

St. Olaf College – The Great Conversation Critical Thinking Rubric

Intended learning outcomes assessed with this instrument:

- Growth and development in critical thinking, progressing from an ability to interpret texts and artistic works to being able to analyze and evaluate them.
 - Note: “Critical thinking” is understood to mean “the ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate texts and/or artistic works.”
- The ability to write in clear, effective prose.

Student work assessed: A sample of randomly-selected papers from all sections of Great Conversation 218

		Levels of Achievement				
		5 Excellent – exceeding our expectations	4	3 Acceptable – meeting our expectations	2	1 Disappointing – falling short of our expectations
Criteria 1st Year	Thesis	Argues a clear and innovative thesis. Successfully offers an illuminating, perhaps surprising, approach to the work. Approaches the work in a revealing way.		Presents a plausible thesis that identifies an important aspect of the work. May not be especially illuminating.		Posits a commonplace or confused thesis that fails to illuminate relevant features of the work, or perhaps misunderstands the work.
	Organization	Clear and effective organization. Author’s strategy is clear from the outset. What needs to be understood first is introduced first. Subsequent steps follow in a reasoned, persuasive order.		Displays uneven organization; may digress or meander either within a paragraph or in the order of paragraphs, but generally offers a discernable, logical structure.		Lacks a logical structure cannot be discerned either within paragraphs or in the overall sweep of the argument.
	Use of Evidence	Identifies and presents evidence relevant to to the given thesis. Accurately, perhaps creatively, construes the evidence to support an interpretation. Draws convincing inferences from evidence. Effectively situates evidence in context.		Identifies relevant evidence, but may not show the relevance persuasively. Evidence may be uneven in relevance or too scanty to build a strong argument. Evidence may be simply cited, rather than built upon. Evidence may be offered without recognition of context.		Fails to identify relevant evidence, misinterprets the given evidence, or fails to clearly interpret it
	Style & Mechanics	Reads easily because of clear and correct grammar and punctuation, diverse and interesting sentence structure, and graceful transitions.		Demonstrates basic use of grammar and punctuation, some varied sentence structure, and logical transitions between paragraphs and sentences.		Lacks consistently correct grammar and punctuation. Includes repetitive sentence structure and weak transitions.

Criteria 2 nd Year	Critical Reflection on the Argument	Recognizes grounding assumptions, compelling arguments on several sides of an issue, and may concede weaknesses of the position being defended. Establishes clear criteria for judgments and conclusions.	Shows some awareness of grounding assumptions. Shows some awareness of possible limits to the position taken. Offers judgments and conclusion with a loose sense of guiding criteria. Recognizes compelling arguments on both sides of an issue	Proceeds from unrecognized assumptions. Does not recognize possible alternatives. Offers judgments without establishing criteria. Avoids or ignores alternate views or position's weaknesses.	
	Total Score				