Essay Grading Scale: Based on the University of California at Los Angeles-California State University at Northridge Writing Exam Scale.

Credit-A = Applies to papers that are clearly superior because of their compelling development and mature voice. An "A" paper may not be flawlessly proportioned or even absolutely error-free, but it does engage all of the following: engages the topic cogently and thoughtfully, developing its points with telling details; chooses words aptly, and sometimes with flair; uses effective sentences, often sophisticated in structure; demonstrates mastery of most of the grammar and usage conventions of standard English.

Credit-B = Applies to effective papers. A "B" paper does most of all of the following well: responds intelligently to the topic, organizing significant details in several coherent paragraphs and providing a sense of orderly progress between and among ideas; chooses words with precision; uses effective sentences; observes the conventions of written English, containing few errors in sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization, or usage.

Credit-C = Applies to competent papers. Although these papers communicate clearly, they lack the purposeful development or stylistic command demonstrated by "B" papers. A "C" paper usually: responds adequately to the topic, showing a clear sense of organization and enough coherent development to make its points acceptably; chooses more generalize vocabulary; uses sentences adequate for the development of its ideas; contains minor errors in mechanics and usage, and perhaps one or two more distracting errors in sentence structure (an agreement error, a clearly unintentional fragment, an obviously dangling modifier).

No Credit-C/D = Applies to unsatisfactory papers. These papers usually lack the coherence and development of "C" papers and exhibit some significant deficiencies in their writers' ability to handle written English. A typical "C/O" paper: responds less effectively to the topic, often stating a major idea clearly but developing it inadequately or with questionable logic; chooses vocabulary that is often too general for the intended idea; uses sentences that often miss opportunities for effective subordination and parallelism; makes enough errors in usage and sentence structure - errors in agreement, pronoun reference, sentence punctuation, and modifier placement - to cause a reader serious, if occasional distraction.

No Credit-D = Applies to papers that show serious weaknesses in many areas. A "0" paper: may distort the topic, and frequently lacks appropriate organization and development with relevant details; often employs very basic vocabulary or misuses many words; usually relies on primer prose or on sentences that coordinate excessively or subordinate illogically; contains many distracting errors in sentence structure, in some cases suggesting an oral rather than a written style.

No Credit-F = Applies to papers that demonstrate severe difficulties with reading and writing standard English. Such papers: may clearly misunderstand the topic's demands; may be very brief, suggesting real effort in producing more than half the words requested; often are markedly incoherent, with few successful links between sentences and -with much faulty predication within them; usually contains distracting errors of sentence structure, inflection, and idiom in almost every sentence.

Criteria for Evaluating Speeches

An "F" speech has any of the following characteristics:

- The speech is plagiarized.
- The speech is apparently delivered without advance preparation.

A "D" speech has anyone of the following serious problems:

- The speaker reads word-for-word a significant portion of the speech from a manuscript. (It is, of course, perfectly appropriate to read briefly from your notes to be certain you are quoting statistics or testimony accurately.)
- The speech is memorized. (If a speech "sounds" memorized, the instructor is justified in assuming it is memorized. Speeches sound memorized when the speaker uses an essentially written style rather than oral style.)
- The topic area fails to meet the specifications of the assignment; i.e., an informative speech that seeks to reinforce attitudes or a persuasive speech that is primarily informative.
- The topic is inherently superficial or trivial. (You may not waste your audience's time with such topics as "Categories of Dust Balls Under Dormitory Beds" or "How to Make Christmas Tree Ornaments out of Bottle Caps.") .
- The speech generally lacks organization; that is, the listener cannot readily distinguish the Introduction from the Body, or the Body from the Conclusion of the speech.
- The speech summarizes a single source.
- The speech is composed primarily of unsupported assertions.
- The speaker cannot locate sources which appear in his bibliography. (There is an inherent assumption that any speaker should be able to locate the sources cited in her speech. Consequently, an instructor may ask a speaker to produce a given source. Repeated inability to do so indicates the source is nonexistent.)

