

1. Always make sure to **follow** the **instructions**—both those provided on the assignment sheet and provided face-to-face during class or office hours—completely.
2. Always make sure to demonstrate accuracy, analysis, clarity, critical thinking, organization, and originality throughout. Unless specifically asked for, avoid summary. Your goal is to be both **concise** and **precise**.
3. For short writings (including quizzes, reflections, responses, etc.) quotations should **NOT** be used. A few words, occasionally, *might* be okay, but the focus on this type of assignment is a concise response to the readings and to the specific assignment at hand. Any more than a few words occasionally will be subtracted from the required length.

For major papers (an analysis of a source, situation, article, etc.), a few, brief quotations are acceptable, if the quoted material is said so well it cannot possibly be paraphrased or if the quoted material is from a primary source and is critical to your analysis.

When quoting material, always use double quotation marks (that is, “x”). Always remember your voice—not the voice of others—should guide the paper. Periods and commas go inside quotation marks.

4. Spelling, word choice, grammar, punctuation, and format count—use formal prose and diction. Focus on having appropriate vocabulary and word variety. “I,” “you,” “we” and similar pronouns should not be used *in most cases*. Please avoid contractions (e.g., “can’t”), too. Clichés should be avoided like the plague! Superfluous and vague diction should be omitted, as should slang and euphemisms. Don’t say “sleeping with” when you mean “sex.” The word “many” is banned! “It is” and similar patterns of expletive sentence structure are usually too weak. Profanity, when relevant to the topic, is acceptable. Students frequently misuse semicolons, commas, and other such punctuation. Please do not assume you know how the rules of “correctness”: Take time to review the rules.

Using the exact, most precise word is really important. Take time to consider all of the related connotations, denotations, and implications. For some more detail, see the Hidden Power of Words series on my website.

5. Watch out for tense. Historical statements use past tense. Discussions of “literature” (what an author or text says or what characters do) go in present tense.
6. Avoid passive voice. This is not the same thing as past tense. Passive voice obscures the who or what of the sentence. You can usually find passive voice by looking for instances of “was,” “were,” “are,” or “is,” for example, followed by a word ending in “-ed” or “-ing.” Examples of passive voice include “the book was written in 2018” (instead of “Kim Jones wrote *The End* in 2018”), “the bowl was knocked off the table” (instead of “Dr. Trevor Lovejoy knocked the bowl off the table”), or “the book was being printed when the fire had occurred” (instead of “the fire occurred while machines printed copies of Kim Jones’s book).

Rebeca Johnson suggests that people can usually find passive voice if “by zombies” can be added at the end of the sentence (or phrase)!

7. Always include thorough introductions and conclusions (with the exception of short response papers). Introductions should be a good, full paragraph and should introduce the topic with background and explain your argument. Conclusions should discuss larger implications and significance beyond the paper. Conclusions are also acceptable places to state your own opinion.
8. Use indented paragraphs, indention should be five spaces. Do not use the “five paragraph essay” format. Paragraphs should not get too long—usually a paragraph longer than 3/4 of one page is too long.
9. Always include captions for images. (In Word, right click and click insert caption.)
10. **Unless otherwise stated:** Papers should be double spaced. The font should be Times New Roman size 12 in the color black. The margin size should be one-inch on all four sides. There should be one space between sentences. The paper should be left justified. Don't split or hyphenate words such that they end and begin on different lines. Pages should be numbered in the top right-hand corner. The paper size should be “Letter” (8.5” x 11”).

If writing and submitting in Blackboard, leave the default font/size that comes up alone. If you compose your work in a Word file (which is recommended), you'll need to copy and paste it in the HTML box and then manually re-add paragraphs and any special formatting (italics, bolds).

11. Make sure to write at least the required length (going over is fine). This is a big pet peeve. Length is important, not because quantity is better than quality, but because there is always room to dig deeper. Length requirements do not include any images (or captions) or bibliographic data. Work below the required amount faces major automatic deductions.
12. You are welcome to use MLA, APA, Chicago, or with permission, another style for citing sources, but whichever style is used must be used correctly – this includes spacing, periods, as well as when/how authors, titles, pages, and dates are listed.

In MLA there is a “Works Cited” page, in APA a “References” page, and in Chicago a “Bibliography.” (See <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> for specifics or the detailed handbook for each style.) When required, this “page” begins on the top of a new page in your document.

