


THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

ISYS90048 Managing ICT Infrastructure

Malcolm Bertoni
Department of Computing & Information Systems
Semester 2, 2018, Week 1




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Teaching Session 01b

- Masters level academic views
- Surface and Deep Learning
- Critical literary analysis
- Writing: Descriptive and Critical
- Critical thinking

© University of Melbourne 2018

2




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Terms

- A **critical analysis/critical literary analysis** is subjective writing that expresses the writer's opinion or evaluation of a text
- **Analysis** means to break down and study the parts
- Writing a **critical** review requires two steps: **critical** reading and **critical** writing

© University of Melbourne 2018

3




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Masters Level Academic Views

- Critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation
 - Being critical requires you to question the information and opinions in a text and present your evaluation or judgement of the text
- Using high quality information to show in depth knowledge and understanding
- Examining issues in depth
- Constructing an argument or discussion
- Balanced, thorough judgments and conclusions
- Clear, concise writing
- Justifying a particular viewpoint or conclusion as a result of 'weighing up' the evidence
- As Masters students you are expected to be able to critically evaluate and analyse a report or document

© University of Melbourne 2018

4



 THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Deep learning

- Students should aim to *understand* ideas
 - So there is a less need to know *every* detail
- Assessment seen as a test of *understanding*
- Key concern is: do *I* ‘get it’?
 - Readiness to explore range of sources and follow new leads
 - Critical review of alternatives
 - Consider implications
- Greater personal interest in topic
 - Curiosity: what does this *mean*?
 - Taking more time to explore

© University of Melbourne 2018

5



 THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Surface Learning

- Students aim to recall basic facts/information by repetition
 - Seen as a test of *memory*
- Key concern: meeting requirements
- Heavy dependence on basic books, lecture notes, handouts
 - Uncritical reproduction
 - Broad generalisations
- Often a general lack of interest in topic
 - More interest in finishing
 - ‘Getting the job done quickly’
 - Key objective: passing subject

© University of Melbourne 2018

6




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

What does critically evaluating and analysing the literature mean?

- Asking the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’, not the ‘whats’
- This means being analytical, not just descriptive
- *Literary analysis* is a careful examination and evaluation of a text, image, or other work or report

© University of Melbourne 2018

7




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Literary analysis : Critical Reading

- Critical reading is an important precursor to critical writing
- The most characteristic features of critical reading are that you will:
 - Examine the evidence or arguments presented
 - Check out any influences on the evidence or arguments
 - Check out the limitations of study design or focus
 - Examine the interpretations made
 - Decide to what extent you are prepared to accept the authors’ arguments, opinions, or conclusions

© University of Melbourne 2018

8




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Literary analysis : Critical Reading Stages

- First Stage
 - Understand what you read
 - Identify key points
 - Summarise points
- Second Stage
 - Analyse the information to discover key themes and arguments in the report
 - Analyse evidence against processes
 - Evaluate the report and evidence
 - Themes, conditions, deeper issues

© University of Melbourne 2018

9



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE


Literary analysis : Critical Reading Stages
cont

- Third Stage
 - Synthesise/create your argument and position and ultimately your assignment based on what you have read
 - Provide Findings and Concluding actions

Summary: Stages in Critical Reading			
First Stage	Understanding what you read	Identifying key points	Summarising points
Second Stage	Analysing the information to discover key themes and arguments in the literature	Comparing and contrasting what various authors believe about a topic	Evaluating the research and thinking of the authors you have read
Third Stage	Synthesising (making or creating) something new (your argument and position and ultimately your assignment) based on what you have read		

© University of Melbourne 2018

10




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Literary analysis : Critical Reading Tips

- When you are reading, highlight or take notes
 - Summarise paragraphs
 - But avoid extracting and compiling lists of evidence, lists of facts and examples
 - Take a holistic approach and ask:
 - How does this text work?
 - How is it argued?
 - How is the evidence (the facts, examples, etc) used and interpreted?
 - How does the text reach its conclusions
 - Ask yourself:
 - What is the topic of the text or report?
 - What issues are addressed?
 - What conclusion does the report reach about the issue(s)?

