Final Project Paper Evaluation Criteria

Students: Your final project papers will be evaluated according to the following criteria or questions. The paper is worth 50 possible points. Use these questions and answers to evaluate your progress toward a finished draft of the paper.

**1. Do you see evidence of a thesis?** *(A thesis is a brief statement that outlines the parameters of the writer's argument—his or her claim, what s/he wants to assert within the context of the paper).*

5 points: Yes, there's a strong, arguable thesis that's clear, engaging, and appropriate for the subject; the writer addresses all aspects of the thesis fully.

4 points: Yes, there's an arguable thesis that's clear, engaging, and appropriate for the subject; the writer addresses most aspects of the thesis though some ideas may be more fully developed than others.

3 points: Yes, there's a clear thesis, but it's fairly general. It could be made stronger or more engaging.

2 points: Yes, but the thesis is weak or vague; I had to really search for it, and/or it may not be arguable or supportable.

1 point: Maybe, but it is not consistent and many ideas in the paper are not connected to it.

0 points: There is no identifiable thesis statement.

**Comments:**

**2. Does the paper have a sense of purpose?**

5 points: Yes. It is very clear what the writer's goals are for the paper and how s/he intends to support the thesis. Throughout the paper the reader knows where the writer is heading and why.

4 points: Yes. The writer makes it fairly clear where s/he is leading the reader, but this could be done with more intention and clarity.

3 points: There seems to be an overall purpose in the paper, but the writer sometimes take detours or makes confusing shifts in the writing, creating some uncertainty for the reader.

2 points: The writer demonstrates occasional consistency.

1 point: There is no consistency of purpose from beginning to end of the paper.

0 points: There is no clear purpose.

**Comments:**

3**. Does the paper handle its ideas in a way that illustrates critical and/or creative thinking?**

5 points: Yes, the writer appropriately integrates facts, examples, and others' ideas in service to his/her own ideas, always giving credit for source material, but also re-shaping the material in original and interesting ways to fit his/her own purpose in the paper. It is clear that the writer knows this subject well, can form his/her own ideas, and can articulate those ideas in original and/or creative ways. The writer also provides a context for thinking about this topic and why I, as the reader, should care about it.

4 points: Yes, the writer understands how to draw upon and integrate facts, examples, and others' ideas to make his/her strongest points in the paper and includes critical and creative thinking on the topic; however, s/he may not develop all ideas fully or in depth.

3 points: To an extent. The writer offers some insight into the topic but s/he may be tentative about or struggling with certain ideas in the paper. S/he does not consistently offer analysis of the sources or draw appropriate conclusions from them.

2 points: Not really. The paper offers generalizations and/or routine insights into the topic. The writer is "reporting" information and simplifying ideas on this topic rather than refining his/her ideas and using source material in support of these ideas. There may also be examples of unsupported or misconstrued information.

1 point: No. The writer seems not to have thought about this topic thoroughly and reflectively; there are contradictory and/or unsupportable statements, vague assertions, over-simplifications, or off-topic remarks. It seems the writer has ignored important elements that would convince me s/he has thought critically about the ideas presented here.

**Comments:**

**4. Are there sufficient examples, details, and support in the paper?**

5 points: Yes, the writer fully supports all of his/her points and constructs a convincing argument in a number of substantive and compelling ways. In addition, the writer offers sufficient commentary and reflective analysis on all of the outside sources.

4 points: Yes, the writer supports his/her points with source information and examples and constructs a convincing argument in a number of ways, but does not always fully comment on those sources.

3 points: Yes, the writer provides adequate support but it is not as varied or persuasive as it might be. Sometimes the writer presents information but neglects to tell me, as the reader, why the information is relevant.

2 points: No, the writer makes some claims that are not supported, provides details or examples that are not fully convincing, and over-relies or under-relies on sources.

1 point: The writer doesn't provide support for his/her opinion or uses irrelevant examples and details in an effort to persuade me as a reader.

**Comments:**

**5. Does the writer appear to be aware of and meet the needs of an audience?**

5 points: Yes, the writer fully meets the needs of a college-level reader, using the appropriate tone and language and providing the necessary information necessary to understand his/her points.

