

GRADING STANDARDS

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Students in my courses will receive detailed instructions on assignments and their weight toward a final grade. Here are some general guidelines that apply to all. You are welcome to email me at momara@u.washington.edu with questions. During term, I will respond to your email within 24 hours.

Class Discussion. In seminars and discussion sections, consistent, thoughtful, and respectful engagement in discussion is the key to your success. To receive high marks for discussion, you must be both a thoughtful commentator and a good listener. This is discussion, not oration; I grade on quality of commentary, not quantity. An “A”-range student comes to class with an understanding of the readings and how they relate to one another, and with discussion points already in mind. She actively and consistently contributes to discussion, but she also knows when to let others speak and responds to their comments with respect. Obviously, if you are not in class you cannot show off your mastery of the material and your penetrating analysis of the issues at hand; an unexcused absence will lower your class discussion mark by 0.3 (on a 4.0 scale).

Discussion Leadership. In some of my seminars and colloquia, the week that you will help design and lead class discussion is an important component of your participation grade. It also is your opportunity to hone in on issues in the reading that you find particularly interesting and provocative, and for you and your co-discussants to set our agenda for the day. An “A” grade for discussion results from discussion leadership that reflects solid preparation and in-person collaboration among the discussion leaders prior to class. Discussion questions should cover the key themes of the reading(s) and link these texts to the other readings and larger thematic issues addressed in the class. The discussion plan should also, however have a built-in flexibility that allows for class discussion going off in unexpected directions, and that enables discussion leaders to bring the conversation back on track if these tangents are not particularly fruitful.

Presentations. In some of my courses, students present a report on a particular person, institution, place, or event. In others, they present individually or as a group on a broader historical subject or theme. An “A” presentation is one that is clearly organized and rehearsed so that it falls within its time limit. In group projects, it reflects teamwork, collegiality, and contribution of all group members. It quickly and effectively communicates the key information about the topic at hand, and it explains why the subject is relevant to the themes of the class. It makes creative and effective use of visual aids, but it does not rely entirely on

them to tell the story, nor does it use them gratuitously. Visual materials or handouts are not required for a high grade on this assignment.

Book Review. Writing book reviews helps you become a better writer as well as provides an opportunity to further explore a topic or theme outside the assigned readings. Many of my courses feature book review assignments. For maximum credit, reviews should be clear, concise, and well-written. The written review and the in-class presentation should cover:

- a brief but thoughtful summary of the text’s main argument(s);
- a general description of the contents of the book; and
- your evaluation of the effectiveness of the text’s arguments and its relation to the other readings assigned and themes discussed in this class.

The review should not be an exhaustive summary of everything in the text, but a brief critical document that conveys main themes and contextualizes the book within the literature. For a useful online guide, see http://library.usask.ca/ref/howto/book_review_write.html.

Papers. Nearly all my courses involve writing papers. The editorial standards for all lengths of papers are the same.

	A	B	C	D	F
Has cogent and incisive analysis that reflects full understanding of source material. Shows original insight and creative thinking. Tells us not only “what” and “why” but also “why this matters.”	*				
Well-written and well-organized, with a clear statement of thesis at the beginning and consistent and clear references throughout to how the evidence and analysis relates to main thesis.	*	*			
Clearly and consistently footnoted using a widely recognized style, such as MLA or Chicago.	*	*			
Demonstrates that you have read the source material and understand its main arguments, but lacks analytic rigor and does not provide		*	*		

new insights into the material.					
Sub-par writing and sloppy organization.			*	*	*
Demonstrates partial or no mastery of the material.				*	*
Fails to meet the basic length and topic requirements of the assignment.					*