© University of Melbourne 2018

11




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical and Descriptive Writing

© University of Melbourne 2018

12



 THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Descriptive Writing

- **Descriptive** writing *sets the background*
 - Represents the situation as it stands
 - Does not analyse or challenge
 - Gives a summary of a piece of literature
 - Tells the reader what you've done
 - Tends to use lots of quotes
 - Makes lists of things (literature, theories...)
 - Gives the 'facts': measurements, data, etc
 - Sets out the history of an event, idea, etc
 - Gives a biography of important people
 - Summarises what is known about the topic
 - Attractive because it is relatively simple

© University of Melbourne 2018

13



 THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing

- In contrast to the descriptive writing style used in school-based study, university study demands 'Critical' or 'Analytical' writing; sometimes referred to as 'critical analysis'
 - University study is principally concerned with what is **not** known and **not** agreed on i.e. why something happened, why is it important, what should now be done and why should it be done
 - Often has a **principal argument**, set out in the introduction, which runs throughout an essay or report – and why it is significant
- **Critical** writing *transforms* the information
 - Not reporting but constructing an argument
 - Pushing the ideas forward
 - Has a 'line' – a thread of ideas from start to finish
- Assignments need a good balance between description (scene-setting) and *analysis*

© University of Melbourne 2018

14


THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing

- Gives a clear and confident account which *refuses* simply to accept what has been said
- Gives a *balanced* account of pros & cons of ideas
- Avoids unsubstantiated assertions
 - Asserts or assume something is simply true
- Uses paragraphs to *develop* and expand ideas
- ALWAYS gives a clear and precise account of the relevant evidence and arguments
- ALWAYS backs up argument with **evidence**
- ALWAYS gives reasons for conclusion
- ALWAYS recognises limitations (tends, suggests..)
- ALWAYS avoid simplistic conclusions

© University of Melbourne 2018

15


THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing in Assignments

- Clearly, good critical writing also depends upon good critical reading skills
- Evaluation of the evidence is exactly the kind of thing your lecturer or tutor will be looking for as part of your critical analysis
- Most common objection: reports are ‘descriptive and not analytical’

© University of Melbourne 2018

16




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing in Assignments

1. Identify the focus of the assignment
 - You need to be clear about your focus
2. Identify your own point of view
 - Sum up main argument clearly and simply
 - Decide which theory or point of view
3. Consider how you'll persuade other people of your point of view
 - An assignment based on good critical analysis is to identify convincing reasons to support your conclusion
 - Work out the reasons for what you are writing
4. Find the proof
 - A good argument is based on solid evidence
 - Identify and evaluate the available evidence to see if it really does support your point of view

© University of Melbourne 2018

17




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing in Assignments

5. Engage in debate
 - Engage in debate with different points of view
 - Academic debates aren't usually clear-cut about right or wrong
 - As a student, you need to weigh up the evidence and then make a decision about which seems the most convincing
6. Structure your argument
 - You need to present your reasoning and evidence in a clear, well structured manner
 - Thought needs to be given how to present material in a way that helps the reader to see the point and to follow the argument
 - You need to think through your argument from the point of view of your reader
 - Is each point clearly linked to the one that came before?
 - Does everything you are saying build towards your final conclusion?

© University of Melbourne 2018

18



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE


Knowing the difference between Critical and Descriptive Writing

Descriptive	Critically Analytic
States what happened	Identifies the significance
States what something is like	Evaluates strengths and weaknesses
Gives the story so far	Weights one piece of information against another
States the order in which things happened	Makes reasoned judgments
Says how to do something	Argues a case according to the evidence
Explains what a theory says	Shows why something is relevant or suitable
Explains how something works	Indicates why something will work best
Notes the methods used	Identifies whether something is appropriate or suitable
Says when something occurred	Weights up the importance of the component parts
States the different components	Evaluates the relative significance of details
States options	Structures information in order of importance
Lists details	Shows the relevance of links between pieces of information
Lists in any order	Draws conclusions
States links between items	Identifies why the timing is of importance
Gives information	Gives the reasons for selecting each option

Reference: What is Critical Analysis? University of Bradford. Viewed June 23 2018, <https://www.brad.ac.uk/academic-skills/>

© University of Melbourne 2018

19



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE


When to use the different kinds of writing

Descriptive writing – when you need to:	Critical writing – when you need to:
Introduce, background	Organise and evaluate evidence
Present facts eg, a case study	Make comparisons between materials
Describe how an experiment was carried out	Analyse why something did not work
List details eg, resources used	Apply your own judgements
Outline areas of knowledge	Make links between areas of knowledge
Quote from writers in the field	Weigh up alternatives
Provide information or data	Evaluate/argue/contest
Summarise	Draw conclusions

Reference: A short guide to critical writing for Postgraduate Students. University of Birmingham. Viewed 26 June 2018, <http://www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc>

© University of Melbourne 2018

20




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing: Introductions & Conclusions

