

ENG4340 Nineteenth-Century American Literature
Assessment Guidelines
Spring 2022

General assessment criteria

The grade for this course is based on one, end-of-semester term paper.

Length: Term papers should be at least 10 full pages, not including Works Cited. Papers should be in Times New Roman 12 point with 1½-spacing.

Language: Students are expected to write clearly, concisely, and in an appropriately academic style, i.e. avoiding slang and informal/unconventional English. Common language errors relate to subject-verb concord, verb tense, prepositions, comma usage, genitives, idioms, spelling, and incomplete sentences with no finite verb. Language counts as part of a total assessment and is not given any specific percentage of the final grade.

Scholarly documentation: The citation of sources and the construction of the bibliography/works cited list is to be correct and consistent with an internationally recognized style of scholarly documentation, such as MLA or Chicago.

Theory and criticism: Students are expected to engage with previous scholarship and criticism on the primary text(s) they have chosen. The bibliography for each paper should include at least 4 scholarly secondary sources. These sources should inform the central analytic argument of the term paper.

Criteria relating to content:

- Does the term paper have a topic with a viable scope and academic validity?
- Does the student have a clearly formulated thesis? Is there a central point the student wants to prove in the term paper in response to the topic he or she has chosen?
- Does the term paper contain interesting or original ideas and arguments supported by relevant examples from the primary text(s)?
- Does the student demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the primary text(s)?
- If literary theory or theory from other fields is introduced is it well integrated in the ongoing discussion and literary analysis? Does the student demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical concepts he or she is using and are they integral to the analysis he or she is conducting?

- If the student employs a methodology beyond close reading or comparison and contrast is the methodology relevant and productive in exploring the topic he or she has chosen?
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Criteria for various levels of achievement

Strong

A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgment and a large degree of independent thinking.

- The student is able to conduct a sophisticated and interesting discussion of their chosen topic by using relevant analytical terms and supporting his/her argument with pertinent examples that demonstrate a very good understanding both of the topic and the primary text(s).
- There are only a few language errors and the student demonstrates a very good command of written English.

Satisfactory

A satisfactory performance, but with some clear shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates an average degree of judgment and independent thinking.

- The student is able to conduct a satisfactory discussion of their chosen topic, which involves using relevant analytical terms and supporting his/her argument with some examples that demonstrate a satisfactory understanding both of the topic and the primary text(s).
- There are several language errors, but they don't impede communication. Overall the student demonstrates a fair command of written English.

Weak

A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates only a limited degree of judgment and independent thinking.

- The student only responds minimally to their chosen topic *and/or* demonstrates only a basic understanding of the primary text(s).
- There are many language errors relating to syntax, punctuation, subject-verb concord, verb tense, vocabulary, idioms, and/or spelling, but these errors do not fundamentally impair the student's ability to communicate in English.

Failure

A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgment and independent thinking.

- The student fails to respond adequately to their chosen topic *and/or* demonstrates little or no understanding of the primary text(s) *and/or* the term paper is too short (see length requirements above).
- There are numerous and serious language errors relating to syntax, punctuation, subject-verb concord, verb tense, vocabulary, idioms, and/or spelling, which fundamentally affect the student's ability to communicate in English.

- A term paper may fail on the basis of poor content or poor language or a combination of the two.