

Dr. Lincoln Z. Shlensky  
University of Victoria

The following are my assessment rubrics for grading undergraduate research essays. I will follow this assessment structure as closely as possible to determine the grade for your paper.

- A. **TITLE:** A creative or explanatory title that summarizes your argument in a few words (points included in Mechanics).
- B. **INTRODUCTION:** An explanatory introduction to your essay that offers background on the topic and a road map of the essay as a whole.
- C. **THESIS AND SUPPORT:** An argumentative thesis — not simply an observation — that answers an important *why* question about the reasons for your comparison and your choice of specific texts (e.g., *Why* is x observation or idea important? *Why* does this matter for American or postcolonial or postwar (etc.) literature or film, culture or history?); you demonstrate support for your view with specific examples, research evidence, and analysis that you introduce at the outset of your essay and then fully explicate in the essay body.
- D. **STRUCTURE:** A clear and explicit essay structure in which each of your paragraphs begins with a helpful transition sentence or phrase that summarizes and carries your argument forward from the previous paragraph, and then advances your main argument in the paragraph body.
- E. **CLOSE READING:** Careful close reading and effective analysis (specific passages or scenes are quoted or discussed in your essay and analyzed as key evidence of your claims).
- F. **RESEARCH:** Effective use of relevant, peer-reviewed, academic research to support your claims (generally, book chapters from books found in the library, or academic papers of greater than ten pages found in academic research databases, but not short reviews of less than ten pages); appropriate integration of these secondary sources into your own essay (cited passages should be introduced by you, their major claims identified and linked to your main argument; all texts listed in your Works Cited section should be explicitly cited in the essay body, with page numbers in parentheses; you recognize the usefulness of, and difference between, summarizing vs. paraphrasing vs. direct quotation of a cited source); scholarly research is clearly distinguished from non-peer-reviewed sources; newer or more authoritative sources are given preference over older or less authoritative ones.
- G. **CITATION FORMAT:** Correct citation format and structure (you use MLA in-text citations and properly format your Works Cited section; you use block quotes used where quoted text exceeds three lines of your typed text; your Works Cited section provides complete page scope [i.e., 302-317] for each of your cited sources; the Purdue OWL site will serve as adjudicator of correct citation style).
- H. **CONTEXT:** Identification of historical, cultural, social, aesthetic, or other specific features of your primary texts that contextualize your claims about them; if you are drawing from two or more primary texts or films, each should be contextualized and historicized.
- I. **STYLE & MECHANICS:** Writing that is sufficiently objective, evaluative, and analytical, yet demonstrates engagement with, and enthusiasm for, the topic; you pay close attention

to spelling, grammar, academic diction, and complete sentence structure (avoiding comma splices and run-on sentences; using semicolons and conjunctive adverbs [however, although, etc.] properly).

- J. **CONCLUSION:** A useful conclusion that reviews the argument and leaves the reader thinking.