

General Grading Standards for term papers

The following is an explanation of the meaning of grades given on term papers.

A = Excellent

The paper shows a detailed understanding of the text. It speaks with an intelligent voice, has something interesting and fresh to say, says it gracefully to an appropriate audience, and supports it fully. The thesis goes beyond what was said in class and the relevance of the topic to the text as a whole is explicit. It shows evidence of creative, original insight into the meaning of the text. The organization is sound. Sentences are clear and unambiguous, have a touch of elegance, and are free of mechanical errors. Citations are properly done.

B = Very good

The paper has a clear but not striking thesis. It is clearly organized and makes and follows a reasonable interpretation of the text. The paper's ideas are good and interesting, and are anchored in the evidence. The paper shows that much work and thought have gone into it. Citations are properly done. Mechanical errors are few and minor and do not affect the readability of the paper.

C = Good enough

The paper meets the acceptable standard for graduation. It makes mistakes in understanding the text, but they are not serious. The paper does not go much beyond the text or class discussion of it. The paper simply restates the text—quotations from the text form too great a part of the paper, and may seem to be used in order to demonstrate that the writer has read the text. The thesis is uninteresting, unclear or weak, or the arguments supporting it are simplistic. Mechanical errors are more than minor and detract from the readability of the paper. Citations are incorrectly done.

D = Not good enough

The paper is acceptable but very weak. It seriously misunderstands the text. It is poorly organized, rambles, or focuses on a minor issue. The thesis is not supportable from the text. The paper summarizes material found in secondary literature rather than analyzing the assigned text. The spelling and mechanics are poor and detract from the reader's understanding of the paper. Words are improperly used. Citations are done incorrectly.

F = Failing

The paper is not acceptable. It grossly violates the expected standards of the assignment. The paper makes a polemical or theological point rather than being a history paper. It is not based on the evidence in the text or discusses issues unrelated to the text. The paper may not have a thesis, does not really have a point to make. It may be much shorter than the assigned length. It may be plagiarized in whole or in part.