

ESTABLISHING EXPLICIT GRADING CRITERIA

We will grade your papers on the following criteria:

1. STRUCTURE:

Begin your paper with a brief description of the narrative, or a brief episode from it that suggests or illustrates your thesis. Give your thesis statement, which is a concise statement of your central argument. Then build your argument in a series of well-structured paragraphs. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence, followed by 3 to 5 sentences that clearly support that topic sentence. Each paragraph should explain ONE idea, not 3 or 4. Pay attention to transitions! Each paragraph should have a clear connection to the one preceding it. End with a strong conclusion that explains what your thesis tells us about the era of the Civil War.

2. ANALYSIS:

Remember that each paragraph should advance your argument. Support your thesis with evidence from your narrative, always remembering to explain what that evidence means. Where necessary, provide context from other course material, but don't lean too heavily on textbooks or lectures. Your analysis should offer specific insights into aspects of this history that other course materials describe in general terms; it may also suggest how your evidence challenges other historian's analyses. Without trying to make too broad a claim about the entire Civil War, show how your narrator's experience of change tells us something interesting and important about the era.

3. STYLE:

Don't try to write like a writer—write like a person who wants to be understood. Clarity comes from knowing what you mean and saying it plainly. We will reward clear, active, powerful writing. PLEASE do not use the passive voice. Do not start sentences with "It is. . .," "There is. . ." or "There are. . ." Use active verbs. Revise your paper to remove wordiness, redundancy, passive voice, and inactive verbs. Make sure that your grammar and spelling are correct. Careless errors, especially run-ons and comma splices, WILL lower your grade.

This is an example of WEAK writing: "There were changes in southern society during the war that made southerners turn their anti-government beliefs against the south."

This is an example of BETTER writing: "Many white southerners interpreted wartime taxation and conscription as the same sort of interference with southern 'domestic relations' that the Confederacy founders had promised to prevent."

What's the difference? In the first sentence, "There were changes" is vague and inactive. What sort of changes occurred, in what context, and why? Specificity and context are essential to good history. "Southerners" is too general; the group in question consists of many (but not all) white southerners. "Anti-government beliefs" and "the south" also lack precision. White southerners tended to resist some forms of political authority, but not others; this dynamic shaped both the Confederate state (which was not the same thing as "the south") and the emergence of opposition to that state's policies.

4. ORIGINALITY:

Although you can get a good grade (B) for a paper based on arguments presented in lectures or readings, "A" papers must offer more original insights and arguments. We strongly encourage you to think for yourselves, building on evidence and arguments from the course but pushing your insights further than what we cover in lectures.

The Superior Paper (A)

Structure: Your thesis is clear, insightful, original, sophisticated, even exciting. All ideas in the paper flow logically; your argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Your paragraphs have solid topic sentences, and each sentence in the paragraph clearly relates to that topic sentence. You provide excellent transitions. Your conclusion is persuasive.

Analysis: You support every point with at least one example from your sources. You integrate quoted material into your sentences well. Your analysis is fresh and exciting, offering new ways to think about the material.

Style: Your sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and citations are excellent. You have NO run-on sentences or comma splices. Your writing style is lively, active, and interesting. You use active verbs and do not use the passive voice. You are not wordy or redundant.

Originality: Your arguments show a great deal of independent insight and originality.

The Very Good Paper (AB)

Structure: Your thesis is clear, insightful, and original. Your argument flows logically and is sound. You may have a few unclear transitions. You end with a strong conclusion.

Analysis: You give examples to support most points, and you integrate quotations into sentences. Your analysis is clear and logical.

Style: Your sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and citations are good. You have no more than one run-on sentence or comma splice. Your writing style is solid and clear. You use active verbs and do not use the passive voice. You are not wordy or redundant.

Originality: Your arguments show independent thought.

The Good Paper (B)

Structure: Your thesis is clear, but may not be insightful or original; or it may be original and insightful but be weakly phrased or difficult to identify. Your argument is generally clear and appropriate, although it may wander occasionally. You may have a few unclear transitions, or paragraphs without strong topic sentences. You may end without much of a conclusion.

Analysis: You give evidence to support most points, but in some cases your evidence and your argument may not align well with one another. Your argument usually makes sense, but gaps in logic may exist.

Style: Your writing style is clear, but not always lively, active, or interesting. You sometimes use the passive voice. You may become wordy or redundant. Your sentence structure, grammar, and spelling are strong despite occasional lapses.

