

Overarching Criteria for the Evaluation of Coursework

Evaluations include assessment of (1) quality of argument and communication of ideas; (2) level of sociological analysis (3) support of argument through integration of course materials and empirical information; (4) thesis development, organization, and writing/presentation style.

Please note that simply fulfilling the basic expectations and requirements will not earn you an “A” grade.

1. Quality and Communication of Argument

A	Clear, engaging communication of ideas and information; shows substantial depth, detail, and complexity of thought; synthesizes knowledge and provides connections or insights beyond the course material.
B	Basic communication of ideas and information; sufficient depth and complexity of thought. Clear thesis and solid development of ideas, but may illustrate less synthesis or new insight.
C	Satisfactory presentation of ideas but less effective communication; content generally relates to argument but cursory, less depth, and/or complexity of thought.
D	Unclear or incomplete development of ideas, lack of depth, and/or content not consistently and directly focused on argument.
F	Does not address the assignment and/or failure to demonstrate or convey sufficient knowledge to justify credit.

2. Sociological Analysis

A	Exceptional explanation of sociological content; effectively utilize key concepts and theories; reflects high level of sociological analysis. Shows a nuanced grasp of sociological principles and the ability to apply these principles in new contexts or in particularly thoughtful, insightful, and/or original ways.
B	Good explanation of sociological content; utilizes key concepts and theories; reflects solid sociological analysis. Demonstrates a good grasp of sociological principles but less complete application or synthesis.
C	Satisfactory but less complete explanation of sociological content, or utilization of concepts/theories, and/or weaker sociological analysis—more descriptive than analytic.
D	Minimal illustration of sociological content, utilization of concepts/theories, or sociological analysis. Descriptive rather than analytic.
F	Does not address the assignment and/or failure to demonstrate or convey sufficient knowledge to justify credit

3. Support of Argument

A	Strong support; Compelling, accurate evidence used to develop and support thesis consistently; explicitly integrates relevant course material; links theoretical and empirical in meaningful ways; appropriately uses quotations and citations.
B	Sufficient support; good range and use of course material and empirical information but could be more grounded and/or integrated; appropriately uses quotations and citations.
C	Satisfactory but weaker support of argument; Information from course material is not explicitly or effectively used. Connection between argument and evidence is always not clearly articulated; may use generalizations to support points; may not always integrate quotations or citations appropriately or effectively.
D	Evidence does not clearly or fully support the main argument; may be incomplete, incorrect, or oversimplified; may depend on unsupported opinion or experience. There is little or no mention of information from course materials. May not cite sources appropriately.
F	Fails to address assignment or fails to support argument; uses irrelevant details, misinformation and/or lacks supporting evidence. Fails to cite sources; plagiarizes.

4a. Thesis

A	Clearly and eloquently identifies a nuanced, compelling central argument. Provides the reader with a clear sense of the upcoming development and organization of the argument.
B	Thesis clearly identifies a central argument. Gives the reader a reasonably good sense of the upcoming development and organization of the argument.
C	Thesis paragraph identifies a central argument, though not stated sufficiently clearly. Does not guide the reader into the body of the paper.
D	Thesis paragraph does not have a discernible central argument or the thesis is vague or not central to argument.
F	No discernible thesis or does not address assignment.

4b. Organization

A	Clear, focused, and coherent organization; Transitions and connections between paragraphs are clearly articulated. Every paragraph makes a distinct, unified, coherent point, expressed in a clear topic sentence; the parts of each paragraph connect logically and persuasively, and internal transitions are smooth. Sentence structure is consistently clear and lucid.
B	Clear transitions between developed, coherent, and logically arranged paragraphs that are internally cohesive. some awkward transitions; some brief, weakly unified or undeveloped paragraphs; may contain some extraneous information. Sentence structure is mostly clear.
C	Not all the parts of the paper are effectively developed or integrated. In a number of paragraphs, there is not a distinct or coherent point or the parts do not always connect logically. Paragraphs have topic sentences but may be overly general, and arrangement of sentences within paragraphs may lack coherence. Sentence structure may be confusing.
D	May have random organization, lacking internal paragraph coherence and using few or inappropriate transitions. Paragraphs may lack topic sentences or main ideas, or may be too general or too specific to be effective. Paragraphs may not all relate to paper's thesis.
F	No appreciable organization; lacks transitions; incoherent paragraphs; suggests no serious revision.

4c. Style, Grammar, and Mechanics

A	Articulate, organized writing/presentation style; appropriate voice for intended audience; sentences are clearly structured and carefully focused, not long and rambling. Almost entirely free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.
B	Solid writing/presentation style; appropriate voice for intended audience; sentences generally clear, well structured, and focused, though some may be awkward or ineffective; minimal spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors which do not impede reader's understanding.
C	Writing/presentation occasionally rough; voice may not always fit audience or purpose; sentence structure generally correct, but sentences occasionally wordy, unfocused, repetitive, or confusing. Stylistic or grammatical errors may temporarily confuse the reader.
D	Unclear, unorganized writing/presentation style; occasionally employs inappropriate voice for audience; sentences often wordy, unfocused, repetitive, or confusing; stylistic or grammatical errors may block the reader's understanding and ability to see connections between thoughts.
F	Numerous grammatical errors and stylistic problems seriously distract from the argument; contains many awkward sentences, misuses words, employs inappropriate voice for audience; difficult for the reader to follow the thinking from sentence to sentence.

Evaluating Written and Oral Work

Questions to ask when evaluating written or oral work:

- Does the essay or presentation follow the assignment?
- Does the essay or presentation have a thesis that addresses the problem or question?
(clear statement of argument; interesting response to problem/question; appropriate degree of complexity)
- If the essay or presentation has a thesis, what is the quality of the argument itself? Is the essay or presentation engaging? Does it clearly communicate complex ideas?
(range and depth of argument; logic of argument; quality of research and/or original thought; appropriate sense of complexity of topic; interesting, thoughtful, and relevant argument)
- Does the essay or presentation demonstrate a solid understanding of sociological theories and core course concepts? Does it explicitly incorporate course material?
(knowledge of course material; level of sociological analysis; application of theoretical concepts; appropriate use of empirical support).
- Is the essay or presentation effectively organized at the macro level? Is it effectively organized at the micro level?
(effective introduction; logical and clear arrangement of ideas; effective use of transitions; unity and coherence of paragraphs; good development of ideas through supporting details and evidence; solid conclusion)
- Is the essay or presentation free from stylistic problems? Is it appropriate for the intended audience?
(clear and elegant writing/presentation style; ease of readability/comprehension; appropriate voice, tone, and style for assignment; clarity and gracefulness of sentence structure; appropriate variety and maturity of sentence structure)
- Does the essay or presentation reflect the standards of academic honesty?
(development of your own argument; appropriate use of in-text citations for quotes, paraphrases, and for acknowledging source of information even when not paraphrasing—i.e. for interpretive claims or facts that are not based on your own data collection and using theories, concepts and/or ideas of others; complete references)
- Is the essay free from basic grammatical and mechanical errors?
(grammatically correct sentences; absence of run-ons and fragments; accurate spelling and punctuation; careful proofreading; appropriate manuscript form)
- Is the essay free from long quotes, summaries, or descriptions that remain unanalyzed?
(meaningful integration of relevant course material and empirical research; linking of theoretical and empirical)