**CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT ASSIGNMENT | ESSAY 1**

**PART ONE: SUMMARIZING**

You’ve already read and annotated each essay and discussed each one in class. Now, you are going to work on assembling an accurate and complete summary of the three essays you will be writing about in your Paper 1.

A summary is a shortened version of a text that identifies its central argument and main points. A summary focuses on the central idea of the passage and includes, in condensed form, the main points in the passage that support or explain the central idea.  A summary should (1) reflect the order in which these points are presented and the emphasis given to them, (2) accurately reflect the author’s ideas, (3) avoid oversimplifying or generalizing the author’s argument, and (4) aim for objectivity, avoiding your own opinions

Follow the instructions and assemble summaries for all three texts below.

**1 – An Ecomodernist Manifesto**

**Step 1. Break down the essay.** Reread the essay.  Divide the essay into sections or stages of thought.  Label each section or stage of thought in the margins. Underline key passages.

**Step 2. Identify author’s main points.** Type the key points of the essay below. Only choose key ideas, not minor details. (You do not need to use all 12 lines or write in complete sentences for this step.)

**1.**  Humans have created a new geological era – the Anthropocene

**2.**  We must use technology to make human life better and protect the environment

**3.**  While our ability to extract resources is functionally infinite, humanity still faces threats to its well-being.

**4.**  The efficiency of modern agriculture and urbanization has already allowed us to start taking steps towards decoupling.

**5.**  Technology can and has been used to improve efficiency and quality of life while simultaneously decreasing environmental impacts.

**6.**  Urbanization is essential to decoupling as it is vastly less intrusive compared to suburbanization

**7.** Access and abundance of clean energy is essential to decoupling

**8.**

**9.**

**10.**

**11.**

**12.**

**Step 3. In one sentence, identify the author’s main point.** Be as specific as possible. Remember: a main point isn’t just what the essay is about; a main point states the central argument the writer is trying to make about this subject.

We, as humans have a duty to protect and preserve both the natural and the artificial worlds, and we cannot do either effectively without removing the artificial world’s dependence on the natural world.

**Step 4. Compose a topic sentence for your summary.** Include the title, author, and main point. Type your topic sentence below. You may use the sample sentence below as a template, if you prefer:

The authors of *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* discuss the idea that despite humanity’s ever-increasing demand for energy, we may be able to achieve a net zero environmental impact within our lifetimes.

**Step 5. Compose a paragraph summary.** Use the topic sentence you composed above, and follow it with 3-4 sentences outlining the author’s key claims.

The authors of *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* discuss the idea that despite humanity’s ever-increasing demand for energy, we may be able to achieve a net zero environmental impact within our lifetimes. Since humans began organizing in civilizations, we have been on a mission to achieve maximum efficiency, especially within the last two centuries. In fact, efficiency has recently increased to the point where the separation between resource consumption and environmental impact has already begun to take place. The answer to fulfilling our duty to protect the environment while simultaneously bettering the standard of living is by doing what we’ve been doing all along – using technology to make the world a better place.

Compare the following summaries. The first oversimplifies and also critiques the author’s view. The second, in contrast, identifies the author’s main argument (that the fast-food chains are to blame for obesity) in the first sentence, including his two main supporting claims (about warning labels and parents). It follows with an explanation of the author’s argument, and ends with an emphasis on the aspect of the article that the *writer* is going to analyze:

1.     David Zinczenko’s article, “Don’t Blame the Eater,” is nothing more than an angry rant in which he accuses the fast-food companies of an evil conspiracy to make people overweight.

2. In his article “Don’t Blame the Eater,” David Zinczenko blames the fast-food industry for fueling today’s so-called obesity epidemic, not only by failing to provide adequate warning labels on its high-calorie foods but also by filling the nutritional void in children’s lives left by their overtaxed working parents. With many parents working long hours and unable to supervise what their children eat, Zinczenko claims, children today are easily victimized by the low-cost, calorie-laden foods that the fast-food chains are all too eager to supply. When he was a young boy, for instance, and his single mother was away at work, he ate at Taco Bell, McDonald’s, and other chains on a regular basis, and ended up overweight. Zinczenko’s hope is that with the new spate of lawsuits against the food industry, other children with working parents will have healthier choices available to them, and that they will not, like him, become obese.

