Synthesis Essay Scoring Guide

The following nine-point guide will be used in grading the essays you write for this course. The guide is based on AP evaluation criteria. For most essays, a more specific rubric will be discussed and/or presented upon return of graded essays. Use this guide and any class discussion regarding the original essays you write in order to evaluate and/or revise your essays with confidence and competency.

9 (100) Essays of this caliber meet all criteria for papers that earn an 8 and are particularly persuasive, or carefully reasoned, or demonstrate impressive compositional skill, stylistic maturity, and rhetorical excellence. This essay must show evidence of sophistication in its argument and synthesis of cited sources.

8 (95) These impressive essays persuasively defend, challenge, or qualify the assertion made. They present cohesive and carefully reasoned arguments using effective synthesis and citation of at least three sources. The writer’s argument is convincing, and the cited sources effectively support the writer's position. Writers of these essays demonstrate distinctive stylistic skill, varied sentence structures, and effective use of diction. These essays need not be flawless, but they must indicate a wide range of effective writing techniques.

7 (85) These essays fit the description of essays that receive a score of 6, but are distinguished by fuller or more purposeful argumentation and synthesis of at least three sources. The style, diction, and compositional skills of this essay are above average, but not quite reaching the level of the 8-9 essays.

6 (80) Essays earning a score of 6 adequately defend, challenge, or qualify the assertion made. They adequately synthesize and cite at least three of the sources. The writer’s argument is generally convincing and the cited sources generally support the writer’s position. These essays are above average in composition, but stylistically are less mature. Some lapses in diction and syntax may mar the overall impression.

5 (75) These essays understand the task at hand and defend, challenge, or qualify their assertions. They support their assertions by synthesizing and citing at least three sources. The arguments of these essays are developed in a limited, inconsistent, or uneven manner. The links between the argument and the sources may be strained. These essays are not poorly written, and they show that the writer possesses the ability to organize an essay in a functional manner. Stylistically, the essay may have simplistic sentence structure and word choice.

4 (65) These essays inadequately defend, challenge, or qualify the assertion made. They attempt to present an argument and support their positions by synthesizing and citing at least two sources, but they may misunderstand, misrepresent, or oversimplify their argument or the sources cited. The writing displays weakness in syntax, diction, and/or organization (often all three!).

3 (50) These essays meet the criteria for a score of 4, but are noticeably less persuasive in their attempts to state and defend a position, are less understanding of the cited sources, or are less consistent in their ability to control the elements of writing.

2 (40) Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate little or no success in defending, challenging, or qualifying the assertion. They may merely allude to ideas in the sources rather than citing them. These essays may seriously misrepresent the sources, fail to present a clear argument, or merely summarize the sources. The prose of these essays may reveal consistent weaknesses in the control of elements of writing, such as organization, grammar, or diction.

1(30) These essays meet the criteria for a score of 2, but tend to be especially simplistic or weak in elements of writing or do not cite even one source.

0 This score indicates an on-topic response that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt.

— This score indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.