

| Section | Outcomes (Points will be earned for meeting certain benchmarks) | Point value | Points awarded/ explanation |
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| Introduction | <p>Students will compose introductions that ease the reader into the essay. All introductions must feature the title of the work being discussed, the author of the work, and the year of publication for the work. Introductions should be concise but well-developed, getting to and focusing upon the main argument(s) of the essay.</p> <p>Benchmarks:</p> <p>Unacceptable (0 points): lacks a formal paragraph length introduction and a minimum effort or attempt at completing the assignment.</p> <p>Developing (up to 3 points): has something that resembles an introduction, but fails to acknowledge the author, title, and year. This attempt is considered developing but not yet competent.</p> <p>Adequate (up to 6 points): is developed, mentions the author, title, and year, and demonstrates the level of aptitude that should be present in a minimally successful college-level essay. This attempt can be considered minimally competent or adequate. <i>**Most introductions will meet this benchmark.**</i></p> <p>Proficient (up to 8 points): is successful for the most part, includes all essential information, is appropriately formatted, and has a clear, logical structure. This attempt is considered competent or proficient, striving toward an advanced level of skill.</p> <p>Masterful (up to 10 points): demonstrates mastery of the introduction, includes all essential information, has a clear voice and style, and builds off of the model provided by the professor. This attempt is considered masterful, striving toward perfection. <i>**Only a select few introductions will meet this benchmark.**</i></p> | 10 | |
| Thesis | <p>The thesis of the essay is the single most important part. It should be the last sentence of the introduction. The thesis must be an argument. It cannot be simply a statement of fact about what occurs in the primary text. It should be a well-developed argument that addresses each of the subsequent body paragraphs of the essay. Failure to have a clear, argumentative thesis may result in failure of the essay.</p> <p>Benchmarks:</p> <p>Unacceptable (0 points): lacks thesis completely; no attempt whatsoever.</p> <p>Developing (up to 5 points): has something resembling a thesis, but lacks the clarity, development, and argument of a minimally competent thesis statement. The statement may also be unrelated to the body and/or conclusion of the essay. This attempt is considered developing but not yet competent.</p> <p>Adequate (up to 10 points): has a minimal argument present, but lacks the development and depth of a sophisticated college-level argument. This thesis will address the topic and texts, but may not have the appropriate level of theoretical involvement for a sustained essay. This attempt is considered minimally competent to competent. <i>**Most thesis statements will meet this benchmark.**</i></p> <p>Proficient (up to 15 points): has a clear, logical argument that is text-based and appropriately theorized. Demonstrates the sophistication of a successful college-level argument. Lacks grammatical or mechanical problems. This attempt is considered proficient.</p> <p>Masterful (up to 20 points): is proficient, but also demonstrates a highly theoretical awareness of the topic and argument. Must be text-based, grammatically correct, and mechanically sound. This attempt demonstrates mastery of the thesis as rhetorical device.</p> | 20 | |

