

Writing Papers And Essays

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Writing is a major component of the college experience. Your professors and instructors expect you to write serious and thoughtful papers and essays in all their classes. Being able to write properly and cogently is central to the development of good communication skills, which you will find useful in many careers. Moreover, the ability to write enhances your ability to reason and participate in political and cultural life.

There are three resources you must be prepared to turn to improve your writing (and every student can improve their writing):

- You need the right tools for the job. A good grammar book, thesaurus, and dictionary are invaluable means for improving writing mechanics, punctuation, spelling, good usage, effective sentence construction, and composition. Obtain and use these tools.
- The staff of the Writing Center, located in Cofrin Library room 109, stand ready to assist you in improving your product. Visit them with drafts of your product. Seek their help.
- You should consult with your professors and instructors during the writing process if you are having difficulties. Early detection of writing deficiencies may permit interventions that could improve course performance.

You should approach writing assignments with these two thoughts in mind: First, professors serve as referees for academic journals and book companies. That means that they are the persons who decide whether something is publishable as is, whether it needs revision, or whether it should be rejected. Think of your professor as the referee of a journal who is making decisions about your paper in the same way. Professors are looking for content and style. Think of your paper as something you are trying to publish.

Second, ask yourself: "Would I give a potential employer a cover letter and resume on anything other than clean white paper with clear dark ink, proofread, and consistent with an accepted format?" You might answer this question with another question: "Do I want the job?" If you answered "yes," then why would you submit anything less to a college teacher? You want a good grade, right? Professors are always gauging student interest and developing impressions of students on how students conduct themselves professionally. The quality of written product indicates your level of interest in both the course and in your professional development. Your professors not only care about your ideas, they also care about how you present your ideas.

Basic Elements of a Scholarly Product

Turn in your paper on clean, sturdy, white paper. No onionskins. Do not use colored paper. Type your paper. The print must be black and legible, preferably using a laser or ink jet printer. If you intend to use a dot matrix printer, use a new ribbon for the final draft. If you use a typewriter, use a new ribbon or cartridge and clean the key faces for the final draft. Do not use color print. There must be at least one inch, but no more than one and one-half inch margins on all sides the paper. Do not justify the text. Double-space but no more than double-space the body of all your papers (except where indicated otherwise). Do not encase

your paper in a plastic or cardboard enclosure. Securely staple the paper at the top left hand corner. Preferred fonts are 12 points, Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier New. Because the size and spacing of the fonts are variable, assignments typically require a certain number of words instead of pages. Use the same font size throughout the paper, including titles, section headings, footnotes, and endnotes.

Different Types Of Assignments

In the following sections are detailed instructions for producing two different types of written assignments: Please make sure you understand which type of assignment you have been assigned and carefully follow the instructions. No matter what the assignment is, whether it is the reflection essay or the term/research paper, you must follow the instructions in the previous paragraph.

The Term/Research Paper

These instructions cover several types of term papers, including literature reviews and standard research projects. Two styles are acceptable depending on the discipline that organizes the subject matter of the course. For sociology and criminal justice courses (e.g. Criminology and Criminal Justice Process), you must follow the style of the American Sociological Association (ASA), as found in *The American Journal of Sociology*. For critical-social-historical courses (e.g. Power and Change in America), you may either follow the ASA style or the format of historical journals, such as *The Journal of American History* and *The American Historical Review*.

Title Page A title page appears with papers produced for social science courses. It contains three elements: (1) the title of the paper, (2) the author's name, and (3) the institution with whom the author affiliates (typically for you it is University of Wisconsin-Green Bay). Center this information on the page. Do not number the title page; the title page is not the first page of your paper. Never include a title page with a reflection essay. For historical papers/essays, title pages are optional.

Abstract An abstract appears with papers produced for social science courses. It contains three elements: (1) statement of problem, (2) methods used, and (3) brief summary of conclusion(s). Type the abstract on a separate page. An abstract is 100-150 words maximum. Do not write the abstract in outline form; it should be a single block paragraph. Double-space the abstract. You may italicize the text of the abstract. Title the abstract page: Abstract. Do not put the title of the paper or your name on the abstract page. Do not number the abstract page; the abstract page is not the first or second page of your paper. Never include an abstract with a reflection essay. For historical papers/essays, abstracts are inappropriate.

First Page of the Body of the Paper If you included a title page and abstract in your paper, repeat and center the title of your paper at the top of the third page. Do not put your name on this page. Although this is the first page of your paper, leave the first page unnumbered. If you do not include a title page and an abstract, in the upper left or right hand corner of page one type the following information: (a) your name, (b) university affiliation or course name, and (c) date.

The Body of the Paper After the first page, you must number all pages in the top, right-hand corner. Do not write the numbers in by hand. You must number your pages. No headers or footers (running heads, etc.), just numbers. Do not put an extra space in between paragraphs unless you are completing a section of your paper and are not using section headings. Carefully construct your paragraphs. Be sure that each paragraph presents a main idea, and make sure this idea relates to the theme of the essay. The best way to

organize the paragraph is to state a topic sentence and follow this statement with supporting statements. Supporting statements must link back to the topic sentence. Paragraphs must relate to one another in an orderly and logical manner. Take time to develop transitional phrases that link paragraphs in a coherent chain. The length of a paragraph is somewhat arbitrary, but it should contain a topic sentence with several supporting sentences. Advice: Work from an outline.

