

## The Grading of the Therac Memos

If your grade fell below an eighty you *must* consult with the Writing Program lecturer who graded your paper. You need not do this if you were below this line because of points taken off in the categories of format and/or visual organization.

**Papers Scoring 90 or above:** The strongest papers made a specific recommendation; the writers used concise, well-focused paragraphs to justify that recommendation, and they concluded with a final summary paragraph. Language was clear, with a concise sentence beginning each paragraph, and detail within the paragraph that followed directly from the idea in that first sentence. The header included To:, From:, Subject:, and Date: fields. Margins were at least one inch. There was extra white space between paragraphs. Given some conflicting information on font size and spacing, we did not subtract points in those areas—though people who did well overall generally single-spaced their memos and used a 12-point font.

**Papers Scoring 80 to 89 points:** Needed work, but were still acceptable, made a clear argument in the first paragraph. All other information in the memo was related to that opening argument. Stronger links could have been made between the information in the explanatory paragraphs and the recommendations. In some instances, the final paragraph really crystallized the overall argument, and it would have worked better as the memo's first paragraph. One or two elements of formatting were sometimes missing, and the paper might have contained an infelicitous sentence or two. Overall, however, the papers had a neat appearance and readers did not have to work to find your central argument.

**Papers Scoring 70 to 80 points:** Provided a lucid discussion of the events in the Therac case, but did not make clear what you were recommending to Ms. Abramov. Other papers in that range made several recommendations or a vague recommendation without a specific plan of action. Some papers landed in this range because they made a recommendation without sufficient evidence to justify it. Sometimes the prose was difficult to read, wordy, grammatically incorrect, or vocabulary was misused. In almost all cases, these papers could have earned additional points with an extra editing or proofreading pass – or with fixes to formatting.

**Papers scoring below 70 points:** Were often summaries of the Therac article. The writers did not make a recommendation of any kind. They were formatted as letters, or did not resemble any kind of business document.