

WRITING PRECIS

September 14th, 2011

Why are we learning this?

- To help develop specific writing skills
- To help develop reading strategies and critical thinking
 - Inquisitive, attentive reading

What is a Précis?

- A précis is a clear, compact and logical summary of an article or book chapter.
- It preserves only the essential or important ideas of the original text.
- It is an abridged, impartial version of a document designed for rapid comprehension.

Use of the Précis

This technique of writing can be used in several ways:

- Essay or Exam Preparation
- Note-Taking
- Annotated Bibliographies
- To assess reading comprehension
- Use of the précis improves reading skills and increases precision and economy of language.
- The techniques of the précis are apparent in the following:

- Newspaper headlines
- Opening paragraphs and introductions to articles and anthologies
- Synopses for dance or theatre productions
- Course outlines and bios

Requirements for Précis writing

- Concentration and alertness
- Sensitivity to word meanings and the author's viewpoint
- Ability to distinguish between major and minor points
- A sense of proportion and emphasis

Steps to writing a Précis

- Read the whole article or book chapter attentively.
- Begin to recognize the author's tone and viewpoint.
- Re-read the article again if necessary for clearer comprehension and/or understanding of ideas.

As you read...

- Note and disregard parts of the author's work that are introductory.
- Underline or highlight key phrases and ideas.
- Note the words or concepts that you do not recognize or understand.
- Observe the emphasis or approach used by the author.

- When you are selecting ideas from the article or chapter to include in your précis, ask yourself:

If this idea or concept were omitted, would the fundamental meaning of the article be changed?

Guidelines for Précis Writing Assignments for Dance 1500

- Choose one of the assigned articles from the appropriate unit
 - Articles from other sources will not be accepted
 - The article you write about is the only source you should use; no secondary resources may be referenced.
- Use clear, factual expressions.
- Do not attempt to copy the style of the original source.
- Do not use quotes!!
- The Précis style does not permit you to introduce ideas of your own, or to criticize or comment on the author's ideas or argument. You are simply summarizing the key points in the article.
- However, at the end of your Précis tell me in one or two sentences *why* you chose the article.

WRITE IN THE THIRD PERSON

- You must distinguish that you are not writing about your own opinions, arguments, or research
 - Every paragraph must reference the author or article
 - Limit your précis to no more than **2 printed pages**
 - Do not include a cover page

- Submit a hard copy at the lecture
- 400 – 450 words maximum, 12pt font, double spaced.
- They will be marked out of 10.
 - The grading rubric will be available for you to see on the course website

Sources

At the end of your précis (after the statement about why you chose the article), include the source for the article using the MLA citation format.

For example:

Dixon-Gottschild, Brenda. "Stripping the Emperor: The Africanist Presence in American Concert Dance" in Dils, Ann and Cooper Albright, Ann (eds) *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002, pages 332-341.

Formatting details

- On the top right hand corner of the first page, please use the following formatting when submitting précis:
 - Lab # and Lab Instructor's Name
 - Your Name
 - Student Number
 - Course Number and Name
 - Date of Submission

Lab #3, with Catalina

Jane Doe

210101010

DANC 1500: The Dance

Experience

Oct 6th, 2010

Précis Assignment #1

Diedre Sklar introduces “Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive approach to

dance” by telling the readers that she will be looking at movement analysis

ethnographically through a list of working premises. She argues that it is through these

premises that we are enabled to see the cultural contexts behind movement or a dance.

It enables a widened perspective that allows us to look at and conceptualize dance and

movement.

The first premise of analysis is...

Due dates for Précis Writing Assignments:

September 28th, 2011

January 11th, 2012

February 29th, 2012

Again, why are we doing this??

- Because...

As an exercise, Précis writing will enable you:

- To absorb at a deeper intellectual level three assigned readings from the course;
- To improve reading comprehension, critical thinking and writing skills; and
- To be more informed about dance research

Examples

- There are four examples of excellent précis from last year under the FAQ section of the course website (www.yorku.ca/cauthery)
 - Overlap between examples and the first assignment (2nd and 4th examples)

Show and discuss the grading rubric

http://www.ehow.com/about_5137732_post-modern-dance-history.html

- Yvone Rainer: “Trio A” (1965, filmed in 1978)
 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Yo7XeRVSrc
 - Trisha Brown: “Sololos” (1976) and “Watermotor” (1978):
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZ7QXyQoSeQ>
- A sample of Contact Improvisation:
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBU9Oernv50>

What to look for in a great Précis:

- Is it an accurate summary of the key points of the article or chapter?

- Is it comprehensive, touching on all the key points?
- Is it efficient, saying a lot in a few words?
- Is the connection between the author's ideas clear?
- Is the writing, grammar, spelling, etc., correct? (It is a very good habit to have a proof reader look at any assignment before you submit it.)
- Is the personal statement included?
- Is the bibliographic citation included?