

The Anti-Rubric: Converting Grades into Discussions of Rhetorical Impact

This rubric asks the reader to assess the writing based on rhetorical impact. As such, it redefines what will be assessed in student writing. To achieve its purpose, the writing may be experimental and depart from what is traditionally considered “good” writing. Sometimes as writers we need “nontraditional” methods to communicate our ideas and experiences and to achieve our goals. For example, the organization and thesis may not be immediately recognizable. So instead of looking for traits we have come to identify with “good” writing, we ask that you assess the writing based on the rhetorical impact it has on you. We define the grade as the degree to which the rhetorical impact is increased or decreased by something the writer has or has not done.

With this rubric we want to reward and honor students for taking risks in their writing and moving beyond comfort zones even if that means producing writing that may be slightly less polished. We also want to acknowledge that writing can be rhetorically effective when it adheres to more traditional approaches to writing. Again, the emphasis is on rhetorical impact. With this anti-rubric, we want to celebrate the diversity of learning and writing in this class.

A – The portfolio has great impact on the audience.

- The work in the portfolio has a mission, agenda, or purpose and the rhetor is confident in that purpose.
- The work engages and consistently maintains the audience’s interest throughout by implementing creativity, attention to detail, engaging explanation and analysis of the subject, and other effective rhetorical strategies.

B – The portfolio has an impact on the audience.

- The work makes a connection with the audience, but the audience’s interest or connection momentarily lapses.
- The mission, agenda, or purpose may not be fully realized, but there is a clear engagement of the subject and a clear attempt to engage the audience. The rhetor is in the process of discovery yet the process itself is engaging to the audience.

C – The portfolio has some impact on the audience.

- The rhetor has attempted the assignment and has finished a rough draft but has not advanced the work further.
- C work lacks follow through in some way: development of ideas through analysis, explanation, or detail; organization; or approach for handling the subject.
- The audience’s connection is there but spotty.

D – The portfolio has minimal or no impact on the audience.

- There is no discernable mission, purpose or agenda and the audience is engaged because of the effort it takes to understand the work in the portfolio.
- The organization and logic of the work is flawed and the rhetor fails to support and develop the topic.

F – The portfolio has no impact or negative impact on the audience and is a communication failure.