

ASSIGNMENT SHEET AND GRADING RUBRIC: ISSUES PAPER

Task: Write an 8–10 page (double-spaced) researched argument on a current, compelling issue related to your focused topic area. Use timely, authoritative sources to support your claims, and use MLA documentation standards for both in-text citations and a works cited page. Your research should include a range of sources, including books, periodicals, scholarly journals, and credible Internet sources. Your audience should include major stakeholders in the issue about which you argue, in addition to your instructor and classmates. Your instructor may require you to use your reflective letter to identify your target audience.

—The “A” Issues Paper (270–300 points)

In the “A” issues paper, the writer makes a compelling argument on a timely (*kairos*), focused issue appropriate for the audience’s needs and interests. The writer has a clear, arguable thesis supported by good reasons and sufficient, typical, accurate, and relevant evidence (STAR). The writer makes effective rhetorical appeals (*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*) and demonstrates that he/she has thoroughly researched the issue, incorporating a variety of credible sources, without being derivative of those sources and their arguments. The writer anticipates and effectively responds to opposing viewpoints (*procatalepsis*). The writer concludes by summarizing the argument and suggesting implications or consequences that engage the reader.

An “A” issues paper is exceptionally well written, in addition to being well argued. The title cleverly indicates the subject, and the introduction effectively catches the reader’s attention, establishes the timeliness and context of the issue, and forecasts the organization of the paper. The writer develops a focused, unified, and coherent argument, and the arrangement of the argument is logical, with smooth transitions from paragraph to paragraph and sentence to sentence. The writer further engages the reader by establishing his/her credibility via his/her good writing: the writer varies sentence length and structure for an easy, flowing rhythm and avoids vague, wordy, or obscure sentences. Diction is clear, concise, and precise, and punctuation, grammar, spelling, and usage adhere to the highest standards of edited American English. Additionally, the writer incorporates sources effectively, citing authority when appropriate; paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting effectively; and adhering to MLA citation and formatting standards both within the text and on the works cited page.

—The “B” Issues Paper (240–269 points)

The “B” issues paper argues a compelling and timely point that addresses the needs and interests of the audience, and the thesis is generally clear and fairly well supported, though minor lapses or gaps may be evident in the argument. Rhetorical appeals and external sources are used effectively, though perhaps not as convincingly as in the “A” paper. The depth of research may be insufficient in places and/or sources are not always authoritative or used in a balanced way. The argument is, for the most part, original, but may too closely echo arguments and information from the writer’s research. Opposing viewpoints are anticipated but may not be responded to fully and effectively. The writer concludes by summing up the argument but may not explore implications strongly enough.

The “B” issues paper is well written, including a serviceable title and introduction, though may lack the flair of the title and introduction of an “A” paper. The paper is generally unified and coherent, and the arrangement clear, with minor exceptions. The writing is also engaging, though the writer may compromise his/her *ethos* by occasionally including awkward syntax and unclear diction. Sentences generally have clear subjects and verbs. With few exceptions, sources are generally incorporated effectively, though some sources might not be blended

seamlessly, and occasionally the reader may not recognize the authority of the source. A few errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, usage, and MLA formatting and documenting appear randomly throughout the paper, but such errors do not distract from the reader's understanding of the argument.

____ The "C" Issues Paper (210–239 points)

The "C" issues paper addresses an issue but may not be fully aware of the rhetorical situation (e.g., the complexities or timeliness of the issue, the needs of the audience, or the writer's purpose in writing). The writer's position may be unclear at times and claims are not fully supported. Rhetorical appeals are used unevenly throughout the paper, and the argument as a whole is derivative of the writer's research; that is, the paper may feel more like a report of the writer's research than an argument. The research is likewise inadequate. For example, the writer might rely heavily on one or two sources. Opposing views are generally ignored or not responded to in convincing ways, and the conclusion merely repeats or summarizes the content of the paper.

The "C" issues paper is readable but requires some effort on the part of the reader. The title and introduction may be uninteresting or may fall a little short in clearly announcing the focus of the paper and establishing the context of the issue, though the focus and context become apparent as the paper unfolds. The paper lacks unity by occasionally introducing information that does not relate to the thesis, and the transitions from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, or idea to idea might be weak. Syntax and diction lack sophistication and may be difficult to follow in places, thereby compromising the writer's ethos. Some errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, and usage appear frequently, though the reader is generally able to understand the argument. Errors in MLA formatting and documentation likewise appear with some frequency. Though the writer cites sources, he/she may drop them in without authority, attribution, or explanation. There might be discrepancies between in-text citations and the works cited page.

____ The "D" Issues Paper (180–209 points)

The "D" issues paper demonstrates little awareness of the writer's rhetorical situation and/or does not address an appropriate issue. The writer's position and purpose are not clearly defined. Claims go unsupported, and the writer's attempts at ethical, emotional, and logical appeals are superficial, at best, or are unpersuasive. The argument is under researched and/or reliant on a single source or two. Sources are incorporated in ineffective and inappropriate ways, or the paper is a mere report or summary of the writer's research. Counterarguments are wholly ignored.

The "D" issues paper is laborious for the reader. The title is rudimentary and may not indicate the focus of the paper, and the introduction is similarly boring and/or fails to announce the focus or arrangement. The paper lacks unity by bifurcating into tangents, and the flow from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, and idea to idea is rough and unclear throughout much of the paper. Syntax and diction are likewise muddled throughout. The paper is riddled with errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, usage, and MLA formatting and documenting. The writer may inadvertently plagiarize by documenting sources incorrectly or not at all.

____ The "E" Issues Paper (0–179 points)

An "E" is generally only given to an issues paper that falls well short of the minimum requirements of the assignment, is plagiarized, or violates a policy established by an individual instructor (e.g., a late-paper policy).