

**AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY**  
**History 3683-10 (57121) • Fall 2019**  
**T/Th 11:00-12:15, 210 CENTRAL CLASSROOM BLDG.**

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*office:* 211 Central Classroom  
*office hours:* T/Th, 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.,  
or by appt.

**Course Description:** The United States is arguably the most religiously diverse – and devout – nation in the western world. How did we get this way? This class will try to answer that question by exploring American religious practice, community, and culture from before colonization to the present. Along the way, we will focus on some common themes that thread through the course. First, we will consider how Americans have both retained and adapted traditional faiths in new settings and circumstances. Second, we will examine how the American faithful have developed and articulated their own spiritual identities – and how they have imposed spiritual identities on others. And finally, we will explore the many ways in which American religious leaders and followers have negotiated and interpreted the meanings of ritual, belief, and community, often revising (or creating) religious traditions in the process. With these themes in mind, perhaps we might better understand what it means (and has meant) to be religious in America.

**Required Readings:** The following books will be available at the Auraria Campus Bookstore (bargain-hunters should also try the selection of used books on Amazon.com and Bookfinder.com, but make sure you get the right editions). You can also find copies on reserve at the library.

Patrick Alitt, *Major Problem in American Religious History: Documents and Essays*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2012)

Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (2012)

Jon Butler et al., *Religion in American Life: A Short History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2011)

Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Mathias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2012)

Stephen P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years* (2014)

**Assignments, Grading, and Course Policies:** The course requirements and their value toward your grade are as follows. *You must complete all of these components in order to pass.*

Attendance/participation: 15%

Midterm exam: 20%

Show-and-tell: 5%

Two papers: 30% (15% each)

Final Exam: 30%

*Attendance and Participation:* I expect regular attendance and will take roll. Everyone is allowed two “byes” – unexplained absences – in the class. After that, any absences – except in the case of legitimate and documented emergencies, medical or otherwise – will detract from the attendance/participation portion of your grade. You are responsible for making up the work you miss during any absence, excused or otherwise.

Classes will generally include a combination of lecture and discussion. During some class meetings (noted in the syllabus and subject to change), we will primarily discuss the assigned documents for that week. Your level of preparation and participation will both improve the quality of class meetings and boost your participation grade.

It should go without saying (but often doesn't) that when you attend class, you will refrain from disruptive behavior, including (but not limited to) talking amongst yourselves, arriving late and leaving early, reading the newspaper, or text messaging. **Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices (besides laptops and tablets) before you enter the classroom.**

*Papers:* You will write two papers (6 pages each), in which you will respond to assigned questions based on the readings and lectures. You will have a choice of topics, but you must write at least one of the papers assigned before the midterm, and at least one assigned after the midterm. More information (including essay questions) follows on page 7 of this syllabus. *All papers must be submitted on Safe Assign on Blackboard as well as in hard copy.*

*Midterm and final exams:* The midterm (take-home format) will cover all material taught and reading assigned up to the exam; the final (in-class) will be cumulative, but weighted toward the second half of the semester. Both exams will include shorter identification questions and essay questions (no multiple choice), covering lectures and readings. More information will follow. *Take-home midterms must be submitted on Safe Assign on Blackboard as well as in hard copy.*

*Show-and-tell:* Each person will sign up for one day to bring a show-and-tell item: some object or reading that has something to do with any theme related to religion in American life, from any period of American history. Examples include a souvenir from a historical site or museum, a book or article, a religious artifact, a website for a museum or historical society, an editorial that ties religion to current political debates, a video, etc. Good places to find articles include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Christian Science Monitor*, or *American Heritage*. You can also check out the websites for various state historical societies and religious organizations, along with the National Museum of American History, and major historical sites. You will sign up for a time slot for your presentation. On the day of your presentation, you should plan to show the item, talk about its content and significance for about 5-10 minutes, and field questions.

