Guidelines and Standards for General Education Courses

1. Civility in the Classroom

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on behalf of the student and the instructor. The instructor, as well as fellow students, should not be subjected to any student’s behavior that is in any way disruptive, rude, or challenging to the instructor’s authority in the classroom. Nor should a student feel intimidated or demeaned by his/her instructor. According to university policy, the instructor is responsible for maintaining a productive learning environment:

The instructor has the primary responsibility for control over classroom behavior and can direct the temporary removal or exclusion from the classroom of any student engaged in disruptive conduct or conduct which otherwise violates the general rules and regulations of the institution. The instructor may report such misconduct to the assistant dean for Judicial Affairs for implementation of such disciplinary sanctions as may be appropriate, including extended or permanent exclusion from the classroom (Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, pg 8).

Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to the following: intentionally antagonizing the instructor, receiving beeper or phone messages or text-messaging in class, leaving class early or coming to class habitually late, eating in class, talking out of turn, doing assignments for other classes, and engaging in other activities that detract from the classroom learning experience. All electronic devices should be turned off during the class period unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. Work missed by the student (if s/he is removed from the class) will not be allowed to be made up, and the student will be considered absent for the day(s) removed from the class.

2. Academic Dishonesty

Faculty in the English department take very seriously any incidents of academic dishonesty. Students found guilty of academic dishonesty may face a range of sanctions including a zero for the assignment or failure in the course, as well as additional sanctions imposed by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. The Department, in agreement with the University, defines academic dishonesty as follows:

Academic Misconduct. Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or facilitating any such act. For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:
(1) Plagiarism. The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one’s own without proper acknowledgment.
(2) Cheating. Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
(3) Fabrication. Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
(4) Facilitation. Helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic misconduct.

(Rights and Responsibilities of Students Handbook, p. 6)
All suspected and/or confirmed incidents of cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, as required by University policy. For a detailed description of the procedures involved in an academic misconduct hearing, refer to the Rights and Responsibilities of Students Handbook, p.8, available at [http://www.mtsu.edu/stuaff/PDF/rights.pdf](http://www.mtsu.edu/stuaff/PDF/rights.pdf)

3. Disabled Students

In order to receive accommodation because of a mental or physical disability, a student must provide documentation from the Office of Disabled Students Services, located in KUC 120 (x2783). Although disabled students may complete course requirements under conditions that are made in consideration of their disability, they are still held accountable to the same standards and overall course requirements.

4. Absences and Tardies

Student attendance is required in each and every class meeting. Additionally, each instructor in the English department establishes his/her individual policy concerning absences and tardies. The instructor’s own record serves as the official document of absences/tardies. Only the instructor has the prerogative of excusing an absence and of permitting the student to make up any missed work. Late work is usually penalized. Students should refer to the syllabus for details about the instructor’s policies.

From the MTSU Catalog (p. 52-53):

A student is expected to attend each class for which he/she is registered except in cases of unavoidable circumstances. Class attendance will be monitored during the term. Students who are reported for non-attendance will be assigned a grade of F to appear on their transcripts, and non-attendance will be reported to appropriate agencies. Distribution of future financial aid will be suspended if applicable.

Exceptions are made for University-sanctioned activities. Students shall not be penalized for such absences. Students anticipating participation in University functions which will take them out of classes should discuss these absences with their instructors at the earliest convenient time.

The fact that a student may be absent from a class does not, in any way, relieve that student of the responsibility for the work covered or assigned during the absence. It is the responsibility of faculty members to excuse or refuse to excuse absences of students who miss their classes. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain excuses for absences and to arrange with the faculty member in question to make up the work missed. Absences begin with the first date the student is enrolled in class.
Expressive writing emphasizes the writer’s feelings/reactions to people, objects, events, or ideas. Expository writing focuses more on objects, events, or ideas than on the writer’s feelings about them. When you report, explain, clarify, or assess, you are practicing exposition. Students in 1010 write 4 essays, each of which goes through multiple drafts and at least two of which demonstrate the student’s ability to support a thesis and properly integrate and cite primary source material. Some sections of 1010 focus on an issue or theme; all sections have a substantial reading component. Instructors use the workshop method to teach the writing process as well as build community.
English 1010 Objectives

1. Students will improve their ability to generate a writing plan with informed writing objectives.

2. Students will draw writing content from experience, imagination, and outside resources (e.g., printed materials, interviews, films).

