***Criteria for grading***

Your writing will be evaluated on the quality, development, and organization of your ideas as well as its clarity and style. The criteria I use in evaluating your writing are listed below in order of importance:

* **Thesis:** Is there one main argument in the paper? Does it fulfill the assignment? Is the thesis clearly stated at the beginning of the paper? Is it interesting, complex? Is it argued throughout?
* **Thesis development:** Does the paper offer supporting evidence for each of its points? Does the evidence reveal the writer’s knowledge of the subject matter? Has the paper overlooked any obvious or important pieces of evidence? Is there enough analysis of evidence? Does each paragraph relate to the thesis? Are all paragraphs adequately developed?
* **Organization:** Is the paper clearly organized? Does the order of the overall argument make sense, and is it easy to follow? Is it easy to understand the main point of each paragraph? Does your introduction capture readers’ attention while informing them of your essay’s topic? Do you use your conclusion to make a point relevant to your thesis? Does your essay have a title that describes its contents?
* **Use of sources:** Is the evidence properly attributed, and is the bibliographical information correct? Are sources introduced in an understandable way? Is their purpose in supporting your thesis clear? Do they do more than affirm your position or provide an easy target for attack? Are responsible inferences drawn from them? Are they properly attributed, and is the bibliographical information correct?
* **Style:** Is the style appropriate? Is the paper concise and to the point? Do you use transitions to signal the development of your thesis? Are sentences clear and grammatically correct? Do the sentences have a graceful rhythm? Do the sentences vary in structure and length? Are there spelling or proofreading errors?

***Grading standards***

Below are the standards I follow when grading papers. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference.

* **A:** A paper that reaches high and delivers. Displays the writer’s enthusiasm and imagination about topic, thereby engaging the reader. Presents significant, sophisticated, interesting, and clear thesis, which is developed by a logical argument, supported with concrete, substantial, and relevant evidence. Reflects an appropriate sense of the topic’s complexity in range and depth of argument. Displays originality of thought and presentation. (Goes beyond the obvious.) Effectively addresses concerns and assumptions of audience. Follows logical and appropriate organization. Uses appropriate and consistent voice, tone, and style for assignment. Wording is clear, precise, and graceful. No errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or manuscript format.
* **B:** A paper that is less ambitious than an A paper, but still achieves its aims with effective writing. Presents an interesting and clear thesis, but may neglect to develop it adequately with analysis and evidence. May contain more summary than original critical analysis. May be marred by an ineffective introduction, weak conclusion, inappropriate tone, or improper emphasis. May fail to address effectively the concerns and assumptions of audience. May contain awkward style, inadequate vocabulary, or mechanical errors.
* **C:** A paper with significant problems in thesis, thesis development, organization, use of evidence, and/or language. Thesis is acceptable, but lacks depth and significance. Often consists primarily of summary with little or no original critical analysis. May lack clarity or conciseness; organization may be weak; may use inappropriate arrangement. May contain serious problems with voice, tone, and vocabulary. May contain a number of problems with punctuation, spelling, grammar, paragraphing, and transitions.
* **D:** A paper that does not meet college-level expectations. Contains severe problems in content and/or organization. Barely meets minimum expectations for assignment.
* **F:** Far below college-level work. Totally off the mark. Fails to meet expectations for assignment.

**Manuscript format**

* Header (all pages): Put your last name followed by the page number in the upper-right corner of each page. (For convenience, use the header tool in your word processing program.)
* First page (not in header): Put your name (e.g., Janice Jones), assignment number (e.g., Paper 1, Rewrite 2, Day 14 Writing Assignment), and the date in the upper-left corner (e.g., March 5, 2012). Single space these three lines. Double space the rest of the paper, including the title.
* Center the title. The title of your paper does not need to be italicized, underlined, or in bold.
* Align text to left margin. In other words, use flush left, ragged right alignment.
* Use 12-point standard font (Times Roman, Palatino, Garamond) and one-inch margins.
* Use some standard style (e.g., MLA, APA) for list of works cited and in-text citations.
* Staple pages together.

**Title of your paper**

* Always give your paper a title that provides readers with a clear idea of what to expect from it.

**Some common errors to avoid**

* Unclear pronoun reference: Make sure pronouns (*he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, *that*, *those*, *which*, etc.) clearly refer to antecedents. (e.g., “John hit Sam. He…”)
* Proper names: Use the full name the first time you refer to a person. Thereafter you may identify the person simply by the last name. In academic writing, never refer to the person by the first name, unless his or her last name is never used, e.g., Cleopatra, Napoleon, Cher, Bono.
* Use *who*, *whom*, or *whose* to refer to persons. Use *which* or *that* to refer to animals or things.
* Avoid vague or overly general reference when using *this*, *that*, *which*, and *it*.
* Use *number of* when referring to discrete items we can count (number of flowers, people, apples, crimes, concepts) and *amount of* for undifferentiated aggregates (flour, air, violence, vegetation, food).
* Do not use passive voice (“it was done”); use active voice (“she did it”).
* Misplaced modifiers: Put modifiers near the words they describe.
  + OK “The waiter served a roll **that was well buttered** to the woman.

NOT! “The waiter served a roll to the woman **that was well buttered**.

* OK “The student’s **torn** book lay on the table.”

NOT! “The **torn** student’s book lay on the table.”

Real example from *New York Times.*

NOT! “The woman held a picture of her dead husband in her lap.”