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| Criteria | Below Expectations | Average | Above Expectations |
| Quality of Ideas | -Essay solely positive or  solely negative.  -Repetitious.  -Based largely on direct quotes (others' voices).  -Few or no references to others' arguments or evidence.  -No attention to contexts of arguments discussed. | -Safe, run-of-the-mill ideas.  -Both positive and negative points included.  -Reasonably clear ideas  -Good attention to contexts of the arguments discussed. | -Originality.  -Striking / Daring ideas.  -Shows insight.  -Essay both critical and  appreciative.  -Takes intellectual risks  -Innovative discussion of relationship between debates and their historical contexts. |
| Content &  Development | -Major points are not clear and /or persuasive.  -Factual errors.  -Missed connections.  -Lack of attention to empirical evidence.  -Topic is obvious, trivial or excessively obscure (relevance unclear).  -Course materials are not addressed. | -Armchair analysis (fails to use support from class  materials).  -Content is not comprehensive and /or  persuasive.  -Major points are addressed, but not well supported.  -Content is somewhat  inconsistent with regard to  course concepts. | -Content is comprehensive,  accurate, and persuasive.  -Major points are stated  clearly and are well  supported.  -Research is adequate,  timely and addresses course content.  -Content and purpose of the writing are clear. |
| Organization &  Structure | -Organization and structure  detract from the message of  the writer.  -No strong thesis stated.  -Paragraph is disjointed and  lacks transition of thoughts.  -Lacking citations; or  improper/incorrect citation  usage.  -Repetitive sentence structure.  -Frequent short sentences;  fragmented ideas. | -Thesis statement exists but could be more compelling.  -Structure of the paragraph  is not easy to follow.  -Paragraph transitions need improvement.  -Some internal problems of organization; the arguments don't come together overall.  -Sentences work together,  but with little variation in  structure and cadence. | - Structure of the paragraph is clear.  -Conclusion provides  insights and added value; not just a summary of the paper.  -Lively, easy to read style.  -Good variation in sentence structure and rhythm.  -Appropriate citation usage |
| Grammar &  Mechanics | -Paper contains numerous  grammatical, punctuation,  and spelling errors.  -Unnecessary use of jargon.  -Paper lacks many elements  of correct formatting.  -Paragraph is needlessly  short or excessive in length. | -Paper contains few  grammatical, punctuation  and spelling errors.  -Language lacks clarity or  includes too much jargon.  -Paper follows most  guidelines.  -Paper is shorter than it  should be. | -Rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed; spelling is correct.  -Language is clear and  precise; sentences display consistently strong, varied structure.  -Paper follows designated guidelines.  -Paper is the appropriate  length as described for the assignment. |