

Grading rubrics for essay exams and writing assignments

Categories: 1) synthesis 2) comprehension 3) accuracy 4) original/critical thought 5) writing style 6) citations

A work (superior-excellent): demonstrates an effort that exceeds the assignment characterized by the following:

- 1) Synthesis of all materials (readings, lectures, discussion), and outside sources where relevant
- 2) Thorough comprehension of the readings and lecture material, including subtle and complex levels as well as generalities
- 3) Strong and accurate grasp of history and culture, and theoretical concepts where relevant
- 4) Original and/or critical thought (i.e. being able to critique readings and come up with alternative arguments)
- 5) Clear and elegant articulation of ideas using evidence and descriptive details, and a clear relationship to the prompt
- 6) Complete and accurate citation of sources according to the instructions

Gradations between A+ and A- may reflect more or less synthesis, original thought, and clarity of writing or argument

B work (good-competent): demonstrates an effort that meets the expectations of the assignment but does not exceed them, characterized by the following:

- 1) Synthesis of some but not all materials, or a reliance on one source of information to the exclusion of others
- 2) Some incomplete, reductive, or overly general comprehension of readings and lecture material
- 3) A weaker grasp of history, culture, and theory as evident in occasional errors of dates, facts, and events, and some misunderstandings of concepts
- 4) Attempts original ideas or critical thinking but lacks sufficient clarity, support, or coherence
- 5) Occasional vagueness in language, insufficient details, organizational problems, or awkwardness in language
- 6) Citations that are inconsistent according to the instructions

Gradations between B+ and B- may reflect more or less reliance on generalities or gaps in comprehension of materials and clarity of writing.

C work (barely competent-struggling): demonstrates little effort beyond the minimum to fulfill the assignment, characterized by the following:

- 1) No synthesis of materials
- 2) Frequent misrepresentation of arguments and information from readings and lecture; routine use of generalities
- 3) Considerable inaccuracy and weak grasp of history, culture, and theoretical concepts; confusion about chronologies, events, people, or concepts
- 4) Little original or critical thinking beyond summarizing course materials or sources
- 5) Organization problems, insufficient or unclear relationship to the prompts, minimum or below-minimum length, regularly vague or awkward writing
- 6) Citations that are incomplete according to the instructions

Gradations between C+ and C- may reflect more or less inaccuracy in summarizing information, use of generalities, vagueness, or relationship to the prompt.

D-F work (poor-failing): demonstrates the least effort to fulfill the assignment

- 1) No demonstrable evidence of attention to one or more of the following: readings, lecture, or discussion (in other words: evidence of routine absences from lecture, section, and lack of reading for class)
- 2) Routine confusion and inaccuracy in summarizing arguments and information
- 3) Routine errors of facts and routine misrepresentation of events
- 4) Excessive and uncritical reliance on unassigned internet sources
- 5) Little or no relation to the prompt, below-minimum length, incomprehensible paragraphs and sentences
- 6) Insufficient or absent citations of outside sources which could be construed as plagiarism and may result in a violation of the codes of academic integrity.