Syracuse University
Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment

assessment.syr.edu

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Rubric Guide

For this and additional resources visit: assessment.syr.edu/assessment/resources/

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Rubric Guide Overview

Rubrics are primarily used at the course level, but can also be used at the program level. By the end of this guide you should be able to:

- explain what a rubric is and the benefits of using rubrics,
- create your own rubrics,
- adapt existing rubrics,
- evaluate the quality of your rubrics,
- use rubrics for assessment at both the course and program levels.

Several resources are included in this guide, including references about the use of rubrics in higher education, further information about developing and using rubrics, and links to online guides about creating and using rubrics. The following additional resources are included as appendices: rubric templates, rubric scale wording options, and example rubrics.

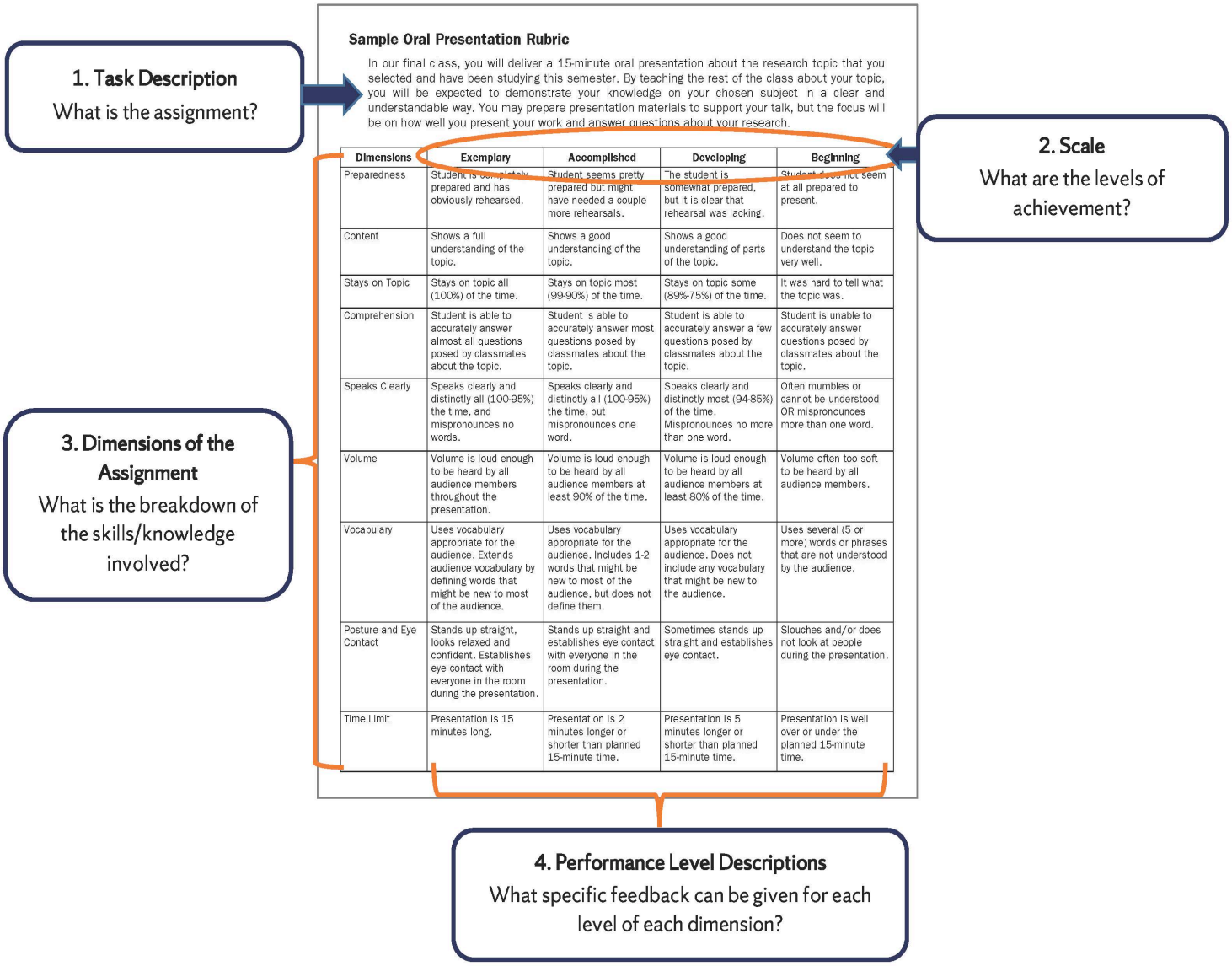
The Assessment Working Team, from the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Office, is available for consultation, presentations, and workshops on assessment-related topics. If you would like assistance, contact us assessment@syr.edu.

What is a Rubric?

Rubrics are valuable tools used to assess student learning at the course and program level. When used at the course level, a rubric:[1]

- is a scoring instrument that demonstrates assignment expectations.
- divides the assignment into various dimensions.
- provides a detailed description for each dimension's varying performance levels.
- can be used to grade and assess a variety of assignments such as book critiques, lab reports, group work, research papers, class participation and discussion, portfolios, oral presentations, and other assignments.

Parts of a Rubric



Sample Oral Presentation Rubric

In our final class, you will deliver a 15-minute oral presentation about the research topic that you selected and have been studying this semester. By teaching the rest of the class about your topic, you will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge on your chosen subject in a clear and understandable way. You may prepare presentation materials to support your talk, but the focus will be on how well you present your work and answer questions about your research.

