**COURSE HANDOUT (Project #1 Part 1)**

**CRITICAL READING**

Critical reading is active and involved with a text, not just reading to find out what it says, but reading to respond to it by asking and answering questions. Reading critically is like engaging in silent dialogue with the text and its author. When we read, we seldom think about our dialogue with the text, but we are often unconsciously asking and answering questions like the following:

* What does this word mean, based on the words around it?
* What is likely to come next?
* Is the author being ironic?
* Why do I find this part of the text confusing?
* Is this a convincing argument?
* What do I think about this new idea?

**WHAT QUESTIONS GUIDE CRITICAL READING?**

Because critical reading is interacting with a text, you need to be able to focus your attention on it. Begin by a finding a place where your friends are unlikely to seek you out and turn off your BlackBerry or iPhone. Like any serious task or skill, critical reading is more successful if you work methodically by doing the following:

* Preview the text.
* Read the text slowly to discover the key ideas and the author’s angle on the topic.
* Reread the text to deepen your comprehension and to evaluate the author’s reasoning.

*Previewing the text*

Find out what you are getting into before you plunge into reading a text. Besides gauging how long it will take you to read it, you should also ask the following questions about the text:

* **What is this text about?** From the title, what can you infer about the topic and the author’s point of view on the topic? Skim the subheadings if the text has them; if not, look at the opening of each paragraph. Based on your preview, try to predict what questions this text will answer. Make a list of questions about the topic that you expect to find answered in the reading. Looking for answers to these questions will make your reading more purposeful.
* **What do I already know about the topic? What opinions do I have about it?**
* **Who wrote the text? When and where was it published?** What can you find out about the author or authors? Biographic details about an author and the author’s political or philosophical positions and other writings offer many clues for comprehending the text.
* **Who is the audience for this text?** The author had a relationship in mind while composing. Your comprehension will be better if you consider who this relationship was and why the author wrote to them.
* **What special features does the text contain that might aid comprehension?** Aspects of layout and visual presentation such as photographs and other images, charts, or graphs, boxes or sidebars, and subheadings can all aid understanding.

*Reading the Text*

After you have skimmed a text and answered the previewing questions, you are ready to settle in and read the text slowly, straight through. **As you read, mark the text with annotations., that is, notes in the margins. Annotating is essential to reading critically.** If you do not want to mark up a book, photocopy the reading or use sticky notes.

How should you annotate? Here are some questions your annotations might answer:

* **What words do I not know?** You can look them up now and write the definition in an annotation or circle them and look them up later.
* **What are the main points as opposed to subordinate passages?** Mark the main ideas in the margin so you can easily find them later. Use brackets to show which paragraphs go together to develop each main idea.
* **What words signal turns in the author’s train of thought?** Words like “however” and “but” show that the author will contradict something just stated. Expressions like “for example” suggest that the author will elaborate on an idea. Circle or underline these words and note how the author’s train of thoughts shifts.
* **Where does the author introduce viewpoints other than his or her own?** Authors often introduce other people who agree or disagree with their ideas. These may be direct quotations but often are paraphrases.
* **How well am I connecting with this reading?** If you find some parts of a text difficult to comprehend, put a question mark in the margin to tell yourself what you need to return to later. If you can connect any prior knowledge, observation, or personal opinion to something in the text, n, write your notes in the margin.

*Rereading the Text*

When you are preparing to discuss a reading. in class or to use it in your own writing, you will want to reread it. Go back to passages that you marked as difficult. You will understand them better once you have finished the entire reading.

**1) Paraphrasing Difficult Passages**

The reading you do in college is sometimes difficult. Paraphrasing can help you make sense of challenging passages. A paraphrase is a restatement in your own words and sentences. Paraphrasing is like translating the passage into language you better understand—using shorter, more direct sentences and more familiar vocabulary. It ought to substitute your own language for the author’s voice, sentence patterns and word choice.

***6 Steps to effective paraphrasing:***

1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.

2. Set the original aside, write your paraphrase on a note card.

3. Jot down a few words below your paraphrase to remind you later how you envision using this material. At the top of the note card, write a key word or phrase to indicate the subject of your paraphrase

4. Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.

5. Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phrase you have borrowed exactly from the source.

6. Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to incorporate the material into your paper.

**2) Finding the Writer’s Moves in a Text**

One way of seeing the big picture of any text you are reading is to go behind the scenes and think about how the text was constructed. What moves did the writer in creating it? Groups of paragraphs often work together to perform a function, such as providing an introduction, background information, an opposing view, or an illustration.