4 points: Yes, the writer is aware of the needs of a college-level reader, but sometimes shifts tone, presents information in a somewhat confusing manner or without the full background context that would better help me to follow his/her point.

3 points: The writer may, in places, forget to include important contextual or connecting information or present information in a way that is not suited for a college-level audience, with either too much technical jargon, slang/informalities, or language that is sometimes inflammatory in tone.

2 points: The writer often uses language that is not suited for a college-level reader; the tone may be argumentative, apologetic, proselytizing, or too familiar; the ideas expressed are difficult to follow and not well connected.

1point: Information is pasted together with no consideration for the reader and there are numerous examples of inappropriate tone and language use. There is no background explanatory material or connections to show the writer’s thought processes.

**Comments:**

**6. Does the paper feel organized and coherent?**

5 points: Yes, all sentences and paragraphs flow well and are clearly focused, building the writer's argument smoothly and logically in progression and strength and skillfully using transitions to move from one idea to another. Nothing seems out of place, unnecessary or irrelevant.

4 points: Yes, the writer develops his or her ideas coherently over the course of the paper, and effectively employs transitions, although some parts of the paper may feel less developed than others, and a very few parts may feel out of place or unnecessary.

3 points: Not consistently. The paper lacks some transitions, makes unexpected shifts or detours, or includes irrelevant or out-of-place information, contributing to some confusion and lessening the persuasive aspects of the writer's argument.

2 points: Not really. The flow of ideas is hard to follow. Paragraphs are frequently unfocused, and many transitions are missing; the author makes contradictory statements, goes off-topic frequently, and/or makes confusing assertions without support.

1 point: The paper is disorganized and incoherent.

**Comments:**

**7. Is the language fluent, appropriate, and clear?**

5 points: Yes. The writer uses language that is appropriate to the topic, clear and easy to understand, and engaging to the reader. The writer uses direct quotes when necessary, and he/she always "bridges" these quotes with his or her own language to create a seamless paper. The writer consistently and effectively uses transitions to signal the development of the argument and the connection between parts. The college-level vocabulary is rich, varied, and skillfully phrased.

4 points: Yes. The writer uses language college-level vocabulary that is appropriate to the topic, clear and easy to understand. The writer attempts to blend sources smoothly into his/her own writing but may not integrate them completely. Transitions, lead-ins or signal phrases are present but are not used consistently.

3 points: Not consistently. The writer uses language that is suitable for the topic but the paper may feel choppy or disjointed in a few places, sometimes through the placement of direct quotes or the lack of signal phrases. Transitions are awkward or often missing.

2 points: No. The writer moves from one source quotation to another, without effective use of signal phrases and/or transitions, and sometimes the language shifts even when there is no direct quotation, leading me to question the authorship or voice in passages of the paper. Vocabulary is not consistently college level or appropriate for the topic.

1 point: This paper was difficult to read because there was no continuity or flow to the writing. The writer jumped from one topic to the next, used unclear, unvaried sentences, changed voice often, or was excessively wordy.

**Comments:**

**8. Does the paper demonstrate strong grammar skills and mechanics?**

5 points: This paper is very readable, without noticeable grammatical or mechanical errors.

4points: There are a few errors in the paper's grammar or mechanics, but they were slight in nature and didn't interfere with the flow of the paper or the writer's ability to engage the reader and present a convincing argument.

3 points: There are a number of errors throughout this paper, and they detracted from the overall effectiveness of the work.

2 points: This paper contains many grammatical and mechanical errors that regularly distract the reader and make it difficult to engage with and/or appreciate what the writer is trying to say.

1 point: Numerous mistakes in grammar and mechanics on each page of this paper made it difficult to discern what this writer had to say on the topic.

**Comments:**

**9. Do you see evidence of information literacy skills?**

5 points: Yes. It is clear that the writer re-shaped his/her topic over time through consulting a wide variety of peer-reviewed academic source materials, researching potential counter-arguments, and then only using those sources that would best support his/her argument and purpose for the paper. In addition, those sources are used accurately, relevantly, and properly in the paper.

