

# Grading Rubric for Paper Assignments

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## A. Substance & Content

1. **Task Completion (20%):**
  - a. Complete the entire task set forth by the instructor in the paper assignment. The body of the paper should support the paper's thesis with appropriate evidence grounded in your own thoughts but also the class readings, lectures, and (if appropriate) outside sources. Engage with relevant authors and have a bibliography.
  - b. Stay on topic. Avoid going on tangents or adding details that aren't crucial for understanding the issue at hand and your thesis.
  - c. Make sure to do some critical evaluation that ultimately pushes the discussion forward, beyond what's in the relevant literature that you discuss and that we covered in this course.
2. **Accuracy & Acumen (25%):**
  - a. The paper should demonstrate an accurate and precise understanding of the ideas, evidence, and arguments that you discuss. Accuracy is still important regarding fine details.
  - b. Demonstrate philosophical acuity in critically evaluating arguments and in anticipating and responding to objections.
3. **Depth & Clarity (25%):**
  - a. Move beyond simple description and summary to reflect a clear, in-depth understanding of the topic and material. When discussing arguments or objections, focus on quality or depth over quantity.
  - b. Be clear and detailed when explaining key ideas. Use examples to illustrate points. Imagine your reader is someone who hasn't taken this class. Think: "If my friend read this, would they be able to understand exactly what's going on?" This will help you demonstrate your understanding of the material.

## B. Structure, Mechanics, and Style

4. **Introduction & Thesis Statement (10%):**
  - a. Avoid lengthy or dramatic introductions. The introductory paragraph(s) should briefly orient the reader to the topic in plain language and briefly describe the plan for the rest of the paper.
  - b. The paper should have a clear thesis statement (usually best stated toward the end of the introduction) that addresses the paper topic and expresses an interesting claim you intend to defend. Make sure your thesis statement is clear, specific, and on-topic. You can absolutely use the first person in an argumentative essay, especially for your thesis statement (e.g. "I will argue...").
5. **Structure & Organization (10%):**
  - a. The body paragraphs should be organized in a logical manner, appropriate in length, and ideally framed by topic sentences.
  - b. The paper may have a short conclusion/summary, but it's not required.
  - c. Use quotations as needed to ground your discussion of someone's view, but don't rely too heavily on them. When you use quotes, introduce them; don't just insert them without any explanation of who said it and what the relevance is.
6. **Style & Writing Mechanics (10%):**
  - a. The paper should demonstrate a command of the writing process and the author's care in crafting it.
  - b. Use good citation practices. Provide full bibliographic details (no particular citation style is required; just use some standard style, like APA).
  - c. Avoid many errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, etc. But don't worry about being fancy with your writing style in philosophy. The clarity and organization of your thoughts is most important.