Hierarchy of Concerns for Assessing Writing

**Appropriateness**
- Does the essay fit the assignment?

**Thesis and Scope**
- Is there a clear thesis or point of view?
- Is the topic too wide or too narrow?

**Development/Critical Thinking/Supporting Detail**
- Does the writer consider various points of view and counterarguments?
- Are there places in the essay where more details, examples, or specifics are needed?
- Does the writer use evidence to support all assertions?
- Is the evidence from the appropriate kinds of sources?

**Clarity/Organization**
- Does the essay make sense as a whole?
- Are paragraphs cohesive? (Are there paragraphs?)
- Does the essay lead somewhere, or wander off?
- Do transitional sentences or phrases connect ideas?

**Tone/Word Choice/Sentence Structure**
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the tone appropriate for both the audience and the purpose of the essay?
- Is vocabulary sufficiently sophisticated? Are words repeated?
- Is sentence structure varied? Do sentences start and stop appropriately?

**Grammar/Punctuation/Formatting**
- Do errors in grammar, punctuation, or formatting distract from the message of the essay?
- Do citations follow the appropriate style?