Recognizing these universally available moves and distinguishing them from their specific content is a way to analyze any text. A good strategy is to make a descriptive outline showing the major subdivision. For each subdivision of the reading, a descriptive outline answers two questions:

* What is the main point or content of this section? **What’s the summary of the section?**
* What is the move or function of this section?**What’s the author’s purpose of presenting the main point in this section? What strategies did the author use to help her/him/them present the main point in this section?**

Writing a descriptive outline requires two skills: paraphrasing the most important point or points in each section and analyzing the function of each section. Now, complete the subdivisions of “Don’t Blame the Eater” by David Zinczenko.

**Paragraphs 1-4**

Summary:

Purpose/Strategies:

**Paragraphs 5-6**

Summary:

Purpose/Strategies:

**Paragraphs 7-9**

Summary:

Purpose/Strategies:

**Paragraphs 10-11**

Summary:

Purpose/Strategies:

**3) Summarizing the Text**

Writing a summary of a reading helps you see the text as a whole, not a series of parts. It is often necessary to sum up the entire content of a reading, such as when you want to explain someone else’s argument in a paper of your own or when writing an annotated bibliography to let others know the content of your sources. To write a summary, you must first sort out the main ideas from the supporting details and then put the main ideas in your own words—that is, paraphrase them. Writing a descriptive outline, as explained above, is an excellent strategy for drafting a summary. Once you have found the major subdivisions of a reading and paraphrased their key points you have material to work with for a summary.

1. Identify the author's name and the title of the text in the first sentence.

2. State the overall main idea of the text (the thesis) in the first sentence.

3. Identify only the most important examples and supporting details. Mention the points and important

examples in the same order as the original.

4. State the author's main conclusion from the information presented.

***Summary Do's and Don'ts***

🗸 Do read the entire text carefully first, marking key ideas and examples. Make notes to yourself in

the margins about the main idea in each paragraph (or the example/s discussed).

🗸 Do organize your information properly. Include all four parts of a summary listed above.

🗸 Do keep your summary brief, but don't leave out anything important.

Don't use the author's words or include large quotes from the text. Use your own words and style.

Don't try to figure out the main idea of the text until you have finished reading through the entire

article. When you've finished reading, write out the text's main idea. Then, go back and briefly

reread the text to make sure what you have written is really the author's main idea.

Don't include your own ideas; don't use "I." Save your reaction for the response.

**4) Responding to a Reading**

During and after reading, you should have more extensive responses to a stimulating text, with more thoughts that can fit in a marginal note. That is why serious readers and researchers keep reading response journals for recording thoughts, reactions, and opinions that are more extensive than brief annotations. You could simply write your thoughts in a spiral notebook or in a file you keep on your computer, or you could follow the suggestion of many reading experts and use a double-entry journal, a notebook, or online document divided into two columns with quotations or paraphrases of the text in own column and your reactions on the right.

1. State your reaction to one or more of the author's ideas.

2. Express your opinion on the writer's point of view and explain *why* you agree or disagree.

3. Include your interpretation of the text (what it means to you); you will use "I.”

4. Make connections to your own personal experience. What does the article remind you of in your own life?

***Response Do's and Don'ts***

**🗸 Do** include any facts or personal experiences that help to explain the feelings or ideas that come

to you while reading. Connect your experience with what you are reading.

**Don't** just repeat the author's ideas. State your impressions/opinions about ideas in the article.

**Triple-Entry Notes**

Another way to stay closely engaged and discover deeper meanings in a text is to create triple-entry notes. (*Note: a first step to this technique would be to create* ***double****-entry notes labeled “What it says” and “What I think,” a natural extension of the right and left margins of annotating.*) This method of note-taking is especially effective for difficult texts. Two formats are described below with sample entries from “Don’t Blame the Eater.” With both formats, leave plenty of white space so you can add further notes as you reread and discuss the reading.

**Question-Centered Triple-Entry Notes**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Text’s Answer** | **My Response** |
| State the question or problem that the text or passage addresses. What are the fundamental questions that underlie the argument? (This may be the most difficult column.) Note the page or paragraph number. | Note how the text answers the question(s). | How would you answer the question? Why? Does this fit with the text’s answer? |
| *Shouldn’t we know better than to eat two meals a day in fast-food restaurants?* | *The article suggests that it’s difficult to find healthy alternatives even we understand that eating too much fast food is unhealthy.* | *I somewhat agree with the author because fast food restaurants are everywhere, and we don’t have many healthy food choices, especially in low-income neighborhoods.* |

**Quotation-Centered Triple-Entry Notes**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Quotation** | **Interpretation / (Paraphrase)** | **Commentary** |
| Choose a significant quote from the text. Choose carefully; pick a sentence that is important for the author’s argument or relates to an important point that you want to discuss. (Note location.) | Explain what the quote means in your own words; interpret the author’s meaning. | This column goes beyond the text. You may discuss what the quote means *to you* or how it might relate to other class readings. |
| *“As with the tobacco industry, it may be only a matter of time before state governments begin to see a direct line between the $1 billion that McDonald’s and Burger King spend each year on advertising and their own swelling health care costs.”* | *Similar to the tobacco industry’s approach, the fast food industry spends a lot of money on advertising, and the impact on our health could cost the government more.* | *Maybe we can use the strategies similar to how we fight the tobacco industry, such as requiring warning labels to solve the problem.* |

**What Is Good Writing?**

Writing well is not simply writing correctly. It is communicating **effectively**. Good writing, whether a letter, a memo, a report, or a paper in school, sends a message from a writer to a reader. All communication starts with *someone who has something to say to someone else and a reason or purpose for saying it*. Short or long, formal or informal, in school, at work, or in another setting, writing is always communication, and good communication responds appropriately to its ***rhetorical situation***.