*Deadlines and exam attendance:* All papers are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted, and all students are expected to take exams on the specified dates. Late papers will be graded down one-third of a grade (A to A-, etc.) for every day they are late, starting after the beginning of class. Papers will not be accepted late or via e-mail, except with a valid excuse (medical or family emergency, etc.) AND prior approval from me. No-shows for exams will receive an F. Make-up exams will not be allowed, except for students who have a valid excuse and have made prior arrangements with me.

*Special Needs:* Students who need accommodations – for disability, religious observance, military service, or any other reason – should let me know within the first two weeks of class. A full statement on accommodations covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act is available on Blackboard, in the “Syllabus and Policies” folder.

*Cheating and plagiarism:* Either offense is grounds for a zero on the assignment and failure in the course. If you are unsure of what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, I strongly encourage you to check with me *before* you hand in your assignment. Please also note that any student who cannot or will not produce the notes, outlines, and other preparatory work for his or her paper will be considered guilty of cheating or plagiarism and subject to the same penalties. The policy in this class is quite simple and is as follows. In the first documented instance of academic dishonesty (as described in the University guidelines, linked below), the student will receive a zero on the assignment. In the second instance, the student will fail the class. All code of conduct violations will be reported.

*Metro State's Academic Integrity Statement:* "As students, faculty, staff and administrators of Metropolitan State University of Denver, it is our responsibility to uphold and maintain an academic environment that furthers scholarly inquiry, creative activity and the application of knowledge. We will not tolerate academic

dishonesty. We will demonstrate honesty and integrity in all activities related to our learning and scholarship. We will not plagiarize, fabricate information or data, cheat on tests or exams, steal academic material, or submit work to more than one class without full disclosure."

For more information on academic dishonesty, see

<https://www.msudenver.edu/deanofstudents/studentconduct/academicintegrity/academicdishonesty/>

*For more information, please see the information on LAS policies and deadlines posted in the "Syllabus and Policies" folder on Blackboard.*

**HIS 3683, the MSU-Denver curriculum, and expected outcomes:** This course satisfies the requirements for an upper-division course and a course with the Multicultural designation, either within the History major or as an elective outside the major. Students in this course will be expected at minimum to fulfill the following Student Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate the ability to locate sources when information is needed, and to evaluate the authenticity, validity, and reliability of resources applied to a specific purpose.
- Communicate in writing with an awareness of audience, by using language conventions appropriate to the occasion and task.
- Demonstrate knowledge of American religious history.
- Demonstrate, using historical sources, how context and contingency influence change over time.
- Develop an effective historical interpretation of the history of American religion and marshal primary and/or secondary evidence to support it.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

*(subject to change)*

Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are available in the "Assigned Readings" folder on Blackboard.

**WEEK ONE: August 19-23**

*Readings:* \*Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does it Mean to Think Historically?"

\* Patrick Stokes, "No, You're Not Entitled to Your Opinion"

\* Karin Wulf, "What Naomi Wolf and Cokie Roberts Teach Us about the Need for Historians"

*Religion in American Life*, preface and chapter 1

*Major Problems*, Richter, "Iroquois Ideas about Creation, Spirits, and Reciprocity," and Carmody and Carmody, "Traditions of the Eastern Woodlands" (both in chapter 2)

*The Color of Christ*, Prologue and Introduction

\*Cherokee, Bering Strait Eskimo, and Winnebago origins stories

August 20: Introductions

August 22: Native American Spiritualities

**WEEK TWO: August 26-30**

*Readings:* *Religion in American Life*, chapters 2-3

*Major Problems*, documents 2.1-2.7

*The Color of Christ*, chapter 1

August 27: A Brief History of European Christianity

August 29: Spiritual Encounters between European Colonists and Native Peoples

**WEEK THREE: September 2-6**

*Readings:* *Religion in American Life*, chapter 4

*Major Problems*, documents 3.1-3.3; Miller, "The Puritans' Errand into the Wilderness" (chapter 3)

September 3: Puritans in the Wilderness

September 5: Magic, Witchcraft, and Lived Religion

**WEEK FOUR: September 9-13**

*Readings:* *Religion in American Life*, chapters 5-6; Laing, "Africans and Christianity in the Colonial South," and Heyrman, "The Beginnings of the Bible Belt" (chapter 3)