Dimensions	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Beginning
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.
Content	Shows a full understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic.	Does not seem to understand the topic very well.
Stays on Topic	Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.	Stays on topic most (99-90%) of the time.	Stays on topic some (89%-75%) of the time.	It was hard to tell what the topic was.
Comprehension	Student is able to accurately answer almost all questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is able to accurately answer most questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is able to accurately answer a few questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is unable to accurately answer questions posed by classmates about the topic.
Speaks Clearly	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, and mispronounces no words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, but mispronounces one word.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most (94-85%) of the time. Mispronounces no more than one word.	Often mumbles or cannot be understood OR mispronounces more than one word.
Volume	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time.	Volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members.
Vocabulary	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Extends audience vocabulary by defining words that might be new to most of the audience.	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Includes 1-2 words that might be new to most of the audience, but does not define them.	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Does not include any vocabulary that might be new to the audience.	Uses several (5 or more) words or phrases that are not understood by the audience.
Posture and Eye Contact	Stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Stands up straight and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact.	Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation.
Time Limit	Presentation is 15 minutes long.	Presentation is 2 minutes longer or shorter than planned 15-minute time.	Presentation is 5 minutes longer or shorter than planned 15-minute time.	Presentation is well over or under the planned 15-minute time.

[1] Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2013). *Introduction to rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback, and promote student learning* (2nd ed.). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

What Are the Benefits to Using a Rubric?

Rubrics are beneficial for students and faculty, since their use adds transparency to the grading process.[2]

For students, rubrics:

- clarify the instructor's expectations regarding the assignment.
- provide criteria for achieving learning outcomes.
- can be used as a guide when developing their assignment.

For faculty, rubrics:

- can be used to assess any criteria or behavior.
- help to make the grading process quicker, fairer, and more transparent.
- allow for consistent grading, from the first assignment through the very last.
- serve as a reliable grading scale.

For discussions after the student work is graded, rubrics:

- serve as documentation of the grading process, should student questions arise.
- reduce ambiguity about how an assignment was graded.
- show students the level at which they performed.
- to help target areas for student improvement.

[2] Fulbright, S. (2016, March 21). Using rubrics as a defense against grade appeals. *FacultyFocus.com*. Retrieved from www.facultyfocus.com/articles/instructional-design/rubrics-as-a-defense- against-grade-appeals/

How Do I Create a Rubric?

There are four main stages involved in constructing a rubric:[3]

Stage 1: Reflecting

- Reflect on what you want from students, what are your expectations, why you created the assignment, and what students learned from the assignment in the past.

Stage 2: Listing

- Focus on the assignment dimensions as well as the details of the assignment. These dimensions vary according to the program learning outcomes, course learning objectives, students's year of study, the assignment itself, and your experience giving and grading the assignment.
- Once you have identified the assignment dimensions, create a description for the highest performance level you expect from students for each dimension.

Stage 3: Grouping & Labeling

- Reflect on Stages 1 and 2 to group similar expectations and results together in what will become the rubric dimensions (e.g., organization, context, analysis, presentation, etc...).
- Remember this is an iterative process. Some performance expectations do not fit neatly into one group. Feedback from your fellow faculty members or TAs are encouraged.

Stage 4: Application

- Apply the dimensions and descriptions from Stages 2 and 3 to the final form of the rubric, using a grid format.
- Determine the appropriate scale you want to use and label each accordingly.
- Complete the descriptions for the other performance levels in the rubric grid. Since the highest level is already complete, start with the lowest performance level and then create descriptions for middle levels.

How Do I Adapt a Rubric?

You may choose to adapt an existing rubric provided by your department, fellow colleagues, field experts, or reference guides. Keep in mind that the adapted rubric must communicate the assignment expectations for students; therefore, using the above stages is suggested to structure the rubric. Two factors are important to consider when adapting a rubric:[3]

1. Time - does using the existing rubric save time?
2. Suitability - does the existing rubric meet the assignment and/or program learning dimensions/outcomes?

If the existing rubric meets these criteria, then it is worth examining for possible application.
For more information and examples, refer to the Rubric Resources section of this guide as well as on the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment website.

[3] Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2013). *Introduction to rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback, and promote student learning* (2nd ed.). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

How Do I Evaluate the Quality of My Rubric?

Whether you create your own rubric or adapt someone else's rubric, you should review the finished rubric to evaluate its overall quality. Below is a metarubric, created by Stevens and Levi,[4] which can be used for this purpose.

Rubric Part	Evaluation Criteria	Yes	No
The dimensions	Does each dimension cover important parts of the final student performance? Does the dimension capture some key themes in your teaching? Are the dimensions clear? Are the dimensions distinctly different from each other? Do the dimensions represent skills that the student knows something about already (e.g., organization, analysis, using conventions)?		
The descriptions	Do the descriptions match the dimensions? Are the descriptions clear and different from each other? If you used points, is there a clear basis for assigning points for each dimension? If using a three- to five-level rubric, are the descriptions appropriately and equally weighted across levels?		
The scale	Do the descriptors under each level truly represent that level of performance? Are the scale labels (e.g., exemplary, competent, beginning) encouraging and still quite informative without being negative and discouraging? Does the rubric have a reasonable number of levels for the age of the student and the complexity of the assignment?		
The overall rubric	Does the rubric clearly connect to the outcomes that it is designed to measure? Can the rubric be understood by external audiences (avoids jargon and technical language)? Does it reflect teachable skills? Does the rubric reward or penalize students based on skills unrelated to the outcome being measured that you have not taught? Have all students had an equal opportunity to learn the content and skills necessary to be successful on the assignment? Is the rubric appropriate for the conditions under which the assignment was completed? Does the rubric address the student's performance as a developmental task? Does the rubric inform the student about the evaluation procedures when his or her work is scored? Does the rubric emphasize the appraisal of individual or group performance and indicate ways to improve?		
Fairness and sensibility	Does it look like the rubric will be fair to all students and free of bias? Does it look like it will be useful to students as performance feedback? Is the rubric practical given the kind of assignment? Does the rubric make sense to the reader?		

