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Professor Victor Menaldo
University of Washington

What makes a great paper great?

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Thesis Statement

Excellent: Has a clear and appropriately positioned thesis statement in the introduction. The best types of thesis statements are those that try to address a question or a puzzle that is clearly stated and which demands an answer. In other words, the question or puzzle is captivating, paradoxical, or stimulates a debate over possible explanations. For example: *If poor countries are poor because they have "bad" institutions, then why don't they simply get rid of those bad institutions and adopt new ones?* As we have seen in class, there are several hypotheses that try to address this puzzle.

Satisfactory: Has a thesis statement, which either could be more concise or more appropriately positioned
Fair: Has a main point but the thesis statement is not articulated clearly
Poor: Has no main point and no thesis statement

Argument

Excellent: Full and clear, definitive argument which supports the thesis statement and is consistently referred to throughout the paper.

Good: Has an argument yet lacks clarity, however can still be understood
Satisfactory: Has an argument but it is weak, lacks clarity but can be understood with effort
Fair: Argument is extremely unclear and inconsistent
Poor: Has no argument

Evidence

Excellent: Provides clear empirical evidence and the evidence supports the argument logically. Remember that evidence can be summoned from any source, as long as that source is legitimate and the evidence makes sense given the problem/question/purpose for why it is being summoned. The key is: the type of evidence that you recruit should be dictated by the question. The question drives the evidence. The evidence should never drive the question. For example, if I were to ask you: who murdered the butler?, I would expect you to have a hypothesis about a possible suspect and expect you to summon evidence about said suspect's motives; their access to the victim; their experience using deadly weapons; whether or not they have an alibi, etc. Moreover, evidence can take on many forms, ranging from patterns that can be quantified to anecdotal examples.

Good: Provides evidence, but lacks systematic or convincing evidence or lacks appropriate follow up discussion
Satisfactory: Provides limited evidence, but lacks systematic or convincing evidence and lacks a clear connection to the argument or lacks appropriate follow up discussion
Fair: Provides very limited evidence and lacks a clear connection and no discussion
Poor: Provides no evidence, doesn't draw on class materials or lectures at all

Demonstrates Clear Understanding of Readings

Excellent: Outlines hypothesis and assumptions of the readings concisely and clearly

Good: Outlines hypothesis and assumptions of the readings, but misses some details
Satisfactory: Outlines only part of hypothesis and some of the assumptions
Fair: Fails to outline important aspects of the hypothesis and/or misconstrues it
Poor: Provides little to no indication of understanding the reading; doesn't include any hypotheses or assumptions

Citations

Excellent: All citations and quotes fit within the context, are appropriately labeled and discussed

Satisfactory: Has some citations, a couple quote usages may not fit but are appropriately labeled and discussed
Fair: Has some citations, quote usage doesn't fit in multiple cases, discussion is lacking
Poor: Has few to no citations, quote usage is incorrect, there is no discussion and are not labeled

Clarity of Writing

Excellent: Writing is consistently clear and concise and all points are fully understood

Satisfactory: Writing is consistent but lacks clarity at times with some misunderstandings
Poor: Writing is consistently unclear, rambling and tangential

Tip

Please Note: If you find yourself struggling with the writing process, the Writing Center is available to help. For more information please visit the website: http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/