**What Is the Rhetorical Situation?**

Rhetoric, *the study of effective communication*, helps us think critically about the texts we read and write. The relationship among the writer, the **reader,** and the **text** forms the rhetorical situation: *these are the variables always present when we think about a writing task.* The effectiveness of any piece of writing depends on how well theauthor has thought about these three basic elements of communication and how they relate to each other. You may want to draw a WRT *Triangle* on a piece of paper when you analyze the rhetorical situation. Here are some questions to consider when you work on the *WRT Triangle*:

Writer

Reader Text

***About the Writer***

* Why is the writer writing this text? What is her/his /their **purpose** (to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to express her/his /their feelings, and so on)?
* What is the writer’s identity? What is her/his /their **angle**, or **point of view**, on the topic?
* What does the writer’s angle imply about her/his /their **voice**, how s/he/they wants to sound to the reader?

***About the Reader***

* For whom is the writer writing the text? That is, who is the intended reader**,** people s/he /they wants to reach?
* Will the reader find the writer’s topic and point of view useful, interesting, something they can relate to?
* What **prior knowledge** and background information does the reader need?
* In what **context** (academic, business, public or personal) will the reader read and talk about the text?

***About the Text***

* What kind, or genre, of text is this, and **what** conventions govern it?
* What **expectations** do readers have for texts of this genre?
* In what **medium** (print or digital, spoken or read) is this genre typically available?
* What **design** features are associated with this genre?

In addition to being aware of the major variables (writer, reader & text) associated with a writing task, you should pay attention to how **rhetorical appeals** are presented in a writing task as well. Rhetorical appeals refer to ethos, pathos, and logos. These are classical Greek terms, dating back to Aristotle, who is traditionally seen as the father of rhetoric.  To be rhetorically effective (and thus persuasive, an author must engage the audience in a variety of compelling ways, which involves carefully choosing how to craft his or her argument so that the outcome, audience agreement with the argument or point, is achieved. Aristotle defined these modes of engagement and gave them the terms that we still use today: logos, pathos, and ethos.

You may also want to include your answers to the questions below in your WRT Triangle analysis.

**ABOUT THE WRITER**

***Ethos: Ethical Appeals:*** Appeal based on the character, persona, and/or position of the writer. This kind of appeals gives the audience a sense of the author as c a competent/fair/authority figure. Such an appeal may highlight the author’s trustworthiness, credibility, reliability, expert testimony, reliable sources, fairness, celebrity, etc.

* Is the author qualified to write on the subject? How does the author show herself/himself as trustworthy and reasonable?

**ABOUT THE READER**

***Pathos: Emotional Appeals:*** Appeal to beliefs/feelings of the reader. An appeal of pathos can move the reader to anger or tears as a means of persuasion. May attempt to invoke emotions such as fear, envy, patriotism, lust, etc. Or an appeal of pathos may stem from shared values b between the writer and the reader, or from an argument that caters to the reader’s beliefs.

* What strategies does the writer use to trigger her/his target reader’s emotion?

**ABOUT THE TEXT**

***Logos: Rational or Logical Appeal:*** Appeal to logical reasoning ability of the audience through the use of facts, case studies, statistics, experiments, logical reasoning, analogies, anecdotes, authority voices, etc.

* What is the subject matter? Are the writer’s claims reasonable? Is there sufficient evidence to support those claims?
* Does the writer make logical conclusions? Does he/she talk about c counterargument, other opinions or points of view?

**RHETORICAL ANAYLSIS**

To begin, let us define what a rhetorical analysis is NOT. **A rhetorical analysis is not a summary of a literary work or scholarly article.** You may have analyzed a novel’s plot line or taken apart the meaning of Shakespeare’s “to be or not to be” soliloquy in *Hamlet* before; however, **trying to understand the meaning of a work or summarize a story is NOT the goal of a rhetorical analysis!**

Definition: A rhetorical analysis requires you to apply your critical reading skills in order to “break down” a text. In essence, you break off the “parts” from the “whole” of the piece you’re analyzing. **The goal of a rhetorical analysis is to articulate HOW and WHY the writer writes, rather than WHAT he or she actually wrote.** **To do this, you will analyze the strategies the writer uses to achieve his/ her /their goal or purpose of writing their piece.**

Okay, so now that you’ve grasped the “dictionary” concept of a rhetorical analysis, let’s break it down into more manageable parts.

