

Writing Across the Curriculum Plan
Department of Political Science
(January 2019)

Part 1: Description of what constitutes good writing within the Department

Written work is expected to be purposeful, substantive, clear, creative, and original. Written work is expected to employ appropriate discipline/course-specific vocabulary and confidently reflect knowledge of course concepts. All work is expected to contain minimal punctuation and grammatical errors and to conform to the appropriate formatting and citation requirements as designated in *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual* by Scott and Garrison (2012).

Part 2: Procedures for helping students achieve good writing

- (1) The following courses are designated Writing Enrichment Courses:
PSC 2100 (Research Methods in Political Science)
PSC 4600 (Senior Seminar)
- (2) Writing Enrichment Courses will meet the following conditions:
 - a. Limited to 15 students
 - b. Taught by experienced faculty
 - c. Offered annually in both the day and evening programs
 - d. Require a minimum of 20 pages of typed, double-spaced, expository prose
 - e. A minimum of 20% of the course grade will be based on writing assignments
 - f. Instructors will confer with their students about their writing at least once
 - g. Instructors will allow students to revise and resubmit written work
- (3) Instructors of all Department courses will do the following:
 - a. Encourage students to use the MU Writing Center
 - b. Assess written work using the rubric in Part 3
 - c. Review with students the MU DIRTY DOZEN list of common writing errors found in Part 3, and mark those errors on student papers
- (4) Instructors will require the following minimum number of pages of written work:
 - a. 1000 level courses – 5 pages
 - b. 2000 level courses – 10 pages
 - c. 3000 level courses – 15 pages
 - d. 4000 level courses – 20 pages

Part 3: Assessment Rubric and MU DIRTY DOZEN

See below

Paper Number: _____ Rater Initials: _____ Round: _____

Instructions: For each of the eight criteria below,

- a) identify specific phrases on the accompanying longer form that describe the work, and
- b) circle a numeric score on the short form for each criterion.

1. Issue Identification and Focus

0 - Absent	1 - Below Expectation	2 - Meets Expectation	3 - Exceeds Expectation
Focus: Issue is clearly identified, and focus on issue is maintained consistently.			

2. Clarity and Coherence

0 - Absent	1 - Below Expectation	2 - Meets Expectation	3 - Exceeds Expectation
Focus: Conveying ideas to the audience in a clear and organized way.			

3. Support/Evidence

0 - Absent	1 - Below Expectation	2 - Meets Expectation	3 - Exceeds Expectation
Focus: Supporting ideas with specific, sufficient, and relevant details.			

4. Research

0 - Absent	1 - Below Expectation	2 - Meets Expectation	3 - Exceeds Expectation
Focus: Incorporating a sufficient number of appropriate sources.			

5. Information Use/Citations

0 - Absent	1 - Below Expectation	2 - Meets Expectation	3 - Exceeds Expectation
Focus: Effectively communicating, organizing, and synthesizing information and avoiding plagiarism.			

6. Assumptions/Context

0 - Absent	1 - Below Expectation	2 - Meets Expectation	3 - Exceeds Expectation
Focus: Positioning one's perspective in a larger context, recognizing one's own and others' assumptions, and acknowledging the relevance of context as appropriate.			

7. Conclusions

0 - Absent	1 - Below Expectation	2 - Meets Expectation	3 - Exceeds Expectation
Focus: The ability to derive logical, informed conclusions.			

8. Sentence-Level Clarity

0 - Absent	1 - Below Expectation	2 - Meets Expectation	3 - Exceeds Expectation
Focus: Sentence-level grammar, usage, and mechanics.			

THE DIRTY DOZEN

Brief Descriptions with Examples

(More detailed explanations, additional examples, and exercises are available at the Dirty Dozen website: www.methodist.edu/english/dd_index.htm.)

1. **(frag) fragment:** A fragment occurs when a group of words is punctuated as if it were a sentence, but it is not a sentence because (1) it needs a subject, (2) it needs a verb, (3) it needs both a subject and a verb, or (4) it is a dependent clause.

Fragment example: Runs down the street. (This fragment needs a subject.)

Fragment example: The teacher writing on the board. (This fragment needs a helping verb—*is, was, has been.*)

Fragment example: I found my keys. On the table. (*On the table* is a prepositional phrase and needs both a subject and a verb.)

