**Evaluating Essays: Not Bull & Not Just Opinion**

Essays are not graded in the same way as objective tests such as multiple choice. Because essays require **informed judgments to write**, they also require **informed judgments to grade**. Hence, they cannot be graded by machine. Grading essays is a matter of **judgment** & **experience** as well; it is not simply opinion or the arbitrary whim of the instructor. Therefore, although there are no perfect essays there are **better** and **worse essays**. Furthermore, there are **clear criteria** for deciding better versus worse.

**Keep in mind that there is no perfect type of exam or perfect grading system**. Nonetheless, the advantages of essay-type examinations (more studying, improving writing & thinking skills, expressing complex ideas, etc.) for learning history outweigh their disadvantages (longer, more difficult, more "subjective"). Conversely, the disadvantages of multiple choice (allow guessing & less studying, rewarding shallow recognition knowledge, encouraging night-before cramming, etc.) for learning history outweigh their alleged advantages (faster, easier, more "objective"). This is especially the case if learning complex historical thinking & practicing "real world" skills are the primary goals.

While essays are **graded as a whole**, the scales below **indicate specific areas for improvement and how your score is generated**. The lower the score (on each 10-point scale) the more room for improvement in that particular area.

The **organization** of the essay is **clear, logical, & easy to follow**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The essay is **concise**, **specific**, & **accurate**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The essay uses **relevant evidence** to support a **broader argument**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The essay addresses **all parts** of the question

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The essay shows a **solid** **understanding** of the historical context or bigger picture

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The essay shows knowledge from **both class & reading**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The **spelling, punctuation, & grammar** are accurate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you have any questions about the purpose of these scales or want to discuss your essay, then please visit me during office hours. You can also e-mail me at yosthistory@yahoo.com to make an appointment.