13. Remember that primary sources provide direct information of some kind; secondary sources are about primary sources. Which a source is can depend on how the source is being used. Scholarly sources are those by people with a doctorate and published in a peer-reviewed publication. The U.H. M.D. Anderson Library has thousands of scholarly books and online articles. For specific guides:
 - a. First Year Writing: <http://guides.lib.uh.edu/ENGL1304>
 - b. Queer Studies: <http://guides.lib.uh.edu/c.php?g=433166> and http://guides.lib.uh.edu/HIST4394_LGBT
 - c. Religious Studies: <http://guides.lib.uh.edu/religion>
 - d. The best database of all time: <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.uh.edu>

14. A creative title is always required for out-of-class work. This is another pet peeve. ☺ This title should not be underlined, in italics, in quotation marks, or in a different size/font: Use regular text.
15. The first line of your paper should be the centered creative title. The second line the beginning of your essay. Do not include your name, my name, class name, etc.
16. Dr. Pegoda will happily go over papers and provide feedback before the deadline so that students have an opportunity to write strong papers and to improve. Students seeking early feedback (or even help starting) should contact the professor as soon as possible, but at least 48 hours before the paper is due. However, students should keep in mind that if they completely ignore feedback provided—which happens surprisingly often—the assessment in question will be further penalized.
17. **Unless otherwise stated:** Papers must be submitted as a .doc or .docx file (.pdf is also acceptable). The file name can be anything. Do not submit papers in the “comments” box. You are welcome to use the comment box for any short notes, comments, concerns to me. Remember that work is only considered “submitted” when submitted online in the appropriate place(s). There is no late work.
18. Papers are always graded holistically—with attention to content, style, mechanics—but the overall focus is on clarity, originality, and overall effectiveness.
19. For students in First Year Writing, revisions for major essays are allowed—prior to the last day of class. If you are interested in doing a revision, you must communicate with Dr. Pegoda (preferably during office hours) before beginning the revision process. Then, spend time making substantial revisions. Before submitting the revised essay for regrading, write a statement detailing what was changed and why and what they learned through the revision process (this process is called “metacognition”). This statement should go on a new page at the end of the paper. Revisions are always submitted to the same box where the previous copy was submitted.
20. Take time to review various “rules” of writing.
 - a. <https://andrewpegoda.com/teaching/five-characteristics-of-college-writing/>
 - b. <https://andrewpegoda.com/teaching/checklist-for-writing-assignments/>
 - c. <https://andrewpegoda.com/2014/06/25/14-must-know-rules-of-grammar-guaranteed-for-successful-writing/>
 - d. <https://andrewpegoda.com/2014/06/25/mastering-the-semicolon-colon-and-apostrophe/>
 - e. <https://andrewpegoda.com/2014/06/24/the-oxford-comma-plus-every-comma-rule-you-need-to-know/>
 - f. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
 - g. <http://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/materials-first-year-writers/what-academic-paper>
 - h. <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/>

- i. Remember when discussing an article (or song), the article's name goes in quotation marks only. When discussing a book or movie, the name goes in italics only. Use appropriate title case.
 - j. When discussing an author (or another person) use their full name the first time, and then, only their last name.
21. All questions should be discussed with Dr. Pegoda. Students are also welcome to get assistance at the U.H. M.D. Anderson Library, the Writing Center, or LAUNCH tutoring.
22. Reviewing the "Big Idea Writing Syllabus" might be helpful, too:
<https://andrewpegoda.com/2017/12/27/the-big-idea-writing-syllabus/>.
23. **And a suggestion!** I suggest you always stop in a bad place when writing. Yes, a *bad* place. Stop in the middle of a sentence or in the middle of developing an idea. That way, when you are ready to continue writing, you'll be able to jump right back in.
24. **And another suggestion!** When making lists, make sure the items are in a purposeful order. If they are not in order of size, importance, or occurrence, place them in alphabetical order.

Questions for Rhetorical Analysis

Overall, consider the relationships between the author, the audience, and the message/primary source (i.e., the text); how all of this is done; and what all of this means. Analyze, and dig deep.

Who is the author of the text?

- Who is the author? Does it matter? What was their place in society? Are they credible?

What is the message in the text?

- Is this a work of fiction, nonfiction, or something in-between?
- What is the rhetorical situation? What occasion gives rise to the need or opportunity for persuasion? When, where, and why was this text originally produced? How does it speak to hopes and fears in a given time and place? How does the text serve different purposes according to time and place? What perspectives does it include/exclude?
- What does the text want people to know, to think, or to do? Is the text attacking, defending, informing, praising, blaming, entertaining, teaching, etc.? How does it go about doing this?
- What is the agenda of this text? What are the related implications?
- What is the main argument of this text? Is it original? What are the supporting arguments?
- What assumptions are made?