[4] Reprinted with permission from Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2013). *Introduction to rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback, and promote student learning* (2nd ed.). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

How Can Rubrics Be Used to Assess an Academic Program?

In program level assessment, faculty determine how well students are achieving the program learning outcomes across the curriculum rather than in one course or level (i.e., first-year student versus senior). The use of rubrics enhances a program's ability to assess student learning. Rubrics are most beneficial when their creation and use becomes a regular part of the academic program's functioning. Faculty may choose to design their own rubrics or adapt existing rubrics that have been nationally developed and recognized by faculty in their discipline.

For instance, the Association of American Colleges and Universities has created the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics, a set of rubrics that offers models of assessment to any college or university interested in using rubrics to measure a variety of outcomes and for any form of assessment.[5]

The VALUE rubrics reflect the shared language of the academe and work of over 100 faculty members. While some situations call for the rubrics to be adapted verbatim, that is not their intention. Rather, they are designed to serve as models that provide a basic framework for faculty members to use to create their own assessment rubrics.[6] The VALUE rubric experts worked in teams to produce 16 rubrics in three categories:[7]

Intellectual and Practical Skills	Personal and Social Responsibility	Integrative and Applied Learning
• Inquiry and analysis • Critical thinking • Creative thinking • Written communication • Oral communication • Reading • Quantitative literacy • Information literacy • Teamwork • Problem solving	• Civic engagement (local and global) • Intercultural knowledge and competence • Ethical reasoning • Foundations and skills for lifelong learning • Global learning	• Integrative learning

[5] Adler-Kassner, L., Rutz, C., & Harrington, S. (2010). A guide for how faculty can get started using the VALUE rubrics. In T. L. Rhodes (Ed.), *Assessing outcomes and improving achievement: Tips and tools for using rubrics* (pp. 19-20). Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

[6] Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2013). *Introduction to rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback, and promote student learning* (2nd ed.). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

[7] Association of American Colleges & Universities. (2009). Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics.

How to Norm Rubrics for Program Level Assessment

The norming process encourages program faculty to come together to test a rubric or set of rubrics using the same sample of student work. This calibration activity ensures that student work is being assessed in a similar and consistent way across the program. The norming process allows faculty to discuss scores and develop a shared framework of how the program learning outcomes might be achieved or reinforced throughout the curriculum.[8] The norming process has several steps:

Context

- The facilitator(s) convene the faculty group participating in the norming session.
- The facilitator(s) set expectations for the norming session, keep the group on task, and conclude in the time frame agreed upon (i.e., 1-2 hours).
- Provide the faculty group with information on program level assessment and rubrics featured in this guide.
- Discuss how rubrics will aid the program level assessment process.

Materials

- Provide the faculty group with samples of student work that represents various performance levels (i.e., low to high performance).
- Provide the faculty group with program learning outcomes and rubrics used to measure outcomes.

Individual Ratings

- Faculty should take time to read the program learning outcomes and rubric.
- Faculty should be familiar with the rubric dimensions and performance criteria.
- Faculty should use the rubric to score the first sample of student work independently.

Discussion & Consensus

- The facilitator(s) should collect the scores and lead a discussion to identify patterns where the scores align and where they differ.
- The faculty group should discuss their individual scores as well as listen to their colleagues' perspectives.
- The group should come to a consensus when scoring student work to ensure a level of consistency in interpreting and applying the rubric.