*Major Problems*, documents 3.4-7

\*Wei Zhu, "The Forgotten Story of the Flushing Remonstrance"

September 10: Religious Pluralism in North America

September 12: Awakenings (*document discussion*)

**\*\*\* PAPER OPTION 1 DUE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 IN CLASS. \*\*\***

**WEEK FIVE: September 16-20**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapters 7-8  
*Major Problems*, chapter 4 (all documents and essays)  
*The Color of Christ*, chapter 2  
*The Kingdom of Matthias*, Prologue and chapter 1

September 17: Religion and Revolution (*document discussion*)

September 19: Reconciling Church and State in the New Republic

**WEEK SIX: September 23-27**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapters 9-10  
*Major Problems*, 5.1-3, 6.5; Butler, "Awash in a Sea of Faith" (chapter 5)  
*The Color of Christ*, chapter 3  
*The Kingdom of Mathias*, chapters 2-3  
\*"The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee"

September 24: Second Great Awakening: Democratic Religion? (*document discussion: Jarena Lee and Major Problems 5.1-2*)

September 26: The Benevolent Empire (*document discussion: 6.5*)

**WEEK SEVEN: September 30 - October 4**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapters 11-12  
*Major Problems*, documents 5.4-7; Raboteau, "The Slaves' Own Religion"  
*The Color of Christ*, chapter 4  
*The Kingdom of Matthias*, chapter 4, Epilogue

October 1: Communitarianism and Romanticism

October 3: Slave Religion

**WEEK EIGHT: October 7-11**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapters 13-15  
*Major Problems*, documents 6.1-4; Morris, "Catholics and Urban Violence"

October 8: Native American Spiritual Resistance

October 10: Immigrant Faiths, Part I: Catholicism, Judaism, and Lutheranism

**\*\*\* PAPER OPTION 2 DUE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10 IN CLASS. \*\*\***

**WEEK NINE: October 14-18**

*Readings: Major Problems*, documents 6.7, 7.1-7; Genovese and Genovese, “Slaveholders and the Bible,” choose ONE of the three essays at the end of chapter 7 (by Moorhead, Stowell, or Woodworth)

*The Color of Christ*, chapter 5

\*Colleen McDannell, “The Bible in the Victorian Home,” from *Material Christianity* (1998)

\*Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman’s Home, or Principles of Domestic Science* (excerpt)

October 15: The Civil War as a Spiritual Crisis (*document discussion: Civil War readings*)

October 17: Victorian Christianity (*discussion: McDannell, Beecher and Stowe*)

**\*\*\* TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17 IN CLASS. \*\*\***

**WEEK TEN: October 21-25**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapter 16

*Major Problems*, chapter 8 (entire); Massa, “Catholics Enter the Mainstream of American Life” and Joselit, “Jewish Food and Jewish Identity” (both in chapter 10)

*The Color of Christ*, chapter 6

\*Nicole Jankowski, “Move Over, St. Patrick: St. Joseph’s Feast is When Italians Parade”

March 28: Manifest Destiny? Religion in the Trans-Mississippi West

March 30: Immigrant Faiths, Part II: Catholicism and Judaism (redux) and Eastern Orthodoxy (*document discussion: Major Problems 8.4-6*)

**WEEK ELEVEN: October 28 - November 1**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapters 17-18

*Major Problems*, documents 9.1-7, 10.1-2; Roberts, “The American Christian Encounter with Darwinian Evolution,” Gutjahr, “Ben Hur and Biblical Criticism” (both in chapter 9), Carpenter, “How Fundamentalists Adapted Their Message to Modern Conditions” (chapter 10)

