

Kay Siebler, PhD  
Written Communication  
Rubric for student journals

**Check:** A check journal is one that addresses topics in the readings and connects those topics to either personal experiences or other texts within this course or other courses. There is evidence in the journal of analysis (asking and answering the “how/why” questions from different perspectives). The student asks interesting and in-depth questions about the readings and attempts to answer them. The journal may move from one topic to another with good transitions, with the focus on more than one claim. The writer avoids summarizing either the texts or class discussion; the focus of the journal is an analysis of specific points in the text that interest the writer. It is clear by the focus that the writer is reading carefully and with a pen in his/her hand. The writer may include some emotional response to the text (“I liked this,” “I hated this”) but moves beyond the emotional response to an analysis of *why* he/she had the response. There is evidence of careful editing and MLA style is used with citations. The writer includes specific quotes from the text to analyze and inform. The journal meets the page length requirement of at least two full pages and the writer sustains a solid discussion for those pages.

**Minus:** A minus journal is one that is thin on analysis or a journal that focuses mostly on an emotional response to the text (what the writer liked or didn’t like about the text) without reflection on why/how the writer had that response. A minus journal relies heavily on summary either of the texts or of class discussion. The journal does not attempt to make connections across texts or to other experiences, courses, cultural issues. The journal may focus primarily on personal experience without indication that there could be other experiences that would support a different perspective. The journal falls short of the minimum page requirement of two full pages. The journal contains sloppy proofreading. The reader may find it difficult to identify a thesis or claim or there may be several different claims, unrelated to each other, throughout the journal with few – or weak -- supports for each claim.

**Plus:** A plus journal creates a strong, impressive analysis of a single claim that either focuses on one text or creates connections across texts. The writer includes impressive supports that are detailed and clear. The writer clearly articulates his/her analysis. The writer’s supports create strong connections between the text and other texts (either for this class or another class). The supports examine connections between the text and personal experiences. Awareness of larger cultural issues is incorporated into the analysis. The “how/why” questions of the analysis are answered fully from more than one perspective. The student asks interesting and in-depth questions about the readings and answers them, taking into account various perspectives. The writer addresses counter arguments or other perspectives that may be different from his/her own and includes an analysis of those perspectives. Quotes are used effectively and correctly cited using MLA style. The text is clean and free of editing errors. The journal meets the minimum page requirement. The writer moves beyond the obvious and creates an analysis that offers a fresh, intelligent insight to the readings and class discussions.