1) \*First off, you want to make sure you READ the articles, literary work, etc., carefully and understand what you have read. Try to identify the writer’s thesis, or his/her main idea or argument.

2) \*Now that you’ve read your sources and understand the overall arguments, it’s time to start analyzing them for rhetorical features. Take a second look at your sources, but this time, use the **rhetorical analysis chart** below to help you analyze rhetorical features.

**RHETORICAL ANALYSIS CHART**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **WHAT DOES THE WRITER SAY/DO?** | **WHY DOES THE WRITER SAY/DO IT?** |
| **1) What’s the writer’s thesis/main idea/overall argument?** | **Why is there a need for the writer to present the thesis/main idea?** |
| **2) What issues are related to the overall argument, according to the writer? Is there a larger debate, discussion, or controversy already going on?** | **Why is it important for the writer to discuss the issues?** |
| **3) What is the writer’s purpose? To persuade, inform, criticize? Something else?** | **Why does the writer choose this purpose? What effect does it create?** |
| **4) What do you know about the writer’s background, credibility, knowledge of the topic?** | **Why does the writer present or imply his/her background, credibility, knowledge of the topic?** |
| **5) How does the writer use diction? (Word choice, tone, style, figures of speech, is it formal, informal? Technical versus slang?)** | **Why does the writer use this type of diction? What effect does it create?** |
| **6) Who is the writer’s intended audience? What kind of relationship does the writer try to establish with the reader?** | **Is there a reason the writer chose to write for this particular audience?** |
| **7) What strategies does the writer use to trigger the reader’s emotion?** | **Why does the writer use the strategies? What effect do they create?** |
| **8) What kind, or genre, of text is this? What expectations does the reader have for texts of this genre?** | **Why does the writer use this genre to present his or her overall argument?** |
| **9) How does the writer arrange his or her ideas? Chronologically?** | **Does the arrangement of ideas, or way the writer develops them create some sort of effect? What purpose does it serve? Why does the writer arrange his/her ideas this way?** |
| **10) What evidence/examples does the writer use to support his or her ideas?** | **Why does the writer use the evidence/examples? What effect do they create?** |

\***The key idea here when answering these questions is understanding WHY the writer chooses to write the way he/she does.** So, when you answer the question “Who is the intended audience?” make sure you also think about why the writer would write for that particular audience. Do the same for the other questions. Of course, these questions are not the only ones you can be asking yourself. If you think of other important ideas and strategies the writer is using, consider those as well! These are simply a starting off point.

3) So you’ve analyzed your sources, answered the questions above, and have identified the rhetorical strategies the author uses. Now what?

1. **First, you’ll need to come up with your own thesis/main idea for your rhetorical analysis.** What point do you want to make about the writer’s rhetorical choices? Do the writer’s rhetorical strategies make his/her article a strong argument? A weak one?

2. **After identifying your thesis, try to arrange the rhetorical strategies you’ve identified in a logical way.** For example, you could start by identifying the purpose and why the writer chose to write about their topic. Next, you could identify specific stylistic choices, such as word choice, formal/informal language, etc. The idea is to logically transition from analyzing one rhetorical strategy to another. Stay on topic with the strategies that the writer uses often and actually has a purpose for using.

3. **With each point you make, have a strong topic sentence declaring the overall purpose of the rhetorical strategies you are about to discuss.** This will help identify the argument you are making, transition your ideas, and add fluidity.

4. **Keep in mind that while writers use different strategies to achieve their purposes, you also need to be making points and evaluations about these strategies, not simply summarizing them.** For example, instead of simply stating the author uses formal language in his essay, state what effect is created by using formal language. By doing this you are not only identifying the rhetorical strategy, by analyzing its purpose.

5. **As with all academic writing, check for grammar, transitional ease, fluidity, and a logical argument.** Proofread, proofread, proofread!

**Additional Information:**

\*If you’re having trouble identifying the difference between a summary and an analysis, here are some examples to aid you.

1. Summary: Smith says global warming has negative effects and we should care about our world’s future.

Rhetorical analysis: Smith provides multiple negative effects of global warming and punctuates his sentences with exclamation marks; thus, he uses quantitative descriptions and punctuation to create a sense of urgency in his readers to care about the planet’s status regarding global warming.

2. Summary: Johnson has a lot of formal language throughout his paper and hardly any informal words.

Rhetorical analysis: Johnson employs formal language throughout his essay. For example, he argues unequal funding in public schools creates a “horrific imbalance between affluent communities and those that are impoverished” (27). In using formal, academic writing, he establishes himself as a credible and valid author (thus, creating ethos from the classical form).