Introduction to Liberal Arts & Sciences: Globalization from Ground Level

Dr. Everett Hamner  
Western Illinois University, Fall 2016  
LAS 195, Mondays 12:30-3, Quad Cities Complex 2206, westernonline.wiu.edu  
e-hamner@wiu.edu, 309-762-3999 x62247, off hrs M 9:30-11:30, W 1-2, Th 10:30-11:30 in QCC 2209

General Catalog Description & Prerequisites

A comparative introduction to the major areas of the liberal arts and sciences. Students will learn how each area evolved and how each approaches problems and controversies. The course may take its particular focus each year from the university theme.

Specific Description & Goals

It is no secret that the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen a marked increase in transnational interconnectedness. But what does that look like for individuals and communities at ground level? This course considers how a wide range of disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences each shed unique light on the causes and consequences of globalization. Featuring questions often explored in English, Sociology, Political Science, Biology, and elsewhere, our semester will focus on three major areas of interconnection.

First, we will consider how globalism has emerged as an ideology during the last few decades’ enormous expansion in digitized information. What does privacy mean in such a world? Who is our neighbor? Who can we trust, and how do we decide? Next, we will expand our knowledge of climate change, or as I call it, “global weirding”: the increasingly chaotic shifts in world climate caused by human activity since the industrial age. How do we know this is a problem, and what stands in the way of sufficient responses? Finally, we will better understand how transnational forces shape contemporary poverty, moving whole people groups across the world and transforming others by remaking local industries. How have the forces of globalization reshaped opportunities for migration and social mobility? What realizations are key to overcoming the most devastating patterns?

Whatever students’ interests in the arts and sciences, this course prepares them to think carefully and creatively across common disciplinary assumptions, one of the most valuable and transferable skills to develop for their future careers. This does not mean becoming non-disciplinary: on the contrary, students should come away with a deepened appreciation for the unique methodologies and concerns of many specific disciplines within and beyond the arts and sciences. There will be course time devoted to learning about potential minors, internships, and extracurricular activities, with the aim that students leave the course with at least a tentative plan for future courses and career exploration. Featuring a moderate reading load, three reading/viewing comprehension quizzes, two substantial reflection essays, and the chance to dialogue extensively with fellow students, the course culminates with an argumentative essay tied to an area of personal interest.
Reading & Assignment Schedule

PLEASE NOTE: Any article (etc.) below not listed under “texts for purchase” on p. 6 will be available on Western Online under “Content.”

1st WEEK, AUG 22nd: THE CHILD IN THE BASEMENT

IN CLASS: ~Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”
~Small group introductions (using introductory survey handout)
~Syllabus review and discussion of goals and assignments

PART ONE: GLOBAL INFORMATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

2nd WEEK, AUG 29th: GLOBALIZATION AS BOTH CONTINUATION & INTENSIFICATION

READING: ~Manfred B. Steger, Globalization: A Very Short Introduction (preface, ch 1-2)
~Paolo Bacigalupi, The Doubt Factory (prologue, ch 1-12)

IN CLASS: ~Guest: Aimee Shouse (Acting Director, Liberal Arts & Sciences Program)
~Digital dependency: a recent illustration, courtesy of Delta Airlines
~Data mining 101, via your friendly neighborhood Target store
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/shopping-habits.html
~John Oliver, Edward Snowden, and electronic surveillance
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEVlyP4_11M

3rd WEEK, SEPT 5th: NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)

4th WEEK, SEPT 12th: ECONOMICS, POLITICS, & CIRCLES OF CONCERN

READING: ~Steger, Globalization: A Very Short Introduction (ch 3-4)
~Bacigalupi, The Doubt Factory (ch 13-25)

WRITING: ~Reflection essay opportunity #1—respond to one of the following (due online, 11 a.m.):
  a) What’s a time when you felt compelled to expand your “circle of concern” beyond its usual parameters? What motivated that? Was the choice rewarded or did it prove too idealistic? How might you modify your choice in retrospect?
  b) Halfway through Bacigalupi’s novel, how much do you identify with Alix and/or Moses? In what ways do their experiences and attitudes seem common and/or exceptional? Choose at least one specific passage to discuss, explaining what stands out and why you feel it matters.
  c) Steger is careful to emphasize that globalization does not mean the end or the insignificance of nation-states or local communities, but the accelerating expansion of connections that extend beyond immediate geography. Pick an example of this phenomenon that matters to you and explain why it should be celebrated, lamented, or (perhaps better) both.