3. Students will be introduced to strategies for synthesizing and analyzing different types of text and material.

4. Students will gain a greater sense of the process of writing: prewriting, drafting, rewriting, and editing.

5. Students will write out-of-class essays that illustrate their knowledge of the writing process and at least one in-class essay that illustrates their on-demand writing ability.

6. Students will write at least four essays of 1000 words each.

7. Students will be able to analyze their writing strengths and weaknesses.

8. Students will improve their ability to develop a thesis clearly with a variety of supporting evidence (e.g., definition, illustration, description, comparison and contrast, casual analysis).

9. Students will learn to adapt their writing to audience and purpose.

10. Students will learn to integrate and document primary sources accurately.

11. Students will develop the ability to vary the structure and length of sentences and paragraphs.

12. Students will learn to write with grammatical competence and use conventional punctuation and spelling.
Argumentative writing is intended to influence the reader’s attitudes and actions. Writing is usually called argumentative if it clearly supports a specific position.

Students in 1020 write 4 essays. (Some instructors assign an annotated bibliography in lieu of the third essay and in conjunction with the fourth.) Content comes from across the disciplines as students explore issues related to various fields of study. Students do not write about literature in 1020. English 1020 has a substantial reading component: students learn how to read rhetorically, building their own repertoire of rhetorical strategies. Instructors use the workshop method to teach the writing process. All 1020 students receive at least one hour of scheduled library instruction.
English 1020 Objectives

1. Students will gain a greater sense of the process of writing: prewriting, drafting, rewriting, and editing.

2. Students will improve their ability to generate a writing plan with informed writing objectives.

3. Students will improve their strategies for synthesizing and analyzing different types of text and material.

4. Students will write at least four research-based essays of 1250 words each. Some instructors assign an annotated bibliography in lieu of the third essay and in conjunction with the fourth.

5. Students will receive library instruction.

6. Students will improve their ability to develop a thesis clearly with a variety of supporting evidence drawn from research (e.g., definition, illustration, description, comparison and contrast, causal analysis).

7. Students will integrate and document primary and secondary sources accurately.

8. Students will adapt their writing to audience and purpose.

9. Students will vary the structure and length of sentences and paragraphs.

10. Students will write with grammatical competence and use conventional punctuation and spelling.

11. Students will be able to analyze their writing strengths and weaknesses.
Grading

Grades on Individual Assignments: A composition course requires students to possess certain competencies at the semester’s beginning and to acquire others as the semester progresses. As their writing improves, students will confront more demanding assignments, but the grading philosophy will remain constant. Students will be graded according to their success in meeting the demands of each assignment. For example, in English 1010 the first assignment could ask for a narration of a memory. The instructor may ask that the memory be recounted in specific, concrete detail and without serious errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The grade would depend on the students writing with vivid detail, using grammar correctly, spelling correctly, and punctuating accurately. An average demonstration of the competencies asked for in the individual assignment would earn a grade of “C.” Subsequent English 1010 assignments would build on the competencies demonstrated in this writing and ultimately would require students to write essays in which they demonstrated all the competencies required in English 1010.

Semester Grades: To receive credit for English 1010 and 1020, students must pass the courses with at least a C-, which means that they have satisfactory achieved the objectives in each course. The grades of B and A represent consistently superior demonstration of the objectives in the variety of writing assignments throughout the semester.

