

Grading Rubric for Research Essays

“How will I be graded on the essay”? This is one of the most important questions to ask in this class since such a large percentage of your final grade is related to your two research projects. Below you will find the general rubric I use for grading your essays. There are essentially 4 things I look for in these essays:

1. Did You Answer the Question? (25 points)

This might seem self-evident, but in fact students often answer the question they *wished* I had asked and not the question I did ask. You see this more with in-class essays than you would with the take-home essays such as the ones we do in this class, but be aware that avoiding the question will cost you lots of points. Complete avoidance of the question is the usual reason for failing these projects.

2. Proper Format (25 points)

Every class will have a different way to “format” your essay, depending on the type of essay you are doing. In this class, you will be concentrating on research questions that are primarily *persuasive* in their orientation. This means that the paper should begin with a clear thesis statement in its introduction, a body that consists of the data, proof, and evidence (DPE) that you will analyze in order to support your thesis (and this would be the bulk of the paper, probably 80% or so), and a conclusion that pulls together the important ideas which the data presented appear to warrant.

3. Spelling / Grammar (25 points)

I frequently hear complaints that “this isn’t an English class” and so on, but in fact producing a paper that is clear and can be understood, one that flows well and is logical, is important for any paper you write. One trick that is very useful for ensuring you are using correct grammar is to read *out loud to yourself* after the paper is completed. You will be amazed at how many grammatical errors your ears catch that your eyes were unable to.

4. Creativity / Original Research (25 points)

This category is usually the most challenging for students and teachers (and even seasoned academics and researchers) alike. Trying to imagine new ways to analyze human events and interactions and then synthesize them in an original way is very challenging. Nevertheless, I hope you’ll try and you will be rewarded for it. Original research means going beyond what I have provided for you on the class website and finding some of your own DPE to analyze. This type of effort is strongly encouraged and will also be rewarded.