

Essay Grading Criteria

The following descriptions will help you understand the criteria used when essay grades (provisional and/or final) are determined. See the syllabus for more information concerning the grades of papers turned in late.

A+	An A -level paper is outstanding in most or all areas. It conveys interesting, provocative, or original arguments. Claims are focused and clear; they are also well-developed and supported with specific examples, evidence, or information (data). Organization, at both the paragraph and the overall levels, is clear and logical, and effective transitions move readers through individual paragraphs and/or the essay itself. Sentences (style and diction, for instance) are smooth and clear, and there are no or few citation, grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors.
A	
A-	
B+	A B -level paper is above average. Like the A paper, it conveys interesting, provocative, or original arguments, but such arguments are not sustained for the majority of the essay. For the most part, a B paper's claims are clear and supported. Organization and/or transitions may be slightly weak. Sufficient specific examples may be missing; sentence style may be rough or weak; or there may be more than just a few problems with citations, grammar, spelling, or punctuation.
B	
B-	
C+	A C -level paper is, obviously, average. The writer responded to the assignment adequately and competently. However, there may be problems with unclear, unsupported, or contradictory claims. Or, there may also be problems with focus, coherence, style, or organization. Transitions may be weak or missing all together, or there may be too many problems with grammar, spelling, or punctuation. (Note that many B -level papers are often brought down to the C level because of too many mechanical errors—ones that demonstrate that the writer did not sufficiently revise, proofread, and/or edit the work.)
C	
C-	
D+	A D -level paper is below average. The writing is unfocused, confusing, and contains too many errors in relation to claims, organization, and/or mechanics (grammar, spelling, and punctuation). While the paper may contain good ideas, the writer may not have devoted sufficient time to the assignment.
D	
D-	
F	An F -level paper fails to deal with the assignment in any meaningful way. It is completely off track and has few, if any, redeeming qualities.