

## GUIDELINES FOR GRADING

As college students, you might be feeling anxiety about grades. Grading should not be a mystery. It is my responsibility to provide clear criteria, understandable assignments, and good instructions and to give you the tools you need to complete an assignment successfully. It is your responsibility to seek help if you are unsure about the assignment goals, my expectations, or whether you are on the right track. Please do so, leaving me at least a business day to respond thoughtfully and/or find a time for us to meet. If you reach out to me the night before an assignment is due, I can't guarantee I'll be able to talk—and I can guarantee that contacting me sooner would have helped. There are no silly questions.

To complete an assignment successfully, you must:

- a. Fulfill every aspect of the assignment-- include every required element, answer the question being asked, and refer to any readings or materials that the assignment requires;
- b. Provide support for your assertions. You should present a reasoned argument with supporting references to facts and readings. Remember: An opinion is not an achievement;
- c. Present your work in a professional, visually-accessible manner. Include your name and a title at the top of your paper. Use spaces between paragraphs. Save your document with a descriptive name, such as "Schwartz CLEG Paper 9 28 15." Spell check and grammar check;
- d. Present your argument--- whatever it might be—in a manner that shows you have considered other viewpoints and alternatives. Note: you will not be graded on your point of view. What matters is that you argue persuasively, which requires supporting your argument with evidence;
- e. Submit your paper on time in the manner requested (Blackboard, not pages).

“A” work:

- 1) Fulfills the above requirements for a successful assignment;
- 2) Demonstrates that you understand the material;
- 3) Includes examples from the texts we studied in support of your observations and assertions;
- 4) Demonstrates that you are thinking critically about the texts and concepts. Examples of thinking critically include
  - a. Pointing out a problem with the text or with the legal concept being addressed. Example: Justice Souter's criticism of originalism fails to address the dangers of departing from the constitution's text. He does not articulate a clear line between acknowledging present circumstances and fabricating new constitutional principles;
  - b. Using two different course texts to approach a problem. Example: Reading A and reading B provide two different, and flawed solutions to the question of how to rein in executive branch power. Neither Epstein nor Volokh addresses true emergency situations;

- c. Arguing both sides of an issue. Example: “Keep our children safe” could be an effective message for suburban mothers. A Gallup poll showed that this is a top priority. However, it could come off as condescending. As the Pew Poll showed, female voters are by no means monolithic.
- 5) Where applicable, introduces a creative or innovative idea;
- 6) Demonstrates outstanding written or oral exposition and/or argumentation, including a logical argument structure, well-supported assertions, and accessible prose.

“A minus” work demonstrates most of the above criteria but the critical thinking components are less well developed or the argument structure is less tight and persuasive.

“B+” work:

- 1) Fulfills the above requirements for a successful assignment;
- 2) Demonstrates that you understand the material;
- 3) Provides some specific examples;
- 4) Thoroughly and clearly explains the relevant concepts; but
- 5) Does not include “A” level critical thinking, synthesis, or creative approaches; or
- 6) Is not presented in the form of outstanding oral or written work product.

“B” work fulfills the requirements and shows significant preparation but demonstrates less complete understanding of the material; shows less critical, integrative, or creative thinking than B+ work, and might not be presented as clearly and professionally as B+ work.

“B minus” work fulfills the assignment requirements but shows less thorough preparation; shallower understanding of reading; some textual evidence but insufficient to be truly persuasive; few critical or creative observations; and/or significant flaws in structure and presentation.

“C” work has one or more of the following problems:

- 1) Does not completely fulfil the requirements for a successful assignment;
- 2) Contains material omissions;
- 3) Fails to adequately and coherently demonstrate comprehension of the material we have studied;
- 4) Is late without a pre-approved extension; and/or
- 5) Is not presented in the form of high-quality oral or written work product.

“D” work

- 1) Does not adequately fulfil the requirements for a successful assignment;
- 2) Displays limited understanding of the material we have studied but makes fundamental errors in discussing the material;

- 3) Is significantly late without a pre-approved extension; and/or
- 4) Is presented in a form that makes it incoherent, disorganized, and/or difficult to understand.

“F” work

- 1) Does not fulfil the requirements for a successful argument, particularly item (a);
- 2) completely fails to explain the material we have studied; and/or
- 3) Is presented in the form of incoherent or written or oral work product whose purpose and meaning is difficult to understand.