Descriptions of grades

A = An excellent paper is distinguished by the following characteristics:

The paper has a strong and interesting thesis, persuasively supported with well-chosen and well-analyzed examples. The paper is well organized and well developed, with clear and effective transitions. The writing is clear and lucid, without errors in grammar, spelling or diction.

A- = The paper shares the characteristics of the **A** paper, but one or two of them are average or good rather than excellent. An **A-** paper might also have a minor lapse in argument, organization or grammar.

The range from **B+** to **B-** comprises some lesser combination of the above elements.

B+ = The paper still has good or even great features but also one of the following weaknesses:

Thesis is predictable or too broad. Thesis is not completely supported. Not all the examples support the thesis; or an important example is ignored; or an example is not fully analyzed. Paper lacks a key transition. Paper contains sentences that are awkward or vague.

B = The paper contains some of the strengths outlined for an **A** paper but also more than one of the weaknesses above.

B- = The number of weaknesses begins to distract the reader from the paper's good elements.

C+ = Paper is consistently adequate or alternates repeatedly between good and bad elements.

C = Rather than a mix of strengths and weaknesses, the paper has mostly weak elements, mixed with some poor or missing ones:

Thesis is too obvious or too vague. Assertions are unsupported. Introduction or conclusion is ineffective. Organization is marred by missing transitions; or unwarranted or missing conclusions. Paper contains errors of grammar, word choice, or sentence structure. Paper relies on clichés rather than careful thought.

C- = Paper only minimally addresses the assignment. Some recognizable attempt to answer the question and organize a response.

D = suggests incompetence. Paper is defined by its defects:

The assigned question is not addressed. The paper presents no thesis; no argument; no evidence; etc.

F = Demonstrates incompetence. Paper is unreadable, unrecognizable, or missing.