IN CLASS: ~Conversations sparked by reflection essays
~How do we know things? Who do we care about?
5th WEEK, SEPT 19th: CULTURE, ECOLOGY, & THE PUPPETEERS OF INACTION

~Bacigalupi, *The Doubt Factory* (ch 26-34)

IN CLASS: ~Excerpts from David Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product* (2008)
~Clips from *Merchants of Doubt* (2014)
~*The West Wing*, geography, and the subtle ideology of information representation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vX-PrBRTTY

6th WEEK, SEPT 26th: IDEOLOGY, THE FUTURE, & THE COMFORT OF CONFORMITY

~Bacigalupi, *The Doubt Factory* (ch 35-44, epilogue)

VIEWING: ~“15 Million Merits” (*Black Mirror* season 1, episode 2)

IN CLASS: ~Quiz #1 (covering part 1 of course)

PART TWO: GLOBAL WEIRDING IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

7th WEEK, OCT 3rd: FAST FACTS ON THE SLOW VIOLENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

READING: ~Bill McKibben, *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* (ch 1)

IN CLASS: ~John Oliver, *Last Week Tonight* (2014 episode clip on climate change)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjuGCJUOsQ

8th WEEK, OCT 10th: SCIENCE VS. SCIENTISM AND THE PROBLEM OF TRUST

READING: ~Chris Mooney, "The Science of Why We Don't Believe Science" (*Mother Jones*, 2011)

VIEWING: ~*Years of Living Dangerously* (season one premiere, 2014)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brhChCrvsQQ

WRITING: Reflection essay opportunity #2—respond to one of the following (due online, 11 a.m.):
a) Tell us an organized, specific story of someone you care about who has strong feelings about climate change, whether they reject or accept the science. What arguments or pieces of evidence seem to matter most to them? How much do their sources matter?
b) In your own words, organize and summarize the most compelling information you have encountered that makes you take climate change seriously. Why are these data moving, and what specific lifestyle commitments do they encourage you to make?
c) How do you think climate change and globalization are related? To what extent should richer nations like the U.S. lead the way in international responses? Why?

IN CLASS: ~Conversations sparked by reflection essays, methodological v. metaphysical naturalism
9th WEEK, OCT 17th: HOW TO TALK ABOUT GLOBAL WEIRDING (AND HOW NOT TO)

VIEWING: ~Katherine Hayhoe, “Climate Change—With Head and Heart” 2014 (from the 6 min mark to the 1 hour mark, 54 min total; 30 min. subsequent Q&A optional)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8c2KAi3H_kc&index=8&list=PLZlaemZC4oceZ4MUIG5Aa_v0IIzoiTTch

IN CLASS: ~What makes persuasion effective? How do the humanities and social sciences matter for climate science?
~Arts & sciences students and the “what are you going to do with that?” question

10th WEEK, OCT 24th: IN A MESSY WORLD, WHY STUDY THE LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES?

READING: ~Margaret Atwood, "It's Not Climate Change--It's Everything Change" (July 2015)

IN CLASS: ~A few of the many recent articles offering encouragement for arts & sciences majors:
http://chronicle.com/article/Liberal-Arts-Majors-Have/236749
http://blogs.wsj.com/experts/2016/06/01/why-i-was-wrong-about-liberal-arts-majors/
http://www.forbes.com/sites/georgeanders/2015/07/29/liberal-arts-degree-tech/#5ab02d555a75
https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/06/09/college-is-not-a-commodity-stop-treating-it-like-one/

~Quiz #2 (covering part 2 of course)
~Argumentative paper description; a look ahead https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZe411pO_js

PART THREE: GLOBAL POVERTY IN LOCAL ENVIRONMENTS

11th WEEK, OCT 31st: THE ENDURANCE OF EXPLOITATION

READING: ~Chris Hedges & Joe Sacco, Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt (introduction, ch 1)


WRITING: ~Argumentative paper: 1-page initial topic description, research plan, & driving questions due online by 11 a.m.

IN CLASS: ~G. William Dunhoff, "Wealth, Income, and Power"
http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html
~"Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans"
12th WEEK, NOV 7th: WHAT DOES ECOLOGY HAVE TO DO WITH POVERTY?