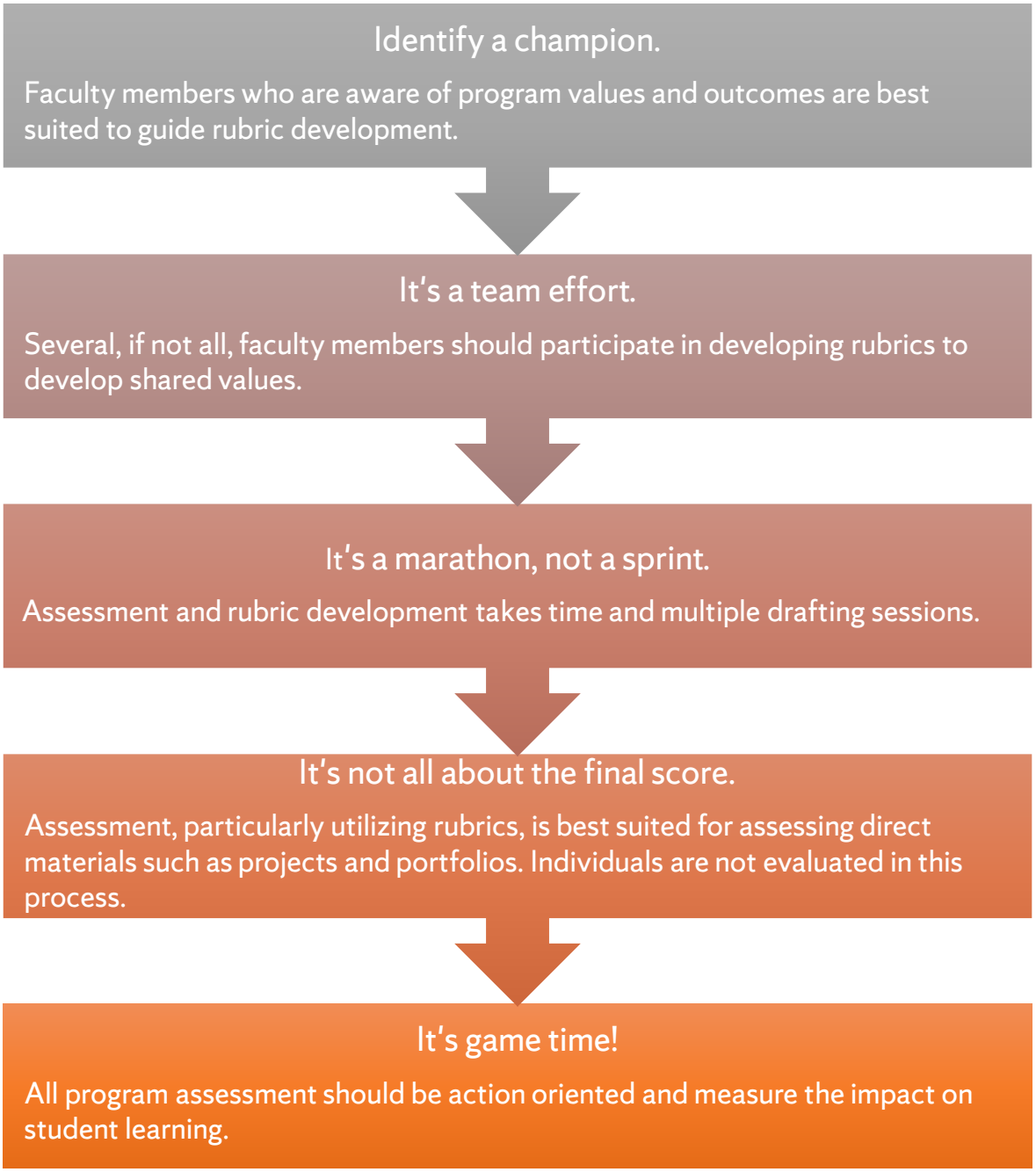
Ongoing Process

- Once the norming session is concluded, faculty can independently score the remaining samples of student work.
- The facilitator(s) should reconvene the faculty group two to three times to score samples of student work from various performance levels so faculty can clearly attest to why student work is assessed.
- When the group reconvenes, discuss the rubric application to determine if it has to be refined or revised accordingly.

[8] Office of Assessment of Teaching and Learning. (2016). *Quick guide to norming on student work for program-level assessment*. Pullman, WA: Washington State University.

Rules for Good Program Assessment Using Rubrics

Developing program level rubrics requires collaboration among faculty teaching in the program. This collaborative process ensures that the academic program develops shared values and resources, and is invested in improving student learning. Stevens and Levi suggest that faculty members keep the following rules in mind to help "guide the development of successful and representative program rubrics":[9]



[9] Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2013). *Introduction to rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback, and promote student learning* (2nd ed.). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Rubric Resources

Reference Guide

Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2013). *Introduction to rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback, and promote student learning* (2nd ed.). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Further Information about Developing and Using Rubrics

Almagno, S. (2016, February 15). Rubrics: An undervalued teaching tool. *FacultyFocus.com*. Retrieved from http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/rubrics-an-undervalued-teaching-tool

Andrade, H. G. (2005). Teaching with rubrics: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *College Teaching, 53*(1), 27-30.

Andrade, H., & Du, Y. (2005). Student perspectives on rubric-referenced assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 10*(5), 1-11. Retrieved from http://www.pareonline.net/pdf/v10n3.pdf

Fulbright, S. (2016, March 21). Using rubrics as a defense against grade appeals. *FacultyFocus.com*. Retrieved from www.facultyfocus.com/articles/instructional-design/rubrics-as-a-defense-against-grade-appeals/

Harrell, M. (2005). Grading according to a rubric. *Teaching Philosophy, 28*(1), 3-15.

Holmes, C., & Oakleaf, M. (2013). The official (and unofficial) rules for norming rubrics successfully. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 39*(6), 599-602.

Little, D. (2006, Fall). Grading with rubrics: Developing a fair and efficient assessment tool. *Teaching Concerns*. Retrieved from http://cte.virginia.edu/resources/grading-with-rubrics-developing-a-fair-and-efficient-assessment-tool/

Office of Assessment of Teaching and Learning. (2016). *Quick guide to norming on student work for program-level assessment*. Pullman, WA: Washington State University. Retrieved from https://atl.wsu.edu/documents/2015/03/rubrics-norming.pdf

Rhodes, T. L. (2011/2012). Emerging evidence on using rubrics. *Peer Review, 13/14*(4/1), 4-5.

Riebe, L., & Jackson, D. (2014). The use of rubrics in benchmarking and assessing employability skills. *Journal of Management Education, 38*(3), 319-344.

Suskie, L. (2015, August 9). An assessment beach read: Where did rubrics come from? *A Common Sense Approach to Assessment & Accreditation*. Retrieved from http://www.lindasuskie.com/apps/blog/show/43477819-an-assessment-beach-read-where-did-rubrics-come-from-AAC&U

Tierney, R., Simon, M. (2004). What's still wrong with rubrics: Focusing on the consistency of performance criteria across scale levels. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 9*(2). Retrieved from http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=9&n=2

Timmerman, B. E. C., Strickland, D. C., Johnson, R. L., & Payne, J. R. (2011). Development of a 'universal' rubric for assessing undergraduates' scientific reasoning skills using scientific writing. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 36*(5), 509-547.

