REQUIREMENTS FOR PAPERS
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I use the following guidelines to evaluate papers. These guidelines state university level expectations with respect to writing, format, documentation, and plagiarism. The best papers will follow these guidelines and be intelligent, creative, and fun to read.

Writing

I adhere to the standards of composition stated in William Strunk and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman Publishers, 2000), and in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, the key elements of which you can access at Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)¹. Strunk and White are especially helpful on matters of style; The MLA is especially helpful on matters of mechanics, format, and documentation. The best book I have read about writing research papers is Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Papers must be well written. Proper sentence and paragraph construction are essential. You should write your papers for an imagined audience of university peers: students and professors who are intelligent and interested but who have not taken the class in which you are enrolled. Do not presume your audience has knowledge of class discussions or readings.

Proofread your paper carefully and correct errors. If numerous errors exist, I will either return your paper ungraded for proofreading, correction, and resubmission (a late penalty will apply), or I will consider the errors when I grade your paper. Either way, you'll be better off if you proofread.

Papers must be well organized. I assume you know the basic components of a research paper. If you are unsure of what constitutes a good research paper you should consult your English basic course materials or The Write Place (either in person or via their web site,² which contains an excellent set of tutorials), or the MLA Handbook. At the least, you should be able to answer "yes" to the following questions about your papers.

1. Does the introduction provide necessary background information, state my thesis, and prepare my readers for what I will do in my paper?
2. Is a clear and singular thesis maintained throughout my paper? Or: Does each section make a clear point that in turn supports the thesis?
3. Does each paragraph develop a clear and singular point?
4. Have I provided convincing evidence to support each point in my paper?
5. Does the conclusion summarize the paper and show how the paper demonstrates the thesis?
6. Have I imagined an appropriate audience for my paper?

Final papers should be the result of revision. Have good writers read your paper. Ask them if your paper is clear and easy to read. Have them answer the six questions about organization listed above. Write and rewrite your papers with care. If you submit your first draft as your final paper, you're setting yourself up for a disappointing grade. Booth, et.al., chapters 13, 14, and 16 provide helpful and practical advice about how to revise papers successfully.

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¹ [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/)
² [http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/](http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/)
Most scholarly publications require writers to use inclusive language. Strunk and White (60-61) suggest some ways to avoid the use of gender-specific pronouns:

- Make nouns and pronouns plural. Original: The writer must address his readers' concerns. Revised: Writers must address their readers' concerns. (Do not mix singular nouns and plural pronouns. Incorrect: The writer must address their readers’ concerns.)
- Eliminate the pronoun. Original: The writer must address his readers' concerns. Revised: The writer must address readers' concerns.
- Use the second person. Original: The writer must address his readers' concerns. Revised: As a writer, you must address your readers' concerns.

Format

See the OWL for format standards. The following guidelines must be followed.

- You must use a Times New Roman size 12 font.
- Double space throughout the paper (including indented quotations, between paragraphs, before and after headings, and on the works cited page).
- All margins must be one inch.
- All pages except the first must be numbered in the top right hand corner.

If you do not follow format standards, I will either return your paper to you ungraded for proofreading, correction, and resubmission (a late penalty will apply), or I will grade your paper and consider the errors when I figure the grade. Do not assume that your word processing program's defaults correspond to the format requirements. Adjust the format settings to meet these standards.

In addition to the six questions about writing stated above, you should be able to answer "yes" to the following questions about format.

- 7. Have I proofread my paper carefully and corrected grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, and problems related to style and clarity?
- 8. Have I made sure that my paper adheres to the required format standards?

Documentation

You must document all sources of information. Document sources in which you find ideas; document sources that stimulate your own thinking; and by all means document by both name and quotation marks any source cited word for word. Documentation is essential for several reasons. It establishes your expertise, it gives credit to authors from whom you have gotten ideas, and it directs readers who desire more information to your sources. Your in-text citations and works cited page therefore must be precise. Documentation is a type of rhetorical proof in that it enhances your credibility and the credibility of your ideas. Sources therefore must be authoritative. It helps you to avoid inadvertent plagiarism. Notes therefore must be complete and accurate.

To ensure precision, use the MLA parenthetical style of documentation. This style is described at the OWL. If you are unsure of the proper documentation style for any entry, learn and use the required MLA format. Do not take the lazy route and simply make up a format that looks good.

Works cited entries for on-line sources can be confusing. The MLA manual states what those entries
should contain and you will find at the OWL descriptions and examples of entries for various types of online sources. Works cited entries for online sources should include URLs: the shortest accurate versions. The OWL also provides descriptions and examples of entries for books and other printed sources. If you cannot find the format for one of your sources, watch this: http://tinyurl.com/3kk3gel. Or see the “Difficult Citations” document on the class D2L page.

To ensure that sources are authoritative you must establish that they are reputable. This is especially true of web sources because publication on the internet requires no review process; anyone can put anything on a web site. Preferable web sites include government sites, university sites, established newspaper and magazine sites, other established media sites, or sources you can identify and for whom you can demonstrate credibility. If a website is not commonly familiar, you should state in the works cited entry whose website it is and why it is a valid source. Do not cite Wikipedia.

The Write Place web site offers a tutorial on the evaluation of web sources. You are responsible to establish the credibility of your sources through complete citations. If I cannot ascertain the credibility of an internet source by reading the citation, then I will deem it an unacceptable source.

To avoid plagiarism you must make sure that your notes are complete and accurate. The MLA states that plagiarism is "to use another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source . . . .” And it states that plagiarism includes "the failure to give appropriate acknowledgement when repeating another's wording or particularly apt phrase, when paraphrasing another's argument, or when presenting another's line of thinking." It need not be intentional. One can also plagiarize via false attribution: the assignation of specific words to a source when the source did not state those exact words.

Plagiarism will result in failure on the paper and is grounds for failure in the course. If I suspect plagiarism I will ask you to submit your notes and sources, so you should keep those materials until your paper is returned. Consult The Write Place or me if you have questions, because ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse. In sum: you should know what constitutes plagiarism and approach the task of research with care.

In addition to the eight questions about writing and format stated earlier in this document, you should be able to answer "yes" to the following questions about documentation.

9. Have I adhered to the MLA style of documentation both within the paper and on the works cited page? Have I provided URLs for online sources?
10. Have I included parenthetical citations wherever needed and enclosed all direct quotations in quotation marks?

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3 http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/research/credibility1.html