

Skills for Course

Following are skills you should develop and refine in this class. They are divided into three broad categories.

Writing Proficiency (W)

Vocabulary (V). Have a sufficiently rich vocabulary so that you can comprehend the writings and speech of educated persons and can communicate your ideas to them.

Grammar (G). Understand the basic rules of grammar so that you can comprehend the writings and speech of educated people and communicate your ideas to them.

Precision (P). Avoid ambiguous, vague, rambling, or imprecise prose.

Organization (O). Construct coherent sentences and paragraphs. Arrange them to communicate clearly.

Understanding (U)

Knowledge (K). Know what an argument is. Be able to identify them.

Sense (S). Have a general sense of the author's or speaker's view.

Thesis (T). Identify the author's or speaker's thesis—the central claim the author or speaker is advocating.

Premises (P). Specify the author's or speaker's premises—the reasons she gives in support of her thesis.

Distinction (D). Distinguish the view that the author or speaker advocates from those she discusses.

Redescription (R). Reconstruct the author's or speaker's arguments using your own words.

Fairness (F). Accurately describe those arguments in a way that is fair to the speaker or author—avoid the straw man fallacy (misdescribing the speaker's or author's view so that it is an easy target).

Argument (A)

Importance (I). Know the importance of arguments—why we need evidence for our beliefs.

When (N). Discern when a claim needs to be supported.

What (T). Have a sense of what you need to know to resolve the issue.

Criteria (C). Know the best ways to read, understand, and critique arguments.

Relevance (L). Spot premises that are irrelevant to a conclusion. Explain why a premise is or is not relevant.

Sufficiency (S). Identify premises that are insufficient to support a conclusion. Know what additional facts or considerations might, in combination with those premises, be sufficient to support a conclusion.

Truth (T). Recognize false or debatable premises. Know what you need to know to determine the truth or plausibility of premises.

Objections (O). Know the objections to the view you advocate. Understand and appreciate their strength.

Response (R). Specify plausible and relevant responses to those objections.

Positive (P). Offer a positive argument for your own thesis.

Each skill will be evaluated according to the following scale:

Inadequate (I) Weak (W) Average (A) Proficient (P) Exceptional (E)

Grades Based on Skills

The following table indicates which skills—and at which levels—you need for each grade. To earn any grade you must satisfy all the skills at and below the identified level.

Grade	Skills					
	Writing	Level	Understanding	Level	Argument	Level
A	ALL	P	ALL	P	ALL	P
	at least 2	E	K, S, T, P, R	E	first 7	E
B	at least 2	P	K, S, T, P, F	P	I, N, T, C	P
			D, R, P	A	L, S, T, O, R, P	A
C	P, O	A	ALL	A	I, N, T, C	A
					L, S, T, O	W
D	V, G	A	K	A	I	W
	P, O	W	S, F	W		