Originality: You do a solid job of synthesizing course material but do not develop your own insights or conclusions.

The Borderline Paper (BC)

Structure: Your thesis may be unclear, vague, or unoriginal, and/or it may provide little structure for the paper. Your paper may wander, with few transitions, few topic sentences, and little logic. Your paragraphs may not be organized coherently.

Analysis: Your paper exhibits several of the following weaknesses: you give examples to support some but not all points; your points often lack supporting evidence; you use evidence inappropriately, perhaps because you have not clarified what point you are seeking to make; your quotations may be poorly integrated into sentences; you may offer a quotation but fail to analyze it or show how it supports your argument; your logic may fail, or your argument may be unclear; your paper may dwindle off without a conclusion.

Style: Your writing style is not always clear, active, or interesting. You use the passive voice, or become wordy or redundant. You have repeated problems in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, citation style, or spelling. You may have several run-on sentences or comma splices.

Originality: You do a fair job of synthesizing course material but do not develop your own insights or conclusions.

The "Needs Help" Paper (C)

Structure: Your thesis is difficult to identify, incorrect on its face, or a restatement of an obvious point. Your structure may be unclear, often because your thesis is weak or nonexistent. Your transitions are confusing and unclear. Your paragraphs show little structure. The paper is a loose collection of statements, rather than a cohesive argument.

Analysis: Your examples are few or weak. You fail to support statements, and the evidence you give is poorly analyzed, poorly integrated into the paper, or simply incorrect. Your argument may be impossible to identify. Ideas may not flow at all, often because there is no argument to support.

Style: Your writing style has problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. You have frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. You may have many run-on sentences and comma splices.

Originality: You do a confusing or poor job synthesizing material presented in lectures and sections, and you do not develop your own insights or conclusions.

The Bad Paper (D or F)

A bad paper shows minimal effort or poor comprehension. Its arguments are very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and/or analysis. The paper has no identifiable thesis, or an incompetent thesis. It's difficult to tell that you've come to class.

RUBRIC FOR A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Essentials	Comments
Clear introduction or abstract (your choice), introducing the purpose, scope, and method of your project.	
Literature review—six quality scholarly sources; clearly summarized; connection to your proposed research clear.	
Significance of topic Statement of problem—gap in knowledge about the topic; hypothesis if appropriate.	
Proposal of how your study will help fill the gap—what new knowledge it might provide.	
Clear methods section—description of measurements, tools for measurement, reasons for choosing tools, sample, reasons for sample choice.	
Organization and logical progression of ideas at the paragraph and whole-paper levels.	
Correct use of whatever citation style you choose (APA, MLA, ABA, Chicago...).	
Style/language—clear actors as subjects of your sentences; active voice when appropriate.	
Style/language—concision and cohesion between sentences and paragraphs.	
Style/language—elegant use of tropes and schemes, when appropriate.	
Careful editing/proofing.	

Your Grade (20% of final course grade):

PROBLEM REPORT AND REFLECTION RUBRICS FOR WRITING IN MATH

A good part of your Math 130 grade is determined by your writing five problem reports and eight reflections. These two types of assignments are intended to help you practice thinking and communicating about mathematics in complementary ways. While the problem reports allow you to think deeply about one particular problem and communicate fully and in specific language the solution to that problem, the reflections allow you to step back and look at the broader picture, fitting what you've been doing in the class with the rest of mathematics learning. To help you with your writing, I give you these rubrics which I will be using to grade your papers. Use them as a guide for what to write and how to structure your writing as well as a check-list to determine if you've done the work necessary to get the points. A word of caution: I can be picky, and spelling and grammar do count. For best results, or if you have any doubts about your paper, consult the Writing Center in Helen C. White.

Rubric for Problem Reports:

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	States the problem and methods that were used to solve the problem.
2	Describes the problem and gives a full account of the methods that were used to solve the problem. States a solution to the problem with minimal reference to why it works and what it means.
3	Clearly and concisely describes the problem. Gives a complete account of the methods used (including any interesting false starts, blocks, or breakthroughs). Provides a clear, if not complete, solution to the problem in the particular situation of the problem, and makes an attempt at explaining the general solution. Gives some reasoning behind why the solution works.
4	Clearly and concisely describes the problem and why it is interesting. Gives a complete account of the methods used (including any interesting false starts, blocks, or breakthroughs). Provides a clear and complete statement of the solution including what the solution looks like in the problem's specific context (if any) as well as the most general form appropriate, and what this solution means for the problem. Gives a well written explanation of why the solution works (why it <u>is</u> the solution, as appropriate).