READING: ~Hedges & Sacco, Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt (ch 2)
~Ben Paynter, “Ripple Effect” (2016, Wired, on the Flint water crisis)
http://www.wired.com/2016/06/flint-water-marc-edwards/

WRITING: Reflection essay opportunity #3—respond to one of the following (due online, 11 a.m.):
a) Pick an area of social injustice that matters to you, then do some research. What can you learn about how global, national, regional, and local entities interact, both to create/worsen and solve/ameliorate the problem? Look especially for non-obvious factors.
b) Where do you see “sacrifice zones” like those Hedges & Sacco illuminate within or near the Quad Cities? What kind of light can you shed on the specific processes by which they have emerged and/or been addressed? As with “a,” show your research.
c) Choose one of the following local QC nonprofits and do some online and firsthand investigation of their mission and apparent effectiveness, then offer a summary and assessment for your classmates: Living Lands and Waters, Girl Scouts of Eastern IA & Western IL, Dress for Success Quad Cities, Riverbend Foodbank, Habitat ReStore, The Arc of the QCA, Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center, Casa Guanajuato (others?).

~Majora Carter, “Greening the Ghetto” (2007) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQcZRmHfs4

13th WEEK, NOV 14th: HOW NAFTA & THE TPP MATTER TO THE AVERAGE JOE

READING: ~Hedges & Sacco, Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt (ch 3)

WRITING: ~Argumentative paper: first page draft+projected outline of remainder due online by 11 a.m.

IN CLASS: ~Race, class, and the cultural structures of fear
~How to complicate, expand, nuance, and/or tighten a thesis

MON 11/21: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

14th WEEK, NOV 28th: LATINO IMMIGRATION

READING: ~Hedges & Sacco, Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt (ch 4)

WRITING: ~Argumentative paper: half draft due online by 11 a.m.

~Argumentative paper: reverse outlining and other tips

15th WEEK, DEC 5th: THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT & WRITING CONSULTATIONS

READING: ~Hedges & Sacco, Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt (ch 5)

WRITING: ~Argumentative paper: full draft (not final) due online by 11 a.m.

IN CLASS: ~Quiz #3 (covering part 3 of course), course evaluations
~Individual and group writing consultations, revision help
FINALS WEEK, DEC 12—: PAPER PRESENTATIONS

WRITING: ~Argumentative paper: final version due online by midnight Monday 12/12

IN CLASS: ~Brief presentations of papers

Course Texts

PLEASE NOTE:
~Prices below are rounded from recent amazon.com new prices—that site has free 2-day shipping for students. In many cases, used copies can be purchased less expensively (also try bookfinder.com).
~I am happy for students to use complete electronic versions of texts so long as they use appropriate citation methods when writing papers and can accept occasional challenges in finding a given passage.


Grading Criteria

~An A recognizes broad and deep understanding of the course material, regular and insightful discussion contributions, and very strong written work—a major impact on the course’s success.
~A B indicates good commitment to coursework, demonstrable contributions and achievements in both verbal and written analysis, and tangible positive impact on other students’ learning.
~A C reflects adequate completion of coursework, including satisfactory participation and writing.
~A D or F denotes incomplete or unsatisfactory coursework, unsatisfactory participation (missing more than 25% of class time or 4+ classes), and/or detraction from course goals (via plagiarism or otherwise).

I will figure final grades using the university scale (A, B, C, D, or F, with pluses/minuses) and the values below (with minor adjustments as needed). Please note the “My Grades” function on the course website, which lets you track assignment grades and estimate your current overall grade at any point.

30% Quizzes (3 x 10% each)
40% Reflection Essays (2 x 20% each)
30% Argumentative Paper (including presentation in final exam period)

Assignment Descriptions

Quizzes: These will neither be picky, insignificant-detail interrogations, nor such easy affairs that one could prepare sufficiently by reading summaries. The idea is that most people who recently covered all assigned texts with good comprehension will average 70-80% of the points available (i.e., earn a “B” or better). Please keep in mind that each quiz only covers material since the previous one. Students sometimes worry about the quizzes initially, but soon agree they provide valuable accountability during the course and allow for higher-quality, greater-depth discussions. My best advice is to get the reading done well in advance, then go back over it, your reading and in-class notes, and my “discussion notes” or other handouts. Checking your understanding and comparing reactions in outside-class conversations with classmates can also be very helpful.

