General Rubric for a College Paper -- Dennis G. Jerz, Seton Hill University jerz.setonhill.edu (brief explanations) Jan 2010

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| **Criterion** | **A** | **B+** | **B-** | **C** | **D** | **F** |
| **Depth/Ideas**  Response  Stance  Thesis  Knowledge  Opinion | Ambitious and engaging.  Clear and defensible.  Insightful, worthwhile and nuanced.  Deep, broad, & integral to thesis. Informed; synthesizes alternatives. | Substantial and effective.  Clear and defensible.  Creative, appropriately complex.  Appropriately applied to thesis.  Considered; acknowledges alternatives. | Appropriate and mostly effective.  Clear and generally defensible.  Useful; appropriately complex.  Generally applied well to thesis.  Unhasty; acknowledges alternatives. | Acceptable and productive.  Mostly clear; generally defensible.  Productive and useful.  Usefully connected to the thesis.  Parts may seem simplistic or one-sided. | Off-topic, sketchy, or inappropriate.  May be unclear, shaky, or obscure.  May be obvious, extreme, or unclear.  Sporadically or ineffectively applied.  Dismisses/ignores valid alternatives. | Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. |
| **Support/ Engagement**  Evidence  Examples  Substance  Sources (if needed)  Int. Engagement | Apt, critically and effectively applied.  Insightful, with effective explanations  Brief, weighty, intellectually satisfying.  Well-chosen; cited accurately & briefly.  Adept; fully & deeply engaged. | Effective, appropriate, creatively applied.  Clear, varied, effective.  Significant, avoiding filler.  Good sources; cited accurately & briefly  Skillful; wholly engaged. | Productive, useful, helpfully applied.  Clear and effective in several ways.  Generally significant, avoiding filler.  Good sources, cited accurately.  Appropriate; well engaged. | Acceptable; generally applied usefully.  Generally clear and helpful; possibly sparse.  Good content; perhaps some filler.  Cited reasonably well; sources may be iffy.  Some solid engagement evident. | Spotty use of evidence.  May be unclear or ineffective.  Diluted by summary or rambling.  May be weak, but cited reasonably.  Engagement is weak or spotty. | Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. |
| **Coherence/ Organization**  Blueprint  Paragraphs  Transitions  Unified Path  Title/Thes./Concl. | Defining, logical & complex.  Well-crafted steps along “the path.”  Logical, smooth, engaging flow.  Clear, inviting, insightful, ambitious.  Harmonious and cumulative. | Clear, logical & complex.  Topics clearly relate to main thesis.  Effective, varied signposts to “the path.”  Effectively conveys upper-level ideas.  Corresponding and integrated. | Mostly clear and logical; sufficiently detailed.  Appropriately focused on the main topic.  Help the reader connect ideas fairly easily.  With a bit of effort, reader can follow.  Connected fairly well. | Usefully identifies supporting points.  Generally focused on the main topic.  Helpful, but possibly weak or mechanical.  The reader must work to identify it.  May not fully agree. | Unclear organizing principle.  Off-topic intros, digressions, or filler.  Weak or missing.  Weak or missing.  Relationship is unclear. | Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable |
| **Style/ Expression**  Diction  Syntax  Focus  Tone | Careful selection of powerful words.  Polished, elegant sentences & phrases.  Sophisticated handling of reader’s needs,  Extremely well-suited to the occasion. | Accurate, varied, effective word choices.  Varied, effective sentences and phrases.  Successful treatment of reader’s needs.  Suited to the occasion. | Generally effective word choices.  Generally effective and accurate.  Generally handles the reader’s needs.  Generally appropriate for the occasion. | Minor word-level errors, but generally sound.  Minor phrase- and sentence-level issues.  Generally acknowledges reader’s needs.  Some evidence of the proper tone. | Problems hurt reader comprehension.  Problems hurt reader comprehension  Reader’s needs may be peripheral.  May be inappropriate or inconsistent. | Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. |
| **Mechanics/ Completeness**  Punctuation  Words & Phrases  Sentences  General Format | Few if any errors in punctuation, words, phrases, sentences, and general format. | A few trivial errors in punctuation, words, phrases, sentences or general format, without affecting the presentation. | Some minor errors in punctuation, words, phrases, sentences or general format, without seriously affecting the presentation. | May contain moderate errors in punctuation, words, phrases, sentences or general format, that affect the presentation. | Significant mechanical errors or omissions impact the submission's ability to meet important assignment goals. | Unacceptable. |