

## Grading Rubric for Essays

Some standard positive and negative comments are listed on the right. If any of those comments stand out in determining the points awarded to your essay, they are underlined>. Circled numbers indicate points awarded in each category.

| <b>Organization, Cohesion &amp; Clarity</b>           |                         |  |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| 5 - 4   | Excellent               | Well-organized overall. Effective paragraphing. Clear writing. Points are clearly connected to each other. Main ideas are clear and stand out. Stays on topic, with each paragraph relevant.   |
| 3 - 2   | Good                    | Occasionally choppy or disconnected. Sometimes not clear what the point is. Some paragraphs trail off as they end. Some parts seem irrelevant. Ideas confused and/or disconnected throughout. Hard to see the point. Too vague; main ideas difficult to detect. Frequently off-topic or irrelevant. Overall organization weak.   |
| 1   | Weak                    | Frequent pointless or unintelligible statements. Completely off-topic (in which case there are no more points available in the other categories below).  |
| 0   | Very Bad                |  |
| <b>Depth, Elaboration &amp; Development, Accuracy</b> |                         |  |
| 8 - 7   | Excellent<br>–Very Good | Main ideas fully explained. Careful consideration of relevant alternatives and of potential objections. Distinguishes subtle differences among possible positions. Says something insightful on the topic. Accurate, well-developed representation of relevant positions from the reading/class discussion. Conveys a strong grasp of the full complexity of the issues.   |
| 6 - 5   | Good – Adequate         | Makes some important points on the topic. At least a little consideration of relevant alternatives or potential objections. Enough detail to make the main ideas stand out. Mostly accurate in presenting relevant positions from readings/class discussion as needed. Conveys some sense that the issues are reasonably well-grasped. Does not take much notice of relevant alternatives and objections. Lacking sufficient detail to develop main ideas. Lacking a sense that the complexity of the topic has been genuinely understood. Details provided, but not relevant. Distorted representation of readings/ class discussion. Some significant positions/ideas omitted. |
| 4 - 3   | Fair – Poor             | Insufficient development of any point of view. Minimal explanation. Crucial aspects/considerations missing. Grazes the surface, not demonstrating any real thought. Reads like a last-minute creation. Gross misrepresentation or omission of relevant positions from readings/discussion. Demonstrates lack of understanding.   |
| 2 - 0   | Bad – Awful             |  |
| <b>Argument Strength &amp; Logical Consistency</b>    |                         |  |
| 8 - 7   | Excellent<br>–Very Good | Offers strong, logical arguments for points that need support. Does not assume too much. Arguments are directed at establishing relevant and important points. Mostly offers decent arguments when needed. May rely on questionable assumptions. Somewhat more research needed to establish the premises.  |

|  |                      |   |
|--|----------------------|---|
| 6 – 5  | Good – Adequate      | <p>Key arguments display obvious loopholes. Relies on unsupported controversial premises, making the argument too easy. Inadequate research to establish basic facts. Arguments may be somewhat off topic or not about the most important issues. Occasionally slips into inconsistency.</p> <p>Unsupported premises seem obviously false. Main argument appears to seriously contradict itself or to be obviously illogical. Line of argument disconnected. Main arguments are off-topic.</p> <p>No support offered for main conclusions, or there are no clear conclusions. Paper may read like an exposition of unsupported opinion, or a list of unsupported claims. Paper consists mostly of quotes strung together. Or, no apparent connection between the conclusion and the topic of the paper.</p> |
| 4 – 3  | Fair                 |   |
| 2 – 1  | Poor                 |   |
| 0  | Bad                  |   |
| <b>Grammar, punctuation, spelling, citation of sources, presentation</b> |                      |   |
| 4 - 3  | Excellent –Very Good | Sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structures; few faults with respect to spelling, punctuation, capitalization; all sources are properly cited as needed; clean presentation.   |
| 2  | Good                 | Acceptable vocabulary and sentence structures; occasional faults in spelling, punctuation, capitalization; citation of sources may contain errors; clean presentation.  |
| 1  | Weak                 | Poor vocabulary and sentence structures; over-simple wording; frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization; citation of sources inadequate; messy presentation.   |
| 0  | Bad                  | Inappropriate language choices; frequent serious breakdowns in wording; persistent dramatic errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization. Sources are not cited. Messy.  |
| <b>Raw Total</b><br>Max = 25   |                      | <p>This is your “raw score”. Given the definitions of the points in each category above, the following scale for interpreting your raw score makes sense:</p> <p>21.5 is the boundary between “Excellent” and “Good”</p> <p>16 is the boundary between “Good” and “Adequate”</p> <p>11 is the boundary between “Adequate” and “Poor”</p> <p>6 is the boundary between “Poor” and “Very bad”</p>   |
| <b>Record-ed score</b><br>Max = 15                                       |                      | <p>This essay is to be worth 15 points toward the course grade. To make this happen, the raw total shown above is multiplied by .6 to get the number of points you receive for this essay; the result is shown to the left. This is the number that counts toward your course grade.</p> <p>Multiply the boundaries listed in the box above by .6 to get approximate boundaries for letter grades on this essay:</p> <p>13 is approximately the lowest A</p> <p>10 is the lowest B</p> <p>7 is the lowest C (Yes, 7 out of 15 is still a C.)</p> <p>4 is the lowest passing score</p> <p>See the online syllabus for details about the course grading scale. Note that grades are NOT based on 90%, 80%, 70%, and 60% cut-offs.</p>   |