Writing Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>4 – Excellent (A)</th>
<th>3 – Good (B)</th>
<th>2 – Satisfactory (C)</th>
<th>1 – Unsatisfactory (D)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Exceptional use and understanding of terminology and concepts discussed in course. Refers not only to newly introduced concepts, but also previous course content.</td>
<td>Effective use and understanding of terminology and concepts discussed in course. Refers not only to newly introduced concepts, but also some previous course content.</td>
<td>Some use and understanding of terminology and concepts discussed in course. Refers only to newly introduced course concepts.</td>
<td>Demonstrates little to no use of or understanding of terminology and concepts discussed in course. Fails to refer to newly introduced course concepts.</td>
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| Prompt | Clearly understands and responds to prompt questions. Shows clear comprehension of the assigned readings and issues and cites reading where relevant. | Responds to the prompt questions. Shows clear comprehension of the assigned readings and issues and cites reading where relevant. | Only loosely follows the prompt questions. Shows slight misunderstanding of the assigned readings and/or issues and cites reading where relevant. | Does not respond to or significantly misinterprets the prompt questions. Fails to show any evidence of doing the assigned readings and/or completely mismanages citations. |

| Logic | Claim/thesis is identifiable and takes a clear and nuanced position. Thesis is backed up with coherent evidence and support; argument builds throughout. Respectfully accounts for opposing viewpoints. Argument builds throughout essay. | Claim is identifiable, maybe simplistic or absolutist. Thesis is supported with somewhat effective logic, perhaps weak or fallacious support. Accounts for opposing views. Argument mostly builds throughout essay. Points of argument may “stack” instead of being interrelated. | Claim is vague and ill-defined. Thesis is supported with somewhat ineffective logic, little evidence of coherent argument and/or support of it. Accounts for one perspective only. Argument is somewhat linked throughout essay. | Claim is absent or difficult to find. Content does not appear to support a central claim. Perspective is unclear. Argument is confusing and evidence does not link together. |

| Writing | Introduction provides targeted background information to contextualize argument. Conclusion wraps up argument and addresses its implications. Reading experience is smooth and pleasant. Questions from prompt are smoothly incorporated into overall argument. Overall tone is professional. | Introduction provides some background but may not effectively transition into argument. Conclusion ties together argument effectively. Reading experience is not helped or hindered by writing. Questions from prompt are mostly incorporated into overall argument. Overall tone is professional. | Introduction is jarring or overly general. Conclusion feels perfunctory or repeats elements from earlier in the essay. Reading experience is somewhat choppy and/or confusing. Answering questions detracts from overall reading experience. Tone is not professional, e.g. uses slang, emoji, or “text speak.” | Introduction is missing or unrelated. Conclusion is missing; essay just ends. Unpleasant to read/difficult to understand. Questions are totally separate from argument. Tone is extremely unprofessional, e.g. uses profanity, alienates the reader, or rants. |

Approaching the Rubric

**Course**

- Are course terms used correctly, and is it clear that the writer actually understands what they mean?
- Does the essay make connections between course concepts beyond what's on the prompt?

**Prompt**

- Is the essay the required length?
- Does the writer answer all the questions?
- Is it clear that the writer read and understood the background readings?

**Logic**

- Is the thesis clear and specific?
- Is the logic sound and supported by evidence?
- Does the writer lay out the reasons behind their argument rather than just making assertions? Is it easy to follow along with their thought process?
- Are opposing viewpoints addressed fairly and with respect—that is, if you happened to hold that viewpoint, would you feel properly represented?

**Writing**

- Does the introduction provide context and lay groundwork for the thesis?
- Are topic sentences used effectively?
- Are the questions incorporated into a larger argument rather than answered in order?
- Are quotations smoothly incorporated and explained?
- Does the conclusion effectively wrap things up and zoom out a little?
- Is the reading experience pleasant and smooth?
- Is the tone appropriate?

Peer Review FAQ

What if they turned in the wrong assignment?
Leave the score as straight zeroes and write “wrong assignment” in the comments section.

**What if they didn’t write anything?**

Straight zeroes, “no assignment” in the comments.

**What if it’s too short/too long?**

There’s some wiggle room here, but if the essay is significantly above or below the required word count (~500 characters) dock the writer 1 point from “prompt” and grade as usual. If the essay totals 2500 characters or fewer, give it straight 1’s and write “too short” in the comment section.

**What if they don’t explicitly identify their ethical framework?**

One point should be deducted from “prompt.”

**What if they identify their theory but it isn’t clear that they understand it?**

One point should be deducted from “course.”

**What if they’re answering the questions like a homework assignment instead of incorporating them into the discussion?**

This will require some judgment on your part. If it’s simply a matter of a random question-answering or two being dropped into an otherwise smooth argument, points should be removed from “writing.” If the question answering greatly interferes with or replaces the argument, however, points should come from “logic.”

**What if there are problems with grammar?**

If your essay has some errors but is still readily understandable, either ignore them altogether or point them out and explain them—in either case, do not dock points. If grammar errors are a.) pervasive, b.) interfering with your reading comprehension, or c.) clearly the result of sloppy editing, take points from “writing.”