Other Useful Resources

Assessment Rubrics. In *Assessment Commons: Internet resources for higher education outcomes assessment*. Available at http://www.assessmentcommons.org/

Goobric, recently created by Google, is a rubrics-based assessment tool and web app that allows teachers to assess students' work in Google Drive:

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/goobric-web-app-launcher/cepmakjlanepojocakadfpohnhhalfol?hl=en)

Goobric is an extension for the Chrome web browser that works with another Chrome extension, Doctopus, a tool for teachers to manage, organize, and assess student projects:

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/doctopus/ffhegaddkjpkfiemhhnphmnadfbkdhbf?hl=en

A brief video explaining how both of these web apps work is available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_1501476915&feature=iv&src_vid=evFN1m82JiY&v=yqrLvpNTNHo

RubiStar is a free tool to help teachers create rubrics. It can be a useful way to start building a rubric to ensure that the terms used to describe performance levels are consistent. Rubrics created within RubiStar all have customizable text, so that you can adapt a rubric to suit a particular assignment or task. You can also download the draft rubrics you create into Microsoft Excel format, where they can be further edited and revised. More information about how to create a rubric in RubiStar is in the site's tutorial, available here: http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php. The Sample Oral Presentation Rubric that is included in this guide was created using RubiStar.

Appendix A: Rubric Templates

To help you in creating your own rubrics from scratch and/or adapting existing rubrics, two templates are included here. You may want to review Appendix B: Example Rubrics in this guide to view other ways in which rubrics can be constructed and what kinds of language may be used, as appropriate to your discipline and the task being assessed.

The first template is for a three-level rubric, which includes:

- prompts for an appropriate task description;
- a scale (which can be modified) of exemplary, accomplished, and developing;
- a column and prompts for the dimensions of the task; and
- columns and prompts for descriptions of the performance levels for each dimension of the task.

If desired, this grid can be expanded to add more levels to the scale (e.g., increase it from three levels to four or five) by adding columns.

The second template is for a scoring guide rubric (also known as a holistic rubric), which includes:

- prompts for an appropriate task description;
- a column and prompt for the dimensions of the task;
- a column and prompt for descriptions of the highest level of performance levels for each dimension of the task;
- a column for comments about performance relative to the ideal of each dimension; and
- a column for points scored for the dimension.

Stevens and Levi (2013) noted that scoring guide rubrics require more explanation in the form of written comments and are more time-consuming than grading with a three-to-five level rubric.

Due to the more specific feedback that the use of these rubrics may be used to provide, they may be better suited for assessing the work of graduate students. Graduate programs may also find scoring guide rubrics more suitable for their needs than three- to five-level rubrics.

Three-Level Rubric Template

Task Description: [Include a clear task description of the assignment here, such as what you might include in a syllabus. Elements of an excellent task description include (a) a descriptive title for the assignment; (b) the purpose of the assignment (why do you want students to do it, and how does it fit with the course objectives?); (c) definitions of any key terms, if needed; (d) support (e.g., will you allow drafts? Provide examples in class?); and (e) scope (e.g., the details of what a final version of the assignment should look like, due dates, format, how it should be submitted).]

Dimensions	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing
[What are the components on which students will be graded? Include those in this column.]	[What is a description of the highest performance possible of this dimension?]	[What is a mid-range example of performance of this dimension?]	[What might have been accomplished but was not for this dimension?]

Scoring Guide Rubric Template

Task Description: [Include a clear task description of the assignment here, such as what you might include in a syllabus. Elements of an excellent task description include (a) a descriptive title for the assignment; (b) the purpose of the assignment (why do you want students to do it, and how does it fit with the course objectives?); (c) definitions of any key terms, if needed; (d) support (e.g., will you allow drafts? Provide examples in class?); and (e) scope (e.g., the details of what a final version of the assignment should look like, due dates, format, how it should be submitted).]

Dimensions	Description of the Highest Level of Performance	Comments	Points
[What are the components on which students will be graded? Include those in this column.]	[What is a description of the highest performance possible of this dimension? Include that in this column.]	[Include comments about performance relative to the ideal of the dimension here.]	[Write in points earned for the dimension here.]

Appendix B: Rubric Scale Wording Options

Included in this appendix are examples of terms that can be used to describe different scale levels for three-, four-, and five-level rubrics. Recall that Stevens and Levi (2013) advocated for the use of clear and tactful scale labels that are positive and active.

Three-Level Rubric Scale Examples

3	2	1
Advanced	Intermediate	Beginner
Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Working toward Expectations
Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing
Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Exemplary	Competent	Needs Work
Exemplary	Intermediate	Novice
High	Intermediate	Beginning
High Mastery	Average Mastery	Low Mastery
Proficient	Intermediate	Beginning
Proficient	Intermediate	Novice

Four-Level Rubric Scale Examples

4	3	2	1
Accomplished	Average	Developing	Beginning
Accomplished	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Beginning
Exceeding	Meeting	Developing	Beginning
Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Near Expectations	Starting toward Expectations
Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair
Excellent Work	Standard Work	Work in Progress	Getting Started
Exceptional	Excellent	Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Exemplary	Acceptable	Developing	Emerging
Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Beginning
Exemplary	Excellent	Acceptable	In Progress

Four-Level Rubric Scale Examples (continued)

4	3	2	1
Exemplary	Proficient	Progressing	Beginning
Expert	Master	Apprentice	Novice
Mastery	Partial Mastery	Progressing	Emerging
Mastery	Proficient	Developing	Novice
Sophisticated	Competent	Partly Competent	Not Yet Competent
Sophisticated	Highly Competent	Fairly Competent	Not Yet Competent
Standard of Excellence	Approaching Standard of Excellence	Meets Acceptable Standard	Does Not Yet Meet Acceptable Standard
Superior	Accomplished	Adequate	Needs Work
Superior	Good	Fair	Needs Work

Five-Level Rubric Scale Examples

5	4	3	2	1
Excellent	Above Average	Sufficient	Minimal	Beginning
Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Needs Work
Exemplary	Accomplished	Acceptable	Minimally Acceptable	Emerging
Exemplary	Very Good	Competent	Marginal	Not Proficient
Innovating	Applying	Developing	Beginning	Not Using
Master	Distinguished	Proficient	Intermediate	Novice

Appendix C: Example Rubrics

Included in this appendix are examples of rubrics that faculty may use to guide their work at the course or program level. There are three rubric examples provided:

- The first is the Critical Thinking VALUE rubric, one of the rubrics related to intellectual and practical skills.
- The second is a sample oral presentation rubric, which was created with RubiStar (http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php) and adjusted to suit the example assignment.
- The third is a writing rubric, created for the WRT 105 course (*Studio 1: Practices of Academic Writing*) of the Writing Program at Syracuse University.

