Grading Criteria for Writing about Literature

“A” essays are very nearly perfect and satisfy the following criteria:

1. Focus—These essays have a clearly identifiable thesis statement, which is the essay's main idea or claim. The thesis is appropriate for the assignment, shows insight and original thought from the student about the literature, and is focused. The titles of the works examined are given in the first paragraph with correct punctuation. The ideas, examples, and support developed in the body of the essay are clearly related to the thesis.

2. Development—These essays have ample supporting evidence taken from the text(s). The student shows through the quotes chosen from the text that his or her assertions are valid and supportable. The student quotes neither too much nor too little. Too many quotes will leave the impression that the student has not thought enough for him- or herself. Too few quotes will imply that the student does not know the literature. The student should choose quotes that are particularly expressive or representative of the idea(s) being developed. The student explains the significance of the quotes by telling how the quotes support his or her assertions.

3. Organization—The introduction is interesting and engages the reader. It clearly states the thesis and the author(s) and title(s) of the work(s) which the student will discuss. The body paragraphs proceed in a logical and apparent sequence. The writer uses sufficient and appropriate cues such as paragraph hooks, transition words, and transition phrases and sentences to let the reader know what has been discussed, what is being discussed, and what will be discussed. These paragraph hooks and transition words, phrases, and sentences lead the reader smoothly from point to point. Each sentence should logically follow the previous sentence, and each paragraph should logically follow the previous paragraph. An effective conclusion draws the essay to a satisfactory close.

4. Execution—These essays have appropriate voice and tone as well as effective sentences and word choices that are appropriate for the purpose and audience. In addition, these essays avoid problems in grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and diction that interfere with the writer’s ideas or distract from the essay’s meaning. Each quotation is cited correctly according to the MLA guidelines for in-text citations, and a correct Work or Works Cited page for the text(s) used follows the essay. Each quotation is either smoothly integrated into the writer’s own sentence or is formally introduced by the writer with a signal phrase or a complete sentence followed by a colon. TIP: Quotations should not be "dumped" (dropped into the paper to stand alone); instead, they should be clearly and smoothly connected to the writer's own words and thought processes. The writer has proofread the paper thoroughly, and it has no or few careless errors such as typos or computos.

“B” essays show above-average mastery of the desired writing skills but are deficient in one of the four criteria.

“C” essays show average writing skills and are usually deficient in two of the four criteria.

“D” essays show below-average writing skills and are often deficient in three of the four criteria, or they contain a major flaw that seriously disrupts communication.

“F” essays are little more than rough drafts. Often, they do not fulfill the writing assignment, or they reveal that little effort was made to improve focus, development, organization, or execution.
Essays determined to contain plagiarism will receive zero (0) points.

**Letter Grades**

To determine a letter grade from numerical grades, I follow the grade policy below:

- 100-90=A
- 89-80=B
- 79-70=C
- 69-60=D
- 59 and below=F

Non-submission of an essay earns a grade of zero (0) points.