

## The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching & Learning

### Grading Rubrics

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Below you'll find the rubric that I use to assess the writing in my courses. I include this in every syllabus that I produce, and I discuss it briefly at the start of the semester and then regularly throughout the course.

Having a rubric such as this enables both the instructor and the students to develop a shared vocabulary for grading, and can be particularly useful when students want more and precise feedback on how they did. A rubric doesn't remove your biases; it explains them: after all, the very nature of assessment is founded on the idea that, as an instructor, you have a bias for good student work!

#### Here's the rubric:

- An A means that I find that the paper to be essentially understandable and coherent. An A paper negotiates the issues it discusses with clarity and care, and it develops ideas that I find interesting and thoughtful. It represents with care and accuracy the positions of others. It has few errors and exhibits a strong, consistent sense of the reader in terms of structure, transitions, and tone. Its precision of language is outstanding.
- A B means that while overall I understood the paper, in spots I got lost or confused, often because of contradictions in logic or lack of support for statements; this usually makes the paper seem less thoughtful. A B paper demonstrates less clarity and precision than an A paper. It addresses the assignment and has few errors; it generally represents others' positions carefully and accurately. Finally, it exhibits some sense of the reader in terms of structure, transitions, and tone but may in a few spots be inconsistent or imprecise.
- A C means that I found the paper difficult to understand. It may address the assignment generally but doesn't seem to have a specific focus, thesis, or purpose. There are usually many inconsistencies of tone, organization, or logic, all of which prevent the reader from being able to make sense of the paper. It can have a few, or many, errors. C papers usually do not seek to represent carefully or accurately the positions of others; indeed, they often rely on bad faith misrepresentations such as straw-man arguments or willful dismissals.
- An NC means that I didn't understand the paper at all. This usually happens because the paper doesn't address the assignment or the texts in any clear or coherent way.

Although my grading system may not be familiar to you, it is not arbitrary, and I make every effort to be as clear and consistent as I can about grades. If you ever have a question about why you received the grade you did, please come and talk to me.

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