

Basic Criteria for Grading Papers

SOC470/776

<i>The superior paper (A)</i>	
Structure	Your thesis is clear, insightful, original, sophisticated, even exciting. All ideas in the paper flow logically; your argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. You have excellent transitions between paragraphs and sections. Your paragraphs have solid topic sentences, and each sentence clearly relates to that topic sentence. Your conclusion is persuasive.
Analysis	You support every point with at least one example from your primary sources. You integrate quoted material into your sentences well. Your analysis is fresh and exciting, posing new ways to think of 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.
<i>The good paper (B)</i>	
Structure	Your thesis is clear, but may not be insightful, original, or easily identified. 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 some evidence may appear where inappropriate. Your argument usually makes sense, although some 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.
<i>The “needs help” paper (C)</i>	
Structure	Your thesis is difficult to identify, or it may be a bland restatement of an obvious point. Your structure may be unclear, often because your thesis is weak or non-existent. 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.
<i>The unsatisfactory paper (D, E or F)</i>	
A bad paper shows minimal lack of effort or comprehension. The arguments are very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. The paper has no identifiable thesis, or an incompetent thesis. It's difficult to tell that you've come to class.	

(Based on “Explicit Grading Criteria” of Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, http://mendota.english.wisc.edu/~WAC/page.jsp?id=101&c_type=article&c_id=4 [Accessed September 8, 2007].)