Alex L. Milsom
UCLA English Dept.

PAPER GUIDELINES

TIME MANAGEMENT	Develop good habits. Do a little each day. Start now. Don't let papers plague you. Stop thinking about it and just start.
PREPARING TO WRITE	Here are some ways to prepare to write: - Reread the text(s) you want to write about and make notes about what lines or pages strike you as related. - Write and refine your thesis argument. - List your evidence for your argument. - Come up with a battle plan for your argument: how are you going to prove it is true from paragraph to paragraph?
THESIS (ARGUMENT) FROM GREEK θέσις PUTTING, PLACING; A PROPOSITION, AFFIRMATION (OED)	Please **underline** your thesis statement. This helps you and it helps me. Also… - It should complete this sentence: "The text argues that…_____." - Someone should be able to disagree reasonably with your statement–they can take the opposite point of view. - It should be *analytical and interesting*, not *descriptive and boring*. This means that when I read it, I don't feel like saying, "So what?"
INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH	Don't start with a generalization that might be corny or extremely obvious, like "Truth is justice." or "The French Revolution was an important time." If you are confused with how to start, go online and read the beginnings of other scholarly articles and see how it's done by the pros. Go here (http://scholar.google.com/) and type in "Rowson" or "Wordsworth" or "Jane Eyre" for instance.
PARAGRAPH TRANSITIONS	Switching to a new paragraph should feel like switching gears, not like switching directions altogether. Somewhere in the first two sentences of a new paragraph, you should connect it back to the previous paragraph.
TOPIC SENTENCES	A good topic sentence should be a précis–or a mini-summary–of the entire paragraph. I should be able to read through just the topic sentences of your entire paper and understand what your paper is arguing and how you're proving your argument is true.
CONCLUSION	Don't just re-write your intro, and don't just summarize what I've already just read. Synthesize–or bring all together–the work you've just done into one place and just make it *feel* like an ending. Again, don't be corny here, and don't just state obvious things that don't really need to be said. Bring ideas from disparate–or separate–parts of the essay into one cohesive idea. It should feel like you are slowing the vehicle down to a smooth stop.
FORMATTING	MLA Standard Formatting. No excuses for deviation. http://webster.commnet.edu/MLA/format.shtml
CITATION	Use MLA style. I prefer footnotes over endnotes so I don't have to flip around while I read, though some teachers have other preferences. (Never grow too attached to one formatting style since these vary widely.) http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/ If it's not a research paper, just put the name of the text and the page or line you're citing in parentheses before the period. Like this ("Guilt & Sorrow" 29).
REVISION	Writing a paper is really revising a paper. It helps to wait a day or two before you look at each draft. It helps to have someone else read it as well.
PROOFREADING	It is unacceptable to have spelling errors in a college paper. Every sentence should make sense. Unlike this one in which.
BACKING UP	Email yourself copies of your drafts as you go along. Email me, your TA, your final edit (in .doc format) on the day it is due.
GRADES	I will comment on your paper electronically because my handwriting is bad. I encourage you to meet with me within two weeks after getting your paper back to discuss your writing and how to improve it for the next paper.

Please review the Requirements–formatting, directions about handing it in, submitting an electronic copy, plagiarizing, and so forth–because failing to follow those requirements will lead to a lower grade.