

Essay Grading Criteria—150 Point Essay

145-150 pts.	Excellent.	This is truly <i>brilliant, insightful, and sophisticated</i> . You have an <i>exceptionally complex thesis, rigorously argued</i> , and supported with quotations that are unusually apt. Your essay is among the very best to ever be presented in an undergraduate course.
135-144 pts.	Extremely Good.	Your paper was <i>original, insightful, going beyond ideas discussed in class</i> . You have a <i>clear, complex thesis</i> . Your essay demonstrates your <i>thorough understanding</i> of the material covered by the assignment. You choose appropriate quotations and integrate them into your own argument. There are no awkward sentences, no unnecessary sentences, or extraneous information.
127-134 pts.	Very good.	You have a <i>solid analysis</i> . You demonstrate a superior understanding of the course material. Your essay is <i>well organized</i> , and you present a <i>clear, specific, argumentative thesis that controls the essay</i> . There are <i>distinct units of thought in paragraphs controlled by detailed topic sentences</i> . There are <i>clear transitions between paragraphs</i> . Your language is clear and articulate. You choose appropriate quotations and integrate them into your own argument.
119-126 pts.	Good.	While you <i>may have some conceptual or factual difficulties</i> , you are <i>doing real analysis and argumentation</i> . You <i>go beyond the ideas discussed in class</i> and you present your argument in a clear, concise manner. You “get it,” i.e., you understanding the concepts and ideas covered by the assignment. I had no difficulty following your argument or understanding the reasoning behind it.
111-118 pts	High Average	You have a <i>clear command of the ideas presented in class</i> , though your own <i>reading of the text(s) still seems deficient</i> . You don’t seem as plagued by clichés and generalities as the average student, but your analysis doesn’t go much deeper. Still, I can read your essay with relative ease, and understand your main point(s). You have a sufficient number of quotations to support your claims, but you don’t always seem to choose the best quote(s) to make your point(s), or perhaps you even use “drop quotes” from time to time. (A “drop quote” is a quotation that is not integrated into your own sentences but is an entire sentence [or more] “dropped” into your essay. Often students writing at this level [and below] tend to drop these sentences in as the first sentence of a paragraph.)
102-110 pts	Average College Essay	Okay, you get <i>the basic idea(s) covered by the assignment, but you tend to just repeat what I said in class</i> , often giving me the impression that <i>you don’t quite “get it.”</i> You tend to think in <i>generalities</i> and write in <i>clichés</i> . Still, I can read your essay with relative ease, and understand your main point(s). You have a sufficient number of quotations to support your claims, but you

		don't always seem to choose the best quote(s) to make your point(s), or you use "drop quotes" (see above).
95-101 pts	Obviously Below Average	You <i>don't really know what you are talking about</i> . You tend to <i>jump from idea to idea</i> without explaining the relationship between ideas. Your <i>use of textual evidence is awkward and/or inadequate</i> . Usually this kind of essay is also characterized by awkward prose plagued by grammatical and syntactical errors, but not always. Sometimes a competent writer has an inadequate command of the course material.
88-94 pts	Seriously Flawed	You <i>fail to respond directly to the topic</i> and/or you <i>fail to demonstrate an adequate understanding</i> of the course material. Usually this kind of essay is also characterized by awkward prose plagued by grammatical and syntactical errors, but not always. Sometimes a competent writer has an inadequate command of the course material.
10-87 pts	Completely Unacceptable	<i>You do not seem to understand any of the material covered by the assignment</i> . This essay may be excessively brief, disorganized, or a collection of random thoughts without any over all sense of organization. Usually this kind of essay is also characterized by awkward prose plagued by grammatical and syntactical errors, but not always. Sometimes a competent writer has an inadequate command of the course material.
000 pts.	Plagiarism	See plagiarism policy in the syllabus.