

## GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

All writing assignments are to be submitted in clear, concise, formal English. Papers and take-home exams should be typed (65-75 characters/line, 25-27 lines/page) and double-spaced. For questions about style, grammar, and citations, refer to *A Manual for Writers*, by Kate Turabian, and *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk and White. **Late assignments will be graded down .5 points for each day of lateness, including weekends, unless I have been persuaded to make an exception before the due date.** **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Students should keep a back-up copy of any paper submitted to me, in case my copy should be lost either on its way to me or after being received. Receipt of a paper from you constitutes an acknowledgment that you have retained an exact and complete copy of the paper for possible future use.

### Structure and Format of Essays

#### I. Introduction

An introductory paragraph should identify the topic and explain why it is historically significant. You should also present your thesis in this paragraph. Your thesis is a significant and original statement about the topic, based on critical interpretation of sources.

#### II. Body

In the body of your essay, you present the evidence to back your thesis. You present this evidence in a structured argument. For example, each paragraph could present a subtheme of the central argument, with topic sentences summarizing the evidence contained in each of those paragraphs. You must cite the sources of all information and ideas in your essay, and you should explain how the evidence backs your interpretation (or, if you are criticizing a source, explain why the evidence or interpretation in it is faulty).

#### III. Conclusion

Here you restate your thesis (in different words than in the introduction) and remind the reader of the evidence you have used to prove your argument.

**Citations:** Since this is a history essay, you should use numbered footnotes to indicate the sources of all information in the essay. In your bibliography, list all sources used, even if you do not cite information from them. Examples of footnote and bibliography format will be provided on a separate sheet. If you do not understand how to use footnotes, consult Kate Turabian's *Guide to Writing College Papers*, or ask me. **You must cite the sources of all information and ideas (other than your own) even if you have put the material into your own words.**

**Style:** The way you write influences the effectiveness of your argument; **both form and content are important.** **Tips:**

\* Use the most precise language possible. Avoid terms or phrases that are vague, or slangy. Some terms (like "freedom," "democracy," "justice") are so overused that their meaning is ambiguous: include clarification in your text.

# CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF ESSAYS

Gigi Peterson

A range: 3.5 - 4.0

The essay is sharply focused on, and organized around, a well-defined thesis. The historical argument is logical and supported by sufficient and appropriate evidence. There is a balance between argument and evidence. The writer avoids over-simplification and over-generalization and presents some of the complexities of the subject.

The prose is polished and precise. The relation between the parts of the essay is clear and the transitions are fluid. The writer seeks the best word or phrase to express ideas, and efficiently uses a variety of sentence types and lengths. The essay contains no serious errors in grammar, spelling, or statements of fact.

An A-range paper combines these features to make an argument that is original and insightful. An A-range test essay is a well-organized and focused synthesis of important evidence that likewise meets the above criteria.

B range: 2.5 - 3.4

The essay is generally focused on a clearly-stated thesis, but the focus may wander. Evidence that is inappropriate or not contextualized may detract from the focus. The writer's interpretation is reasonably clear and well-ordered, but could use additional support or development.

The writing is generally good but may be imprecise at times. Some of the transitions may be rough. The writer makes effective use of simple constructions with some variety in sentence type and length. Word choice is adequate. There may be errors in grammar, spelling, or small statements of fact.

C range: 1.5 - 2.4

The essay addresses the question and demonstrates an understanding of the sources, but is not consistently focused; it may lack a thesis. The interpretation may be overly generalized or simplified. There is an imbalance between argument and evidence. Attention may be given to one portion of the reading at the expense of the whole. The writer does not demonstrate sufficient awareness of the complexities of the subject and may tend toward the self-evident.

The writer's meaning may be obscured by imprecise use of language. Order is imposed on the essay, but the relation between parts is not consistently clear. Transitions may be awkward. There is some carelessness in presentation demonstrated by errors in grammar, spelling, or statements of fact.

D range: .7 - 1.4

The essay does not present or adequately develop a thesis, or it does not address the question. The interpretation is vague and insufficiently supported by the evidence. There is a lack or an excess of direct quotation. The writing is imprecise and the essay is poorly organized. There are significant errors in grammar, spelling, or facts.

*Adapted from criteria developed by Elizabeth Simmons-O'Neill, UW Interdisciplinary Writing Program*

## CALVIN AND HOBBS / BILL WATTERSON