In addition to the VALUE, oral presentation, and writing rubrics, there are several resources listed in the Rubric Resources section of this guide.

CRITICAL THINKING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Association of American Colleges and Universities

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Framing Language

This rubric is designed to be transdisciplinary, reflecting the recognition that success in all disciplines requires habits of inquiry and analysis that share common attributes. Further, research suggests that successful critical thinkers from all disciplines increasingly need to be able to apply those habits in various and changing situations encountered in all walks of life.

This rubric is designed for use with many different types of assignments and the suggestions here are not an exhaustive list of possibilities. Critical thinking can be demonstrated in assignments that require students to complete analyses of text, data, or issues. Assignments that cut across presentation mode might be especially useful in some fields. If insight into the process components of critical thinking (e.g., how information sources were evaluated regardless of whether they were included in the product) is important, assignments focused on student reflection might be especially illuminating.

Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Ambiguity: Information that may be interpreted in more than one way.
- Assumptions: Ideas, conditions, or beliefs (often implicit or unstated) that are "taken for granted or accepted as true without proof." (quoted from www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/assumptions)
- Context: The historical, ethical, political, cultural, environmental, or circumstantial settings or conditions that influence and complicate the consideration of any issues, ideas, artifacts, and events.
- Literal meaning: Interpretation of information exactly as stated. For example, "she was green with envy" would be interpreted to mean that her skin was green.
- Metaphor: Information that is (intended to be) interpreted in a non-literal way. For example, "she was green with envy" is intended to convey an intensity of emotion, not a skin color.

CRITICAL THINKING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	**Milestones**		**Benchmark**
	4	3	2	1
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence *Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion*	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

Sample Oral Presentation Rubric

In our final class, you will deliver a 15-minute oral presentation about the research topic that you selected and have been studying this semester. By teaching the rest of the class about your topic, you will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge on your chosen subject in a clear and understandable way. You may prepare presentation materials to support your talk, but the focus will be on how well you present your work and answer questions about your research.

Dimensions	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Beginning
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.
Content	Shows a full understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic.	Does not seem to understand the topic very well.
Stays on Topic	Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.	Stays on topic most (99-90%) of the time.	Stays on topic some (89%-75%) of the time.	It was hard to tell what the topic was.
Comprehension	Student is able to accurately answer almost all questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is able to accurately answer most questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is able to accurately answer a few questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is unable to accurately answer questions posed by classmates about the topic.
Speaks Clearly	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, and mispronounces no words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, but mispronounces one word.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most (94-85%) of the time. Mispronounces no more than one word.	Often mumbles or cannot be understood OR mispronounces more than one word.
Volume	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time.	Volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members.
Vocabulary	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Extends audience vocabulary by defining words that might be new to most of the audience.	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Includes 1-2 words that might be new to most of the audience, but does not define them.	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Does not include any vocabulary that might be new to the audience.	Uses several (5 or more) words or phrases that are not understood by the audience.
Posture and Eye Contact	Stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Stands up straight and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact.	Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation.
Time Limit	Presentation is 15 minutes long.	Presentation is 2 minutes longer or shorter than planned 15-minute time.	Presentation is 5 minutes longer or shorter than planned 15-minute time.	Presentation is well over or under the planned 15-minute time.

Syracuse University Writing Program (WRT 105) Rubric Example

An example of a rubric and related materials that have been used at Syracuse University for WRT 105 (*Studio 1: Practices of Academic Writing*), a writing course in the College of Arts and Sciences that is part of the Liberal Skills Requirement of the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum, are included on the following pages. These materials are shared courtesy of Writing Program Senior Lecturer Jonna Gilfus, PhD, and were created through collaboration between Dr. Gilfus and Writing Program Senior Lecturer Anne Fitzsimmons.

The materials shared here include an introduction to the unit and its context, written by Dr. Gilfus, as well as a glimpse into her thought process when developing the assessment materials for the unit. Also included for the unit are a task description, a list of evaluation criteria, and an evaluation summary and rubric.

Introduction to the Unit

This is the second unit in a 3-unit sequence for our introductory writing course, WRT 105. Here's a little intro from our course description that might help situate the aims of the course:

> ...Students explore composing as it relates to different social contexts and media. As students inquire into composing in contexts, they understand their own writing and development with heightened awareness, with the goal of adopting an agile, adaptive, resourceful stance toward future writing situations in academic, professional and civic realms.

In this particular course design, students began their work in unit 1 exploring various literacies and learning to ask new questions about literacy and its relationship to cultures and communities, identities and ideologies, and technologies and media.

We centered the second unit on the exploration and analysis of a particular type of literacy, in this case, digital literacies. Students chose a particular object for analysis (see the "task description" included) and spent about 5 weeks learning to do in-depth analysis, reading texts to help with their inquiry, learning to make and support claims with evidence, and practicing with integrating primary and secondary source material in analytic writing. They produced a final piece of analytic writing for Expressions, our SU digital Wordpress space, and they also wrote a reflective essay about their own process, strategies and work as writers.

