Checklist for Writing Essays

Manuscript format
_____ My document is double-spaced.
_____ My document uses the standard MLA font of Times New Roman.
_____ My entire document is set to one-inch margins.
_____ My left header contains my name, instructor name, course number, section number, and date (written out).
_____ My right header contains my last name and the page number (also in Times New Roman 12 pt.).
_____ My title is centered, properly capitalized, descriptive, interesting, and concise. Furthermore, it does not contain italics, boldfacing, underlining, or quotes unless appropriate.
_____ My paper is clean and (if appropriate) neatly stapled.
_____ My word count appears in the lower right corner of my essay’s final page of regular text.

Organization
_____ My opening paragraph hooks the reader's interest.
_____ My opening paragraph introduces the thesis statement of my essay and avoids irrelevant information (“throat-clearing”).
_____ My paragraphs are arranged in a systematic and logical order.
_____ Each of my paragraphs is unified, or strictly focused on one main idea.
_____ My paragraphs flow smoothly from one main idea to the next and feel connected.
_____ My purpose and audience awareness are clear and maintained throughout my essay.
_____ My conclusion moves beyond summary to provide a synthesis of my ideas.

Development
_____ My writing illustrates that I have reflected carefully on the expository situation surrounding my topic and that I have considered the perspectives of my readers.
_____ My essay addresses all areas of the assignment prompt (for example, I have conducted research, and narrated/compared/analyzed my topic thoughtfully and provided support and included images with captions, and documented my sources carefully, etc.)
_____ Each of my paragraphs makes a substantial contribution to the development of my thesis.
_____ Each of my paragraphs is developed with adequate details, examples, quotes, facts, etc.
_____ My development is high caliber; I have provided specific details, quality examples, and relevant quotes.

Style
_____ My writing avoids wordiness, redundancy, or unnecessary repetition.
_____ My diction exhibits precision and an appropriate level of formality.
_____ My sentences avoid nominalizations and overuse of the verb “to be”
_____ My sentences avoid passive expression as a general rule.
_____ My sentences are structured concisely, so that the reader does not have to re-read for comprehension.
_____ My sentence structures and types vary as effective--simple, compound, complex, compound-complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory.
_____ My transitions are varied and sophisticated.
_____ My writing uses parallelism and avoids distracting shifts in point of view.

Instructor Melissa Alling
January 2010
Checklist for Writing Essays

Grammar
_____ My subjects and verbs agree in number and in person.
_____ My pronoun references are clear.
_____ My pronoun cases are used correctly (who vs. whom, that vs. which, where vs. when)
_____ My writing maintains consistency in verb tenses.
_____ My sentences are grammatically complete (no run-ons, fused sentences, comma splices, or fragments).
_____ My modifiers appear close to the words they modify.
_____ My punctuation is used accurately and effectively (periods, commas, colons, semicolons, apostrophes, quotation marks, dashes, hyphens, ellipses, parentheses, brackets, etc.)

Mechanics
_____ My spelling is accurate.
_____ My quantities are expressed in either numerals or words, as appropriate.
_____ I have used italics for titles of artistic works, and foreign words or expressions.
_____ I have inserted symbols where appropriate (foreign accents or letters, mathematical equations, units of measurement, etc.)
_____ I have used italics for emphasis, not boldface, caps, or underlining. (Note: Punctuation such as commas, dashes, or parentheses is also appropriate for emphasis.)
_____ I have capitalized the first letters of proper nouns and every letter of acronyms
_____ I have used brackets and ellipses appropriately when quoting material

Academic Integrity
_____ I have not slapped this essay together in a day or two.
_____ I have consulted my textbooks and other materials (dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, etc.) whenever I was unsure about an aspect of my composition
_____ I have written this essay from a sincere interest in my topic.
_____ I have not tried to confuse or impress my reader with academese.
_____ I have avoided plagiarism by obtaining permission and/or documenting the words, texts, images, creations, and ideas of others, regardless of that person’s professional qualifications or my ability to copy and paste from the internet.
_____ I have made an honest effort to inform future researchers about the content and value of my sources in my annotated bibliography or works consulted page.

Instructor Melissa Alling
January 2010