Grading Standards for Composition Classes in the English Department

For the most part, the A paper

- is excellent in nearly all respects.
- shows originality of thought that goes well beyond material presented in class.
- addresses the assignment with a clear purpose and engages the audience effectively.
- exceeds all basic requirements of the assignment.
- has a clear, arguable, creative, and well located thesis.
- is efficaciously organized and flows smoothly throughout.
- evidences very strong MLA style which contains only a few scattered errors.
- is fully developed with resoundingly authoritative support that is concrete, reliable, appropriate, sufficient, and convincing.
- is marked by stylistic finesse that has few, if any, mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors.
- employs logos, ethos, and pathos which work efficaciously towards achieving the purpose and for the audience of the paper.

For the most part, the B paper

- is excellent in several respects.
- goes significantly beyond material presented in class.
- addresses the assignment with a clear purpose and engages the audience effectively.
- meets all basic requirements of the assignment.
- has an explicit, clear, arguable thesis.
- evidences only minor lapses in organization and development.
- evidences proper MLA style which nevertheless contains scattered errors.
- is developed with authoritative support that is for the greater part concrete, reliable, appropriate, sufficient, and convincing.
- is marked by stylistic competence that has minor mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors.
- employs logos, ethos, and pathos which for the most part work effectively towards achieving the purpose and for the audience of the paper.

For the most part, the C paper

- may be excellent in one or two respects and overall is competent.
- may respond to the assignment by restating in class material in large part.
- shows lack of clarity in audience and/or purpose.
- meets requirements of assignment.
- has an identifiable and explicit thesis which may nevertheless be poorly located or unoriginal.
- evidences some errors in unity.
contains some lapses in organization.
shows weakness in transitions and paragraph structure.
makes a solid attempt to use MLA style which nevertheless contains errors.
has some unreliable, irrelevant, and/or insufficient supporting evidence.
contains mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors that adversely affect meaning in spots.
employs logos, ethos, and pathos which do not seriously impede the purpose nor alienate the audience of the paper.

For the most part, the D paper

is not competent in handling its topic.
may not respond to assignment adequately or may be so derivative of in class material as to be entirely unoriginal.
has an illogical or unmet purpose and/or an undefined or inappropriate audience.
does not fulfill most of the stated requirements.
presents a dubious (and possibly implicit) thesis that is too vague, too factual, and/or too obvious to be developed effectively.
evidences paragraph-level unity errors
evidences large-scale coherence errors.
evidences poor MLA style which contains numerous errors.
has insufficient, biased, irrelevant, fallacious, or irrelevant supporting evidence.
demonstrates problems with spelling, punctuation, diction, or syntax which impede expression of content
employs logos, ethos, and pathos which impede the purpose and alienate the audience of the paper.

For the most part, the F paper

may be plagiarized wholly or in large part.
does not respond to the assignment or addresses the topic so briefly as not to respond to the assignment in any meaningful way.
shows no attention to audience and purpose.
is difficult to understand in content and form.
does not fulfill the stated requirements.
has no implicit or explicit thesis or contains multiple topics or theses.
includes irrelevant details which shift the focus of the paper inappropriately.
displays seriously flawed or no organization.
shows little or no attention to MLA style.
lacks support entirely or uses support which is illogical, unclear, unreliable, inaccurate, or irrelevant.
contains major and repeated errors in diction, syntax, grammar, punctuation, or spelling which impede the expression of content.
seems so unaware of logos, ethos, and pathos that the argument is a jumble of appeals.
**Glossary**

audience: the individual or group to which a paper is directed

coherence: the order of the content within a piece of writing

ethos: argumentative appeals to values and credibility

logos: argumentative appeals to logic and reason

MLA style: the current Modern Language Association style

organization: see "coherence" above

pathos: argumentative appeals to character and emotion

purpose: the aim(s) or goal(s) of a piece of writing

support: facts and expert opinions used as evidence to substantiate claims

support, relevant: evidence which clearly relates to the claim

support, reliable: evidence drawn from authoritative sources

support, sufficient: evidence that is ample to establish the validity or reasonableness of a claim

thesis: the controlling idea of an essay. A thesis names the topic(s) of the essay, makes an arguable assertion about the topic(s), and predicts the structure and/or content of the essay.

unity: the content of a piece of writing