I think rubrics should be used with care. A big part of our new curriculum is devoted to developing students' awareness of genre and writing situations, focusing more on metacognition and encouraging students' experimentation and even playfulness with genre. For me, the rubric is a tool that should be tuned in to a specific assignment, and designed to respond to a particular writing situation.

I usually provide the students with evaluation criteria before the assignment is due. These then become the basis for the rubric. I sometimes develop the individual descriptors for the rubric in response to their submissions. In other words, I read through all the papers quickly, looking for trends and patterns, and develop the rubric as a way to focus their attention on specific aspects of the work. The categories are stable, but the individual boxes are tailored toward a particular set of student work. In this model, the rubric is not so much for purposes of "accuracy" in grading as it is a way to continue to teach even after the "final" draft is completed. It also allows me to analyze what students might have learned about the various criteria in a specific teaching unit.

Finally, I almost never just give a rubric alone in my evaluation. I feel like it provides a starting point for me to have a conversation about their work, rather than an ending.

Task Description

WRT 105
Fall 2014
Unit 2: Situating Digital Literacies

> Youth must become media literate. When they engage with media— either as consumers or producers— they need to have the skills to ask questions about the construction and dissemination of particular media artifacts. What biases are embedded in the artifact? How did the creator intend for an audience to interpret that artifact, and what are the consequences of that interpretation?
>
> ~boyd in *It's Complicated*

> As an anthropologist, I think of media slightly differently than most people. I don't think of it as content, and I don't even think of it as tools of communication. I think of media as mediating human relationship, and that's important because when media change then human relationships change.
>
> ~Wesch in *An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube*

The Writing Situation:

In this unit, we will consider questions surrounding digital literacy. What is digital literacy? How might it relate to overall literacy development in today's culture? Why does it matter? What are the ethical, social and cultural implications of composing in new media?

For this assignment, I'd like you to begin with these questions, and then use the readings and discussion we have been doing over the unit to zoom in on a particular site of analysis. For example, you might:

- Analyze a website or other digital artifact, such as a viral advertisement or Wikipedia "edits" page. Look closely at the way it attends to the visitor's needs or welcomes/inhibits interaction through textual or visual choices, organization and design. What does it reveal about those who built it and those who use it? What/who does it leave out? Make connections to the ideas and theories from the readings over the unit.

- Analyze a particular digital discourse community. Start with something small enough to do an adequate in-depth analysis (in other words, don't try to tackle Facebook or You Tube). You might, for example, analyze an online support group, or special interest group designed around an interest in gaming or a hobby. What happens there? What never happens? What seem to be the patterns, intersections and "rules" of communication for members? Who might be excluded, intentionally or unintentionally? How? Make connections to ideas and theories from our readings.

- Analyze an important moment or experience in your own digital literacy development. Start with something that seems important, but that you are willing to think more about and put into conversation with larger questions of digital literacy. You might, for example, analyze a moment were confronted with how public social media truly is for the first time. What does your experience reveal about the larger questions regarding digital literacies—those of intended audiences, interpretations or consequences?

No matter what you chose as a primary site for your analysis, there are a few things you'll be expected do include:

- Thoughtful, in-depth analysis of your site that draws on your new understanding of digital mediums.

- Careful, explicit claims about what you are noticing—interpretations developed through your analysis.

- A clear sense of purpose for the writing that takes into account what's at stake and the "so what?" question a reader is likely to have.

- Integration and synthesis of at least one of the readings we worked on together in your writing.

- Attention to style and arrangement of words, images and ideas that invites your audience to see something new through your analysis.

- A reflective memo describing the choices you made and your process as a writer.

Your audience for this writing is your fellow students and others interested in digital literacy. For example, you might think of this writing as something that could be submitted to our own Syracuse University undergraduate journal, *Intertext*: http://surface.syr.edu/intertext/
Or an undergrad journal more specifically examining these issues, such as *Digital America*: http://www.digitalamerica.org

Evaluation Criteria

WRT 105: Unit 2 Evaluation Criteria

[1] Does the essay reflect the writer's engagement with relevant literacies? That is, is the analysis characterized by new awareness of or engagement with the unit-specific literacies? [This might be evident through the writer's use of specific literacy concepts or through a particular perspective on the subject].

[2] Does the writer organize the essay effectively, starting with an explicitly interpretive thesis, analytical claims and supporting evidence, appropriate, thoughtful interpretations, and transitions that avoid simple chronological shifts? Does the writer link claims and evidence back to the original thesis, "evolving" it throughout the paper?

[3] Is there a clear sense of *purpose* for the writing that takes into account what's at stake and the "so what?" question a reader is likely to have?

[4] Does the writer demonstrate an awareness of *audience*? For example, does the writer raise and answer questions readers are likely to have? Does the writer use a voice and style (that is, construct a *persona*) that is situationally appropriate and effective?

[5] Are the introduction and conclusion appropriately 'social'? For example, does the introduction escort a reader into the analysis by providing appropriate *context*, and does the conclusion escort the reader out of the discussion through 'culmination' and 'send off'?

[6] Does the writer make use of relevant and appropriate affordances—e.g. pull quotes, images, etc.— to make the project visually engaging and persuasive?

[7] Does the title provocatively focus the reader's attention?

[8] Does the writer use MLA in-text citation [if relevant] and a Works Cited page correctly?

[9] Did the writer edit for grammar, style, and usage effectively?

Unit Evaluation Summary and Rubric

WRT 105
Unit 2 Evaluation *Fall 2015*

Dear ,

Below please find my holistic response to your work across Unit 2. Your polished work (including the formal visual literacy analysis blog post, all discussion posts, in-class writing, informal writing, peer review and conferencing) is worth a total of 25 points. The reflection you posted on Blackboard is worth 10 points. At the end of my comments you'll also find a shaded rubric with criteria specific to the analysis. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns after reading through my response.

