Manuscript Form

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The following points cover the basic things you should keep in mind when typing your paper.

1. Your paper should have a title that reflects your argument and catches your reader’s interest. This means you should not use “Cinderella” as a title. “Cinderella’s Crafty Virtue” would be a more appropriate and provocative title. Note that titles should incorporate the name of the text under discussion. This means that if you want to use a poetic title, you should follow it with a subtitle that is more straightforward and explanatory. Example: “Magic in the Muck: Fishbones and the Power of Nature in Yeh-Shen.”

2. Titles of novels and plays are done in italics. Titles of short stories and poems are generally placed within quotation marks. Titles of critical articles are also put in quotation marks.

3. Your paper should be held together with staples.

4. The first page should have the following information in either the upper left- or upper right-hand corner: name; professor’s name; name or number of class; date. This information should be single-spaced. It should also have the title of your paper centered in the page. The first page should not have a page number on it, but all subsequent pages should be numbered. Each subsequent page should also have your name on it in one of the upper corners.

5. Papers should be typed, double-spaced. There should be a 1” margin on either side of the page as well as at the top and bottom. This will give the reader space for comments.

6. Make a habit of careful proofreading for spelling and punctuation. Run spell-checks, grammar checks, etc. Remember that such checking systems will not catch all mistakes. If you meant to type “warn” and you type “warm,” the spell-checker will not indicate this as an error.

7. When incorporating quotations into your paper, you should give the page number (for prose), the line number (for poetry that is printed with line numbers), or the act, scene, and line number or page number (for plays) in parentheses after the quotation and before the period. Note that slashes are used to indicate line breaks when quoting poetry. Poetry quotations longer than three lines or prose quotations longer than four lines should be indented ten spaces and single-spaced. Omit quotation marks around these indented quotations.
8. AVOID PLAGIARISM--A SERIOUS ACADEMIC OFFENSE. If your paper refers to an idea which is not your own, you need to indicate the source of this idea in a footnote or parenthetical reference, even if this idea was not presented in written form. If your paper refers to material encountered in another text (such as an article, book, or some other critical material), you need to indicate this source. Even if you are paraphrasing the idea rather than quoting it, you need to indicate that you are borrowing the concept from someone else. PLAGIARISM IS A FORM OF THEFT. Ideas are valuable, so give credit where credit is due. You will need to list all of your sources, whether cited or simply consulted, in a Bibliography at the end of your paper. For more on citation practices and rules, see the English Dept. webpage at https://www.swarthmore.edu/english-literature/citing-your-work or go to the English Department under the Academic Program section and open the file on Academic Support: Citing Your Work.

9. Always keep a backup copy or hard copy of your paper--no matter how short it may be. Computers fail, discs get lost or destroyed, and sometimes professors lose papers. When writing a long paper, you should print it out even before it is done as a precautionary measure. This way, if lightning strikes and your computer crashes, you will not lose your work.