

Grading Rubric

This grading rubric is based on four elements that together work for an effective paper: thesis, evidence and analysis, structure, and style.

Thesis	The central argument, question, or issue addressed by the paper	30%
Evidence & Analysis	The quality of the sources used to support the argument or answer the question posed by the paper, and the effectiveness with which they are used to support the claims of the paper	30%
Structure	The logic, flow, and organization of the paper	20%
Style	The use of language, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and formatting	20%

1. Thesis

Strong	The major claim of the paper is stated clearly at the outset of the paper. In addition, it is complex, insightful, and interesting. The thesis responds to a true and important question, tension or problem. The introduction has a clear motive that outlines the stakes of the argument and demonstrates a meaningful context for the author's claims.
Very Good	Either the major claim is clear, arguable, and complex but misses opportunities for nuance or subtlety, or else it sets out to explore an ambitious idea whose complexity leads to minor errors in articulation. The introduction suggests some context or stakes for the argument but does not offer strong motivation, or a convincing motive is gestured at but remains implicit.
Good	Either the major claim is clear and arguable but lacks complexity or else sets out to explore an intriguing idea that has not developed into a specific claim. The introduction either unsuccessfully motivates an unexpected claim or weakly and artificially motivates a claim that does not constitute a significant revision of the <i>status quo</i> .
Adequate	The major claim is logical and would require some evidence to support, but the stakes are not as high as they should be. The paper's major claims are somewhat unclear, unspecific or uninteresting. The introduction lacks a clear motive or contains an unspecific or weak motive.
Weak	The major claim of the paper is weak—vague, simple, or obvious. The paper does not respond to a true question, tension, or problem. The introduction usually has no motive.

2. Evidence and analysis

Strong	The best available evidence is introduced to support the claims and stakes of the paper. It is drawn from solid, well-respected places, and its nuances are insightfully explored. The argument is sufficiently complex to require an explanation of how the evidence supports the paper's claims, and evidence is used to develop new claims.
Very Good	All claims are supported with evidence that is integral to the development of the argument, but in a few places the link between claim and evidence may be unconvincing or insufficiently explained. The analysis demonstrates several moments of keen insight but also includes arguments that lack subtlety or are insufficiently explained elsewhere in the paper.
Good	Most ideas are supported with well-chosen evidence that is sometimes explored in an insightful way, although nuances are often neglected. The evidence is often integral to the development of the argument, although there may be gaps in the explanation of how the evidence supports the paper's claims.
Adequate	Evidence is usually relevant, but the paper often does not consider the most important evidence or will present multiple examples to demonstrate the same idea. The paper makes some effort to explore the subtleties of the evidence and may be occasionally insightful, but it rarely uses evidence to complicate the argument and develop new claims.
Weak	Evidence may be lacking or irrelevant. Instead of using evidence to develop the argument, examples remain undigested and unexplored. The author may simply summarize and simplify evidence, or present it in a confusing or unhelpful way.

3. Structure

Strong	Ideas develop over the course of the paper so that the foundations established early on push the argument toward a more complex conclusion. The structure is both logical and engaging.
Very Good	The argument follows a clear logical arc, but small gaps, digressions, or a lack of transitional language interrupt the flow of ideas in a few places.
Good	The argument is interesting and logical, but the structure of the paper is, at times, confusing. The paper's claims, while complex, are executed in a confusing sequence, or they seem related to the thesis but have a confusing relationship to one another. Transitional language may be present but is unsuccessful or inconsistent.
Adequate	The argument mostly makes logical sense, but the structure of the paper is confusing—jumping around, missing transitions, or taking on too many ideas at once. Or, the argument itself may be presented simplistically, leading to a predictable structure and unnecessary transitional language.
Weak	The argument may be too simple and so does not develop over the course of the paper. Or the argument may be incoherent or too broad, without any clear organization or transitions.

4. Style

Strong	The writing is clear and concise, yet sophisticated, demonstrating sentence variety and appropriate vocabulary. The paper is a pleasure to read.
Very Good	The writing is mostly clear but may contain a few confusing sentences or mechanical problems. It is mostly engaging.
Good	The writing is straightforward, mostly clear, and often engaging, but it contains occasional mechanical problems, confusing sentences, or moments of vagueness.
Adequate	Though the writing generally makes sense and there may be moments where the diction is appropriate and elegant, it is weak enough in places to obscure the author's ideas, often as a result of vagueness, verbosity, awkwardness, or a recurrent mechanical problem.
Weak	The writing is generally confusing, awkward, or too verbose, and probably exhibits numerous mechanical problems. Its diction may be inappropriate.

Grading

An A paper makes an interesting, complex, and important argument and is thoroughly well-executed.

A high B paper either aims at making an engaging, complex argument but is hindered by a few local problems with structure, analysis, or style, or else it has a simpler argument that is thoroughly well-executed.

A B paper addresses the assignment and demonstrates effort to produce a complex argument. However, the essay is hindered by either a lack of complexity, creativity, or importance in the thesis or by structural, analytical, or stylistic problems in the execution of its ideas.

A low B paper demonstrates an effort to address the assignment, but the argument is ultimately too obvious, undeveloped, or obscured by significant structural, analytical, or stylistic problems.

A C paper has significant problems with argumentation and/or presentation.

Not Passing. A paper will not pass if it does not meet the minimum page requirement, does not address the assignment, plagiarizes, or does not meet standards for academic writing or argumentation.