Reflection Essays: These are formal writing assignments, but they are posted publically (under “Discussions”) and thus allow for immediate informal follow-up discussion from classmates, both during and outside of class. While mechanical polish and stylistic/organizational issues count (1/3), the most important grading criteria I will use (2/3) are the extent to which you probe a given question, the creativity and originality of your ideas, the ways you engage our various course texts and previous
discussions, and the critical self-awareness that you display. In addition to broadening and deepening your personal engagement with the course’s bigger questions, these reflections give me another tool for gauging the class’s responses to the material and for prioritizing class discussion topics.

Your task is to complete (only) TWO of the three discussion postings, with due dates to choose between in week 4 (9/12), week 8 (10/10), and week 12 (11/7). In each case, your post should be at least 1000 words and is due online by 11 a.m. on the date listed. You are also required to write at least 500 words in less formal (mechanics don’t count) substantive responses to other students’ postings (including their replies to your post) over the next week. Each of the two essays are worth 20% of your course grade, with your investment in the in-class and follow-up online conversations also playing a minor role in grades (which I will determine after a week has passed in each case). For these essays, roughly 2/3 of the grade will reflect the sophistication, clarity, and organization of your ideas; 1/3 will reflect writing mechanics and polish and can be boosted by especially notable investments in dialoguing graciously and honestly with fellow students (both online and in class).

**Argumentative paper:** A short but *very* carefully revised 2000+ word (usually 7-8 pp. of actual text) argumentative paper about the representation of evolutionary biology in a particular cultural text, whether a novel, film, or otherwise, and whether featured in the course or not. Each student should engage materials that are individually interesting, referencing multiple secondary materials from the syllabus and beyond. Consultations about topic and thesis possibilities (whether via email or after class) may begin as soon as students are ready, but definitely by week 11. Please note that there are separate due dates for topic and thesis, pages 1-3, a full draft, and the final version; this is not a paper to dash off at the last minute! While preliminary drafts will not be graded, the project’s improvement across them will affect borderline final grades, and their late or non-completion will subtract 1/3 of a grade each from the final paper grade. Previous student papers and suggestions of popular text options will be available as we approach the assignment.

**PLEASE NOTE:** For the argumentative paper, there are intermediate due dates for a 1-page plan, a draft of page one, a half-length draft, and a full-length draft. These submissions are not individually graded, but I do weigh heavily evidence of progress in these stages when a student’s final course grade is on the border between two possibilities.
PLEASE NOTE:
The following is part of all of my syllabi. Please read it carefully, but keep its generality in mind.

My Teaching Philosophy and Expectations of Students

The better we understand each other’s expectations, the more quickly we can develop a good working relationship. Here are a few key elements of my teaching philosophy:

~I want students to engage me and each other authentically and maturely. I hope this course will spark your curiosity in many ways, and that happens best when students honestly and tactfully share reactions to controversial topics. I intentionally raise such issues because a public university classroom is a uniquely valuable setting in which to explore and learn from frank, respectful disagreement. I aim for us to develop a classroom community that everyone appreciates and that extends beyond its walls.

~Just as critically, I expect students to be professionally responsible. You should approach this course as you might a challenging, rewarding job, one with tasks that are yours alone. I well understand that it is very hard to balance multiple classes, paid work, childrearing, and other responsibilities, but my roles include challenging you beyond your comfort zone and honestly assessing your academic work (not your value as a human being). Having a good sense of how your work stacks up, both in terms of strengths and weaknesses, is critical for your future decisions. Do your best to remember: a grade is a snapshot of a brief moment (and even a semester is brief); it takes a lot of these together to begin to illustrate your abilities, and even your entire college GPA will never convey those fully.

~While we will be studying fields in which I am relatively expert, I approach this class as a learner, too. Wisdom is not just knowledge, but humility, a deepening awareness of how much one does not know. I spent over a decade earning my graduate degrees not to hoard power, but to be in a position to empower others. You show you are ready for that with your simultaneous investment. In short, what you get out of this course will be directly related to what you put into it, during and beyond classtime.

Attendance & Participation

My courses differ substantially from those requiring regurgitation of memorized information. Our goals include learning new interpretive approaches, understanding diverse people and ideas, expanding critical thinking and creativity, strengthening analytical and writing skills, and learning from each other’s unique backgrounds. Thus preparation for each session, regular on-time attendance, and thoughtful discussion participation are crucial. Except in extreme circumstances, each class missed beyond 3 (with tardiness or early departure counting as ½ class) will automatically lower the final mark by 1/3 grade (e.g. missing 4 classes changes a B to a B-). Extensive absences will result in an “F” for the course.