The grade of N will be awarded to students who complete the first attempt of the courses(s) but fail to meet minimum standards. In other words, for the first time the student takes the course, the grade of N is appropriate if the student has completed all the writing assignments and has met all the course requirements, including the attendance, yet has not developed satisfactory writing skills to pass the course. The grade of N will be assigned only once in English 1010 and 1020; in subsequent semesters the student will be assigned a grade of F if minimum writing standards for the course are not met. The grade of N is not punitive; it will calculate into Hours Attempted but not Quality Hours.
Standards for Judging Written Work in General Education Courses
MTSU English Department

Effective writing:
1. Achieves its purpose
2. Considers and adapts to its intended audience
3. Adequately develops ideas through the use of specific details
4. Carefully constructs and organizes ideas, sentences, and paragraphs
5. Effectively uses language, including correct grammar and mechanics
6. Demonstrates correct MLA, APA, or CMS documentation skills

Grades on essays written in English 1010 and 1020 range from A to F, and they are evaluated according to the criteria defined below:

PASSING

A An A paper is rated SUPERIOR and shows originality of ideas and control of coherence, unity, development, and flow. A controlling main idea is readily apparent and is supported well with clearly developed examples and details. Paragraphs are structured well and include a variety of sentence structures and the use of transitions. Sentences show a superior command of word choice appropriate for audience, topic, purpose, and point-of-view. There are very few minor errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

B A B paper is rated ABOVE AVERAGE and has an interesting topic with an obvious structure or plan but lacks full competency in coherence, unity, development, and/or flow. A controlling main idea is apparent and is supported with examples and details. Paragraphs are structured well and include some sentence variety and transitions. Sentences show a command of appropriate word choice for audience, topic, purpose, and point-of-view. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are usually appropriate with very few major or minor errors.

C A C paper is rated AVERAGE and has a clear topic but lacks originality and full competency in coherence, unity, development, and/or flow. A controlling main idea is used but lacks some necessary supporting details and examples. Paragraphs show some structure but may not use a variety of sentence styles or structures. Some transitions are used but may not be appropriate for content. Sentences show a limited command of appropriate word choice for audience, topic, purpose, and point-of-view. The paper may have a few major errors or frequent minor errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
NOT PASSING

D A D paper is rated **WEAK** and has a poorly defined central idea that shows little insight and/or lacks full competency in coherence, unity, development, and/or flow. Sentences are sometimes unrelated to the main idea and give only limited supporting details and examples. Transitions are present but most are lacking or inappropriately used. Sentence structure is frequently correct; however, sentence style and patterns are usually repetitive forms. Word choice is often inconsistent, incorrect, and inappropriate for audience, topic, purpose, and point-of-view. Major and distracting minor errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling are obvious.

F An F paper is **VERY WEAK** and may have no clear main idea. Sentences do not support a main idea and do not provide specific details or examples. Sentences are faulty in style and not readable in parts. Transitions and sentence variety are quite limited or unused. There are frequent serious errors and excessive minor errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

0 A ZERO paper is rated **UNACCEPTABLE** and does not follow the framework or address the topic given. This score is also given to those papers that deliberately use explicit language that attacks the assignment or topic. It is also frequently given to plagiarized papers.

*Please note: Though instructors may assign the grade of D on individual assignments, your course grade must be C- or better to earn credit in the course. D is not a passing grade in English 1010 or 1020.*
GENERAL EDUCATION LITERATURE COURSES

English 2020 and 2030

The General Education Literature requirement (part of the Humanities/Fine Arts requirement) may be fulfilled with one of the following courses offered by the English Department. ENGL 2030, Experience of Literature, provides a broad overview of literature primarily in the Western tradition, but with selections from other cultures. Students will become familiar with the work of accomplished contemporary writers in addition to reading some of the classic works of Western literature. ENGL 2020, Themes in Literature and Culture, provides students the opportunity to trace a specific theme or idea through a number of literary texts that reflect different historical and cultural contexts. Both courses have the same course objectives:

Course Objectives:
1. Students will improve their ability to read, think, and write critically and analytically about a wide variety of texts.
2. Students will be able to identify basic structural and/or technical elements and strategies and will be able to discuss how those elements contribute to the overall effect of a literary work.
3. Students will gain a greater sense of the range and sorts of texts that are available to them as readers and, hopefully, of the sorts of texts that they most enjoy and wish to continue reading.
4. Students will gain a greater sense of the “conversations” between texts; that is they will have a sense of the ways in which texts respond to earlier texts, develop ongoing cultural conversations about key issues, develop genres and style, etc.
5. Students will gain a greater sense of the ways in which texts function within culture(s), of the ways in which texts can be used to understand and gain insight into cultures/historical movements, and of the ways in which cultural context shapes both the production and reading of texts.
6. Students will develop a sense of themselves as readers; they will gain greater independence in their interpretations and become more aware of their own approaches, assumptions, and interpretive strategies. Conversely, they will become aware of the range of possible reading strategies, encounter and test out new ways of working with texts, and increase their interpretive repertoire.