**2 - Geoengineering is a bonkers plan, but it may be needed to tackle global warming**

**Step 1. Break down the essay.** Reread the essay.  Divide the essay into sections or stages of thought.  Label each section or stage of thought in the margins. Underline key passages.

**Step 2. Identify author’s main points.** Type the key points of the essay below. Only choose key ideas, not minor details. (You do not need to use all 12 lines or write in complete sentences for this step.)

**1.** Geoengineering is nuts, then so are CO2 emissions

**2.** Geoengineering is all about tradeoffs

**3.** Geoengineering must still be heavily researched

**4.** Geoengineering is not an excuse to continue CO2 pollution

**5.**

**6.**

**7.**

**8.**

**9.**

**10.**

**11.**

**Step 3. In one sentence, identify the author’s main point.** Be as specific as possible. Remember: a main point isn’t just what the essay is about; a main point states the central argument the writer is trying to make about this subject.

Geoengineering is a fast, yet risky way to mitigate global warming.

**Step 4. Compose a topic sentence for your summary.** Include the title, author, and main point. Type your topic sentence below.

Gernot Wagner discusses in “Geoengineering is a bonkers plan, but it may be needed to tackle global warming” that solar Geoengineering through atmospheric sulfur dioxide injection is a fast, yet risky way to mitigate global warming.

**Step 5. Compose a paragraph summary.** Use the topic sentence you composed above, and follow it with 3-4 sentences outlining the author’s key claims.

In his essay, “Geoengineering is a bonkers plan, but it may be needed to tackle global warming”, Gernot Wagner claims that solar Geoengineering through atmospheric sulfur dioxide injection is a fast, yet risky way to mitigate global warming. While it certainly has its drawbacks and risks, it may be the only viable way to reverse the clock slightly on climate change, giving us more time to develop and implement less intrusive solutions.

**3 – The Degrowth Alternative**

**Step 1. Break down the essay.** Reread the essay.  Divide the essay into sections or stages of thought.  Label each section or stage of thought in the margins. Underline key passages.

**Step 2. Identify author’s main points.** Type the key points of the essay below. Only choose key ideas, not minor details. (You do not need to use all 12 lines or write in complete sentences for this step.)

**1.** Perpetuating economic growth without damaging the environment is impossible

**2.** Viable alternatives to capitalism must be explored

**3.** Degrowth can only work if it is globally influential

**4.**

**5.**

**6.**

**7.**

**8.**

**9.**

**10.**

**11.**

**12.**

**Step 3. In one sentence, identify the author’s main point.** Be as specific as possible. Remember: a main point isn’t just what the essay is about; a main point states the central argument the writer is trying to make about this subject.

The concept of growth is environmentally harmful, and the only way to ensure the protection of the environment is to explore and implement a viable alternative on a global scale.

**Step 4. Compose a topic sentence for your summary.** Include the title, author, and main point. Type your topic sentence below.

In “The Degrowth Alternative,” Giorgos Kallis makes the argument that growth is inevitably harmful to the environment and that it must be abandoned to ensure environmental security.

**Step 5. Compose a paragraph summary.** Use the topic sentence you composed above, and follow it with 3-4 sentences outlining the author’s key claims.

In “The Degrowth Alternative,” Giorgos Kallis makes the argument that growth is inevitably harmful to the environment and that it must be abandoned to ensure environmental security. He makes the claim that we must replace capitalism with a viable alternative and use a bottom up approach to rebuilding society. He draws parallels between a shift from free market capitalism to a degrowth economy and from feudalism to free market capitalism.

**PART TWO: SYNTHESIZING**

For this part of the assignment, you are putting the three articles/authors in a conversation with each other, with a focus on the specific ideas/questions we’ve discussed in this unit.

