

Peer Review Guidelines for Applied Representational Analysis

Peer reviews account for a significant portion of your grade. Both the writers upon whom you comment and I will see your review, so please be careful about addressing your audience. Reviews should reach about a page in length.

You will email the writer and me the review by the beginning of the next class. It is best to complete these as early as possible, without skimping on details.

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Reviewer: your name. ***Always put your own name first.***

Essay: the name of the paper under review (or, "Untitled").

Writer: the name of the student writer you review.

Instructions

The goal is to provide *constructive criticism*; that is, to offer comments that will assist the writer in improving the paper. *Identify what works and what is less successful.* You needn't organize your review according to the categories listed below; instead, you can concentrate on addressing particular issues in detail. While I don't want you to worry about accounting for everything, I would like for you to identify and describe at least one feature of each paper that is particularly successful. Good thesis? good analysis? insightful observations? provocative title? sophisticated style?—describe why the feature works.

Categories

Development and Use of Details:

Identify a point in the paper that seems to need development. Are some of the paragraphs short and choppy? Do you find a particular paragraph in which there is insufficient evidence to back up the writer's claims? Is there a place where the writer could improve the paper by expanding an analysis or concrete description? Has the writer used sources to their best advantage? Take note of where you disagree, or find yourself saying, "I don't know what allows the writer to make such a claim." Explain to the writer why you think the point that you've identified needs work. Point out where a more careful or more extended reading of a source might be helpful. Are you able clearly to visualize what the writer describes? Does the conclusion merely rephrase what was already said, without adding anything new to the argument?

Organization:

As you read the paper, take notice of where sentences and paragraphs drift toward a very different subject, idea, or point that seems unrelated to what you've just been reading. Explain to the writer what the problem is. Point out abrupt shifts in argument that leave

you hanging, cause confusion, or stray from the stated topic. Does the writing have overall coherence? Are there effective transitions between ideas? Do you have an easy time following the argument?

Claim and Argument:

After reading the entire paper once, glance back through it. Is there a statement that sets up how all the sections of the argument relate? Is that statement in a prominent position? And is that statement also an *arguable claim*, based on the writer's interpretation of textual specifics? Explain why or why not. If the paper has an appropriate thesis, is that thesis stated as clearly and specifically as possible, given what is contained in the rest of the argument? Is it complete? Does the paper measure up to the thesis? Does the writer use enough evidence to back up the claims?

Rhetoric:

Does the writer show awareness that she or he is addressing an academic audience? Is the writing appropriately formal, without being stiff? In other words, does it seem like a college paper to you? Does the writer have an engaging writing style?

Conventions:

Do errors of sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation interfere with the reading and understanding of the argument? Are there inconsequential errors? Is there proper documentation? *Please do not concentrate your review solely on matters of convention.*