

Writing Program Tutorials
Research in the Disciplines (355:201)

Grading Criteria for the Research Paper

Reasons Why a Research Essay Might Not Pass:

- It amounts to a report. (It summarizes sources and/or the topic without analyzing them/it.)
- It fails to engage with sources or contains **serious** misreadings of them.
- It reflects an inability to select and use relevant quotations from the sources.
- It is very disorganized and/or very unfocused.
- It contains serious citation problems (plagiarism or bordering on plagiarism), or fails to use an appropriate style throughout (MLA or APA preferred).
- It contains frequent sentence-level errors that impede meaning.
- It does not meet the page requirement.
- It does not meet the source requirement.
- It reflects little effort to use a framework of theory, concept, or debate to analyze source material on the topic (the case material), or an inappropriate analytical relation.
- It reflects very little research: the essay may spend most of the paper constructing a sophisticated frame with little topic material actually being analyzed.

The "C" Essay:

- C essays go beyond report writing to a fairly sustained analysis of a research interest.
- In the C essay the writer uses a theoretical framework, but it may not be entirely suitable.
- The writer does not sustain the framework but does return to it as the essay unfolds.
- The C essay engages with sources, though it may rely heavily on a couple of them.
- Most of the sources and quotations selected are suitable to the paper, but not all of them.
- The C essay begins to use quotations to develop and extend ideas, not only support them.
- The C essay is organized, but there may be sections that lack organization or focus.

- The C essay may have some sentence-level error, but it rarely impedes meaning.
- It meets page and source requirements.

The "C+" Essay:

- C+ essays are more complex than C essays in one or more significant ways; for example, they may engage with the sources in more intricate ways.
- An essay that looks like a C but reflects more comprehensive research may merit a C+.
- A student might earn a C+ because the essay attempts to work on a difficult question or issue, or takes risks in challenging dominant interpretations of the topic.

The "B" Essay:

- The conceptual framework used to analyze the topic or case is appropriate for the topic, and are in view throughout the whole of the paper.
- The author complicates the framework in some way that surpasses a basic application. This effort may involve using the case material to test (or even to challenge) the validity of framing concepts, or working with more than one framing text.
- The B essay demonstrates appropriate use of sources. The writer's use of both conceptual and case material reveals that she or he has clearly entered into a scholarly conversation.
- The B essay uses quotations to develop and extend ideas, in addition to using quotes to support ideas. The author locates points of disagreement as well as agreement among the sources, and uses those points to take a position on the issue.
- The B essay is generally well organized, though there may be paragraphs or sections where the essay does not cohere because connections have not been completely worked out.
- The essay contains few sentence-level errors and very few citation errors.

The "B+" Essay:

- Is more complex and/or has more depth than the "B" paper in one or two substantial ways.
- The B+ essay reveals a moment when the student's own interpretive approach or position is well developed.
- The B+ essay's use of theoretical framework might be particularly sophisticated.
- The B+ essay may lack the ambition and scope of the "A" paper but is highly proficient.

- The B+ essay often has the ambition and scope of the “A” research project but is one draft away in terms of coherence, control, and/or error.

The "A" Essay:

- The A essay project is ambitious in its projects, the questions it asks, and the texts it uses.
- The A essay uses the case to test the limits of the frame, and may propose an alternative frame or make appropriate changes to the frame.
- A essays reflect complex understanding of the issues raised.
- The A essay relies on carefully chosen sources and quotations that demonstrate that the student has read around in the research area.
- The A paper is well-organized and controlled, with few citation and sentence-level errors.