Who is the audience for the text?

- Who is the intended or original audience? Who is the actual audience? What values do they hold? How do they react?
- How would other audiences react? How do you react? How might some take offense? How might it be inappropriate for some? (Consider women, men, non-binary folk; children, adults; people racialized as White, Asian; and so on.)
- Does the audience believe the text? Do they change their behavior?

How does the text communicate?

- What is the structure or staging of the text? How is information arranged?
- In what medium or genre does this text exist? What role does this medium play in analyzing the text? How would a change of setting or medium change the message?
- What is the writing style? What techniques of communication are used and how?
- What kind of evidence is used?
- Does the text emphasize fonts, images, and/or sounds? Is the layout and delivery effective?
- Does the text appeal to the logos, ethos, and/or pathos?
- How is the text framed? Where is the text presently located?

What is the even broader context of the text?

- Why is this text important? Is it still important?
- Is it even ethical to analyze this source? (For example, if it were a diary entry from the 15th Century.)
- What else was happening when this text was produced?
- What is the intertextuality?: How does this text relate to other texts? What other text surround this text?

What if we destabilize the text?

- What happens if we do a queered or feminist or crip or environmentalist or critical race theory reading, for example, *of this text*?

Academic Honesty, AKA Cheating:

Students are expected to abide by the highest standards of academic honesty. For all course assessments and discussions, students are also prohibited from any form of cheating or plagiarism or the *appearance* of any form of cheating or plagiarism. Violations will usually result in an automatic "F" for the class. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Note that this course uses plagiarism detection software. Students who stay on top of their studying, ask good questions, work ahead, and complete assessments as instructed should have no problem. For this course, students must always do their own work and must always clearly acknowledge the origin of all information.

Specifically, as per the Academic Honesty Pledge for this class, **STUDENTS AUTOMATICALLY AGREE TO THE FOLLOW CONDITIONS WHEN SUBMITTING ANY WORK:**

- I completed any required readings or viewings necessary for this assessment.
- I did my own research, using assistance only from librarians or Dr. Pegoda, if applicable. (It is acceptable to have a classmate, friend, or writing tutor read your completed paper and provide general feedback.)
- The ideas in this work are mine and mine alone. When presenting others' ideas, I have cited them properly.
- I did not seek nor provide any assistance to other students in this course (current or former students) while preparing or writing this assessment beyond having another student read my completed paper and provide general feedback for final revisions.
- I did not buy this paper or pay someone to write this paper or provide this information.
- I did not use any kind of paraphrasing website or tool that generates sentences or paragraphs.
- I did not reuse any work written or otherwise by someone else or written by me for this class, a different class, or a class in a different semester or institution.
- I did not manipulate any fonts or margins or content in order to make my paper appear longer.
- I will never upload or sell said assessment to any website.
- I understand that if any part of this work is plagiarized or I violate any of the above points of the Academic Honesty Pledge, the penalties are potentially very severe, likely including a 0% on this assessment, an "F" for the semester, a report submitted to the university, and possible expulsion from the University of Houston.

Students who have questions should ask. Students are responsible for policies in the student handbook, as well as common sense. Again, however, students who study and do their own work, will be just fine.

Assessments that earn the grade of "A" have the characteristics described in the following sentences.

A

Assessments that earn the highest marks—first and foremost—shine in original, creative thinking. Such assessments teach the audience something new. They use and analyze primary sources and secondary texts, as appropriate, and this evidence is clearly and correctly cited. Paragraphs and effective transitions guide the reader. "A" assessments have a clear thesis, as appropriate. The conclusion is more than one paragraph and more than a basic summary of the paper. The writer uses active voice and avoids expletive sentence structure (e.g., "it is," "there was")

Audiences can read these works effortlessly, when it comes to aesthetics, diction, grammar, mechanics, and spelling, but they might have to pause and re-read a sentence occasionally when it comes to internalizing the ideas due to their emotional demands or originality.

They are entertaining and exciting to read. The "A" assessments follow instructions but take risks, too, and go above and beyond the stated expectations. The "A" paper is not "perfect"—no essay is—but it demonstrates careful thought and revision. Any errors do not take away from overall effectiveness.

