**Standards for Grading Papers**

* **A paper (Superior)**

Excellent, with perhaps, one forgivable flaw.

* Challenging thesis and clearly developed.
* References used intelligently in argument.
* Correct sentence/ grammatical structure.
* Sophisticated writing style.
* Appropriate documentation.
* Subtlety and complexity in approach to subject.
* Independence of thought.

The Superior paper is written far above the minimum standards I have outlined for the assignment. It includes all the positive qualities of the B paper listed below. In addition, it displays originality, imagination, vitality, and a personal voice for the author. But the principal characteristic of the "A" paper is its rich content and analysis. The quality, quantity, clarity, and density of the information delivered is such that the reader feels significantly taught by the author, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. The "A" paper is also marked by stylistic finesse: the title and the opening are engaging; the transitions are artful; the phrasing is tight, fresh, and specific; the tone enhances the purpose of the paper. The "A" paper, because of its careful organization and development, imparts a feeling of wholeness and clarity. A papers are also 100% free of factual errors.

**The A paper cites all required sources and does so correctly**.

* **B paper (Good)**

Good overall (i.e., does many things right).

* Some minor errors in factual content OR
* Some errors in terminology or general writing skills OR
* Some lapses in clarity (i.e., vagueness, incompleteness, flaws in structure).

It is significantly more than competent. Besides being almost free of mechanical errors, the "B" paper delivers substantial information--that is, substantial in both quantity and in relevance. Its specific points are logically ordered, well-developed, and unified around a clear organizing principle that is apparent *early in the paper*. It has positive value that goes beyond the avoidance of error, but it lacks one or more qualities that would bring it close to perfection. It may develop an idea fully and accurately but lack elements of originality. It may have all the qualities of an A paper except naturalness of organization, or it may be marred by improper form, inappropriate style, or occasional obscurity. Stylistically, the opening paragraph draws the reader; the closing paragraph is both conclusive and thematically related to the opening. The transitions between paragraphs are, for the most part, smooth, the sentence structures varied. The diction is more concise and precise than that of the "C" paper. In general, a "B" paper offers substantial information with few distractions.

The B paper, then, is a complete paper in fulfilling the assignment, but lacks something in organization, clarity, richness of detail, quantity of information , or cleanness of style. It is good, but it is not excellent. It is often, to be blunt, good but dull (I.E.: just regurgitates what other people say without any kind of originality or innovative insight). Often the B paper is one revision away from being an A. The revision involves noticing the flaws and thinness in analysis, content, or style, and then moving vigorously to correct them.

B papers, like A papers, are 100% free of factual errors.

B papers cite all their sources and do so correctly but might have some problems with Chicago style.

* **C paper (Adequate)**

Generally correct, with more than a few flaws.

* Inconsistent or superficial.
* Weakness in line of argument.
* Dull thesis.
* Mechanical approach to argument.
* Lack of support/evidence
* Problems with basic grammar or matters of style.
* Simplicity of thought, structure, or expression.

It is generally competent but lacks intellectual rigor; it meets the assignment, has few mechanical errors and is reasonably well-organized and developed. This is a paper that ticks off all the check marks of the assignment and does not do anything more. The actual information it delivers, however, seems thin and commonplace. One reason for that impression is that the ideas are typically cast in the form of vague generalities--generalities in presentation of theory, experimental findings, or even application examples. The paper may not be developed fully, its logic may be unconvincing or its organization, paragraphs, or sentences weak. Stylistically, the "C" paper has other shortcomings: a weak opening paragraph, a perfunctory conclusion, strained transitions, choppy and monotonous sentence patterns, and diction marred by repetition, redundancy, and imprecision. Occasionally, a paper may rate an A or B in content and receive a C because of errors of form. Just as often, a paper may be relatively correct in form, but its content may be uninspired or thin, thus warranting a grade no higher than C.

C papers cite all their sources but often have significant errors in Chicago style.

* **D paper (Unsatisfactory)**

  Does not make its case. Might be missing required sections.

* + Severe difficulties in logical structure or mechanics of expression.
  + Illogical, unsupported thinking without a line or argument.
  + Inadequate thinking about the topic.
  + Incoherent writing.

This paper is largely faulty, often because of errors of form or mechanics, but it does not warrant complete disregard. It may contain little or no content, it may simply restate arbitrarily selected material from the sources, or it may lack coherent organization. It does, however, have some saving graces: a spark of originality, some mastery of sentence skills, or relative grasp of organization.

* **F paper (Not acceptable)**

  Does not make its case or completely off topic.

* + Severe difficulties in logical structure or mechanics of expression.
  + Illogical, unsupported thinking without a line or argument.
  + Inadequate thinking about the topic.
  + Incoherent writing.

Its treatment of the subject is superficial; its theme lacks discernible organization; its prose is garbled or lacking in clarity or style. Mechanical errors are frequent. In short, the ideas, organization, and style fall far short of acceptable college writing in English (the language, not the Department).