
2. Soft points: points earned through performance of other, optional activities. They count just as much as hard points, and you need a certain number of soft points to achieve the grade you want, but they do not substitute for hard points.

The table below shows how hard points and soft points are earned. Follow the links to find out more about the various assignments and requirements. Note that **some assignments have deadlines**, as noted in the spec sheets or in the calendar. Hard points count for 600 points possible. Soft points, as the table below shows, count for 150 points possible.

	Assignment		Points Possible
Hard Points (required assignments)	Response Papers on Lectures	1 response for each of 10 lectures (10 points possible for each)	100
	Response Papers on Essays	1 response for each of 5 essays (10 points possible for each)	50
	Analyses of Primary Documents	1 analysis for each of 5 documents (10 points possible for each)	50
	Webb text, <i>The Great Plains</i>	Quiz	50
		Written response	50
	Attendance & Participation	Attendance - 3 points per class session	75
		In-class & online participation - 3 points per contribution	75
	Fieldwork Project (three options,	German-Russian Community Report	

	choose one)	3D Model of Historic Building	100
		Service Learning (Hutmacher Expedition)	
	Total Hard Points Possible		550

	Assignment	Points Possible (each)
Soft Points (choose assignments)	Book Review (up to four submissions)	30
	Film Review (up to four submissions)	20
	Heritage Food (one submission)	50
	Spillover Attendance Points	3
	Total Soft Points Possible	150

Notice that **all assignments have rubrics for evaluating work**. Pay attention to these! All work is evaluated systematically according to the rubrics. Cover all the stated elements!

As the foregoing material shows, although there are no major exams, there are a lot of assignments and elements to keep track of. It is important that you know where you stand. Moreover, the course strives for a sense of agency and ownership, putting you in charge of your progress. You are charged, therefore, to record and report your own grades. Here is how the process works.

1. You record your scores on this spreadsheet, an Excel file. Notice that it is prepared to receive your scores and for you to attach comments to them. Whenever you receive a grade, or accomplish some task for which credit is awarded, record your points in this spread sheet.
2. At three points during the semester you will be asked to turn in your grade sheet, submitted as an attachment to a Facebook message. The third submission, at end of term, is for the purpose of determining your final grade. The two interim submissions (see

calendar for dates) are for the purpose of seeing that you are keeping up with course work and recording it.

3. A certain number of items in each submission will be spot-checked, confirming that the work was submitted and graded as recorded.

Finally, we need to avoid the problem of students turning in a glut of assignments at the end of the semester. They need to be spaced out through the term. Take this into account as you plan your work; do assignments early, take the pressure off yourself. As a baseline of prevention against end-of-term glut, however, we have certain simple ground rules for submission of assignments.

Quiz & Response on Webb	As noted in the calendar
Fieldwork Project	As noted in the calendar
Response Papers on Lectures and Essays, Analyses of Primary Documents	Within 1 week of conclusion of lecture
Reviews for Soft Points	No more than one submission in any 7-day period
Bonus for Early Birds	Compile 100 soft points by spring break, and receive 20 bonus points to be added to your total points at end of term