Peer Review Guidelines
(Originally developed for Harvey Mudd College's Writ 001 by Debra Mashek and Matina Donaldson-Matesci)

Your job as peer reviewer is to help the writer present his or her ideas in a clear, logical and forceful manner that you, as the reader, can easily understand. This involves far more than just correcting spelling and grammar. It involves considering how the overall **structure** of the paper, combined with **word choice** and **sentence structure**, provide for the clear expression of ideas.

General Guidelines:

- Be specific. Simply saying, "interesting" or "great" is unhelpful without further clarification. You must tell the writer <u>what</u> about the piece makes it compelling.
- Aim your comments at the writing, not the writer. Be positive and direct.
- Trust your instincts. If you are confused by something, it will probably be unclear to other readers as well.
- Always keep overall structure in mind. Ask yourself, "Am I confused because this is worded unclearly, or because this idea doesn't relate directly to the thesis or as I understand it"?

Some More Specific Guidelines:

- "Higher Order" concerns before "Lower Order" concerns (HOCs before LOCs). At the peer review stage, writers need comments on larger structural issues:
    - Is the thesis of the proposed work clear?
    - Is the paper organized in a logical, reader-friendly structure?
    - Is the evidence presented appropriate and sufficient?
    - Has the writer included enough context and detail to satisfy the needs of the outside reader?
    - Does the introduction sufficiently contextualize and motivate the thesis/proposed work?
    - Are technical solutions presented in response to technical problems?
    - (Does the conclusion round out the essay (drive home the main argument and point to some broader significance)?) -- N/A to our work
    - As the prose level, is the essay easy to read and understand?

- "Lower Order" concerns like spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical issues are of less concern at this stage in the writing process (that is, unless mechanical errors obscure meaning). If you detect patterns of error, feel free to comment on them, but don't correct every error for the writer. Small, sentence-level errors are likely to fall out in the next revision. If not, they are best corrected at the polishing stage.