A "C" speech has some good features but also one or more of these major problems:

- The topic is inappropriate to the speaker, the audience, or the occasion. (Treating any serious subject flippantly will probably be more offensive than effective, although well-placed humor helps. "Custer's Last Stand" might make a good speech for an audience specifically interested in history, but probably not for this one. You must not assume the appropriateness will be obvious; establish it.)
- The topic of the speech is too large to be treated in the time available. (Narrow such topics as "Prison Reform in Tennessee" to something that can be handled adequately in the allotted time, e.g., "Public Access to the Knox County Jail.")
- The body of the speech has major organizational problems, such as too many or too few major divisions, or an illogical arrangement of those divisions.

- The speaker fails to adequately develop ideas in the speech. Major points or sub-points in the body are improperly divided or explained, or individual assertions need more support to be accepted by the audience.
- The speaker fails to identify sources within the speech. (Statements such as "Studies show that prison inmates have an average IQ of 85" lose meaning without a source, because the audience has nothing on which to evaluate their validity. On the other hand, saying "Dr. Brian Beatty, Director of the National Foundation for Convict Rehabilitation says prison inmates have an average IQ of 85" gives the audience a basis for determining its credibility.)
- The supporting material is largely of "average" quality.
- The sources used in preparing the speech are significantly out of date.
- The speaker uses too few sources in the preparation of the speech.
- The sources are less than the best available. (For instance, <u>Reader's Digest</u> has less competence in dealing with child abuse than someone who works in the Knox County Department of Human Services.)
- The speaker's eye contact is inadequately established and maintained. A speaker must make consistent eye contact (emphasis on contact) with persons in different parts of the audience throughout the speech.
- The speaker cannot be clearly and easily heard.

A "B" speech is technically sound in each of the following areas:

- The speech is delivered extemporaneously (especially in this class, the speech must be delivered from a key-word outline on note cards).
- The topic of the speech is appropriate to the speaker, the audience, and the occasion.
- The introduction is effective, including an attention-getter, a proposition, a clarification which includes a rationale or statement of relevance, and a preview.
- The conclusion is effective, including restatement or summary, and closure.
- Transitions are used effectively.
- The speech is organized in a logical manner.
- Supporting material relates directly to the assertions and proves what the speaker says it proves. (For example, you cannot prove that America is a violent country by citing a statistic that shows crime has increased 120 percent in the last decade. because the statistic includes non-violent crime, such as auto theft. A better tactic would be to compare murder rates per 100,000 people among industrialized countries.)
- A variety of sources of information are used, such as interviews, magazines, newspapers, and books (although the latter should be used sparingly to avoid dated information).
- The speaker identifies sources clearly, in a conversational manner.
- The speaker reasons logically in the development of arguments.

An "A" speech has all of the technical soundness of a B speech plus theses additional strengths:

- The language of the speech is conversational. The speaker is comfortable with the audience, yet straightforward and business-like in manner.
- The speaker presents an original perspective on the topic.
- The topic is significant
- Supporting material is drawn from primary sources, that is, sources having first-hand knowledge of the subject
- The speaker uses a wide variety of the best material available on the topic, choosing experts in the field, professional and academic journals, the most objective newspapers, and other primary sources.
- The speaker presents the relevant qualifications of the sources which are used.

A note on the time element:

A speech that runs substantially over the time limit probably suffers at least one of two problems. Usually, the speaker has failed to properly narrow or focus the topic, which causes the speech to fall in the "C" category (see discussion of "C" speeches). On the other hand, the speech may include too much supporting material (quotations, examples, etc.), thus falling in the "B" range (assuming the speech suffers from no other major problems). Drastically short speeches also suffer from identifiable problems: lack of adequate preparation (a "D" or even "F" criterion), too few sources ("0" or "C"), triviality ("D"), or inadequate development ("C").

Speeches with time problems **will** affect the grade.