Reading: Reading is a constant, daily requirement in English 2020 and 2030. Students will read stories, poems, and dramas in the required course text. In addition your instructor may also assign you to read a novel or view a film.

Writing: Students will write a minimum of three essays about specific works of literature. Students will also write a minimum of two essay examinations. The instructor may also expect students to write daily on the assigned reading. Grades in English 2020 and 2030 will derive largely from the essays and examinations that students write. The instructor will grade the essays according to the Standards for Evaluating Written Work in Literature Courses that follow. Read these Standards carefully. For additional help or writing instruction, go to http://www.mtsu.edu/~uwcenter.
STANDARDS FOR EVALUATING WRITTEN WORK IN 
SOPHOMORE LITERATURE COURSES

Writing an essay about a work of literature is like writing any other essay. Generally, essays about literature are either expository or persuasive in nature. A typical essay topic may require that you show how a writer uses a certain narrative technique in a story or how a specific poem dramatizes a certain theme. You should approach the act of writing about literature by following the same process that proved successful for you in composition courses. Your essay will need a title, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. It will also need a thesis, which you will need to develop and to support with evidence (that is, with examples and quotations), just as you did in essays you wrote in your composition courses. If you will draw on your previous experience in writing essays and adhere carefully to the guidelines that follow, you will be able to write essays that demonstrate your understanding and appreciation of literature.

The following guidelines provide you with essential information about how to write an essay about a piece of literature and what to include in each essay that you write:

General Points

1. Do not assume that your reader knows the title and the author of the work you are writing about. Also do not assume that your readers are familiar with the piece of literature under discussion, nor that they are aware of why your essay is important. In your introductory paragraph, you should (a) identify the piece of literature by author and title, (b) briefly give significant details of setting, character, and plot, or other pertinent information that the reader of your essay should know to understand the context of your argument, (c) state your central idea (thesis), and (d) suggest the importance of your thesis to the reader’s general understanding of the piece of literature.

2. In writing about literature, your primary purpose or goal is to convince the reader that your thesis about the piece of literature is a valid one. First of all, you must have an idea (a thesis), whether it be about theme, character, setting, plot, point-of-view, irony, or symbol. Secondly, your entire essay must deal directly and emphatically with that idea. The most common deficiency in writing about literature is the loss of focus on the central idea; instead of using the materials in the piece of literature to show that the idea is reasonable and valid, the unthinking writer will often lapse into simply retelling the narrative, as if the idea were secondary to or self-evident from the plot line. You must show the reader that the materials from the story are relevant to your thesis. This point cannot be over-emphasized. If you do not make the connection between your thesis and the materials in the piece of literature, you will not write a convincing essay.

3. To convince your reader that your thesis is valid, you need to support your observations and interpretations with specific examples and quotations from the piece of literature about which you are writing. Since you cannot assume that your reader has read the work of literature, you must show that your observations are valid by referring frequently to what the characters think, say, and do. Do not make
the mistake, however, of thinking that you must proceed in the order in which the piece of literature proceeds. This is to make the mistake of allowing the author's organization to determine the organization of your argument.

4. Even though your reader may not have read the piece of literature that you are writing about, you are not obliged to retell the plot in detail. Rather, you should make sure that the reader understands who or what you are talking about by making necessary identification via phrases and clauses. For example: in The Death of a Salesman, Willy calls Bernard, his studious nephew, “a pest” for encouraging Biff to study for his Regents exams.