Rubric for Reflections:

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Engages with the question in clear and readable language.
2	Uses clear and understandable language. Answers the question in a chosen context (usually general). Provides a response more specific to the writer (your own personal response).

In general, problem reports should be between 3-5 pages including a paragraph description of the problem, 1-2 pages for the description of methods, and at least one page for the explanation of the solution. Reflections should be between one and two pages and the format is loose, depending on individual preferences. All papers should be typed up using a reasonable-sized font (12-point or so) and double spaced. Hand-drawn equations, diagrams, and tables are all fine.

A final note: Although the rubrics do not state it outright, form, style, and presentation are all essential to a well-written paper. Spend some time thinking about the organization of the material (it doesn't have to go: problem, methods, solution, analysis. You can sneak the solution in earlier on if it makes the paper easier to read). Most of all, making it interesting may be the best way to motivate you to write about a problem you've already solved. Try reading it out loud to your roommate to see if they can follow it without going cross-eyed or falling asleep.

Jocelyn Johnson
Philosophy 341

EVALUATION SHEET IN PHILOSOPHY

Name: _____ Topic: _____

Poor OK Good Very Good Outstanding

1. Well-Defined Thesis
2. Logic and Development of the Argument
3. Originality of Ideas
4. Serious Consideration of Counter-Arguments
5. Well-Informed (incorporates relevant readings and conceptual distinctions)
6. Reflects Solid Understanding of Readings
7. Writing Style (clarity, flow, transitions, etc.)
8. Grammar, Paragraph and Sentence Structure

Comments:

Notes on Grading Criteria for Essays

What follows is a clarification of some of the criteria for essays that are listed on the previous page. Not all the criteria are addressed. If you have questions about those that aren't discussed or about the following, please ask.

Well-Defined Thesis. The thesis of your essay is the conclusion of the argument that you will develop. Not formulating the thesis statement precisely is one of the most common mistakes of an essay. Although it is not necessary, I strongly advise you to place the thesis statement in the first paragraph of your essay; I will also ask you to indicate the thesis of your essay by underlining or italicizing it. After writing a draft of your essay, go back to your thesis statement to check whether what you intended to argue is what you did in fact argue.

Examples of unacceptably vague—but all-too-common—thesis statements are:

“In this paper I will discuss and criticize X’s article.”

or

“I will argue that euthanasia is morally permissible in some situations.”

Neither of these tells the reader what your essay is about except, in the first example, that you will discuss X’s article, and, in the second, that you will discuss euthanasia. Better thesis statements are:

“I will show that X’s argument is invalid because s/he fails to make the distinction between *doing* something and *allowing* it to happen.”

or

“I will argue that neither active nor passive euthanasia is acceptable because both violate human dignity.”

For an example of an introduction which I think is especially good, see Martin Perlmutter’s introduction to “Desert and Capital Punishment” in *Morality and Moral Controversies*, pp. 390-1. His introduction is much longer than one for a five page essay, but I think the last paragraph of his introductory section is a good model for a shorter introduction.

Originality of Ideas. It is not expected that your essay will involve insights that no philosopher has ever had (nor is it expected that this is an impossibility). However, you are expected to think about these issues for yourself and not merely summarize points that have been made in the readings or class. It is fine to mention the arguments that have been made, and sometimes important to do so, but your essay should go beyond this. This is usually easiest if you disagree with the argument that someone has made. However, even if you think some author got things exactly right, there are ways to make your essay original. For example you could discuss good objections (perhaps from other readings or lectures) that the author hadn’t considered and argue that those objections don’t work. Or you could apply the style of argument that you find correct to an aspect of an issue that the author didn’t discuss. For example, if someone argued that marijuana should be legalized for reason X, you could argue that the same reason does (or doesn’t) work when considering other drugs.

Well-Informed. As mentioned above, your essay should not be a mere summary of readings or lectures. However, if there are arguments, distinctions, etc., which are relevant to your argument but your essay demonstrates no awareness of this, the essay will be marked down.

