

## Writing Program

### Research in the Disciplines (355:201)

#### Grading Criteria for Early Papers

Early papers in 201 are evaluated in terms of the same four categories as 101 papers: project, use of text, organization, and presentation. In addition, 201 papers are evaluated on the use of a theoretical framework, a requirement of the Research Essay. The terms “project” and “argument” are not interchangeable, but share a concern with the goals, assumptions, and issues of the paper, which should be articulated in the paper’s introduction. In 101, we use the language of “project” for what a student wants to accomplish in the paper; a project is created by contributing to the conversation raised by the texts read for class and locating a larger context for the student’s ideas that are generated by the texts. We avoid using “argument” because it can promote simplistic, absolutist positions, and encourage the student to “remain trapped in the texts.” However, in 201, the student is not working exclusively with assigned texts except in the first paper; he or she must research a topic and select the appropriate texts to use. Therefore, formulating a “project” in advance of researching the topic may have the effect of pre-empting the research process, and lead the student to consider only the texts that expedite the “project.” Therefore, we use “argument,” as well as “project,” in 201 because of its more text-centered implications. It may be appropriate to restrict the formulation of a “project” to the final stages of drafting to avoid foreclosing potential complexities during the research process.

#### Reasons why a paper might not pass:

- It has no clear focus, or the beginnings of an argument or project.
- It privileges student ideas at the expense of the text.
- It does not engage with the texts or with the assignment.
- It shows a basic lack of reading comprehension or failure to grasp the author’s argument.
- It over-generalizes about the assigned readings, and depends largely on summary, generalization, and non-textual example rather than quotation, paraphrase, and reference.
- It has little coherence overall or on the paragraph level.
- It has significant sentence-level error that impedes meaning, especially serious patterns of error in sentence integrity, agreement, or citation.
- There is no sign of a theoretical framework (does not mention an analytic concept or debate).

#### The "C" Essay:

- Shows evidence of a focus or the beginnings of an argument or project.
- Demonstrates the ability to work with three texts.
- Engages with the ideas in the readings, and shows evidence of significant reading comprehension.
- Shows an ability to use quotation, reference, paraphrase, and citation, although the essay may still include summary.

- Has an overall organization, although there may be sections that lack coherence or focus.
- Has sentence-level error under control; although errors may appear on each page, they do not significantly impede the meaning of the essay or undermine the writer's credibility.
- Identifies and explains a theoretical concept or debate, and may begin to apply it to the texts.

### **The "C+" Essay:**

- Has an argument or project, but it may not be clearly articulated.
- May move toward an independent position or project.
- Is more complex than the "C" essay, engaging with more complicated ideas and textual examples.
- Has several moments of solid work with text, but may not indicate how these moments contribute to the project.
- Creates organizational coherence in the form of transitions and topic sentences, but may not establish a clear relationship between paragraphs.
- Has sentence-level errors under control, although there may still be some mechanical, formatting, or citation errors.
- Begins to use the theoretical framework to develop the argument or project, and returns to it periodically during the essay.

### **The "B" Essay:**

- Advances more independent ideas, but may repeat rather than develop or reconsider them.
- Takes interpretive risks, challenges dominant interpretations, or responds to the assignment and readings in thoughtful and distinctive ways.
- Represents the argument or project accurately in the introductory paragraph.
- Demonstrates the ability to work with the texts in the service of the project, using quotation to develop and extend ideas as well as to support them.
- Locates points of disagreement as well as agreement among the texts, and uses those points to take a position on the issue.
- Shows coherence in overall organization and a clear relationship between the paper's parts; presentation and development are controlled and organized.
- Contains few sentence-level errors and very few citation errors.
- Begins to use the framework analytically, and uses it throughout the paper in the service of the argument or project.
- May include "C" moments in an otherwise well-reasoned and well-developed project.

### **The "B+" Essay:**

- Shows independent ideas in control through most of the paper, and may reveal a moment when the student's own interpretive approach or position is especially well developed.
- Is more complex or has more depth than the "B" paper in one or two substantial ways, or executes several of the elements of the "B" paper particularly well.

- Works with text with confidence and authority; may analyze text with particular insight.
- Is notably well-organized; each paragraph fluidly contributes to the project.
- Has minimal presentation error.
- Uses a theoretical framework analytically throughout.

**The "A" Essay:**

- Reflects a complex understanding of the issues raised, is ambitious in the questions it asks and the project it attempts.
- Develops a thoughtful, well-defined interpretive approach and an awareness of the writer's position in relation to the positions of the texts.
- Is well-organized and controlled, with a sustained development and articulation of a position that extends or challenges the positions of the readings.
- Has minimal presentation error.
- Uses a theoretical framework analytically throughout, may complicate or challenge the framework, or may use it to complicate the argument or project.