October 29: Modernity Confronts Tradition

October 31: Tradition Confronts Modernity

**WEEK TWELVE: November 4-8**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapters 19-20

*The Color of Christ*, chapter 7

November 5: Christian Imperialism, Religious Warfare, Christian Realism

November 7: The American Religious Landscape at Mid-Century

**\*\*\* PAPER OPTION 3 DUE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7 IN CLASS. \*\*\***

**WEEK THIRTEEN: November 11-15**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapters 21-22  
*Major Problems*, chapter 11 (entire), chapter 13 (entire)  
*The Color of Christ*, chapter 8  
*The Age of Evangelicalism*, Introduction and chapters 1-2

November 12: Crusades for Justice

November 14: Immigrant Faiths, Part III: Latin American and Eastern Traditions (*discussion: Major Problems, chapter 13*)

**WEEK FOURTEEN: November 18-22**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapters 23-24  
*Major Problems*, chapter 12 (entire)  
*The Age of Evangelicalism*, chapters 3-4  
\*Diana Henriques, "Religious Programs Expand, So Do Tax Breaks":

November 19: Religious Countercultures

November 21: The Suburbs and the Megachurch

**\*\*\* PAPER OPTION 4 DUE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21 IN CLASS \*\*\***

**WEEK FIFTEEN: November 25-29 – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**WEEK SIXTEEN: December 2-6**

*Readings: Religion in American Life*, chapter 25, epilogue  
*Major Problems*, chapters 14-15 (entire)  
*The Color of Christ*, chapter 9, Epilogue  
*The Age of Evangelicalism*, chapters 5-6, Epilogue  
\*Rachel Held Evans, "Want Millennials Back in the Pews? Stop Trying to Make Church 'Cool'"  
\*Lori Johnston, Pew Report on Religious Types Shows What Americans of Different Faiths Have in Common"  
\* Peter Beinart, "Breaking Faith"

December 3: Faith and Politics: The Religious Right and Left

December 5: Spiritual Trials and Crossroads at the Turn of the Century

**\*\*\* PAPER OPTION 5 DUE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5 IN CLASS \*\*\***

**\*\*\* FINAL EXAM: DATE AND TIME TBA (MOST LIKELY TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 11:00-1:00) \*\*\***

## HISTORY 3683 • AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY PAPER TOPICS

- *You must respond to TWO of these questions, distributed as follows:*

*Everyone must do topic one OR two.*

*Everyone must do topic three, four, OR five.*

- *Responses should be 5-6 pages each, typed in 12-point font and double-spaced, with 1" margins. Use fonts typical for academic papers (i.e., Times New Roman), not novelty fonts or exceptionally large fonts (like Courier).*
- *All papers should be submitted in hard copy and on Safe Assign on Blackboard.*
- *For more tips, see the "Paper Guidelines," below.*

**Topic One (due Thursday, September 12):** Considering the period from the founding of Massachusetts Bay in 1629 to the aftermath of the witch trials in the 1690s, would you argue that the overriding dynamic of Puritan New England was unity or fragmentation?

**Topic Two (due Thursday, October 10):** Alexis de Tocqueville, when he toured the United States during the early nineteenth century, saw the spirit of religion interwoven with the spirit of democracy. In other words, he believed that religion conferred power to the people, much like he believed the nation's new democratic institutions did. Was he right? Based on what you have read about religious life and institutions during the Second Great Awakening, would you argue that religion took a democratic turn during the early nineteenth century? *Please note that the Tocqueville quote is just a jumping-off point for this paper, not its central topic. You should use a broad base of sources and evidence to answer this question.*

**Topic Three (due Thursday, November 7):** Which do you think was the more important epicenter of religious change during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: urban or rural America? In your response, you should take into account not just the religious culture of this particular period, but also the long-term imprint that religious transformation left on American life.

**Topic Four (due Thursday, November 21):** One historian has argued that the power of the Civil Rights Movement (both its transformative power and its perceived threat to opponents) lay in its efforts to reshape Christianity. Considering the efforts to expand and restrict African Americans' civil rights between Reconstruction and the 1960s, assess the validity of this statement.

**Topic Five (due Thursday, December 5):** What influence has more powerfully shaped most Americans' spiritual identities in the era since WWII: political leanings or ethnic and cultural background?

