Writing about your literature prompt 1: Critical Reading Form

The *Critical Reading Form* can be filled in after every research paper or book read. This is a good way to keep track of what’s been read, develop critical reading skills and get you writing! Complete the points below by writing in full sentences; however, try not to write too much when reviewing a journal paper, for example, try to summarise it with no more than two to three sentences in each section. Being able to summarise books in the same way is also important, though more challenging due to their size and complexity.

Try writing to a timer and fill this form in in no more than 30mins. Make sure the bibliographic data is correct. If you feel you cannot fill in all the sections don’t worry, but realise that it is important to identify the gaps in your knowledge and use them to direct your reading. If you feel a piece of work is particularly important you can indicate it as such and come back to it later for a closer reading.

**Critical Reading Form Tips:**

1.) Create a MS Word template of the *critical reading form* which you can open and fill in after each paper. In addition set up a filing system on your PC to organise your notes. Remember to back up all your files, getting in the habit of synchronising your home and university computers and any external drives you have.

2.) You return to important papers and books and add an extra detail to the form, writing a paragraph or page for each section of the form on second and third readings.

3.) Use the forms as examples of your writing and thinking which you can use in supervisory sessions. These forms are good ways to practise your academic style and receive feedback on it.

4.) Many of the new electronic reference management software packages, which help you build accurate bibliographies, also have sections for notes. You can copy in the content of your form to these notes sections.

Note: If you cannot answer any of these questions that is ok to begin with but you should use those gaps to direct your reading. Use this exercise as a way to generate shorter pieces of critical writing which both help you develop your skill as a writer and enable you to get feedback on your writing from your supervisor at an early stage. Remember you can write in layers, revisiting this exercise time and time again building detail and complexity as your understanding develops.

*Critical Reading Form (do in Word?)*

1. Authors, title, date, publication title, place of publication, [vol/issue: pp. if a journal paper], type of copy I have (e.g. paper, PDF, notes)
2. What is this work about?
3. What are the main findings of this work?
4. What gap in our understanding does this work fill?
5. What is the research tradition/approach/method used?
6. How is this work connected to the wider research field? (Mention specific papers/researchers)
7. How is this work relevant to your assignment?
8. What are the limitations of this work? (Mention specific papers/researchers)
9. Useful quotation (optional)?

Code: circle as appropriate

1. Very useful, return to for more detailed analysis; 2. Useful and of general importance

3. Relevant but of minor importance; 4. Not relevant