**Instructions:**

Answer each question posed in the lefthand sidebar for each of the three authors; *in other words, how do they address each of these questions in their essays?* Type your answers in the appropriate boxes. Refer to specific passages but also include your own summary/interpretation of the passages. Try to be as specific as you can, as this will be a building block of your essay.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **QUESTION** | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| **1**  **What specific problems do the authors identify, focus on, and propose to solve? How do the authors describe those problems?** | “An Ecomodernist Manifesto” focuses on the misconception that we are in an inevitable downward spiral towards catastrophic climate disaster. With a hint of optimism, the authors discuss how decoupling technological progress from the natural world may be a possibility sooner than many may think. | Wagner focuses on a possible short-term solution to climate change. He identifies solar geoengineering as a prime candidate and weighs the costs and benefits of implementing such a process. | “A Degrowth Alternative” claims that attempting to solve the climate crisis through growth-based means is not only illogical but impossible. Kallis offers the solution of implementing a global alternative to capitalism. |
| **2**  **What attitude towards these problems does the author take? In other words, how would you describe their point of view?** | The authors take a very optimistic standpoint in describing their outlook on the future. | Wagner carefully balances optimism with pessimism, claiming that action must be taken but the most viable solutions will likely come through technological progress. | Kallis is quite dissatisfied with existing systems, taking a pessimistic and radical approach to change. |
| **3**  **What is the authors’ perspective on the capacity of humanity to fix (or address) the problems they identify? What do they think we should do in response?** | “An Ecomodernist Manifesto” argues that humanity has the capacity to fix the climate crisis through technology and minimizing our impact on the environment. | Wagner believes that humanity will ultimately be able to solve the climate crisis through engineering and intense research. | Kallis believes that humanity only has the capacity to fix the climate crisis if we abandon our values and start fresh. He believes that a global unison towards degrowth is absolutely essential. |
| **4**  **How do the authors address counter arguments, or objections, to their points?** | The authors are highly optimistic towards decoupling, arguing that in many ways we are already well on the way toward the goal. | Wagner is not unaware of the drawbacks of solar geoengineering, even claiming to be “painfully aware” of them. However, he claims that these drawbacks are simply part of a tradeoff in the realm of climate change solutions. | The author objects to a harsh transition away from capitalism by drawing analogues to past shifts in the manifestation of hierarchy in human civilization. |

**PART THREE: JOIN THE CONVERSATION**

In this section, **your voice** takes control, and you offer your own ideas on the key points or respond to what your authors have said. Think of this section as forming your own message and purpose for your argument: the foundation of what you will write your own essay.

**Instructions:**

For Essay 1, you will carefully and accurately summarize the arguments made by our authors and describe their larger conversation and context. Then, most importantly, you will enter this conversation and offer your own stance, make a point of your own, and use evidence in support of your stance.

You’ve read a series of articles about global warming that take radically different perspectives on how humanity should respond to the climate crisis and even how we should talk and think about. In informal writing responses and in-class discussions, you’ve been asked to explain which approaches seem to you more appealing and/or realistic and to evaluate the claims the authors make in support of their views. In this paper assignment, you’ll be asked to demonstrate how well you understand the articles we’ve read and, in effect, create a conversation between them that you will then enter.

**Responses to Individual Authors. Write 2-3 sentences addressed directly to the authors that explain your thoughts about their essay:**

**1: While decoupling is possible to an extent, and I am certain that technology will play a major role in mitigating our impacts on the environment, I disagree with the authors’’ claims regarding suburbanization. While it is certainly the case that an urban environment is the most efficient way to pack humans in terms of land and energy use, urbanization also has major drawbacks from a governance standpoint.**

**2: I agree that some degree of geoengineering will be necessary, I believe that the drawbacks of using pollution to counter pollution are not worth the risk. It is much more likely that removing carbon from the atmosphere to counteract its long atmospheric lifecycle will be a much less risky and possibly more effective.**

**3: Reorganizing society against the will of the people is totalitarian and ignorantly dangerous. There is not a parallel between the shift from feudalism to free market capitalism, and free market capitalism to a “degrowth economy.” This is simply because every economic system that has ever existed is built upon our innate ability to develop value hierarchies. In other words, feudalism, while lacking a free market, is still a form of capitalism and therefore a growth-based economy.**

**Your Stance: Using a “**[**Sentence Guides for Academic Writers**](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k29EqvxqrQ0YcBTwCQ3thXm-WkNEbBms/view?usp=sharing)**”style template (feel free to take/adapt one from the book), write below one sentence that states your own stance and contribution to this conversation.**

“An Ecomodernist Manifesto” makes the important point that willful and incentivized innovation and universal liberation are the keys to solving the climate crisis.