

Short Paper Instructions: Scholarly Response

LING 140: Language in the US

Spring 2024

In this Short Paper, you will closely read and examine a piece of scholarly literature. You can submit this kind of paper for any section of this course (“Variation”, “Power”, or “Histories”). As always, there is no minimum or maximum length, but I expect about 500-750 words (2-3 double-spaced pages).

Select an article- or chapter-length piece of published academic writing (perhaps 25-80 pages in length—page count is not a proxy for how difficult or complex an article is!). This can be published in an academic journal such as *Diachronica* or *American Speech*, or be a chapter of a book from an academic publisher. This can be an article listed in the course Zotero group, an article cited in an assigned reading or in the Zotero, another paper/chapter by one of the authors represented in the course readings, or something else. If “something else”, please send it to Chris to confirm that it is an appropriate choice.

Your paper should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction:** A short section, perhaps one paragraph, that outlines what you’re going to say in the next two sections. (Hint: it’s probably easier to write this last)
2. **Summary:** around one-half to one full page in which you summarize the main claims of the article, and the evidence that the article uses to support its claims. This section should also present some of the author’s motivation—why do they think this work is important? The focus should remain on this particular article, though—you don’t need to survey outside scholarship.
3. **Responses:** around one to one-and-a-half pages, in which you lay out your own reactions to the article. Organize this section into paragraphs, with each paragraph expressing a distinct idea. Write this in a formal, academic style, though the use of the first person is ok (“I found the argument that [...] unconvincing because [...]"). Start each paragraph with a topic sentence stating your idea, then present your reasoning.

Here are some suggestions for responses you might have to an article. These are written as paraphrases of topic sentences—use your own words. This is not an exhaustive list, just some ideas to spark your creativity:

- “I found [author]’s argument that [claim] unconvincing because...”
- “This article’s proposal, [claim], could have interesting implications for [other context].” [Explain crucial similarities and differences between the contexts]
- “This article’s proposal, [claim], may not generalize to [other context].” [Explain crucial similarities and differences between the contexts]
- “This article’s conclusion that [claim] sheds new light on [another idea you have read in this course or another course]...” [explain how]
- “This article’s conclusion that [claim] seems to contradict [another idea you have read in this course or another course]...” [explain how]
- “I am curious about how this method would apply to [context]” [sketch the basic idea of a study similar to the one in this paper, but for a new context]

Remember that these are just paragraph-length responses. They should be thought-out, but they don’t need to be “correct”. Writing can be how you think through ideas, not just a presentation of a finished product.

Grading Rubric

You will be graded according to the following criteria:

A successful scholarly response will...

- ... begin with an introduction outlining the rest of the paper.
- ... summarize the main claims, motivation, and key supporting evidence of the article.
- ... clearly distinguish between the author’s ideas and their own ideas.
- ... offer thoughtful responses with supporting reasoning.
- ... organize information into paragraphs with strong topic sentences.

For each of these points, the paper will be rated “2” if it succeeds in this area, “1” if it partially succeeds, and “0” if it does not succeed. Rewrites are welcome and re-graded.