

Peer Review Guidelines

Please read through these guidelines fully before you begin peer review.

Here's how it will work:

Read through your group member's writing once to get a feel for how it works as a whole. Do not write any comments yet.

Now go through the draft again, using the provided peer review assignment to guide you in your response to it. Some questions require you to write a response on the assignment sheet directly, while others require you to write on the draft itself (and some ask you to do both). Make sure that you **write legibly** (I suggest you use print, not cursive/script, since if your group members and I cannot read your comments, you will receive no credit for your work).

After you complete all of these questions, you should read through the draft again and make additional comments as you see fit. However, you should **not** correct spelling, grammatical, or proofreading mistakes (you should indicate them by circling them or otherwise making them, but you should not make changes to them for your peer). **These marginal notes (where you ask questions, make comments, etc.) are an important part of your response.**

You will also meet with your group during this class to discuss your comments, and your work will be checked/evaluated as to the quantity and quality of your responses.

This Peer Review counts **significantly towards both your overall essay grade and your participation grade**: If you do not attend class on Peer Review days (or are late) and you do not provide completed (thoughtful) comments for **each** of your group members, **you will receive NO credit** for your Peer Review grade for that essay (please note also that this penalty applies to being absent/late during the Peer Review class). This means that you will **lose one letter grade on your Final Project Write-Up**.

Group Discussion:

In-class discussion of your first drafts is meant **to supplement your written response, not to simply repeat it**. One of the most useful things you can offer your peers is your understanding (or lack thereof) of their essays: if a writer (your classmate) means to say one thing, but the reader (you) takes away something else from the essay, then there is a disconnect that needs to be addressed. First noting and then working to bridge this gap is an important step in the revision process.

After the break, you will break up into your peer review groups to discuss your feedback and revision strategies. Spending ~15 minutes per essay, you will go through each person's draft separately. **You shouldn't simply read through the comments you have already written, or simply exchange papers and have people read (to themselves) the comments already there**. This is a chance for **group work, dialogue**, and an opportunity for an **exchange of ideas**.

You should structure your discussion to start with the most important issues first ... if you believe the essay is mostly summary and not argumentative, you should all work together to help your group member brainstorm a thesis and subsequent claims. **Peer Review is not simply two people bombarding the writer with criticism/comments ... it is a conversation.** The person who wrote the essay should feel free to ask questions of the other group members as well (come prepared with any questions/concerns about your writing that you would like to discuss with your group members).

Remember that you should try to frame your comments in a way that is not insulting, harsh, mean, or alienating. If you just say, “your essay was bad” or “there was nothing good about it,” you are going to not only hurt your group member’s feelings and destroy his/her confidence, you will also lose any hope of helping her (she will become defensive and just shut down). After you give your comments, you should listen to what she was “trying” to convey in the essay, and then work together to negotiate revisions.

Do not simply answer questions with a “yes” or “no” (or a simple re-statement of the question). You will not receive any credit unless you explain your responses fully and provide helpful/detailed feedback.

You should definitely ask questions (in the margins), suggest productive directions for your peers to pursue, provide helpful feedback. The **least helpful** thing you can do for your classmates is to just state that everything is “pretty good” or “perfect” in the essay. Your goal is to help him/her re-vision the essay, not to merely praise it.

However, **under no circumstances is anyone to re-write any part of anyone’s essay** (e.g., you should offer suggestions for the thesis statement/topic sentences and ask questions that will help your peer to think more critically about his/her work and to produce more focused/argumentative claims, but don’t simply write, “your thesis would be better if you re-wrote is as the following: ...”).

Some other general notes:

Make sure that **you come to class** for Peer Review and that **you show up on time** (this is very important)!

Bring a blank printed copy of your own essay to class on Peer Review day, so that you can take notes during the peer review based on your group members’ comments (they will definitely be saying things/giving you advice that they have not already written down, and you want to make sure that you take note of it as it will help you to revise your essay).

At the end of the peer review session, you will exchange work. You should take home the feedback written about your essays so that you can use it as you revise towards your final draft.