

## Evaluation criteria for term papers (and BA/MA Thesis)

	<b>EXCELLENT</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>BELOW EXPECTATIONS</b>
<b>ARGUMENT</b>	clearly-defined, well-founded research question; hypothesis or thesis interesting, arguable, incisive; argument stated early on and argued throughout; consideration of counter-arguments	research question stated but could be better argued; hypothesis or thesis might be vague or bland; may be only implied, not stated early on; may not be argued throughout, disappearing at times	vague or missing research question; simple, descriptive, or confusing; parts unintegrated and unrelated; only implied or not stated early on; not argued throughout; underlying assumptions might be problematic; few counter-arguments	no discernible research question; thesis or hypothesis missing or purely descriptive (an observation of statement of fact); faulty underlying assumptions
<b>STRUCTURE</b>	a logical, coherent progression of ideas, not a mere list; appropriate weighting of sections; paragraphs structured logically	generally logical but either confusing because of jumps and missing links or predictable and undeveloped; some disorganized paragraphs (perhaps skimpy or confusing)	lacking coherence (big jumps, missing links); disorganized; unbalanced (e.g. long introductions and short	confusing; rambling; disorganized; plot summary; excessive filler
<b>EVIDENCE</b>	sufficient and appropriate examples from primary materials that are integrated, not plopped, into an argument; good theoretical underpinning; sophisticated synthesis of relevant secondary research	generally solid but may be scanty or presented as undigested quotations that are just plopped into the discussion; theoretical underpinning present but could be improved; secondary research present but may contain significant gaps	either missing or presented as undigested quotations; may be taken out of context; weak or missing theoretical underpinning; secondary material sparse, inappropriate, or irrelevant	very few examples; undigested quotations; taken out of context; no theoretical underpinning; secondary sources ignored or poorly chosen

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ANALYSIS	shows thorough understanding of both primary sources and theoretical concepts; shows how examples from primary sources support the thesis; goes beyond summary or paraphrase; might offer unexpected observations	appropriate connection between primary materials and theoretical concepts, but might tend towards the obvious; greater part of evidence supports the thesis; at times insightful but sometimes mere summary or description	some insightful moments but generally missing or mere summary; may present some misinterpretations; weak connection between theoretical concepts and analysis	missing or based on misinterpretations or summary; no connection between theory and analysis; restatements of the obvious
SOURCES	relevant, up to date, of high scholarly quality; quoted and cited correctly and consistently; critical approach to the literature	quoted and cited correctly (for the most part) but deployed in limited rather than nuanced ways; relevant, up to date, of high scholarly quality; approach might not be critical	plopped in, if used at all; may be quoted or cited incorrectly or inconsistently; used as filler; might be out-of-date or irrelevant	plopped in, if used at all; incorrectly quoted or cited; used as filler; misunderstood; from unscholarly sources
LANGUAGE	clear, sophisticated, formal diction; smooth, engaging, a pleasure to read; free of lexical, grammatical, or orthographic errors	generally clear, but lacking in sophistication; may exhibit occasional errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, lexis and format; diction maybe overwrought or too colloquial	generally unclear and hard to read; may show severe errors in lexis, grammar, or spelling	simplistic or difficult to read; riddled with severe errors in lexis, grammar, or spelling; incomprehensible passages

### ADDITIONAL CRITERIA FOR BA OR MA THESIS

- ✓ innovative research question that responds to the state of the field
- ✓ original approach or methodology

### SPECIFICALLY, A FAILING ESSAY

- is significantly shorter than the assigned length;
- may address the assignment superficially but doesn't offer independent insight;
- may cite sources but doesn't grapple with either sources or ideas
- includes plagiarized material