

YOUR PAPER GRADE – ALL PAPERS – DR. BYERS

I assume that if you are in an upper division history course, you have a good grasp of basic grammar and punctuation. I also assume you understand how to formulate a thesis and support it with evidence. For assistance with this, see the “Writing Good History Papers” guide, located on the UNG History Department website at <https://my.ung.edu/departments/HAP/Pages/Writing-Good-Papers.aspx>. As I grade your papers, I evaluate them on the criteria below. When your paper is returned, do not expect to have it “corrected.” I read for content and to evaluate structure, and will make notes on those components. Anything else that is problematic (spelling, grammar, etc.) will be circled in red.

An “A” paper contains a clear, identifiable, well-written thesis and introductory paragraph. A good introduction will provide your reader with enough pertinent information for them to understand the issue with which your paper is concerned, and explain why your research is important. The succeeding paragraphs will present evidence that supports your thesis. They will be succinct, informative, and well written. They will logically flow from one to the next, using exemplary transitional statements. The conclusion will move beyond a restatement of your thesis to reemphasize the significance of your thesis and your findings. It will have no major (and few minor) grammar or punctuation mistakes, and no spelling mistakes. In the age of spell-check, spelling mistakes are unacceptable. The footnotes, in both content and format, will be perfect. It will meet all technical requirements (length, page numbers, etc.).

A “B” paper will have many of the same identifying qualities as an “A” paper, but may have grammar or punctuation mistakes, or may have minor problems with footnote format. It will have no spelling mistakes. It will still have a good introduction, a logical use of evidence in its succeeding paragraphs, exemplary transitions, and a conclusion that is more than a restatement of the introduction. It will also meet all technical requirements. Often, the difference between an “A” paper and a “B” paper is a lack of attention to detail. Remember, a “B” still signifies an outstanding paper, but one which would likely benefit from a final edit.

A “C” paper is one that technically meets all the requirements of the assignment, but has more structural problems than a “B” paper. A poorly phrased thesis, a lack of logical flow from one piece of supporting evidence to another, a weak conclusion (one which makes statements beyond the paper’s actual evidence), can all contribute to a “C” grade. “C” papers will also contain a small number of grammar and/or punctuation problems, and may have more significant problems with footnote format. A “C” paper will, however, still meet all technical requirements. Remember, a “C” still signifies that you have met the basic requirements of the assignment. In other words, it is a satisfactory paper.

A “D” paper differs from a “C” paper in the degree and number of problems. A “D” signifies a poor effort to meet the assignment’s requirements. A “D” paper generally has significant grammar and punctuation problems and a badly written, or sometimes difficult-to-find, thesis. It will have weak transitions from paragraph to paragraph, will use evidence improperly or fail to use evidence that was readily available. Its conclusion may be no more than a reworded version of the paper’s introduction. It may have some spelling mistakes. It may fail to meet some (but not all) of the technical requirements. It may be too short, use first-person references, use passive voice, or it may contain contractions. Often, a “D” paper looks much like the rough draft of what could become an “A” paper. It is a paper that, with work, could become at least satisfactory.

An “F” paper, on the other hand, is hopeless. Its thesis is nonsensical or nonexistent. Its organization is confused. Its grammar, punctuation, and spelling are consistently incorrect. It will likely fail to meet most of the technical requirements. Generally, an “F” paper requires reading no more than the first page to determine that the author spent little time researching or writing. I generally do not read “F” papers beyond the second or third page.