Document Format for Formal Papers

The appropriate format for writing depends on the specific writing situation and its conventions. Formats vary among academic disciplines and even within disciplines. Follow whatever specifications you are given, or you observe, in the local environment. For college courses, if no specific requirements are given, you will usually be safe following the standards below. Use these standards for your English 202 papers.

Note: The items in bold are not the default settings if you are using Microsoft Word. I have some handouts posted with screen captures to show how to change those settings.

- Use a standard typeface (such as Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Garamond) and moderate size (10-14 point).
- Use margins of 1" all around and left justification.
- Ask about whether double-sided printing is acceptable. (I will take it.)
- **Double-space.**
- **Indent paragraphs. Don’t add an extra space between paragraphs.**
- Use either a heading on the first page or a title page (either one is fine with me), to provide basic information about the assignment. This should include at least your name, the name of the course and/or instructor, the date, and the title of the paper.
- **Number pages.** Optionally, you can add your last name or an abbreviated title before the page number. With word-processing software, you can do this by creating a page header.
- Proofread your paper after you print it. A few small handwritten corrections are acceptable, but if you need to make several changes, or substantial ones, correct and re-print the page.
- Hold pages together with a staple (my preference) or paper clip.

You can see examples of papers that follow these formatting conventions in
- *Practical Argument*, pp. 343-49
- *Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age*, pp. 112-20 (with a heading on the first page) or 156-58 (with a separate title page).