**Essay Rubric**

* **Readability and Audience Awareness**: Papers are designed to appeal to a particular audience, whether that audience is the scholarly community, professionals, students, the instructor, or the general public. They therefore must be readable. Readability refers to the clarity of the paper itself. Readability is influenced by the use of proper grammar and mechanics, but readability also relates to the relative clarity of ideas expressed, and the extent to which a writer uses language and tone in ways appropriate to the intended audience.
* **Clarity of Objective, Argument, or Thesis Statement**: All assignments serve a purpose. Within a given class, a paper is designed to address one or more key objectives. Papers with a clear objective, purpose, or thesis statement sufficiently explain what the paper sets out to accomplish and why that argumentative goal is significant.
* **Support, Analysis, and Critical Thinking**: All papers serve a particular purpose. Elaborating on the objective, purpose, or thesis statement requires the writer to provide examples or evidence to support that objective, purpose, or thesis statement. Carefully-chosen examples and evidence demonstrate that the writer can think critically about the paper topic. When outside resources are required, the paper will provide appropriate documentation, typically using MLA style.
* **Organization**: An organized paper models a clear progression of ideas. The writer moves from idea to idea in a deliberate, not a haphazard way, effectively and persuasively transitioning from one topic to another. In addition, for a given topic or class, effectively organized papers will logically structure the key sections required for the assignment

**Writing Rubric**

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|  | **A** | **B** | **C** | **D** | **F** |
| **Readability and Audience Awareness** | Text is a pleasure to read. Sentences convey complex ideas with clarity; the reader is not forced to re-read passages for comprehension and is not distracted by any problems with grammar, spelling, and/or punctuation. In addition, the writer has carefully crafted language, tone, and evidence to engage an intended audience. | Text is easy to read; sentences convey ideas with clarity. The reader understands sentences clearly when reading at normal pace; Isolated problems with grammar, spelling, and/or punctuation do not impede the reader’s comprehension of the paper’s overall argument. In addition, the writer has crafted language, tone, and evidence with a clear audience in mind. | Text is readable in most places; reader can understand most sentences clearly when reading at a normal pace, though may have to reread several passages. Problems with grammar, spelling, and/or punctuation distract reader in a few places. Additionally, the writer may not consistently craft language, tone, and evidence to engage an intended audience. | The reader has consistent difficulty understanding sentences when reading at a normal pace; the reader consistently has to reread passages. Recurring problems with grammar, spelling, and/or punctuation often distract the reader. Additionally, the paper’s use of language, tone, and evidence limit the engagement of an intended audience. | Recurring problems with grammar, spelling, and/or punctuation interfere with the reader’s ability to understand the text’s lines of reasoning. Additionally, language, tone and evidence may consistently demonstrate that the writer lacks a sense of audience when crafting an argument. |
| **Clarity of Purpose, Objective, or Thesis Statement** | Presents an ambitious, clear and engaging objective, purpose, or thesis statement that the reader can easily identify; the argument is complex, sophisticated, and intellectually risky, moving beyond course discussions and lectures to address a question or issue from perspective readers might have not considered. | Presents a clear objective, purpose, or thesis statement that the reader can easily identify; the argument is complex, appropriate for the assignment and evinces a strong, audience-focused critical stance. | Presents an objective, purpose, or thesis statement that the reader can identify; the thesis statement takes an identifiable stand on an issue or question in a way that is appropriate for the assignment. | Presents a partially-formulated objective, purpose, or thesis statement that the reader has some trouble identifying; the thesis statement may not be clearly appropriate for the assignment. | The reader cannot identify a thesis. |
| **Evidence, Analysis, & Critical Thinking** | Uses evidence (e.g., course material/outside sources) to investigate a range of possibilities contained in the paper’s objective or thesis. Evidence is more than sufficient, incisively chosen, and presented fairly, accurately, and stylishly. When appropriate, writer identifies and reckons with conflicts and contradictions in the evidence compiled, engaging with source material in a way that showcases his or her own critical voice. | Uses evidence (e.g., course material/outside sources) to investigate several aspects of the paper’s objective or thesis. Evidence is sufficient and is presented fairly and accurately, with attention to style. When appropriate, writer engages with contradictions in source material in a way that shows an awareness of critical voice. | Uses some evidence (e.g., course material/outside sources) to investigate the paper’s objective or thesis, though some ambiguity may exist as to how evidence or examples fit with the paper’s overall argument. Some sections require more evidence or examples. | Evidence is insufficient to support the objective or thesis. Reader has difficulty understanding how evidence or examples support the paper’s objective or thesis. Even when appropriate, writer may neglect to engage with source material in a way that demonstrates an awareness of critical argument. | Evidence or examples are absent. |
| **Organization** | The paper demonstrates a command of structure and organization. The paper is organized with clarity, logic and style; Sections, and paragraphs within sections, flow easily and naturally. In addition to fulfilling the assignment, this paper demonstrates that the writer carefully considered the most appropriate argumentative structure and crafted the structure of the paper accordingly. | The paper demonstrates a clear awareness of structure and organization. Is clearly and logically organized; most sections, and paragraphs within sections, flow easily and naturally. The paper is structured with care in a manner consistent with the assignment and well-suited to the argument being pursued. | The paper strives to follow a clear organizational structure. However, some sections, and paragraphs within sections, do not flow naturally, and the organization of the paper is not always clear and logical. The paper may contain several instances of poor transition from one idea or section to another. | Substantial organizational issues exist; paper may not be organized according to assignment specifications; major transition problems may be observed. | Major organizational issues exist; paper may lack several sections required by the assignment; there appears to be little flow among sections. |

