*Paper Grading Rubric*

| Grade | Clarity | Coherence | Reading Comprehension | Engagement/Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** **(Outstanding)** | I always know exactly where we are in the argument. Transitions are explicit and prepared in advance. | The paper's premises support its thesis clearly and effectively. Objections are considered and (mostly) overcome. | The student's presentation of the text, e.g., *The Human Condition*, flows smoothly and shows mastery of the argument, as well as interpretive ingenuity. | The paper is engaging and thought-provoking. I find myself wanting to join the argument. The paper recognizes what is at stake and is a promising or convincing answer to the prompt. |
| **B** **(Good)** | I almost always know where we are in the argument. It is all there, just not fully clear. Transitions are explicit. | Premises mostly support the thesis clearly and are organized in a reasonable manner. Objections may be considered but not overcome. | The student's presentation of the text indicates a good understanding of both the argument itself and of what it accomplishes. | The paper is interesting. I am not lost, nor am I fully caught up in the argument. It goes beyond what is straightforwardly evident but is not yet thoughtful. The paper recognizes what is at stake and responds to the whole prompt, but the main problem may escape untouched. |
| **C** **(Okay, with problems)** | I can mostly make out the argument, but have to fill in necessary pieces myself. Some transitions or recaps. | The premises do some supporting, but not particularly clearly or effectively. | The presentation of the text indicates good familiarity with the material, including decent understanding of the argument, but I have serious concerns about this understanding. | I am mildly interested, hindered by having to stop sometimes to figure out what's going on. The paper says little more than is straightforwardly evident, but it does present a recognizable response to the prompt. |
| **D** **(Not okay, not disastrous)** | I am regularly lost in my attempts to follow the argument. Things show up next to each other, associationally related. | The premises are not obviously *supporting* the thesis, though they may be closely related. | The presentation of the text indicates basic familiarity with the material, but no clear grasp (or only a very superficial grasp) of its argument or relevance – a real misunderstanding. | The paper is thematically related to the prompt, but I am frequently lost. The thesis is deeply uncontroversial or a completely inadequate response to the prompt, so it is hard to care whether it is right or not. |
| **F** **(Shipwreck)** | Argument? What argument? Stream of consciousness was good enough for Joyce. | The premises do not support the thesis, or the thesis emerges as an afterthought. "So it turns out that I think…" | The presentation of the text indicates vague understanding of the material, including serious and pervasive misunderstanding. It is unclear whether the student has sufficiently read the text. | I am mostly lost. I spend more time deciphering what the thesis is than whether it answers the prompt. I may be unsure from the paper's content at which prompt it was aimed. |

**What to do with this rubric (i.e., tongue-in-cheek instructions):**

Before writing: 1) Decide which grade you would realistically like to get on this paper. 2) Read across that row. This is what your paper will need to do. 3) Write your paper. 4) Compare your paper with the rubric, especially the rows immediately above and below your target. Make sure it does not suffer from the problems of the row below, and try to push it toward the excellences of the row above.

When you get the paper back: 1) Pay attention to which things are underlined – these are the primary reasons for which the paper earned its way into a particular box. 2) Reread your paper, and try to see in it what concretely could be altered to reach a higher box in each column.