

Common Problems

Format:

- Don't forget **page #s** or a **descriptive title**-- i.e. not just "Paper #1" or "Marx"

Content Issues:

- You need to **define and explain key concepts**—this is part of demonstrating that you understand them. Samples from these questions: bourgeoisie, proletariat, means/mode of production, commodity, types of value, species-being, class, alienation, materialism, etc.

Argument Issues:

- Beware of using **too many quotes** or of using quotes that are **too long**. You should NOT be taking up 3-4 lines (or more) with a quote. Use paraphrasing and summary skills in your own words (remember to cite paraphrased ideas, though!)
- At the opposite extreme, you **need to use citations**—it's hard to write an assignment based on texts without ever referring to them, directly (quotations) or indirectly (paraphrasing). You need to provide evidence from the text that supports your argument.
- Always **integrate your quotes**—quotations can rarely stand alone as their own sentence. What is Marx saying in each quote, and why does it matter for your argument?
- **Punctuation** samples: Marx argues "quote here" (325). OR: The bourgeoisie "quote here" (Marx, 325).

Writing Quality Issues:

- Give your paper **structure/strong organization** with an introduction, clear thesis, forecasting, transitions, and conclusion. The intro should give the reader an overview of your whole argument.
- **Each paragraph should focus on one main idea.**
- **Passive vs. Active Voice:** Avoid passive voice to make your sentences more interesting/clear. Active voice explains who's doing what; passive voice tells what is being done to the subject. Active: the bourgeoisie exploit workers. Passive: Workers are exploited by the bourgeoisie.
- **Subject/Verb Agreement:** a singular subject (i.e. "Marx") takes a singular verb (i.e. "claims"). A plural subject ("the laborers") takes a plural verb ("work").
- **Singular/Plural Agreement:** be consistent with pronouns—i.e. capitalist=he/she, while capitalists=they.
- **Present vs. Past Tense:** Be consistent throughout the paper.

Grading Shorthand

WC=word choice. Did you use a word that conveys the wrong meaning?

SP=spelling. Please spellcheck your papers AND read them over/have someone else read.

Awk=awkward. Try reading your paper out loud to listen for sentences that don't make sense.

Pass.=passive voice

Rep.=repetitive

Arg=argument

✓= on the right track, good point

Cite=citation