

## WRITING TIPS

**Content: Did you show that you had read and understood the material? Did you include and define all key concepts? Did you answer all questions raised in the prompt?**

- Address the questions explicitly in the introduction.
- Define your terms. Don't rely on common sense definitions. This is very easy to do in sociology where a lot of the concepts overlap with everyday vocabulary. Be sure to define terms and refer to them as the theorist would.
- Try to capture the nuance in the theorist's arguments. We want to see complex thinking that really engages the material—demonstrate your understanding of the readings.

**Argument: Did you go beyond summarizing to give a critical analysis? Did you give specific evidence?**

- Strike a good balance between citations/quotes and narrative. Avoid having too many quotes or too few. Always be sure to explain them; don't assume that the quotes are self-explanatory.
- Don't leave quotes hanging. Always integrate them and weave them into your narrative. The transition from your words to the quotes should be seamless.
- Be careful to check the context of your quotes. Make sure they are referring to what you think they are.
- Focus on answering the questions and building an academic argument, not centering the paper on your personal opinions.

**Writing quality: Is the essay organized and clear? Did you make major errors that distracted from your ideas?**

- Give your paper structure with an introduction, clear thesis, forecasting, transitions, and conclusion. Each paragraph should focus on one main idea.
- Use an outline, and then write a first draft or even multiple drafts.
- PROOFREAD! Also: read the paper out loud to listen for awkward phrasing, and have someone else read it to make sure your argument is clear and logical and that there are no major errors.