4 points: Yes. The writer sought a variety of relevant academic sources in support of his/her general topic, applied these appropriately in support of his/her thesis, and considered counter-arguments; however, the writer may not have used these sources in the most convincing and thorough manner, or s/he may have weakened the paper somewhat by not seeking more or stronger source material.

3 points: To an extent. There is evidence that the writer sought out different sources for the paper but had difficulty discerning which sources would best support the paper's argument/purpose. I also see problems in how these sources were used or not used in the body of the paper. The writer may over-simplify, generalize, or misunderstand some source material, or ignore/understate important counter-arguments.

2 points: Not really. This paper is a patch-work of information from sources that feel randomly drawn together or detract from a writer’s credibility on the topic. The writer may misstate source information, take material out of context, or dismiss other credible points of view without appearing to have considered them. Some of the sources are not of an academic nature.

1 point: No. The writer did a minimal search for information, used weak sources that are non-academic, misapplied or only loosely related to the topic, and strung them together without showing how they contribute to his/her thesis. There is no evidence of serious academic research.

*0 points for entire paper:* *This paper is plagiarized in part or in whole. Regardless of the writer's intentions, this paper demonstrates serious problems in applying information literacy skills.*

**Comments:**

**10. Is the paper appropriately cited? Are sources properly identified in places where they are summarized, paraphrased, and directly quoted? Are sources properly identified at the end?**

5 points: Yes. Whenever others' ideas or language choices are used in the paper, they are properly cited. The writer has clearly identified those ideas and word phrases that belong to others, even when s/he is combining his/her own ideas with those from sources. I find all sources for the paper listed in full and correct form on the Works Cited (MLA) / Reference Page (APA).

4 points: Yes.The writer properly uses and cites summary information, paraphrases, and direct quotes. There may be a very few places in the paper where the student fails to cite an idea or fact because s/he imagines it is common knowledge in the field. There may be a very few places where the writer paraphrases a source and cites it, but doesn't alter the writer's original language to the degree s/he should. All sources are clearly and correctly identified in the paper's body and in the Works Cited (MLA) / Reference Page (APA).

3 points: To an extent. The paper contains some statements that should be more clearly cited. The writer may sometimes attempt to paraphrase and cite whole excerpts by including a citation at the end of a paragraph. The writer may cite direct quotations but neglect to identify a few facts, examples, and/or details that are drawn from sources and/or refer to a source used in another work without indicating where s/he found it. S/he may also forget to include an in-text or reference page citation.

2 points: No. The connection between source material and the body of the paper is not always clear. There may be few citations included in the paper itself and/or the citations are for such general information that their usefulness is questionable, or there may be uncited passages that seem to be in a voice that is not the writer’s. There may be problems with consistent citation notation and style. The paper may refer to sources that are not included in the Works Cited (MLA) /Reference Page (APA). Or the Works Cited/Reference Page may include sources that were not identified anywhere in the body of the paper.

1 point: No. Sources are incorrectly included or excluded in in-text citations and/or on a reference page. Many sources may or may not be listed on a reference page, and proper citation style is absent or inconsistent.

*0 points for entire paper: This paper is plagiarized in part or in whole. Regardless of the writer's intentions, this paper demonstrates serious problems in understanding the academic process for acknowledging the work and ideas of others.*

**Comments:**

**Sub-total Points:**

**Deducted Points:**

How well does the paper meet the guidelines of the assignment? You may deduct 1-5 points from the sub-total if the paper does NOT meet the assignment guidelines, including minimum page limit, required number of sources & in-text citations, formatting details, and required elements (such as annotated bibliography, abstract, outline, table of contents, or other).

**Total Points:**

**What these point values mean:**

45 -50 points: a paper of distinction for a college-level writer

35 - 44 points: a passing-level paper for a college-level writer.

25-34 points: a paper that may demonstrate certain strengths but is *not* passing as a finished document for a college-level writer.

1 - 24 points: a paper that should be considered only as a first attempt to think in writing about the given topic.

0 points: a paper that is plagiarized and *not* considered passing for a college-level writer. Plagiarism will result in an academic incident report and failure to pass the course.