

Thursday, December 4, 2014

Name of Reviewer:

Name of Person Whose Essay is Being Reviewed:

Peer Review: Responding to First Drafts of Research Essay

[Part I – Argument: Thesis and Purpose]

1. Does the essay begin in an engaging/focused way, or do you finish reading it unsure about what the point/argument of this essay is? Does it give an overview of the topic as well as a clear sense of the essay's argument? Is it specific enough (defining key terms, setting scope of project/focusing topic) or is it too vague/general? **Write a paragraph below** to explain your (specific) impressions of the essay's opening and **make marginal comments on the essay** itself.

2. **In the space below**, explain your thoughts on the essay's argument. Do not simply write that the thesis is "good" or "bad" or "specific" or "vague." Tell your group member "why" the thesis is this way and offer suggestions for revision (based on your understanding of how the essay as a whole works/develops). Make sure to address the "so what?" issue and to consider the follow questions:

- Is the position of the author clear and specific (or is it a vague generalization)? Why or why not?
- Is the thesis engaging and more than an obvious statement of fact (is it new and interesting)? Why or why not?
- Is the thesis supportable (or does it seem farfetched or irrelevant to the topic)?
- Is the thesis directly related to a close reading/analysis of the text/topic chosen?

3. Does the essay specifically address the purpose of this assignment (to write an argumentative research essay that explores a complex topic and makes a clear, engaging argument in response)? **Below, explain** why or why not (don't just write "yes" or "no").

4. Finally, consider the essay's title (this should be a title specific to the argument of the essay, not a generic one such as "Research Essay" or "Technology and Happiness Is it appropriate for the essay? Is it specific enough in describing the essay's particular argument? **Below, explain** why or why not.

[Part II – Paragraphs: Content, Organization, and Development]

*For any of the following questions, **feel free to write a paragraph (on this sheet)** explaining your thoughts if you feel there is a general trend occurring through the essay (and you are able to synthesize your feedback). Also, try "color-coding" your peer's essay with highlighters (one color for each idea).

1. Go through each body paragraph and **in the margins** write the claim presented there (jot down just a few words ... maximum one short sentence). If there is more than one **main** idea (claim), number them and write them down as well.

2. Then, go back and read the first sentence of each body paragraph. Does this topic sentence adequately represent the claim of the paragraph **and** explain the **significance** of this idea (why these details are important)? Does it answer the "so what?" question? **On the draft**, write "yes" or "no" next to each first sentence and then explain why or why not.

3. Is each paragraph clearly linked to the author's thesis? Or does your peer ever stray from his/her main point? **On the draft**, indicate paragraphs/sections that are not connected to the essay's main argument (are not relevant) and explain why.

4. Does each paragraph build on the previous one (develop the argument further), or is the argument repetitive (stating the same thing over and over again in slightly different words)? **Provide comments (with explanations) in the margins.**

5. Are there effective transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas? Does the essay flow smoothly from beginning to end? Is the essay's progression logical and coherent (do you feel that, as a reader, you get the information you need, the order you need, to understand the essay's argument)? **In the margins**, indicate any places you feel that the writing is disconnected (and explain why).

6. Are there any points in the argument where you can honestly say, "so what?" (are they irrelevant, boring, obvious, or not specific enough)? Does your peer simply present facts/information and summarize her source? If so, **indicate these areas in the margins** of the draft and offer suggestions for improvement.

[Part III – Sources: Comprehension, Analysis, and Incorporation]

1. Does the essay demonstrate a strong knowledge of the topic, related issues, and sources? Comment on the quality of your peer's use of his/her sources. Does s/he show a good understanding of the texts' arguments/ideas? Are there any places where you think your peer misunderstands or distorts the meaning/content of a text or doesn't address important aspects of it? **Explain your thoughts in the space below** and **make comments in the margins** to address specific cases.

2. Is the necessary background information (the essential/relevant information you need as a reader to understand the argument the writer will eventually make) provided at the beginning of the essay (in the first body paragraph/s after the Introduction)? **Please note in the margins** which paragraphs serve as background information and whether or not they are in the appropriate place in the essay (e.g., do they come halfway through the essay, when a reader would have benefited from them on page 1?). Also **please note any places** where you feel confused or wish you had more information about what is being discussed.