B

Assessments that earn the grade of "B" *sometimes* exist in an odd limbo. Such "B" assessments do not necessarily have anything "wrong," per se, but they generally lack various degrees of originality or more often, analysis—almost as if the writer did not fully finish what they were saying. Sometimes assessments earn a "B" because of substantial weaknesses in their analysis and evidence or in their presentation of ideas.

C

Assessments that earn the grade of "C" tend to just do (or partly do) the assessment but not fully engage with it. The sophistication of analysis, organization, prose, and so on is not at the same level as the "A" and "B" assessments. "C" assessments tend to rely more on generalizations, obvious statements, already-established ideas, dated sources, stiff transitions (i.e., "first," "second"), clichés, and do not demonstrate a clear, personalized understanding of the topics. Assessments can also earn a "C" if they have substantial weaknesses in any of the areas outlined here or typically assessed, especially in terms of grammar/mechanics/style.

Assessments that are all one paragraph or that have formatting issues that prevent easy readable automatically earn no higher than a "C."

D

Assessments scored at the "D" level typically show some very basic knowledge of some of the ideas at hand but also contain many factual mistakes or do not follow the instructions. Other times, the "D" indicates a paper that readers cannot understand because of numerous stylistic mistakes.

Papers that are 20% or more short of any requirement length can earn no higher than a "D."

F

Assessments earn an "F" when there is a serious gap between the submitted work and the professor's expectations. Typically, such occurs when students submit plagiarized work (which includes copying and pasting information, having too many quotations, etc.), submit work that is off topic or that indicates important concepts have not been grasped, work that readers cannot understand because of excessive stylistic mistakes, or submit work that is missing more than 40% of the required content.

Grading Sheet for Major Papers/Assessments

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

(creative title; appropriate font, format, layout, length; images with captions; submitted correctly/on-time; etc.)

INTRODUCTION/CONCLUSION

(begins/ends clearly and thoughtfully; thesis clearly stated; captures reader's attention; summarizes argument; leaves reader with something to think about; etc.)

STYLE: ORIGINALITY, CREATIVITY, AND PATHOS

(ideas and analysis go beyond the well-established ideas/the obvious; takes risks; explains significance; appropriate formality; avoids generalizations; etc.)

THESIS AND ARGUMENT

(everything works together to support clearly-defined, evidence-based thesis; arguments are free of logical fallacies; appropriate development, etc.)

FOCUS, ORGANIZATION, AND CLARITY

(each paragraph has topic idea holding it together; paragraphs are closely and logically related, includes transitions; is not redundant; paper is on topic; etc.)

EVIDENCE, ANALYSIS, AND LOGOS/ETHOS

(uses quality/relevant evidence and analysis; evidence is analyzed and supports thesis; usually avoids quotations; information is "factually" accurate; proper citations, throughout and at end; topics ethically approached; etc.)

LINGUISTICS

(has regard for "correctness" and "conciseness"; sentences are clear, varied and structured; tone, includes grammar and punctuation—especially commas, spelling, pronouns, paragraphs, proper tense, word variety, word choice; etc.)

GENERAL COMMENTS:

General grading marks

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| F | Filler |
| R | Redundant |
| !! | Wow! Great! |
| RO | Run-on Sentence |
| Frag | Incomplete Sentence |
| PV | Passive Voice |
| T | Tense Issue |
| P | Pattern of Error Occurring |
| C | Comma Issues |
| W | Wordy |
| V | Vague/too general |
| PA | Pronoun Agreement Error |
| Sigf | Significance? |
| OT | Off Topic |
| √ (check) | Good |
| ☺ | Creative/Funny |
| ☹ | Sad/Touching |
| Haha! | Something Extra Funny |
| ^ | insert |
| WM | Word Missing |
| WW | Wrong Word – must be fixed (usually re: connotation, topic, or spelling) |
| SP | Spelling Error |
| ? | Ideas are Unclear |
| E? | Claims Lack Appropriate Evidence |
| WC | Word Choice Needs Attention (usually re: connotation or formality) |
| WC?/WW? | Why This Word? Is This Word Correct? |
| no/ACC | Factually or Logically Inaccurate |
| ditto | Same Comments/Feedback again |
| <i>Words underlined</i> | Choppy wording |
| <i>Text highlighted</i> | Something we have discussed not to do or something that is wrong related to linguistics |
| <i>Words Circled</i> | Usually grammar error or a word that is used too often/shouldn't be used |
| <i>Oval</i> | Remove Extra Spaces (Between Sentences) |
| ↕ | Remove Extra Spaces (Between Paragraphs/Sections of Text) |
| ↔ | Indicates Page Margins Are Too Small/Too Large |