

Research Paper Checklist¹

- The topic fits the project parameters.
- Formatting fits the project parameters.
- The paper has a clearly stated thesis or organizing theme.
 - The thesis is *defensible* (based on evidence and reasoned argument).
 - The thesis is *relevant* (it makes a difference to how the passage is read; it is not obvious from a surface reading of the passage).
 - The thesis is *manageable* (its scope fits the permitted word count: I am not "padding up"; a good sign is if I am having to "cut down" quite a bit.)
- The paper's content is factually accurate.
- This essay exhibits *analysis* with appropriate summary (not all or mostly summary; "analysis" means critical assessment of evidence and of reasoned arguments).

Content characteristics:

- Warrants for claims are very clear.
- Arguments are explained thoroughly.
- Arguments are insightful or creative, not standardized.
- Alternate or opposing viewpoints are taken into account.
- Paper treats a reasonably large subset of the relevant data.
- Unexplained presuppositions are minimized.

Resource characteristics:

- Enough sources are used to support the topic.
- Varied sources are used, supporting a well-rounded treatment.
- Sources exhibit good academic quality.
- Source citations are formally correct (I use SBL Handbook, or Turabian, or MLA, or University of Chicago, and am consistent in my usage).
- The paper does not exhibit grammatical or syntactical errors.
- The paper does not use offensive, racist, sexist, or otherwise non-inclusive language.
- I have *re-checked* the syllabus on formatting and on the project parameters (again!).

¹ Based almost entirely on the criterion by which Professor Christopher Heard (Pepperdine University) assesses his undergraduate student papers. <http://www.heardworld.com/higgaion/?p=368>