General Evaluation Rubric for Papers

The Superior Paper (A/A-)
Thesis: Easily identifiable, plausible, novel (not so obvious no one would disagree with it), sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear, makes reader think about something in a new way.
Structure: Evident, understandable, appropriate structure for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.
Evidence: At least one example or piece of specific evidence (often more than one) used to buttress every assertion or claim made. Author clearly relates evidence to main points in supporting paragraphs and supporting paragraphs clearly contribute to strengthening the overall thesis argument. Excellent integration of quoted material into sentences. Abstract and general assertions supported with specific examples.
Analysis: All ideas flow logically; argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound; analysis is fresh and exciting, posing new ways to think about the material. Author anticipates and successfully deals with counter-arguments; author clearly demonstrates familiarity with course readings and makes insightful connections with or applications of the readings and outside material (from other parts of class, or other classes) which illuminate the thesis.
Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and word choices varied and excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; no spelling errors; no run-on sentences or comma splices; avoids vague words like "interesting" or "different"; avoids beginning with a general paragraph that contributes little to the essay. Clearly has been proofread.

The Good Paper (B+/B/B-)
Thesis: Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or originality.
Structure: Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.
Evidence: Examples used to support most points. Some evidence does not support point, or may appear where inappropriate, or some assertions or claims may not be adequately supported. Quotes well integrated into sentences.
Analysis: Evidence often related to supporting points, though some links perhaps not always clear; overarching argument is clear, flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments are acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed. Some application of or connections made with course readings. Occasional insightful connections to outside material made.
Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and word choices strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly; some (minor) spelling errors; may have one run-on sentence, sentence fragment, or comma splice. Proofread.

The "Needs Help" Paper (C+/C/C-)
Thesis: May be unclear, contain many vague terms, appear unoriginal or offer little that is new, or there may be multiple theses; provides little around which to structure the paper.
Structure: Generally unclear; often wanders or jumps around; few or weak transitions; many paragraphs without topic sentences.
Evidence: Examples used to support some assertions or claims. Points often lack supporting evidence, or evidence is used where inappropriate (often because there may be no clear point). Quotes may be poorly integrated into sentences.
Analysis: Quotes often appear without analysis relating them to thesis or supporting arguments (or there are weak supporting arguments in paragraphs), or analysis offers nothing beyond the quote. Logic may often fail, or argument be unclear. Few connections made to course readings. May not address counter-arguments or make any outside connections. May contain logical contradictions.
Mechanics: Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and word choices. Errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several run-on sentences, fragments, or comma splices. May not have been proofread.

The "Truly Needy" Paper (D+/D/D-)
Thesis: Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point.
Structure: Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.
Evidence: Very few or very weak examples. General failure to support statements or assertions, or evidence seems to support no statement. Quotes not integrated into sentences, but rather simply "plopped in" .
Analysis: Very little or very weak attempt to relate evidence to argument; may be no identifiable argument, or no evidence to relate it to. Vague generalizations with no specifics. Ideas do not flow. Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views. Many logical contradictions.
Mechanics: Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences, fragments, and comma splices. Appears not to have been proofread.

The Failing Paper
Shows minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment. Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis, little evidence, and no connections to course readings.