Humanities 101 Essay Preparation

Writing the Papers

Each paper required in Humanities 101 should be three pages in length, typed and double-spaced in a twelve point font ("New York" if done on the computer), using the default margins of Microsoft Word 5. Successful papers (see "C" below) will use proper grammar and will be made up of clear sentences and well-organized and clearly written paragraphs. Such papers will present persuasive and original arguments, clearly developed from beginning to end, based on good understanding of the relevant texts. Given the limits of the assignments, you should avoid lengthy summaries of contents and long quotations, merely referring to the passages you wish to cite. Below are some guides to proper grammar, citation of sources, and argumentation; none of these lists are, of course, exhaustive.

A. Grammar, Syntax and Style:

1) Avoid running two or more sentences together by failing to use proper conjunctions and punctuation.
   NO: I went to philosophy today it was boring.NO: I went to philosophy today, it was boring.NO: I went to philosophy today and it was boring.YES: I went to philosophy today, and it was boring.

2) Make sure that your pronouns agree with their antecedents, and that subjects agree with verbs.
   NO: Those are the four professors who I met.NO: Those are the four professors which I met.YES: Those are the four professors whom I met.
   NO: Each of the points which they made are clear.YES: Each of the points which they made is clear.

3) Make sure that the references of your pronouns are entirely clear:
   NO: Socrates refuted Meletus, and the jury became angry at him.YES: The jury became angry at Socrates when he refuted Meletus.
   NO: Aeneas went to Hades after reaching Italy, which was dangerous YES: Aeneas went to Hades, which was dangerous, after reaching Italy.

4) Avoid split infinitives.
   NO: Now, to further explain my point.YES: Now, to explain my point further.

5) Avoid dangling participles.
   NO: Being drunk, the road swayed to and fro.YES: Since the student was drunk, the road swayed to and fro.
   YES: Being drunk, the student saw the road sway to and fro.

6) Use apostrophes correctly. For all practical purposes, the apostrophe is used with nouns only to show possession. The proper forms for the possessive are ’s (if the word does not end in s) and s’ (if the word ends in s).
NO: We have too many book's to read. YES: This book's cover came off. YES: All of these books' covers came off. NO: All of these books's covers came off.

7) Use commas properly with restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers (a restrictive modifier limits the meaning of the word modified and is essential to the sentence; a non-restrictive modifier merely adds information about the word modified and is not essential to the sentence).

   NO: A man, who has no music in him, lacks a certain spirit. (restrictive)
   YES: A man who has no music in him lacks a certain spirit.
   NO: Cassius who had no music in him did not appreciate the aesthetic. (non-restrictive)
   YES: Cassius, who had no music in him, did not appreciate the aesthetic.

8) Place the period and the comma inside quotation marks; place the semicolon and the colon outside the quotation marks; place the question mark, the exclamation point, and the dash outside the quotation marks except when they are part of the quotation.

9) Do not overuse colorless verbs (especially to be, exist, and occur).
   NO: Plato was eloquent in his argument.
   YES: Plato argued eloquently.

10) Prefer the active voice.
    NO: Aeneas was conducted through the underworld by the sibyl.
    YES: The sibyl conducted Aeneas through the underworld.

11) Avoid long strings of prepositional phrases.
    NO: At the outset of the introduction to his annals of the empire of Rome, Tacitus asserts his objectivity.
    YES: Tacitus asserts his objectivity in the Annals' first sections.

**B. Use of Sources**

1) When you summarize the thought or quote the words of anyone other than yourself, use internal textual references instead of footnotes. They should have this form: Plato says that forms are real (Republic, 123). All works consulted, including editor's or translator's introductions to the text you are discussing, must be cited in a bibliography and debts expressed according to the following form:
   Author (last name first), Title. City: Publisher, date.

2) Any brief quotation (from one significant word to 4 lines) must be identified by quotation marks. Work them into the syntax of your own sentences: The "archaic attitude of mind" (Lesky, 99) with which Herodotus wrote did not clearly distinguish fact from myth.

3) You should avoid lengthy quotations; however, If you do quote a passage of five or more lines, then indent the quotation ten spaces from the left margin, double-space both above and below the quote, single space the quoted lines and do not add quotation marks.
4) **Plagiarism:** We accept the definition of plagiarism found in the Student Handbook: Plagiarism is a form of cheating because the plagiarist copies or imitates the language and thoughts of others and passes the result off as an original work. Plagiarism includes the failure to identify a direct quotation by use of quotation marks or in some other appropriate way, paraphrasing the work of another without an acknowledgement of the source, or using the ideas of another, even though expressed in different words, without giving proper credit (p. 17).

In addition, there is an absolute prohibition against consulting papers of students who are taking or have taken the course. All writing for the course must be done without any aid from other students; however, it is permissible to discuss assignments with other students and/or to discuss a rough draft of your paper with a tutor in the Writing Center. If there is any similarity between any two papers, this would constitute prima facie evidence that plagiarism has been committed. Any ideas which you derive from others must be cited. Close paraphrase of texts you are discussing must also be cited, but please be advised that, even if properly cited, close paraphrase should usually be avoided. It is often employed as a poor substitute for a clear, brief summary of the meaning of the text; when it is more or less as long as the passage itself, it would better be replaced with quotation.

**C. Evaluation: Papers will be evaluated on the following bases:**

1) **Good writing:** See some mistakes to avoid in part "A" above.

2) **Clarity:** In arguing your interpretation of a text, you should quickly make it clear to the reader what the main claim (thesis) of your paper is. Other points which you make should be equally clear. To this end, each paragraph should have a single focus. Throughout the paper and especially at its outset, you should avoid sweeping generalizations.

3) **Coherence:** Both within each section and the analysis as a whole, you should develop your thesis in the body of the paper in such a way that each sentence follows the previous sentence, and each paragraph the previous paragraph in an obvious logical order.

4) **Arguments for and (when required) against your thesis:** Your analysis should avoid being one-sided, and it should not ignore specifics which are important to your topic.

5) **Interpretation:** You should exhibit in your paper a good understanding of the relevant text(s) or monument(s). Note that interpretations should not be offered dogmatically; they need to be defended with argument. Evidence for your interpretation of a text (or monument) should consist of citation and explanation of the words (specifics) of the text (monument) themselves. In using quotations and citations of the text, you must make it clear how those passages go toward supporting what you say.

6) **Integration:** Your paper should show your ability to integrate into the assignment what you have learned from lecture, reading and discussion.