MAKING AN OUTLINE TO HAND IN

This is an example of an outline that serves as a guide to your paper for your reader. If you haven't already been making formal outlines, this outline is a formal version; it lays out your main points and subpoints for your reader. Generally, this kind of outline uses conventions of formal outlining: Roman numerals, letters and indentations. Sometimes this sort of outline can be produced after you have written your paper.

Formal outlines can be written in two ways. In topic outlines, the ideas are expressed in parallel phrases (in other words, they are expressed in the same grammatical form--as noun phrases, as verb phrases, etc.). Topic outlines have the advantage of being brief. In sentence outlines, on the other hand, the ideas are expressed in complete, though not necessarily parallel, sentences. Sentence outlines give the reader a clearer idea of what you will argue.

Regardless of the kind of formal outline you choose, convention states that you begin with a statement of your thesis and indicate increasing levels of support in this order: I., A., 1., a., (1), (a). In scientific papers, however, a decimal system is also commonly used. A topic outline follows:

Thesis: Among the pluralist, elitist, and neo-Marxist political theories, neo-Marxism provides the most powerful analysis of the current political scene.

I. Functions of political theories
   A. Tools to help understand governments
      1. Categorization
      2. Comparison
   B. Limitation: Over-simplification
II. Three political theories
   A. Neo-Marxism
      1. Definition
      2. Description
   B. Pluralism
      1. Definition
      2. Description
   C. Elitism
      1. Definition
      2. Description
III. Comparative analysis of U.S. government
   A. Pluralism
      1. Analysis
      2. Weaknesses
   B. Elitism
      1. Analysis
      2. Weaknesses
   C. Neo-Marxism
      1. Analysis
      2. Critique
         a. Strengths
         b. Weaknesses
IV. Conclusion

Notice in a formal outline, whenever a point is subdivided, there are **at least** two subpoints. Logic and convention state that when you divide a point, you can divide it into no fewer than two subpoints.