

June, 2009
Writing Rubric
Middlebury College

Learning Objectives	Scoring Scale 4 highest	Scoring Scale 3 middle high	Scoring Scale 2 middle low	Scoring Scale 1 lowest
Title and Introduction	Awakens and focuses interest on the writer's agenda. Compelling.	Clear and focused. Establishes its subject. May be compelling, but may miss opportunities.	Problems with clarity or focus.	Does not attempt to generate interest. Serious problems with clarity or focus
Thesis or Research Question	The writer formulates an elegant, ambitious argument or question which governs the evidence and analysis throughout.	The thesis / question is clear and arguable, even interesting, and governs the evidence throughout.	The thesis/question is not entirely clear or is not arguable or does not govern the evidence throughout.	The thesis/question is difficult or impossible to identify, and the purpose of the essay is unclear.
Use of Key Terms	The writer establishes, and defines where necessary, the key terms of the argument. Key terms are used with confidence and sophistication.	Key terms are established and defined. Use of key terms lacks either confidence or sophistication.	Key terms are established but not consistently used or not clearly defined.	Key terms are not established, or they are unclear or inappropriate
Information and Evidence	The writer selects persuasive, interesting, and insightful information to contextualize and inform the argument. Sources are cited appropriately. When necessary, evidence counter to the argument is effectively addressed.	Sufficient and appropriate persuasive information informs and contextualizes the argument. Sources are appropriately cited. Ineffective counter argument.	Information informing and contextualizing the argument is sometimes insufficient or unpersuasive for the argument. Sources are sometimes inappropriately cited. No counter argument.	Information informing and contextualizing the argument is rarely sufficient or persuasive for the argument. Sources are generally inappropriately cited or not cited.

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Analysis and Interpretation	The writer always analyzes the evidence in support of the argument. Interpretation is insightful and persuasive, and displays extraordinary depth of thought. May pose original ideas.	The writer usually analyzes the evidence in support of the argument. Interpretation is persuasive and occasionally insightful.	The writer sometimes analyzes the evidence in support of the argument. Interpretation is sometimes persuasive but rarely insightful.	The writer rarely analyzes the evidence in support of the argument. Interpretation may be implausible.
Structure	Elegantly organized with respect to both the whole essay and the continuity of paragraphs. Accommodates the complexity of the argument imaginatively.	Well organized throughout but without either elegance or complexity. It accommodates the argument satisfactorily.	Well organized on the whole but occasionally needing work on individual paragraphs or continuity. It accommodates the argument.	Organization is haphazard, and the argument is difficult to follow. Paragraphs and continuity need work
Mechanics	The writer demonstrates a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures. Few or no errors.	The writer demonstrates some range of vocabulary and sentence structures. Some errors.	The writer demonstrates a limited range of vocabulary and sentence structures. Frequent errors when attempting complexity.	Persistent errors with simple vocabulary and sentence structures.
Audience Awareness	The writer is fully aware of an audience and accommodates readers' needs throughout.	The writer is aware of an audience and sometimes accommodates readers' needs.	The writer is aware of, but not clear about, audience. The essay is occasionally confusing.	The writer is not aware of audience needs. The essay is frequently confusing.
Voice and Style	The writer sustains an appropriate and interesting voice. The essay is complex and handled with sophistication throughout.	The writer sustains an appropriate voice and is occasionally interesting. The essay is handled with clarity and purpose, and occasional sophistication.	The writer's voice is occasionally inappropriate or lacking confidence. The essay is handled without sophistication.	The writer is unable to sustain an appropriate voice. The essay may be potentially interesting but is handled without clarity or purpose.

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Conclusion	The conclusion answers all questions with insight. It continues to stimulate the reader's thinking and may suggest questions for further research.	The conclusion answers all questions satisfactorily and may suggest questions for further research.	The conclusion answers most questions, but may be unclear or incomplete.	The essay ends without concluding.
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