5. After you have developed and supported your thesis in the body of your essay you need to provide a conclusion in which you emphasize the validity and significance of your thesis. You can do this by discussing how your idea contributes to a greater understanding of the work as a whole.

**Technical Points**

1. Typed papers should be double-spaced throughout, including indented quotations and the Works Cited page.

2. You should use the present tense in writing about literature: In “Woodchucks” Maxine Kumin uses (not used) carefully selected diction to convey a message about killing and war.

3. Try to keep yourself out of the essay. Unless you want to distinguish your ideas from the opinions of others, you need not say “I think,” “I believe,” or “In my opinion.”

4. In a formal essay do not address the reader as “you”; “As you can see.” A better choice is to say “As we can see” or “As one can see,” or to revise the sentence entirely.

5. The titles of novels, plays, and feature films are underlined or italicized, while the titles of short stories and poems are placed in quotation marks: Walker’s novel The Color Purple (or The Color Purple), Spielberg’s film The Color Purple (or The Color Purple), Shakespeare’s play Othello (or Othello), Crane’s short story “The Open Boat,” Kumin’s poem “Woodchucks.”

6. Make sure to use a brief introductory phrase or clause to introduce your quotations. For example, the student writer in the sample paper that follows introduces a quotation in this manner:

   Indeed, the gardener relives his experience as an assassin every night in his dreams:
   
   All night I hunt. . . . I dream  
   I sight along the barrel in my sleep.  
   If only they’d all consented to die unseen  
   gassed underground the quiet Nazi way. (27-30)
7. In introducing quotations, be careful of punctuation. Certain standard introductory expressions are followed by a comma when a complete thought follows (e.g., she says, he believes, he murmurs, she observes). However, do not use a comma after the word that when it introduces a quotation:

The gardener says that “All night I hunt. . .” (27).

Expressions that contain a complete thought and that are not introductory in nature, however, cannot be followed by a comma. Instead use a colon as in the following example: The gardener relives his experience as an assassin every night in his dreams: “All night I hunt. . .” (27).

8. Prose quotations of more than four typed lines are set off from your text by beginning a new line and indenting ten spaces from the left-hand margin. When you present a quotation in this manner, use quotation marks only if your source uses them and exactly as your source uses them. Ordinarily, an indented quotation does not require quotation marks around it.

9. Three or more lines of poetry are set off from your text by beginning a new line, indenting ten spaces from the left-hand margin, and reproducing the lines exactly as they appear in the text (line endings, indentations, spacing, capitals, etc.). See the example in item 6 above.

10. One or two lines of poetry should be incorporated within quotation marks into the text of your prose. When you quote two lines of poetry, be sure to separate the lines by a slash (/) with a space before and after the slash. For example:

Kumin’s diction reveals that the narrator’s attitude remains somewhat benign the following day, when “Next morning they turned up again, no worse / for the cyanide than we for our cigarettes / and state-store Scotch, all of us up to scratch” (7-9).

11. Be sure you understand what kind of documentation your instructor expects. Your instructor may require you to use (a) parenthetical citations to give page numbers for fiction, line numbers for poetry (see examples in #6, #7, and #10 above), or act-scene-line numbers for drama and (b) a Works Cited page. The following sample essay cites line numbers parenthetically for quotations from a poem and acknowledges the source for the quotations with a Work Cited.

12. If you desire additional help or writing instruction, go to the University Writing Center Website at http://www.mtsu.edu/~uwcenter.
A Sample Essay

In the following essay, a student writer successfully develops an analysis of connotative language in Maxine Kumin’s “Woodchucks.” The essay earned the grade of A. It was written outside of class and underwent several drafts before submission. The essay meets all the technical requirements outlined above—except it is single-spaced, not double-spaced as your typed essay should be.

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| Diane Bohne  
Professor Dean  
English 2030  
June 25, 1995 |

**The Effect of Connotative Language in Kumin’s “Woodchucks”**

In “Woodchucks” Maxine Kumin uses carefully selected diction to convey a message about killing and war. Although “Woodchucks” is ostensibly a light, ironic poem about a gardener’s attempts to eradicate his nemesis, the woodchuck, a closer examination of its connotative language reveals the poet’s more serious, underlying message—that killing is much easier when it can be accomplished impersonally, from a distance.