## HISTORY 3683 • AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY WRITING GUIDELINES

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to write two papers of approximately six pages each. Grading will be based on the following components:

**Argument:** Your paper must have a clear, analytical argument, in the form of a thesis statement and sustained throughout the paper. Your thesis statement should appear toward the end of your introduction. It must make some sort of historical argument, which you will then support with evidence in the rest of your paper. Think of your thesis statement as answering a “how” or “why” question rather than a “what” or “who” question – in other words, it should suggest an interpretation rather than a description. Some examples:

*Weak thesis (C or D paper):* "This paper will discuss how African Americans' legal status changed in the decades after World War II." [*Describes the topic but makes no argument.*]

*Somewhat better (B paper):* "African Americans' legal status improved dramatically in the decades after World War II." [*Suggests an argument but not the reasoning behind it.*]

*Much better (A paper):* "African Americans' legal status improved dramatically in the decades after World War II, partly due to improved economic opportunities and growing sympathy among whites, but even more due to mounting activism by blacks themselves." [*States a clear argument, and summarizes the reasoning behind it.*]

Beyond the thesis statement, you should use your topic sentences to reinforce and support your argument. Think of each topic sentence as a mini-thesis statement that makes an analytical point about some piece of your overall argument.

**Organization and structure:** Develop your argument with clearly stated points, each of which builds logically on the points that preceded it and contributes a crucial piece to the overall argument. Prior to writing, develop an outline that breaks the overall argument down into two or three building-block points that work logically together. These building blocks will be the basis for your paragraphs.

*Weak organization (C or D paper):* Paragraphs have no logical organization or relationship to each other and lack topic sentences that support the overall argument. Paragraphs have no apparent arguments or topics holding them together, but rather seem to start and stop at random points. There may be not true topic or concluding sentences.

*Somewhat better (B paper):* Paragraphs have clear topics, but the sequencing of topics may not makes sense (for example – random chronological order, when the topic suggests an analysis of change over time), and topic sentences do not offer analytical points to support the main argument. Transitions may be lacking, abrupt, or unclear. Paragraphs may lack concluding sentences.

*Much better (A paper):* Each paragraph has an analytical topic sentence that supports the thesis statement, evidence and analysis that supports the topic sentence, and a clear concluding sentence that wraps up the main idea. Transitions (which appear with the topic sentences, not the concluding sentences) as smooth and logical. Paragraph topics build logically from one to the next.

**Primary and secondary evidence:** I cannot stress enough that these papers are intended to give you a chance to think and write like historians – and that means that you *must use evidence*. You must include *primary evidence* (evidence from the time or events you’re discussing) and *secondary evidence* (writings based on

primary research) to establish *historical context* (background information) in order to craft and present a historical argument. Without evidence, the paper is not a historical analysis – it's just an opinion piece. Evidence can include quotes (brief quotes from primary sources only, please), facts, statistics, anecdotes – anything that helps support your argument AND that you can document. Using primary evidence involves careful reading *and* writing, so leave yourself plenty of time for these tasks.

*Reading:* To use evidence effectively, you should read your documents (along with assigned reading in *Of the People*) with the following questions in mind:

- What is the subject of core issue of the documents?
- Who created the documents, when were they created, and under what circumstances? How did the creators relate to the events or people being discussed (as an eyewitness, secondhand source of information, etc.)?
- What was the documents' wider historical *context*? How might that context have influenced the author(s)?
- What do you know (or what can you infer) about the authors' social positions (class, race, gender, level of education, occupation, etc.). What about the authors' political orientations or biases? How might this background have shaped their perspectives?
- Who was the intended audience for the documents?
- Why did the authors create these documents – did they intend to persuade people? If so, of what?
- Based on all of the above, how reliable are these primary sources? What can we accept as fact, and what must we be suspicious of? Keep in mind that even a very biased source can be a valuable one, but we have to be aware of that bias as we analyze it.

*Writing:* Part of using evidence effectively means incorporating it into your writing in ways that strengthen your argument rather than distracting (or detracting) from it.