Polished Work & Invention (worth 25 points)

Reflection (worth 10 points)

Totals

Polished Work and Invention:	/25
Reflection Grade:	/10
Overall Unit 2 Grade:	/35

WRT 105: Unit 2 Evaluation Rubric

Criteria	NA	1	2	3	4
Engagement with visual literacies		Little evidence of writer's engagement with visual literacies through the writer's use of specific literacy concepts or through a particular perspective on the digital literacies.	Some evidence of writer's engagement with visual literacies through the writer's use of specific literacy concepts or through a particular perspective on the visual literacies, but this may be limited or there are missed opportunities.	Clear evidence of writer's engagement with visual literacies through the writer's use of specific literacy concepts or through a particular perspective on the visual literacies.	Exceptional engagement with visual literacies through the writer's use of specific literacy concepts or through a particular perspective on the visual literacies.
Organization and Evolving Thesis		The organization makes the essay difficult to understand. There is no clear evidence of an explicitly interpretive thesis, analytical claims and supporting evidence, appropriate, thoughtful interpretations, and/or transitions that avoid simple chronological shifts. Claims and evidence are not linked back to the original thesis, "evolving" it throughout the paper.	The essay has some sense of purposeful organization. For example, there may be some evidence of an explicitly interpretive thesis, analytical claims and supporting evidence, appropriate, thoughtful interpretations, and/or transitions that avoid simple chronological shifts. Claims and evidence are not always clearly linked back to the original thesis, "evolving" it throughout the paper.	The essay is mostly effectively organized. There is evidence of an explicitly interpretive thesis, analytical claims and supporting evidence, appropriate, thoughtful interpretations, and transitions that avoid simple chronological shifts. Claims and evidence are mostly linked back to the original thesis, "evolving" it throughout the paper.	The essay is highly effective in terms of organization, with an explicitly interpretive thesis, analytical claims and supporting evidence, appropriate, thoughtful interpretations, and/or transitions that avoid simple chronological shifts. Claims and evidence are not linked back to the original thesis, "evolving" it throughout the paper.
Purpose (aka... "so what?")		The sense of *purpose* for the writing is unclear. It does not seem to take into account what's at stake and the "so what?" question a reader is likely to have.	There is some sense of *purpose* for the writing, but the essay misses many opportunities to address what's at stake and the "so what?" question a reader is likely to have.	The *purpose* for the writing is mostly clear and takes into account what's at stake and the "so what?" question a reader is likely to have.	The *purpose* for the writing is completely clear and takes into account what's at stake and the "so what?" question a reader is likely to have.
Awareness of Audience **Voice & Style (*persona*)**		There is a lack of awareness of *audience*-- questions readers are likely to have are not raised or answered. The voice and style (*persona*) detracts from the text because it is not situationally appropriate and effective.	The writer does not always demonstrate clear awareness of *audience*-- questions readers are likely to have may not be addressed. The voice and style (*persona*) of the text does not appear to be completely situationally appropriate and effective overall.	The writer demonstrates good awareness of *audience*--raising and answering most questions readers are likely to have. The voice and style (*persona*) is generally situationally appropriate and effective.	The writer demonstrates clear awareness of *audience*--raising and answering questions readers are likely to have. The voice and style (*persona*) enhances the text because it is situationally appropriate and effective.

Criteria	NA	1	2	3	4
Intro and conclusion		The introduction and conclusion miss the mark in terms of being 'social'. For example, the introduction does not escort a reader into the analysis by providing appropriate *context*, and the conclusion does not escort the reader out of the discussion through 'culmination' and 'send off'.	The introduction and conclusion have some evidence of being 'social' in design. But the introduction may not fully escort a reader into the analysis by providing appropriate *context*, and/or the conclusion may not escort the reader out of the discussion through 'culmination' and 'send off'.	The introduction and conclusion are appropriately 'social'. For example, the introduction escorts a reader into the analysis by providing appropriate *context*, and the conclusion escorts the reader out of the discussion through 'culmination' and 'send off'.	The introduction and conclusion are exceptionally 'social'. The introduction escorts a reader into the analysis by providing appropriate *context*, and the conclusion escorts the reader out of the discussion through 'culmination' and 'send off'?
Visual Appeal		The writer has done little or nothing to make use of the affordances of a digital medium (pull quotes, images, subheadings and layout choices)	There is some evidence of the writer making use of affordances of a digital medium (pull quotes, images, subheadings and layout choices), but also missed opportunities.	The writer has generally made good use of the digital medium to enhance the writing medium (e.g. pull quotes, images, subheadings and layout choices).	The writer's choices in terms of visual appeal (pull quotes, images, subheadings and layout choices), significantly enhance the impact of the project.
Title		No title provided	The title is more like a label, it does not fully focus the reader's attention.	The title somewhat focuses the reader's attention.	The title provocatively focuses the reader's attention.
MLA in-text citation [if relevant] and Works Cited		No MLA in-text citation or Work Cited page provided, though the text needs MLA formatting.	There are errors in MLA in-text citation formatting, and/or formatting of the Works Cited page.	Most MLA in-text citation is formatted correctly, and the text includes a correctly formatted Works Cited page.	The writer uses MLA in-text citation correctly, and includes a correctly formatted Works Cited page.
Grammar, style, and usage		The grammar style and usage choices interfere with meaning.	Grammar style and usage could use more attention. Some choices interrupt the reader's understanding.	Grammar style and usage choices are appropriate and the text appears to have been edited.	Grammar style and usage enhance the impact of the analysis.