Kumin’s diction becomes less literal and more connotative as the narrator in “Woodchucks,” in his attempts to abolish the woodchucks from his garden, progresses from using lethal chemicals to wielding a .22 rifle. The narrator’s discussion of the virtues of the chemical bomb reads almost like an advertisement on the back of a package: “The knockout bomb was featured as merciful, quick at the bone” (2-3). The detached tone of this statement reflects the relatively indifferent attitude of the narrator at this point. The narrator views the process of poisoning the woodchucks underground much like the placing of “roach motels” under the sink—easy, no fuss, and no mess to clean up when the whole process is finished.

Kumin’s diction reveals that the narrator’s attitude remains somewhat benign the following day, when “Next morning they turned up again, no worse / for the cyanide than we for our cigarettes / and state-store Scotch, all of us up to scratch” (7-9). The author’s choice of the words “up to scratch” is ironically humorous, almost as if the gardener and the woodchucks were playing a kind of game. The game, as well as Kumin’s diction, takes on warlike connotations, however, when the gardener sees the damage the woodchucks have caused in his garden. The violent terminology that the narrator uses in his

| Descriptive title derived from thesis. |
| Opening paragraph (1) identifies literary work and author, (2) introduces work and topic for analysis, and (3) states thesis. |
| Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 develop thesis with quotations and examples from the literary text. |
| Discussion is organized appropriately, tracing the poet’s use of connotative language chronologically. |
description of the damage transforms the normal activities of woodchucks into acts of war: “They brought down the marigolds . . . / then took over the vegetable patch / nipping the broccoli shoots, beheading the carrots” (10-12). The connotations of the words “brought down,” “took over,” and “beheading” all conjure up images of activities normally associated with war.

Kumin portrays the actual shooting of the woodchucks in mechanical, emotionless language, but her use of personifications such as “baby” and “mother” make the reader suspect that the killings are affecting the gardener more than he is admitting:

[I] now drew a bead on the littlest woodchuck’s face. 
He died down in the everbearing roses. 
Ten minutes later I dropped the mother. She 
flipflopped in the air and fell . . . 
Another baby next. (17-22)

Indeed, the gardener relives his experience as an assassin every night in his dreams:

All night I hunt . . . . I dream 
I sight along the barrel in my sleep. 
If only they’d all consented to die unseen 
gassed underground the quiet Nazi way. (27-30)

Kumin’s use of the word “Nazi,” with all its connotations of torture, slavery, and genocide, confirms without question that deeper meanings lie beneath the sardonic surface of this apparently benign poem. Indeed, Kumin’s use of this word transforms the poem from a simple, light-hearted verse into a crushing commentary on the relative ease and cowardice of killing from a distance. The reader realizes that the gardener did not give a second thought to using poison, a method of killing which did not involve looking into the “woodchuck’s face[s]” (16), pulling the trigger, and watching them as they “flipflopped in the air and fell” (20).

Kumin effectively communicates the theme of “Woodchucks” through her careful use of connotative language, which helps to spur the reader’s imagination into supplying many of the images that she merely suggests. Although Kumin does indeed supply some visual, tactile, and kinetic images, such as “the feel of the .22” (14) and her descriptions of the woodchucks’ destruction of the garden, the most effective component of this poem by far is the meanings that the reader conjures from the poet’s connotative language. Kumin depends upon connotative language to convey the theme of her poem—that killing is easier to do from a distance and that it is much more difficult to kill someone when you are looking into his face. Kumin cloaks her statement under the surface of a
seemingly light, ironic poem. The connotative language she employs makes the reader look below the poem’s surface, just as the gardener in the poem first discovers, then conceals, the killer in himself.