Classroom Courtesies

Please excuse yourself when necessary; transitions are the best times. Please mute cell phones and other potential distractions; obviously, laptops and other electronics should not be used during quizzes. Finally, please wait to put away materials until we call it a day; I will respect your schedules as well.

Communication

While there are occasional errors, I do my best to build a trustworthy syllabus that won’t need major adjustments. Please read it thoroughly; it answers most routine questions. Also, keep in mind that unless you expect to be gone for multiple class meetings in a row, I don’t need to know about illnesses, transportation problems, work conflicts, or the other ordinary challenges. When you have a question not addressed on the syllabus or in class, please ask after class or in office hours. If that isn’t possible, email is the next best option (much faster than voicemail). My goal is to respond within 2 business days, but if my answer is detailed, I may ask to shift the chat to office hours. Finally, be aware that I sometimes use email to make class announcements, so ensure I have an address you check daily.
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q. Can I make up the quiz I missed?
   A. Yes—but only within the next week (whether in office hours, during the next class meeting’s break, or immediately afterward). Also, I only offer this opportunity once per semester, barring extreme circumstances (which do not include having to work, car breakdowns, deaths in friends’ families, etc.).

2. Q. Can you tell me what I missed in class?
   A. Not really; the experience of most of our conversations and even my presentations will be difficult to replicate in other forms. However, I can say that almost every week, I hand out some form of “discussion notes,” and I usually get these posted on the course website (under “Content”) within 24 hours.

3. Q. What should I write about?
   A. What do you care about? What has grabbed you and evoked some sort of emotional response, whether positive, negative, or in some combination? I regularly encourage students to engage texts and questions that have significant personal resonance; most people do their best work when it means more than a grade. If you’re having a hard time getting at what you care about, seek out conversation—not just with me and peers, but also with family, friends, and others who know you well. Sometimes having to introduce your learning to those unfamiliar with the material helps the most in figuring out what excites you.

4. Q. How does your grading scale work?
   A. My system may mean your grade is higher than you think. Western Online will compute your current course grade using my formula, but it’s simple enough to do yourself. The maximum possible points for the course is 100, so divide your total by that (or by the points available as of a given date), then multiply that number by 4. This puts your score on the 4.0 scale, which I then translate to a letter grade. The same process can be used for any individual assignment. So, for example, if you earned 8 out of 10 points on a quiz, you would divide 8 by 10 (=.80), then multiple that by 4 (=3.20), and that would be between a B and a B+. In each case, I reserve the right to bump the grade up a notch if I believe it’s warranted (or rarely down, most often when there are attendance problems like those described earlier in the syllabus).

5. Q. Do you want a hard copy of my paper, and when will it be graded?
   A. Please submit papers via the course website only; if it should be down when a deadline is approaching, emailing the paper and then posting it the next day is fine. My goal is to return papers online within a week of the due date. Late papers can take longer; please alert me of such submissions with an email.

Further Writing Assignment Guidelines

In addition to utilizing the argumentative essay revision guide at the end of this syllabus, it is worth familiarizing yourself with a good style guide. I use MLA style most often, but other styles (Chicago, APA, or another with pre-approval) are fine as long as they are consistently applied. Please use this page setup on all assignments, unless specified otherwise: 1” justified margins on all sides; size 12, Times New Roman font; and double-spacing. Finally, provide a cover page including paper title, course title and my name, your name, and date, as well as a list of works cited or a bibliography. Unless instructed otherwise, all assignments should be submitted online as a docx, doc, or rtf file.

The Writing Center

“The U.S. Bank WIU-QC University Writing Center is available to assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The one-on-one assistance available is valuable for generating ideas, talking about global-level issues such as organization, and even working through grammatical problems. The writing center is located in QC Complex 2219. Call 309-762-9481 for an appointment and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment.”
Late Work