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| Body ¶s | <p>All body paragraphs should be arranged in the CIA mode of organization. Each body paragraph should feature a claim, which is an argumentative topic sentence. Each body paragraph should have an illustration from the text in question. In most cases, it is best to use a direct quotation from the text being studied. Make sure the quotation is appropriate to paragraph the argument being presented. Finally, each body paragraph should feature a substantial analysis of the illustration. The analysis should be well-developed and well-supported by conventional uses of logic and evidence. Any paragraph that does not relate to the thesis statement will be considered off-topic and will result in a loss of potential points.</p> <p>Breakdown: points for content/idea development, for CIA structure, for clear relationships between the paragraphs, for transitions, for MLA style and documentation.</p> <p>Benchmarks:</p> <p>Unacceptable (0 points): the body paragraphs have no sense of organization or logical construction; the ideas expressed are jumbled, unclear, or illogical. No attempt to cite sources properly.</p> <p>Developing (up to 10 points): the paragraphs show some consideration for organization, but do not follow the guidelines set forth; they lack clear, logical organization and transition from idea to idea; development of ideas is spare or inadequate and may not make sense from one to the next. Any attempt to cite sources is poorly executed and hinders understanding of the content.</p> <p>Adequate (up to 20 points): the paragraphs are organized using the CIA method (or another acceptable pattern of organization), resulting in clear, logical development and structure; most sentences have clear relationships from one to the next; these paragraphs meet only a minimum standard of college-level writing. Citations are done properly. <i>**Most body paragraphs should meet this benchmark.**</i></p> <p>Proficient (up to 30 points): content and ideas are developed in a way that shows serious consideration of the topic at hand; most ideas and analysis support the thesis and argument presented; paragraphs and the sentences within each are clearly organized and logically structured; transitions between ideas and paragraphs are clear and effective; this attempt is representative of sophisticated college-level writing and thinking.</p> <p>Masterful (up to 40 points): is proficient, but also demonstrates a high awareness of the logical organization and structure. This attempt demonstrates proficiency but goes above and beyond to illustrate the top-tier of college-level writing and thinking. <i>**Few body paragraphs will meet this benchmark.**</i></p> | 40 | |
| Conclusion | <p>The conclusion of the essay is vital to its success. Conclusions should NOT simply restate the thesis. Instead, the conclusion in any essay should reiterate major points, but more importantly that reiteration should be in the service of explaining the literary, social, or cultural significance of the work being studied. Conclusions serve to tie up the essay, to gently remind us of what has been covered, to address where this work might lead, and to tidy up the argument presented so that readers can see the importance of the work done in the essay. To earn the maximum point value, the essay must attempt to answer the “so what” question?</p> <p>Unacceptable (0 points): has no conclusion or attempt at a conclusion.</p> <p>Developing (up to 3 points): simply summarizes the essay’s main points without any kind of thoughtful evaluation of the work presented. Uses the phrase “in conclusion.” Lacks the basic level of development to be expected in a college essay.</p> <p>Adequate (up to 5 points): reiterates or reinforces the main assertions (not just the thesis!) of the essay without explicitly repeating them. Offers a comprehensive final word on the matter. Attempts to answer the “so what?” question. The conclusion demonstrates the basic expected development and</p> | 10 | |

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| | <p>organization of a college-level essay.</p> <p>Proficient (up to 8 points): meets the requirements for an adequate conclusion, but goes beyond the expected to demonstrate serious consideration of the topic and its broader implications. The “so what?” question is answered in a meaningful and thoughtful manner.</p> <p>Masterful (up to 10 points): is proficient, but also demonstrates a highly theoretical awareness of the topic and argument. Must be text-based, grammatically correct, and mechanically sound. This attempt demonstrates mastery of the thesis as rhetorical device. Provides a remarkable answer to the “so what?” question, while making clear and concise connections to the outside world.</p> | | |
| MLA Style | <p>All essays are expected to adhere to MLA style conventions, including but not limited to: font, margins, heading, header, double-spacing, title, page numbers, in-text citations, and a works cited page.</p> <p>Unacceptable (0 points): the essay makes no attempt to adhere to MLA style.</p> <p>Developing (up to 3 points): the essay has something resembling a works cited page, but the guidelines for basic formatting are not met. Lacks the technical skill and effort of a basic college-level essay.</p> <p>Adequate (up to 5 points): the essay meets all basic requirements with few errors in formatting and citations. Meets the basic standard for college-level works.</p> <p>Proficient/Masterful (up to 10 points): the essay has, if any, few errors in formatting and style. Points will be awarded for attention to small conventions and stylistic techniques such as punctuation placement and the introduction of quotations.</p> | 10 | |
| Grammar & Mechanics | <p>Grammar and mechanics are essential to conveying your arguments to others. Any essay that has substantial grammar problems will be subject to failure. Please note that because this is an advanced composition course, all students are expected to have a reasonable level of grammar proficiency. If an essay lacks basic logical constructions, the grade will reflect this deficiency.</p> <p>Unacceptable (0 points): the essay has more than three major grammatical or mechanic errors.</p> <p>Developing (up to 3 points): the essay has one or more major errors and several minor errors which interfere with basic communication.</p> <p>Adequate (up to 5 points): the essay has no more than one major error and no more than five minor errors, none of which interfere with basic communication.</p> <p>Proficient (up to 8 points): the essay has no major errors and few minor errors or stylistic issues, none of which interfere with communication.</p> <p>Masterful (up to 10 points): the essay has hardly any minor errors or stylistic concerns, none of which interfere with communication.</p> | 10 | |