Fragment example: Because it is too wet and cold. (This fragment is a dependent clause.)

2. **(fs) fused sentence** (also called a run-on sentence): A fused sentence occurs when two independent clauses (complete sentences) are joined with no punctuation.

Fused sentence example: It is a dark and cloudy day I will go home and take a nap. (The two independent clauses are run together after *day*, creating a fused sentence.)

3. **(cs) comma splice:** A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses (complete sentences) are joined with only a comma between them.

Comma splice example: It is a dark and cloudy day, I will go home and take a nap. (The two independent clauses are joined with a comma, creating a comma splice.)

4. **(s/v) subject-verb agreement error:** A subject-verb agreement error occurs when a singular subject is matched with a plural verb, or vice versa. Subjects and verbs must agree in number.

Subject-verb agreement error example: I likes apples.

Subject-verb agreement error example: The boys in the band is out of practice.

5. **(p/a) pronoun-antecedent agreement error:** A pronoun-antecedent agreement error occurs when a singular pronoun is matched by a plural antecedent, or vice versa. (The antecedent is the word, phrase, or clause to which the pronoun refers.)

Pronoun-antecedent agreement error example: A high school senior should research their college options carefully. (*Senior* is singular, but *their* is plural.)

6. **(//) lack of parallel structure:** A lack of parallel structure occurs when two or more parts of a sentence should be worded in the same grammatical way but are not. Faulty parallelism occurs especially in lists.

Lack of parallel structure example: I like apples, oranges, and pears are tasty too. (*Apples* and *oranges* are nouns, but *Are tasty too* is a phrase, so the items are not parallel. To maintain parallel structure, the third item should be *pears*.)

7. **(pro) vague or unclear pronoun reference:** A vague or unclear pronoun reference occurs (1) when it is not clear to which noun a pronoun refers, (2) when a pronoun refers to a concept rather than to a previous noun or pronoun, or (3) when the reference of the pronoun is indefinite.

Unclear pronoun reference example: The teacher gave the girl her book. (It is unclear whether *her* refers to *teacher* or *girl*.)

Vague pronoun reference example: Bob spent the entire day fishing, but he didn't catch a single one. (*One* refers to *fish*, but the noun *fish* is not in the sentence. *One* cannot refer to *fishing*.)

8. **(mm) misplaced modifier:** A misplaced modifier occurs when a modifier is placed too far away from the word it modifies. (A modifier is a word or phrase that modifies or describes another word.)

Misplaced modifier example: The robber was described as a six-foot-tall man with brown hair and a mustache weighing 150 pounds. (The misplaced modifier is *weighing 150 pounds*. Obviously the man, not the mustache, weighed 150 pounds.)

9. **(dm) dangling modifier:** A dangling modifier is a modifier that does not relate sensibly to any words in the sentence.

Dangling modifier example: While reading a magazine, my cat sat with me on the porch swing. (Was the cat reading the magazine?)

10. **(shift) inappropriate shift in person or tense:** A shift occurs when a writer changes from one person or tense to another person or tense without a logical reason.

Shift in person example: I hate to go to the mall because you can never find a parking place. (There is an illogical shift from first person—*I*—to second person—*you*.)

Shift in tense example: The server took our order but then disappears for an hour. (There is an illogical shift from past tense—*took*—to present tense—*disappears*.)

11. **(apos) error in the use of an apostrophe:** An error in apostrophe use occurs when (1) an apostrophe is used for no reason, (2) an apostrophe is needed but is not used, or (3) an apostrophe is misplaced.

Apostrophe error example: The girl's are having a lot of fun at camp. (*Girl's* should be *girls*.)

Apostrophe error example: Its hot today. (*Its* should be *it's*.)

Apostrophe error example: The three girl's shoes are all alike. (*Girl's* should be *girls'*.)

12. **(fp) faulty predication:** Faulty predication occurs when a subject does not work grammatically with its predicate (verb).

Faulty predication example: The most valued trait in a friend is a person who is loyal. (Because a person is not a trait, the sentence should read, "The most valued trait in a friend is loyalty." Avoid constructions like "the reason...is because," "is when," and "is where.")

(ISS) Illogical sentence structure: Some sentences students write do not conform to any of the Dirty Dozen errors; they're just ungrammatical. The abbreviation "iss" is used to mark these sentences.