Citing Sources You must cite the work of other people you use or discuss in your work. Failure to do this constitutes plagiarism (intellectual theft). See the section on plagiarism and the penalties for academic misconduct.

For social science papers:

- If you are citing in the body of the text, your reference citations should include author and year of publication (Brown 1978). You need to cite page number(s) if you quote text or if the information is very specific and/or the paraphrase is close to the original. Example: "It is impossible to fully grasp Marx's *Capital*...if you have not studied through and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*" (Lenin 1968:180). The ellipses in the quote indicate deleted words where no meaning is lost.
- Set off and indent quotes of more than three lines two tabs (tabs set at 3-5 spaces) with no right indentation:

In much the same way that men are not taught to acknowledge all the ways they are privileged in society, whites are not taught to recognize how their status as white people confers them many privileges.... [A]ll the various interlocking oppressions take two forms: an active form which can be seen; and an embedded form which members of the dominant group are taught not to see. (McIntosh 1997:1)

Note the use of brackets in the paragraph. Anytime you change the internal structure of quoted material you indicate you are doing so by enclosing alterations in brackets. Only change structure to facilitate the smooth flow of the composition. Never change meaning.

- Identify both last names for dual authors (Simon and Dodder 1985). For more than two authors use "et al." in the text (Stack et al. 1994), except the first time where you list all the authors (Stack, Bladlow, and Shriver 1994) if the number is less than five. When two authors have the same name use identifying initials in the text (P. Jameson 1992; F. Jameson 1967). For institutional authorship, supply the minimum identification from the beginning of the complete citation (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1963:117). If there is more than one reference to the same author and year, distinguish them by the letters a, b, etc., added to the year (Levy 1963a: 12). If the text you cite is from an Internet address, then cite the author and date as you normally would with the page number as it appears on the Internet site (Roberts 1996:3).

For historical papers/essays, you may substitute endnotes for footnotes. Place the endnotes at the conclusion of your paper, on a new page, before the reference (works cited) page(s). This often involves creating a separate file for a bibliography.

- Although some historical journals do not include bibliographies, you must submit a bibliography with papers turned into college courses. This is so your professor can check your sources.

- Using footnotes and endnotes follow a different format. The most widely accepted way to use these is to include the first time a work is cited the entire reference like this:

1. Richard Quinney, *Class, State, and Crime*, 2nd edition (New York: Longman, 1980), p. 21.

After the first citation, subsequent uses of the material are indicated by the last name and a shortened version of the title:

5. Quinney, *Class, State, and Crime*.

The same procedure is followed with either footnotes or endnotes with the exception being of course that you locate the endnotes at the conclusion of the paper and footnotes at the bottom of each page. Word processors like Word and WordPerfect make this manner of citing others' work easy. If you work from a typewriter, you should probably avoid footnotes and endnotes.

Reference Page(s) Reference pages may have three possible titles: Selected Bibliography, References, or Works Cited. The reference pages begin on a new page, but continue the page number from the body of the paper. References are doubled-spaced. Examples of bibliographic entries:

Gartman, David, 1986. *Auto Slavery: The Labor Process in the American Automobile Industry, 1897-1950*. New Brunswick. NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Peck, Dennis, 1987. "Toward a Sociology of Action: Breaking Through the Zone of Indifference." *Sociological Spectrum* 7: 2-23.

Swartzsky, Bob L. 1998, "Bubba's Cat," <http://www.npr.org> .

The Book Review/Review Essay

The book review/review essay is an intelligent and scholarly look at one or more books in a subject area. Depending on the assignment, the review may be a straightforward synopsis of a book, or it may be a critique—that is, a critical look at a book or selection of books. Such essays should focus on the content of the work being reviewed or criticized. A review of style and/or an opinion/reaction essay are unacceptable forms of a review.

In this type of essay, there is no title page or abstract. If you are reviewing one book in a book review format, in the upper left corner of page one type the following information: the name of the book you are reviewing, the author, the publisher (including city and state), the edition (if more than one), the date, and the page numbers, including preface. If it is a review essay covering more than one book, then including the above information for each book. Although a book review is not titled, you may wish to title a review essay.

Leave page one unnumbered. Start page two with the number 2 in the upper right corner. Number all pages except for page one. Do not generate a running head of any sort before the page number. Type only the number. Do not type, for example, "page 1." All numbers must be typed. Do not write the numbers in.

There is no works cited page. If it is a direct quote or close paraphrase, cite the page number. If more than one book is reviewed, note the author or shortened title (underlined or italicized) before the page number. *Hints*: Avoid quoting. Paraphrase specific passages if

you must. Make sure your paraphrase is not a quote. If you paraphrase and the statement looks similar the passage from the book, then cite the page it is on.

What are the objectives of a book review/review essay for a course?

- To convey to the reader that you have read and understand the book. When a person reads your essay, s/he looks for indications that you are familiar with the major points of the text.
- To convey to your professor that you grasp the relevance of the book to the course material.
- Professors want to know what you learned from the text. What did you not know before that you do now having read the book? What did you know before but now see from a different perspective or understand more clearly with greater depth?

Things you should never do:

- Do not write an “opinion essay” or a “reaction paper.” Thoughtfully review the book as described above.
- Do not botch statistics. Readers do not want to see any statistics. You should be reflecting on the main points of the text, not repeating the evidence the author uses in formulating those points (you don’t have time in the typical 500-750 word limit typically assigned). If you must quote numbers, please make sure you understand what you are quoting.