



The 2026 Brandon Langhjeml Essay Contest Evaluation Rubric

	Excellent 10 points	Proficient 7.5 points	Developing 5 points
Thesis and outline Student has provided a clear and interesting thesis statement. Student has clearly outlined the argument.	Presents a precise and controversial thesis (e.g., something with which reasonable people might disagree, or something that requires argumentative support to be accepted). Presents a clear outline of how this thesis will be defended.	Attempts to formulate a thesis, but this thesis is somewhat unclear or is difficult to identify in the research paper. Attempts to present an outline of the thesis, but this outline is unclear because the thesis itself is unclear.	Presents neither a thesis nor an outline of how this thesis will be defended.
Argumentation Student has provided good reasons to believe the thesis	Presents good reasons to believe the thesis, citing relevant sources and dealing with counterarguments to the thesis.	Presents some good reasons to believe the thesis, sometimes citing relevant sources or sometimes dealing with counterarguments to the thesis.	Presents no good reasons to believe the thesis.
Relevance Student addresses the essay topic <i>and only</i> the essay topic. Student provides sufficient context to understand the thesis and argument.	Presents sufficient background information to place the thesis and argument in context. Provides a sense of the debate of which the essay is a part. Able to locate own thesis within this debate.	Presents background information, but it is not always clear how this information relates to the thesis/argument.	No background information is provided, or whatever information is provided is not relevant to the thesis/argument.
Originality Student has offered an original thesis and/or argument.	Advances an original thesis and/or argument. Does not merely restate a position which may be found elsewhere.	Advances a somewhat original thesis and/or argument. Some aspects of the essay are derivative.	Does not advance an original thesis or argument. The essay is derivative and makes no contribution to the conversation.
Style Student has written well and has properly cited their sources.	Grammatically correct and properly cited.	Some grammatical errors or some citation errors.	Significant grammatical errors and/or improper citations.