Serious Consideration of Counter-Arguments. This is a fairly basic requirement of any philosophical writing, and you will surely see it often in the course readings. Many who are new to philosophy find this confusing because it seems that the author is arguing both for and against the same position. However, it is considered a virtue of philosophical writing if you can anticipate objections to your view, present them as strong counter-arguments, and provide convincing responses. You won’t be expected to come up with obscure counter-arguments, but you are expected to address convictions against your position that have been raised in readings or lectures that are fairly obvious. An essay shows more intellectual integrity, and will receive a higher grade, if it raises a serious objection which cannot be answered than if it ignores serious objections altogether.

Dr. Elise Gold, Engineering Professional Development

Paper 2: Proposal/Annotated Bibliography

AUTHOR: _____

Below you will find the various elements on which your paper will be evaluated. The Y (Yes), S (Somewhat), or N (No) by each item indicates how well you have done with each element. Items specifically needing work may be underlined or highlighted. Along with a grade, an overall evaluation follows, with a few major suggestions for improvement.

Cover Letter

- ___ explains purpose, focus, audience, use of logos, pathos, ethos
- ___ discusses what's working best and worst in draft
- ___ discusses what's new for the writer
- ___ describes substantive revisions made between drafts
- ___ uses appropriate tone

Title

- ___ accurately reflects paper
- ___ is catchy

Introduction

- ___ grabs reader's attention
- ___ sets stage and tone for paper
- ___ presents good research focus question, conveys significance of topic, previews controversy/debate

Thesis/Concluding Statement

- ___ has effective specific thesis/concluding statement

Development

- ___ effectively conveys why research topic is worth investigating
- ___ discusses major topic areas well as personal interest, interest to class, synopsis of opinion, research plan
- ___ avoids arguing a position to survey range of views
- ___ provides good supportive evidence and details, using sources, and discusses their significance rather than merely reports them
- ___ avoids redundancy in points, examples, etc.

Structure

- ___ uses good organizational strategies (follows through on proposal structure, organizes section discussions, especially opinions, well)
- ___ has unified paragraphs with effective topic sentences
- ___ has clear logic/coherence within/between paragraphs/sections; uses effective transitions (not mechanical) between/within paragraphs

Conclusion

- ___ recaps proposal effectively without repeating introduction
- ___ is interesting and places issue in large context
- ___ leaves reader with lasting impression about importance of research topic

Audience

_____ clearly identifies audiences and their knowledge, values, and needs; uses appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos well

Selection/Use/Citation of Sources and Annotated Bibliography

_____ has adequate number of well selected sources (have currency, depth, range of views, credibility)
_____ uses sources well to build/support argument not over-relying on them to form a pastiche; includes good, well-incorporated quotations, paraphrases, and summaries without plagiarism or inaccuracies
_____ provides correct APA in-text citations avoiding problems like info attributed to wrong source, info listed but no citation,
incorrect page cited, no quotation marks around a direct quotation, etc.
_____ includes full, correct APA references to sources at end of paper
_____ has clear and developed annotations that summarize, evaluate the bias, and explain sources' usefulness

Style/Sentences

_____ employs variety in sentence structure and length
_____ achieves clarity and economy of language by avoiding wordiness, word choice problems, passive voice, nominalizations, jargon and technical language, clichés
_____ has appropriate and consistent tone

Mechanics

_____ has relatively few problems with punctuation, grammar, spelling; has proofread carefully

Format

_____ follows manuscript guidelines well (i.e., for title, spacing, typeface, pagination, headings for proposal format, etc.)

Revision

_____ demonstrates good/excellent substantive revision between drafts on various levels—thesis and subordinate ideas,
development and support, organization and logic, style and mechanics

GRADE: _____ (Points lost for late and/or incomplete rough draft or final draft, missing cover letter, missing/incomplete mechanics checklist; annotated bibliography, in-text citations, and/or reference list missing or incomplete; copies of sources missing, not highlighted, or not cross-referenced; sources used inaccurately, evidence of plagiarism? _____)

OVERALL EVALUATION:

PAPER 2 CRITIQUES OF PEERS' WORK

_____ provided well developed, substantive reviews of peers' writing
_____ identified critical areas to work (higher-level writing issues like thesis, organization, support, development, etc., rather than lower-level writing issues like style, mechanics, proofreading)

- _____ included specific suggestions for improvement
- _____ included careful marginal comments
- _____ addressed peers directly with appropriate tone
- _____ provided positive as well as constructive feedback

GRADE: _____

(Points lost for late or missing draft, for not participating in peer reviews) _____