- There is often confusion about what introductions and conclusion should contain
- A good Introduction contain three things:
 - A **What**, **Why** and **How**
- **What:** i.e. what is your focus ('This report will focus on....') and what is your principal argument ('It will argue that....')
- **Why:** i.e. the significance and importance of the thing that you are discussing eg: why is it important for patient care or methods of teaching
- **How:** what is the structure in brief; eg: 'First the report will discuss....then it will examine....'etc
- Usually descriptive

© University of Melbourne 2018

21




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing: Introductions & Conclusions

- Conclusions should to a certain extent replicate the introduction's **What** and **Why**, rewritten into the past tense: in other words 'This report has argued that....' etc
- It should not contain any new information and just restate the principal argument and its significance
- Clarity within introductions and conclusions is also important and may need several drafts to get right
- You need to make sure that you have evidence that supports your conclusion
- There should always be a logical conclusion

© University of Melbourne 2018

22




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing: Structure, Paragraphing & Signposting

- Each paragraph should forward your principal argument in some way or refute a possible counter argument
- It should **not** be two lines **nor** should it be a whole page
- It should have a sentence at the beginning that gives an indication to the reader what the paragraph will do: i.e. 'It is important to consider the relationship between poverty and poor diet...' if that is what your paragraph does
- Your last sentence of your paragraph should make a link between that paragraph and the next
 - These are called signposts or linking sentences: sometimes your tutor may criticise a lack of 'signposting' or that you do not have 'linking sentences': this is often what they are referring to

© University of Melbourne 2018

23




THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Critical Writing: Key concepts

1. Describe
2. Discuss
3. Evidence and 'good evidence'
4. Critical analysis
5. Synthesis
6. Argument/Evaluation
7. Conclusion

© University of Melbourne 2018


24

 THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Critical Writing : Key concepts cont

1. Describe
 - Introduction, Background, assignment goals – keep to a minimum
2. Discuss
 - Articulation of different points of view
 - But not enough on its own
3. Evidence and ‘good evidence’
 - Evidence is what is advanced to support a claim
 - Good Evidence is relevant, verifiable, representative, cumulative, actionable


© University of Melbourne 2018 25

 THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Critical Writing : Key concepts cont

4. Critical analysis
 - Examination of elements:
 - Analysis is sometimes seen as ‘taking things apart’ ‘breaking them down’ or ‘deconstructing’ them
 - **Descriptive writing** answers the *who, what, where, and how* questions and often tends to summarise the text
 - **Analytical writing** answers to the *why* question
 - Students consider the question: “Why is this point important?”
5. Synthesis
 - Drawing conclusions about whether analysis conclusions put forward are valid, evidence based and justifiable
 - Present your point of view in a clear, well reasoned way *with justification*
 - Synthesis reconstructs things – puts things together to reach a conclusion and make a clearer picture

© University of Melbourne 2018 26



THE UNIVERSITY OF

MELBOURNE

Critical Writing : Key concepts cont


6. Argument/Evaluation

- Characteristics:
 - Position: Author has a position that they want the audience to accept
 - Reasons are given to support (justify) the position
 - Line of reasoning: Is the logical ‘unpacking’ of the reasons why ‘on balance’, considering everything, this argument (viewpoint) is justifiable

7. Conclusion: Not just a summary of the report

- You will often have several smaller arguments/conclusions, leading to one overall conclusion

© University of Melbourne 2018
27




THE UNIVERSITY OF

MELBOURNE

References

- A short guide to critical writing for Postgraduate Students. University of Birmingham. Viewed 26 June 2018, <http://www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/asc>
- Atherton J S (2013). *Doceo; Writing at Master's Level* [On-line: UK]. Viewed 20 May 2018, http://www.doceo.org.uk/academic/m_writing.htm
- Cottrel, S. (2005). *Critical Thinking Skills*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan
- Fowler, J. (2007). Thinking and Writing at Masters Level: A Reflective Passage, *British Journal of Nursing*, 16, 14, 887-890

© University of Melbourne 2018
28

THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

References cont

- Learning Development Centre, Glasgow School for Business and Society. Viewed 18 June 2018, <https://www.gcu.ac.uk/gsbs/ldc/academicwriting/>
- Ramsden, P. (2003). Learning to Teach in Higher Education, 2nd Edition, Routledge
- University of Leicester, Student Learning Development, Viewed 21 June 2018, <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/critical-reading>
- What is Critical Analysis? University of Bradford. Accessed June 23 2018, <https://www.brad.ac.uk/academic-skills/>

© University of Melbourne 2018 29