Works Cited


Grading

You will receive grades that range from A to F on the essays and the exams that you write. You are expected to write essays that are free from errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. The presence of such errors will substantially reduce your grade on an essay and may even result in a failing grade if the errors are numerous. Your primary purpose in every essay is to develop and support your central idea (thesis); the failure to develop your thesis adequately will almost certainly result in an unsatisfactory grade on the essay. You are expected to support the thesis of your essay while maintaining organization, logic, and coherence. An essay that lacks these three principles of effective writing is as certain to be penalized as a paper that lacks adequate development of its thesis or that contains errors in those basic areas mentioned above.

The grades on examinations that you write will depend primarily on the correctness of your answers. However, your instructors will expect you to observe the conventions of good writing on exams, especially on essay exams. Answers that show a disregard for those qualities listed in the above paragraph may be penalized substantially. In other words, competent writing is required of you on all the written work assigned in the sophomore literature courses.

The following list identifies for you those qualities that are essential in each essay you write if you expect to receive a satisfactory grade on the paper:

1. A clear statement, usually in the introductory paragraph, of the essay's thesis;
2. The adequate development of the thesis by using numerous examples and by citing several quotations directly from the text;
3. An organized, logical, and coherent development of the essay's thesis and the smooth integration of direct quotations into the fabric of your own words and ideas;
4. The effective construction of sentences and paragraphs, and the careful selection of words and phrases appropriate to the topic and the tone of your essay;
5. Freedom from errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and in the mechanics of citing quotations correctly; and
6. The proper documentation form as required by your teacher.
In order for an essay to receive the grade of a "C" or better, all of the above criteria must be present. A serious weakness in any one of the areas or a minor weakness in two of the areas will limit the essay to a grade no higher than a "D." Serious weaknesses in two areas or minor weaknesses in three areas will result in a failing grade. The grade of "A" or "B" will be given to essays that display the above criteria in prose that is thoughtfully conceived, stylistically vigorous, and forcefully expressed.

**Academic Integrity.** You should make certain that all your written work reflects your own thinking. There is no substitute for your own honest opinions and ideas in the essays you write. You are free, of course, to discuss the literature you are studying with your instructor and your classmates. But you must be careful not to pass off someone else's work as your own. To do so is to be guilty of plagiarism. You are especially advised not to use secondary sources without appropriate documentation or to copy from study guides, such as Cliff's Notes. For more information regarding the consequences of plagiarism see www.mtsu.edu/provost

**Final Grades.** Final grades in the sophomore literature courses will derive largely from the essays and examinations that you write. Because the grades on your essays and exams are based on the quality and correctness of your writing, your instructors, in deciding your final grade, may consider the improvement in your writing during the course of the semester. They may discount low grades made early in the semester if work done later shows genuine and permanent improvement; and they may likewise discount high early grades if later work shows increasing carelessness and lack of effort. For this reason you should strive to improve the quality of your writing on each paper required of you. Grades on examinations and quizzes will, of course, be averaged into your final grade.
The University Writing Center

Location: James E. Walker Library, Room 362
Website: www.mtsu.edu/~uwc
Email: uwcenter@mtsu.edu

- The UWC offers FREE assistance for any writing assignment in any class, in any major, at any stage, with any question, and for any problem.

- Our staff of writing assistants will work with you to:
  - Practice prewriting and brainstorming
  - Organize material
  - Achieve unity, coherence, and adequate development
  - Create effective opening/closing paragraphs
  - Improve revision/editing skills
  - Improve diction, grammar, and mechanical errors
  - Prepare for standardized or essay tests
  - Address grammar and writing problems through long-term assistance
  - Brush up on skills when no immediate paper is due
  - Develop speech outlines
  - Practice speech delivery and performance

- Sessions are 25 minutes or 50 minutes—whatever best fits your needs. Walk-ins are welcome when writing assistants are available, but appointments are recommended.

- Plan ahead and make your appointment early so you have time to revise and come back again if needed.

- All of our handouts are available online through our website if you can’t make it to the center for an appointment.

- Over several sessions, we can help you become a better writer! While your goal may be to improve your grade on an individual essay, ours is to help you learn to write more effectively throughout your college career.

If you’re ready to work, we’re here to help. Communication is the most important skill you’ll learn in college—don’t miss this opportunity to develop your ability to effectively communicate.