Essay Writing Guide - Western Civilization

Elements necessary to the essay:

Introduction: (approx 2-3pts)
1. General background to the topic
2. Clearly identifiable thesis statement / argument
3. Identify subtopics and outside sources to support argument

Body: (approx 15pts)
1. 3 to 5 subtopic paragraphs (elements or points of your argument)
2. Subtopic paragraphs must directly support the thesis statement / argument
3. Each paragraph contains a clearly identifiable point
4. Use of SPECIFIC examples from the readings to support
5. Use of examples must be substantial and clearly linked to argument

Conclusion: (approx 2-3pts)
1. Restate in some form the thesis statement / argument and sub topics
2. Insight into topic or topics

Essay writing “DOs”
DO answer the question directly.
DO answer all parts of the question if there are multiple parts.
DO make a clear thesis statement / argument.
DO support your argument with SPECIFIC examples from the readings.
DO identify your sources (the outside readings).
DO be clear and concise. Flowery speech will get in the way of making your point.
DO arrange or construct your essay in a way that will best support your argument and demonstrate your knowledge of the topic and readings.

Essay writing “DON’Ts”
DON’T use “buzz words.” Define any complex terms or vocabulary.
DON’T use absolutes. There is always an exception to the rule.
DON’T refer to or make comparisons the present day. Instead, focus on the task at hand.
DON’T let poor grammar, sloppy sentences, use of slang or abbreviations, etc. get in the way of making your argument clear and understandable.

Note: The essays will be graded primarily for content. Points will be deducted, however, if the essay organization, construction, and grammar interfere with understandability. Superior essays effectively integrate essay writing mechanics such as organization and construction with a demonstrated mastery of the subject matter through a convincing use of argued points and source examples to support a clear thesis.