

Critical Reading Instructions

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Critical Reading Instructions

You and your assigned group will do a “critical reading” assignment. The purpose of this assignment is threefold:

1. To **understand** an article even more deeply by reading it critically in a group.
2. To **help other students understand** the article by presenting your critical reading.
3. To **kick-start discussion** of this article by posing the questions your reading raised.

Let’s zoom in on each of these goals.

Meeting Ahead of Time

Your group must meet *before* the day assigned on the syllabus. Your group’s Critical Reading form (only one) is due the day before you present. Meet, discuss, summarize, and debate the article.

Your goal first and foremost is to understand the assigned article. Discuss it as a group. Re-read the article multiple times. Your goal is not to “divide and conquer” the article! **EVERYONE** should read **ALL** the article. You cannot get a comprehensive view of the article if you only summarize a part.

Everyone should have a solid good understanding of the article. Disagree. Change your mind. Try to summarize it to yourself in one paragraph, then one sentence. Work hard to understand it.

Then fill out the form and send it to me.

I. Understanding

A great way to achieve understanding is to answer these Critical Reading 6 questions: Use this template as you read, discuss, and take notes.

- **Author’s Thesis:** What is their thesis? What is their answer? Their solution? Their main truth claim?

- **Author's Question:** What is the author's question? What problem are they trying to solve?
- **Author's Arguments:** What is the argument for their thesis? What reasons does the author give to believe their thesis? What evidence? What support?
- **Objections to the Author's Thesis:** What counterarguments or objections to their own thesis do they mention and respond to?
- **Your Opinion:** Do you agree, disagree, or something else? Explain what argument persuades you or what objection dissuades you?
- **Discussion Question:** What remaining question do you have? What do you wonder about the author's assumptions, implications of their thesis, key terms, motives, or their arguments? Do not just ask, "what do you all think?"

Answer all these questions as clearly and succinctly as you can, individually and as a group. You don't need to turn in the form below, but you can use it if it helps you.

II. Presenting

On the assigned day, one or all of you will present your Critical Reading.

Walk the class through the article's arguments, counter arguments, and then present your opinion. We have all read the article, but maybe didn't read it as closely as you did.

How long is your presentation? 10-30 minutes is fine. (Your goal is not to talk for 50 minutes!) Summarize in detail how the author argues his or her thesis, then respond.

Since there are 2-4 people per group, you can fill out *one* Critical Reading Template and present that. Or you can fill out three Critical Reading templates and present just one of them (whichever you decide).

III. Discussion

Conclude your presentation with one or two questions that you are left with after reading the author's article. These questions will hopefully foster discussion but can be almost anything. Just make sure it is your sincere question that you are really wondering. Critical Reading 6-Point Template

Author's Question. What is the question the author wants to answer?

Thesis. What is the author's answer — their thesis, their truth-claim?

Arguments. Outline the author's argument supporting their thesis. What reasons do they give to accept their thesis?

Objections. What objections does the author present to his or her own argument? How does the author respond?

Your Opinion. Is the author's thesis correct, in your view? If not, what premise is false, what term unclear, or what inference invalid? Explain why you agree or disagree

Question. What is ONE biggest question you have for the class about this reading – you might question one assumption they have, or one premise, one term, their conclusion, or some implication of the argument.

IV. author_profile: true

(Optional) **Key terms.** What are the author's key terms and how are they defined? (Optional): **Assumptions.** What are the author's assumptions or presuppositions? (Optional): **Implications.** Suppose the author's thesis is right — what would follow logically?