Holistic Grade Descriptions

Option one

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| C | **Solid work.**  C papers fulfill the assignment.  They take a stand on one issue or question arising from class readings and discussion, and provide some evidence from source material to support that position. C papers show some awareness of audience: they offer readers a discernible structure, using transitions to move from one idea to the next both between and within paragraphs, and demonstrate some attempt on the part of the writer to craft language, tone and evidence with a particular audience in mind. Finally, C papers are readable. Grammatical and/or syntactical mistakes are not so prevalent that they impede a reader's understanding of the paper’s argument. |
| B | **Strong, thoughtful work.**  Papers that earn a B build on the skills needed to earn a C. In addition, B papers offer readers a clear central argument articulated through a strong, audience-focused critical stance. B papers choose a structure well-suited to the argument being pursued. B papers offer readers sufficient evidence, and they present that evidence fairly and accurately. When appropriate, B papers engage with contradictions in source material in a way that shows an awareness of critical voice. Finally, B papers demonstrate that the writer understands the importance of word choice, voice, and style, in addition to grammatical competency. |
| A | **Exceptional work.**  Papers earning the grade of A build on the foundations discussed above. An A paper pursues a complex and sophisticated argument that. A papers are those that take on a certain amount of intellectual risk, moving beyond course discussions and lectures to address a question or issue from a perspective readers might have not considered. To construct such an argument, the writer must carefully consider what argumentative structure might best suit the particular argument being pursued, and craft that structure accordingly, investigating a range of possibilities contained in the paper’s argument. Evidence presented in support of this argument is more than sufficient, incisively chosen, and presented with fairness and accuracy. Finally, A papers convey complex ideas with clarity, precision, and style. |
| D | **Below-Average Work**  Papers may earn Ds when writers, while demonstrating a general understanding of the topic and concepts, have not mastered some basic skills. Writers who earn a D grade should review the criteria for the C grade above. |
| F | **Unacceptable Work**  Papers that are assigned the grade of F are papers that misunderstand the assignment or show little understanding of required concepts. F papers may fail to meet the technical requirements of topic, length, or format. The F grade may also be assigned if any portion of a paper has been plagiarized. |