

APPENDIX IV
Critical Thinking Essays
Grading Criteria

Critical Thinking Essays will be evaluated based on a 100 point scale using the following breakdown:

Organization/Mechanics	20 points
Thesis Statement	20 points
Critical Thinking	40 points
Conclusion/Explanation	10 points
References/Citations	10 points

Below we provide more details of what we will be looking for when we read your essays.

ORGANIZATION/MECHANICS:

- Does it have a complete heading – your name, course number, date, paper #, title?
- Are margins, font size, spacing appropriate and consistent?
- Are there frequent unclear, awkward sentences, poor grammar, spelling errors, typos, and/or a lack of definition of terms and abbreviations?
- Does the essay reflect a lack of careful proofreading?
- Is there a logical progression and smooth transitions between ideas?
- Is information repeated to stretch the essay's length?
- Did you meet the guidelines for length: 300-400 words? (using 1 1/2-spaced, 11-pitch font), plus the reference cited section?

THESIS STATEMENT:

- Is there a thesis statement and is it clear? Does it provide a clear roadmap to the rest of the essay?
- Does it detail what you expect, what you will try to prove, show?
- Does it establish the argument or your point of view?
- Is the location of the statement appropriate?
- Is it too broad or too narrow?
- Does it provide an appropriate level of controversy?
- Are you rehashing an old idea or a more original topic?

A STRONG thesis statement usually appears in the first paragraph. The thesis can be supported using evidence and logical thinking. A WEAK thesis is more of a topic statement for a report and can be supported without critical thought (e.g., "Global warming is a problem the world faces today.").

CRITICAL THINKING:

- Is the title of the paper reflective of its content?
- Does the information presented in the essay support the thesis statement?
- Are all sections of the essay relevant to the thesis statement?
- Do you show an understanding of the material?

- Do you have a well-rounded argument? Do you acknowledge skepticism by addressing the essay from differ sides?
- Do you make a cohesive argument? Did you leave any/many questions unanswered regarding your thesis and do these omissions detract from its development?
- Are your sources credible and do they support your argument? Did you evaluate the credibility of your sources or just accept what you read as fact?

STRONG critical thinking is insightful and does more than just report what is known about the topic. You need to present solid evidence and logical arguments to support your thesis.

LITTLE critical thinking is mainly a report, perhaps containing a few critical thoughts, which are not well developed. **LACK** of critical thinking is based entirely on a descriptive report about the issue, with arguments based entirely on opinions and wild assertions.

CONCLUSION:

- Do you introduce new information in the conclusion? (You should not do this!).
- Do you provide a personal interpretation of the factual evaluation?
- Do you readdress the thesis statement to provide closure?
- Do you have a powerful concluding/summary statement?

Many papers seem like the writer was glad to be done. Although likely true, you should not just jot down a few sentences and called it quits. "We must take action now!" "More research is needed..." The conclusion should be a strong summary of ideas.

REFERENCES:

- Is there a reference cited section?
- Is there consistency throughout the paper as to how everything is cited/formatted?
- Are all sources cited within the text listed in the literature cited section and vice versa?
- Do the references have all the appropriate information so that a reader can find the source?
- If used, are web sites current (active) and properly referenced?
- How current is the information? If "old" information is used, is it still relevant or is it grossly outdated?
- Did you find and use 2-4 new references (i.e., those not provided as part of this case study) in the development of your essay?