

Appendix 2: Writing Criteria

Six Criteria for Writing in this Class

Central Purpose: Are the reasons for your writing clear, appropriate, and fully responsive to the prompt?

Details: Are the words and ideas used within the assignment relevant and effective in developing and supporting the paper's central purpose?

Organization: Can your reader easily follow and understand your paper from beginning to end? Are there writing elements, like transitions and topic sentences, which maintain a coherent flow?

Fullness: Do you do enough to carry your case? Is the document substantial enough to leave your reader believing that you know what you are talking about?

Fluency: How fluid, sophisticated, and effective is your writing at the sentence and paragraph level? Are sentences and word choices varied and clear?

Presentation: Is your paper well-edited and spell-checked? Have you reviewed your verb tense/agreement, punctuation, and other grammatical elements? Have you followed all guidelines pertaining to formatting, citation standards, and other rules of appearance as they are described in the course syllabus?

The Grid

On papers for this class you'll find in addition to comments a set of six numbers, like:

3 1 2 3 4 2

These numbers correspond to each of the criteria described above in "Six Criteria for Writing in This Class." All count equally towards the final grade.

The point of these numbers is to give you a quick mini-grade on each of the criteria I use to score papers. You can get from 1 (not very good at all) up to 6 (as good as it gets) in each category. The number represents my judgment about how well your paper has done on that one category, as measured against both my general sense of how well 100-level students ought to perform, and the performances of other students in the class. As I assign them, I have in mind the following general sense of what they mean:

1 Not enough sense of this category to be functional in college level work. (e.g., a paper without any specific details to explain or clarify the argument.)

2 A start in this category, with some successes, but needs substantial additional work (e.g., a paper that offers some specific details, but doesn't describe or explain them sufficiently to be effective.)

3 Functional success with this category, but not yet showing full control. (Some exploration of a few details, for example, but not with much fullness, or without consistency.)

4 Functional success with this category, with some lapses and/or inconsistencies (e.g., full exploration of some details, but not with all, or without consistency or clear relevance to the paper as a whole.)

5 Success with this category, but a success not fully integrated throughout the draft. with only minor problems. (e.g., a paper with a good sense of how to use details and to develop them far enough to make them useful to the argument.)

6 Full success with this category. (e.g., a paper with truly insightful, and fully developed details, all pertinent and effectively informative.)

There is no *exact* relationship between these numbers and the final score you get (I don't just add them up), but there is a very strong correlation. Six 6's, for example, would undoubtedly earn full credit.