

Points	10	9	8	7	6>0
Overall Impression (50% weight)	Reads like an article in National Geographic, the Atlantic, or a research paper in a scientific journal. I'd pay money to read it. I'd like to show it to other colleagues.	Reads very well: a competent essay by an experienced upperclassman. I read it with interest, but I wouldn't necessarily pay for it.	Some interesting aspects but uneven flow and clunky; there's no mistaking it with the work of an experienced writer.	Is this a first-year student? The writer needs a lot more experience.	Few people would voluntarily read this unless they were paid to read it.
Ideas (100% weight)	Original, fascinating, creative, novel ideas. Fully demonstrates subject knowledge at a high level and specific to this course.	Ideas are not entirely novel but have a novel spin/angle. Demonstrates knowledge specific to this course.	Ideas have merit but are largely already answered in the literature. Not obvious that the student learned a lot in this course.	Ho-hum ideas, or ideas that may be true but are rather obvious. Subject knowledge evident but rudimentary.	Weak ideas that are oblivious to better explanations that have more explanatory power. Could have been written by a student outside of the course.
Thesis (50% weight)	Easily identifiable, lucid, insightful, crystal clear.	Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight.	Unclear (contains vague terms); provides little around which to structure the paper.	Difficult to identify; does not discriminate ideas; muddies or distracts with empty rhetoric.	Has no identifiable thesis or a weak thesis. You could even accuse the author of intentionally obfuscating the arguments to fluff them up.
Structure (50% weight)	Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.	Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.	Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, and there are many paragraphs without topic sentences.	Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.	No evidence structure or organization.
Use of Evidence (100% weight)	Primary and secondary source information incorporated to buttress every point. Examples support thesis and fit within paragraph. Excellent integration of quoted material into sentences. Factual information is incorporated.	Examples used to support most points. Some evidence does not support point or may appear where inappropriate. Quotations are integrated well into sentences. Some factual information is incorporated.	Examples support some points. Quotations may be poorly integrated into sentences. There may not be a clear point. Moderate amount of factual information is incorporated.	Very few or weak examples and factual information. General failure to support statements, or evidence seems to support no particular point.	No attempt has been made to incorporate factual information or interpret primary and secondary sources.
Logic and Argumentation (100% weight)	All ideas flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Author anticipates and successfully defuses counter-arguments; makes novel connections which illuminate thesis	Argument is clear and usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed. Occasional insightful connections to evidence are made.	Logic may often fail, or the argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments or make any connections with the thesis. May also contain logical contradictions.	Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support. Simplistic view of topic, and there is no effort to grasp possible alternative views. Very little or very weak attempt to relate evidence to argument.	Too incoherent to determine.
Mechanics (50% weight)	Language is clearly organized. Correct word usage, punctuation, sentence structure, and grammar; correct citation of sources; minimal to no spelling errors; absolutely no run-on sentences or comma splices.	Sentence structure and grammar strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Some spelling errors and at least one run-on sentence, sentence fragment, or comma splice.	Minor problems in sentence structure and grammar. Multiple errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several (two to five) run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and comma splices.	Huge problems in sentence structure and grammar. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many (more than five) run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and comma splices.	Very difficult to understand owing to major problems in mechanics.