

WCOM 661
Article Critique
Guidelines for Preparation

I. Article Evaluation:

(The Evaluation section below is for background reflection only and should not be included in your critique, though some of the results might be indicated indirectly.)

Evaluation: On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means “very poor” and 10 means “excellent,” how would you rate the article according to the following criteria:

- a. Clarity _____
- b. Coherence _____
- c. Conciseness _____?

What is the average rating for these criteria? Remember that you need to justify each of your ratings. For example, if you give the article a 5 for coherence, this means that there are too many digressions or irrelevant ideas or facts. An 8 for coherence would mean that the sections of the article, and especially those of the main body, flow smoothly into one another and that it is not difficult to follow the development of the author’s ideas. On the other hand, a 2 for conciseness could mean either that the article is too long for the development of the ideas or evidence or, conversely, that the article is too short because the authors have left out some important ideas or evidence or not developed their points fully.

II. Article Critique: Having completed your evaluation of the article write the critique using the following outline (some variations are possible); the numbers do not necessarily represent paragraphs:

- 1. The main thesis (purpose) of the article—summarize very briefly
- 2. How the author develops this thesis (purpose)—methodology, results, discussion
- 3. Anything important the author may have left out
- 4. Evaluation of the article (this part could be incorporated in the conclusion):
 - a. How does it contribute to knowledge in the field?
 - b. How well does the article convey the information contained in it?
 - c. Are there any problems or questions to which the article gives rise?
- 5. Brief concluding paragraph giving an overview of the article’s content and quality (the justified average rating from section I above; *do not, however, use the numbers in your critique*).

III. Preparation for Writing the Article Critique: The following are some more detailed reflections that could be done *before* critiquing an article.

A. Identify the type of article (research article, presentation of hypothesis, commentary on “state of the question,” report of findings, interpretation or explication of a text or texts, book review, review article, systematic review, meta-analysis, interview, etc.).

Then write a one-paragraph summary of the main idea, thesis, or purpose of the article (see Article Summary Guidelines).

B. Audience: For what kind of audience is this article intended? Remember that there may be more than one kind of audience for some articles.

C. Purpose:

1. What is the main goal or objective of this article?
2. Is the author trying to accomplish anything in addition to the explicit objective?
3. Is there a subtext (i.e. an underlying theme that may not be obvious but is nonetheless important)?
4. Has anything been left out?
5. Does the article reveal any kind of bias or limited point of view?

D. Organization: Do a short outline of the main points of the article, following the sequence in which they are presented in the article. Then ask the following questions:

1. Do the main points follow logically one upon another?
2. Are the most important points presented first or last?
3. Does the article present a problem and offer a solution to it? And, if so, is the process of arriving at the solution described?
4. Does the article move from general ideas or facts to specific ideas or facts, or vice versa?
5. Is there a movement from old information to new information?
6. If you were asked to compare the article to a building, what kind of building would it be? Visualize it.

E. Style:

How would you describe the following aspects of the article's style?

1. Level of vocabulary
2. Use of technical terminology
3. Grammar and syntax
4. Rhythm and flow
5. Use of third or first person
6. Tone of voice
7. Use of documentation
8. Punctuation
9. Degree of formality or informality?
10. Overall impression: If this article were a person, what would this person look like? Visualize him or her.

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