- *Quoting:* When you quote from a source, you must use quotation marks to indicate those portions that you are quoting. You should reproduce the words exactly and use citations to indicate from where they came. **Quote ONLY primary sources** (that is, sources from the time you are writing about that serve as evidence in your paper). You may quote from a secondary book or article, but only if the portion you are quoting comes from a primary source (so you might, for instance, use a quote from George Washington that appears in a book, but you should not quote the author of that book, who is writing about George Washington.). The reason: when you quote the author of a secondary source, you are letting that person do the historical thinking and analysis for you. In these assignments, *you* must do that work yourself. (There is an exception to this rule: when you are directly engaging a historian's argument, you may quote the historian to advance your point. But you should still rely on primary evidence to critique that argument, and you should not use secondary quotes as a stand-in for your own analysis.)
- *Paraphrasing:* When you paraphrase, you use someone else's idea but explain it in your own words. You must indicate whose idea it is, just as you would for a direct quotation. You should not, though, use the original author's words; you must rephrase it in your own words. If you are paraphrasing, you may use ideas or arguments that historians present in their secondary works, as long as you give credit and synthesize these points in your own argument.

- *Citing your sources:* You should cite all evidence that is not common knowledge. This includes quotes, little-known facts and anecdotes, and statistics, along with any paraphrasing or reference to someone else's ideas. You will not be penalized for excessive citation, so if you are in doubt, cite it. Either footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations (author and page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence) will do. You need not include a bibliography unless you use a source outside of class material (which is not expected). Citing sources properly is an important matter of academic integrity. If you paraphrase or quote another person's ideas without acknowledgment, you are plagiarizing. This is illegal, unethical, and grounds for a failing grade. Don't do it.

What should all of this look like in your paper? I will consider use of evidence as follows:

*Weak (or no) use of evidence (C, D, or F paper):* The paper includes no primary evidence and little or no reference to the assigned primary documents. The paper might mention or even quote the primary documents, but because there is no historical context, the author inaccurately misinterprets the meaning or significance of the evidence, or misses key pieces of information. Papers that include plagiarized text receive an automatic zero.

*Somewhat better (B paper):* The paper includes insufficient primary evidence. Some of the primary evidence supports the argument, but other examples may be poorly chosen, or the paper might simply rely on quotes with little context or analysis (letting quotes stand for themselves with no further discussion, for example). Formatting of quotes is awkward or grammatically incorrect (for example, floating quotes with no transitional phrases to link prose to quotes). The paper might have entire paragraphs without primary evidence.

*Much better (A paper):* Every paragraph (possibly except the introduction and conclusion) contains primary evidence. Primary documents are properly quoted, so that quotes and prose combine to form complete sentences. Quotes support but do not replace analysis; rather, analysis explains the quotes in proper context (derived from secondary evidence). Secondary evidence is paraphrased rather than quoted. All evidence works to support the broader argument as well as the points in each paragraph.

**Style:** I will not grade you on style alone, but good writing is necessary to communicate your ideas. Therefore, quality of writing will figure into your grade. Get to the point, use clear wording, and avoid awkward phrases and sentences. Steer clear of overly formal or informal prose (for example, unnecessarily complicated or elaborate language, colloquialisms or slang, contractions, etc.). Use correct grammar and spelling. I highly recommend that you read your prose aloud to catch awkward or incorrect phrasing.

*Weak writing (C or D paper):* The paper either uses slang and inappropriately informal language, or it uses overly formal and unnecessarily wordy language. There are numerous problems with word choice, conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and awkward phrasing. The mechanical problems are significant enough to obscure the paper's argument and distract the reader.

*Somewhat better (B paper):* This paper has many of the same problems as a C paper, but they will not be significant enough to distract from the overall argument. The weaknesses in writing are less universal and easier to fix than in a C paper, but the prose overall is not as polished as an A paper. The paper may have repetitive writing problems (i.e., habitual wordiness or overuse of the passive voice).

*Much better (A paper):* The prose is polished with good word choice, proper grammar and punctuation, few (if any) instances of awkward phrasing, and no nagging or repetitive problems.