Barring extreme emergencies or prior arrangement, I will deduct one-third of a grade for each week (or portion thereof) that an assignment is late. If you anticipate special difficulty in meeting a deadline, please discuss this with me privately and well in advance so that if warranted, we can consider special arrangements. Readings and assignments are in many ways cumulative, so it is important that you keep up; at the same time, we lead busy lives and occasionally other priorities intervene. Balancing those realities, my policy aims to make being on-time important without making a rare delay devastating.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are among the most serious violations of a student’s integrity and of relationships with the instructor, fellow classmates, and the university. In the humanities, plagiarism most often involves presenting another person’s specific words or ideas as one’s own, whether by copying or closely paraphrasing, and without citing the source. Please be aware that such an offense will at minimum result in an “F” on the assignment and in many cases leads to an “F” for the course. In many of my courses, I briefly review proper citation, but if you have questions about how to credit an idea or information source, ask. If you are unsure about definitions or consequences of academic dishonesty, consult WIU’s Student Academic Integrity Policy at http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php.

Counseling Services

“Confidential counseling services are available for WIU-QC students. Time management, stress management, balancing work and family, study skills, low self-esteem, relationship problems, depression, and anxiety are some examples of issues that students may address in personal counseling. Students may call 309/762-1988 to make an appointment with Counseling and Career Services.”

Accommodations

“Students with disabilities: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.”

Sex Discrimination/Title IX

“University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php.”

Student Rights & Responsibilities

For further information on expectations for both students and university personnel, please see http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php.
Dr. Hamner’s Argumentative Essay Revision Checklist

The Introduction

1. **Hook:** Will your introduction (including the first sentence) efficiently grab readers’ attention without being silly, exaggerated, or disconnected? Is the shift from it to the paper’s thesis natural or forced?

2. **Thesis:** Is it clear what sentence(s) convey the paper’s central claim?
   
   **Strengthening your thesis:**
   - Is your claim obvious or subtle? Boring or daring? Outlandish or plausible?
   - Is your claim vague or specific? General or precise?
   - Is something significant clearly at stake in your argument? Have you provided a sense of why it matters whether your reader buys or dismisses your claim?

3. **Map:** Does the introduction preview the order in which the paper will examine the evidence?

The Body

4. **Main Points:** Can you summarize in a single phrase the main point and/or task of each body paragraph, or are some paragraphs’ goals or relevance to the thesis unclear?

5. **Topic Sentences and Concluding Sentences:** Within a given paragraph, do the topic sentence and concluding sentence fit, without being identical? Do they provide meaningful links between paragraphs?

6. **Organization:** Are there any paragraphs that don’t make logical sense in the organization of the essay—e.g. too-short/disconnected “lonely” paragraphs or too-long/repetitive “bullying” paragraphs? Should any be removed or integrated elsewhere? Can you reorder so the argument’s force grows more naturally?

7. **Textual Evidence/Quotation:** Is there sufficient evidence from specific texts (at least one quotation per body paragraph, as a general rule) to back up the argument’s main points? Are there appropriate page number citations? Does the paper introduce quotations with a sense of their original context? After quotations, do you offer interpretations of their meaning or just expect readers to hear them as you do?

8. **Minimal Summary, Maximum Analysis:** Except in briefly introducing unfamiliar key text(s), does the paper avoid plot summaries? Does your interpretive and analytical work remain the focus?

9. **Reasonable Specifics, Not Generalities or Overreaches:** Does your paper resort to vague generalities that might describe any text? (“The author uses lots of description to help readers understand.”) Does it include gross overstatements that cost you credence? (“In this story everything is about death.”)

The Conclusion

10. **Closure:** Does the conclusion bring the essay to a meaningful close or end abruptly? Does it avoid exact restatement of the introduction, but still reinforce your main points? Does it suggest how the essay’s main ideas might be expanded into other contexts and why it matters that your reader take them seriously?

Mechanics & Style

11. **Grammatical & other mechanical issues:** Has at least one strong writer proofread your paper?

   **Among the most common problems (beyond spelling, capitalization, basic punctuation):**
   - Pronoun reference: are the referents of your pronouns clear? Do they agree in number?
   - Run-on sentences and fragments: is each of your sentences a single, complete thought?

12. **Stylistic issues:** Have you presented your work in the most professional, attractive manner possible?

   **Among the most common problems, especially for less experienced writers:**
   - Verbal “fluff”: is every word and phrase doing real work toward demonstrating your thesis? Have you eliminated as much repetition as possible? You want the “impact per word ratio” as high as possible.
   - Have you stayed in the present tense while writing about literature, film, or other artistic texts?
   - Have you provided an accurate, unique, provocative, inviting title?
   - Does your paper fit the length and formatting requirements?