

English Department Core Literature Rubric

| | A Outstanding | B Exceeds Expectations | C Meets Expectations | D Marginal | F Unacceptable |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| Thesis | Central claim is controversial, insightful, sophisticated, and unexpected. Thesis is stated clearly and forcefully, leaving no doubt where the argument is going. | Central claim is reasonable, but either simpler, less sophisticated, or less controversial than an A thesis. It may lack subtlety or nuance; the idea may be unmanageable. | Central claim may be too obvious or too broad to be convincing. Plot summary or vague claims about “importance” may take the place of specific argument. | Mere summary instead of argument, or claims too obvious. Essay may not ask the right kind of question, or significant parts of the text may be misunderstood. | No central claim, or just miscellaneous observations. The basics of the text are misunderstood. |
| Organization | Introduction clearly states the thesis; argument develops logically with clear transitions; a conclusion convincingly ties the argument together. Helpfully guides the reader to the conclusion. | Argument is not always developed in a way that is helpful to the reader. The conclusion doesn’t quite bring everything together. | Structure does not serve the reader well; reader has to struggle to follow the argument. Essay disjointed. Paragraphing not used to best effect. | Structure doesn’t guide the reader through the paper. Argument doesn’t build from point to point; it may be disjointed or drift without direction. Paragraphing problems. | No discernible structure. The reader has to struggle to follow the argument from introduction to conclusion. |
| Evidence and Close Reading | All claims are grounded in the texts with impressive attention to language and other textual details. Judicially selected evidence convinces the reader to accept the thesis. Essay is sensitive to nuances. | Most but not all evidence supports the thesis. Generalization may take the place of careful attention to the text. Links between the evidence and the thesis are not always clear. | Evidence may be superficial, based in misunderstanding the text or historical context. Paraphrase may take the place of careful engagement with the text. Important evidence may be neglected. | Evidence does not support the thesis, or is irrelevant, oversimplified, or misinterpreted. Paraphrase or summary takes the place of careful engagement with the details of the text. | Little or no evidence drawn from the text, or the text is seriously misinterpreted. |
| Research | The best sources convincingly integrated into the thesis. Various sources are accorded the appropriate degree of authority. All sources cited properly. | Research contributes adequately to the thesis. Appropriate attention to the authority of various sources. Sources are cited. | Some research brought to bear on the subject, not always successfully. Sources used without proper regard for their authority, or are not cited properly. | Research not convincingly integrated into the essay, and used without regard for accuracy or relevance. Sources not cited. | Sources not credible or not integrated into the argument. No attempt made to cite evidence. Any passage of the essay is plagiarized. |
| Grammar, Style, and Mechanics | Style is, graceful, clear, engaging, and suited to the audience. Diction is precise, sentences demonstrate variety, technical terms are used correctly, and mechanical errors are minimal. No words are wasted. | Style is generally clear and with no substantial flaws. Sentences are well constructed and terms are used precisely. Mechanical errors are limited. | Prose is awkward, verbose, or unclear. It may be too colloquial or too stilted. Diction may be vague or inappropriate. Mechanical errors, but not so many to threaten the reader’s comprehension. | Serious problems with coherence and sentence clarity, or mechanical problems that interfere with comprehension. Terms are used imprecisely. Prose is awkward or verbose, making the reader struggle. | The writing is confusing, awkward, or verbose, and marred by mechanical problems that interfere with comprehension. Diction imprecise and sometimes inappropriate for the subject. |