

Essay Musts

Structure, formatting, and evidence requirements for all essays and papers.

All written assignments for this course MUST adhere to these requirements or be subject to a reduced grade. Check for all of the following before submitting any paper.

Formatting Musts

Video: Formatting Musts (5:02)

All papers submitted to me must:

- Be double-spaced, in 12 pt. standard font, with one-inch margins.
- Not have extra blank lines between paragraphs. Instead, indent the first line of each paragraph to show a new paragraph has begun.
- Have a cover page with the title, your name, my name, and the date.
- Have page numbers on each page after the cover. The cover should not have a page number.
- Include both citations and a bibliography. (See Evidence musts.)
- Run at least the required length specified in the assignment.
- Have titles of books, films, and plays italicized and capitalized.
- Be submitted on time via Brightspace as a Word or compatible file attachment or as a PDF attachment. Late papers will be marked down.

See “Hints for meeting requirements” below. Watch the video for important guidance and how-tos. If you are uncertain how to do any of this, ***ask me before submitting your paper.***

Evidence & Content Musts

Video: Evidence Musts (12:07)

All papers submitted to me must:

- Support all assertions with specific, cited evidence from your sources.
- Use only primary and secondary sources. Tertiary sources, including textbooks, encyclopedias, and many websites, are not allowed, ever.
- Provide a footnote or a parenthetical citation for all direct quotations, descriptions, paraphrases, and ideas from sources, with the required info (author from bibliography plus page or section number).
- Include a bibliography listing all sources used, with all required info (author, title, publisher, year).
- Be written by you and NOT by another person or AI software.

See “Hints for meeting requirements” below. Watch the video for important guidance and how-tos. If you are uncertain how to do any of this, ***ask me before submitting your paper.***

Structure Musts

Video: Structure Musts (9:01)

All papers submitted to me must:

- Have an introduction paragraph that:
 - states the problem or question being addressed;
 - discusses possible opinions on this problem; and
 - ends with a thesis statement—a statement of opinion that someone could disagree with, stating what specifically you intend to prove in this essay.
- Cover three reasons why your thesis is true. Each of the three main sections of your paper should have:
 - an assertion (what your reason is),
 - a description of supporting evidence (some moment in your evidence that’s an example of your assertion), and
 - a discussion of how your evidence demonstrates the point you’re making.
- Have a conclusion that summarizes your three reasons and why they support your thesis.

See “Hints for meeting requirements” below. Watch the video for important guidance and how-tos. If you are uncertain how to do any of this, ***ask me before submitting your paper.***

Hints for meeting requirements

Formatting Musts

- Watch the Formatting Musts video for more on making sure your essay conforms to requirements.
- **Page counts.** Page counts are for full pages not counting the cover page and bibliography. If the requirement is “3-4 pages”, what I am looking for is at least 3 full pages of text, not counting the cover and not counting the bibliography.
- **Use the template.** Save the trouble of setting up the cover and page numbers—use the MS Word template file I created. There is also a Google Docs version.
- **Brightspace notes.** You may only submit via Brightspace. Do not submit written assignments as submission text—they must be file attachments. If you need help with Brightspace, go to the Lehman IT Brightspace support page or call the IT helpdesk at (718) 960-1111.

Evidence & Content Musts

- **Watch the Evidence Musts video** for more on making sure your essay conforms to requirements.
- **You may not use tertiary sources for any assignment.** Tertiary sources include textbooks, encyclopedias, study guides, dictionaries, my lectures, YouTube videos, TV documentaries, blogs (even history-themed ones), essay aggregation platforms, and generally almost everything on the internet except online scholarly journals and transcribed primary sources. See the Sources page for more. If you're not sure, ask me.
- **No AI software.** Having someone (or something) else write your paper is academic dishonesty and a form of plagiarism, not to mention being unreliable. Only by exploring the evidence yourself do you know that what you're saying makes sense.
- **Citing direct quotes is not enough.** This common mistake will lose you points. Paraphrases and ideas must also be cited.
- **Citation styles.** You can use Chicago, MLA, or any other citation style. What matters to me is that anything that's not your analysis must have a footnote or a parenthetical citation that points to an item in your bibliography. See the Elephant Pamphlet for more on citations and bibliographies.
- The number of sources you need to use varies from assignment to assignment.

Structure Musts

- Watch the Structure Musts video for more on making sure your essay conforms to requirements.
- See the Elephant Pamphlet for more on how to do all of this, including thesis statements, essay structure, and citations.
- **Optional draft.** You can submit an optional draft for any paper, no later than one class meeting before the due date. I won't grade it, but I'll give you feedback about how well you're addressing your topic and thesis. To make sure I see it soonest, please email me your optional draft rather than uploading it to Brightspace.
- **Grammar.** I will not mark down for grammar, but clarity is important. Please spell-check and, if you're not sure about your writing, have a friend read it.
- **See me for guidance.** I am available anytime, by email or in office hours, to discuss any aspect of your paper.

On the website: A sample interpretive essay can be found on the Essay Musts page.

Grading Criteria for Essays

All essays are graded by assessing the following criteria:

- **Introduction (20%)** • States a topic and problem within the assignment • Ends with a definite thesis statement (a specific opinion that can be disagreed with) • Thesis gives insight into the assignment prompt
- **Organization (25%)** • Main body organized in 3 sections, each addressing a different aspect of the thesis and building support for it • Each section is driven by a specific, concrete assertion • Each section is self-contained and focused on its topic
- **Analysis (25%)** • Interpretation dominates over description (why over what) • Analysis prefers the specific to the general • Analysis provides insight on the relevant time and culture • Analysis supports the section assertions and overall thesis • Analysis provides in-depth answers to questions in prompt
- **Evidence (15%)** • Evidence used is relevant and well-chosen • Assertions are consistently supported by evidence • Independent voice retained with judicious use of quotes
- **Conclusion (15%)** • Paper ends with an appropriate concluding paragraph • Conclusion draws together the arguments made in each section and reinforces the thesis • Conclusion answers questions from assignment prompt

Grading Deductions

There are two kinds of deductions relating to formatting, citations, and other technical requirements (see above for the requirements for all papers). Some deductions are reversible and can be gotten back by resubmitting the assignment with the issues corrected. Other deductions are not reversible.

Reversible deductions. If you have one of these deductions, you may resubmit your paper with these problems fixed, and I will modify or remove the deductions. Only these deductions can be reversed.

Nonreversible deductions. These deductions reflect problems inherent to the paper as it was submitted. They cannot be reversed.

No cover sheet	-3	Submitted late (1 week)	-10
No page numbers	-2	Submitted late (2 weeks)	-20
Work titles not italicized/capitalized	-2	Submitted late (3+ weeks)	-30
Missing items in bibliography	-4	Too short	-10
No bibliography	-8	Fewer sources than required	-20
Some citations missing	-5	Tertiary sources used	-10
Many citations missing	-10	Heavy use of tertiary sources	-25
All citations missing	-30	Plagiarism	-100