

### Rubric for Short Papers

The point of each of the short papers in this class is not just to come up with a *yes* or *no* answer or to make a claim. While each of the papers will require you to take a position, your paper will be primarily assessed on the basis of how well you support your position with arguments and how well you support each argument with evidence. While there are positions which are indefensible (and therefore lead you in a direction which cannot be argued for effectively), it is perfectly possible to take a reasonable position and not support it effectively or at all. A paper which consists of a final “correct” answer without coherent support is almost as unsuccessful as a paper that takes a totally indefensible position (which, by definition, does not have coherent support).

Your job is to make a reasonable response to the question by

- stating a clear position in answer to the question;
- supporting that position with the strongest arguments you can in the space allotted;
- supporting each argument with the strongest evidence you can;
- distinguishing between stronger and weaker arguments where needed; and
- demonstrating a clear logic flow between evidence, argument and conclusion.

Assume for each of these papers that your audience is a literate English speaker with general knowledge about the topic, but not the kind of specialized knowledge that you are acquiring in this class. You should aim at a clearly written, mechanically correct essay.

*You must provide appropriate references whenever you use some else's words or ideas in your short papers. The crucial thing is to give appropriate credit and to allow the reader to check your presentation against the source. (The existence of problems with the form of citations is a minor issue and costs a maxim of half a point.) Failure to cite at all where needed is a form of plagiarism and is treated differently from other aspects of assessing papers. Failure to cite information or words to the source will result in a reduction of 5% for each failure on the first paper; 10% for each failure on the second paper; 25% for each failure on the third paper; and 100% for all later papers.*

**Content:**

thesis/position indefensible/  
non-existent/unresponsive  
to the question

thesis/position clear,  
reasonable and responsive  
to the question

0.....1/2

no arguments or analyses

a few arguments clearly presented;  
more arguments less clearly presented

most or all arguments  
clearly presented

0.....1.....2

arguments not supported  
with evidence

some arguments supported with  
insufficient or unclear evidence

most or all arguments  
well-supported with evidence

0.....1.....2

logic flow non-existent

logic flow muddled or unclear, but  
discernable

logic flow clear and easy to follow

0.....1.....2

**Form:**

many problems with sentence  
structure, word choice, mechanics  
of presentation (spelling and  
punctuation)

occasional awkward or  
incorrect structure or  
word choice; few  
mechanical errors

gracefully written with  
no structural, word choice or  
mechanical errors

0.....1/2.....1

citations present, but inconsistent  
with APA or MLA form

citations present and consistent  
with APA or MLA form

0.....1/2