3. How well does your peer incorporate examples/summary/quotations from the text(s) into his/her own writing? Is this material well-integrated into the body of your peer's essay (introduced and then explained), or is it awkward and out-of-place? Are they relevant to your peer's argument (do they support a point he/she makes)? Is this discussion specific (with concrete details) and relevant to the overall thesis (does it support a larger point)? Is it put in dialogue with the other sources and the larger argument?

In the margins of the draft, indicate whether examples/summary/quotes are appropriate (do they support the argument being made in that paragraph?), relevant (for quotes, is it necessary to use the author's exact words here or is the point already clear?), introduced (not just thrown into the essay abruptly/without warning), and explained (does your classmate provide sufficient analysis of the example?). If the quote/detail is just fluff (thrown in to fill up space), please indicate so. Make suggestions for revision.

Also, if possible, **provide a comment below synthesizing your thoughts** on the incorporation of sources.

4. Is the use of research (either direct quotations/examples or summary/paraphrase) balanced with your peer's own ideas and analysis (do the sources occupy too much – or too little – space in the argument)? **Explain your response below.**

5. Does your peer cite sources correctly (both parenthetically within the essay and in a separate “Works Cited” page) in MLA format? If not, **offer suggestions for correction on the draft itself.**

6. Does the essay provide possible opposing viewpoints/counter-arguments (or does the writer simply provide one side of the topic/argument)? Are these counter-arguments adequately answered/dealt with by your peer within the course of his/her essay or are they presented in a way that undermines your peer’s own position? **Please explain below and offer suggestions for improvement.**

[Part IV – Conclusion]

Consider the Conclusion (final paragraph). Does it provide a sense of closure to this essay? Does it adequately sum up the essay’s argument or do you finish reading it feeling unsatisfied? Does it present any new information that confuses you (new information should be developed into its own body paragraph)? **Explain your specific thoughts below.**

[Part V – Tone: Style and Diction & Sentence-Level Issues]

1. Describe the tone/voice of the essay: is the tone appropriate for both the assignment and the audience? Why or why not? (Consider which “person” you peer writes in – 1st, 2nd, or 3rd). **Make specific comments on the draft and explain your thoughts below.**

2. Is the essay written in the present tense (it should be!)? If not, please **circle/highlight** the incorrect use of tense on the draft itself and in group discussion in class **discuss possibilities for revision.**

3. Are there any words/phrases that seem awkward or harsh to you (that might insult/alienate/confuse readers)? Please address these diction (word choice) issues when they occur **on the draft itself** and, if necessary, **make a synthesis comment here.**

4. Pay particular attention to the "authority" and credibility of the writer throughout the essay. Does the essay seem over-confident/one-sided (too much like personal opinion rather than close analysis and logical argumentation)? Or does the essay seem too neutral (doesn't really take a stand or support the thesis)? **Explain below** and offer specific suggestions for improvement **on the draft itself.**

5. Are there typos or sentence-level errors (spelling, grammar, syntax, word choice, etc.) that you notice? If so, **please circle/highlight them** on the draft itself and in group discussion in class **discuss possibilities for revision.** Sentence-level errors are particularly important when they interfere with the writer's ability to convey his/her meaning.

[Part VI: Overall Impression]

1. What did you take away from this essay (what is the author's main point)?

2. Have you learned anything new from this essay? If so, what?

3. Final Comment

Finally, below you should write a “terminal” (end) comment of **at least two full paragraphs (at least 5 sentences each)**, addressed to the writer. Make sure to start off by stating the positive aspects of the essay (what you think is done successfully). Then, pick three main points that you think your peer should focus on as he/she revises this essay. Make sure to be as specific as possible. It is not necessary to repeat every comment you have made already ... streamline/synthesize your feedback here to best help your classmate. **You will need to read the whole essay through again (and look over the comments you have made) to figure out how to effectively/concisely sum up your responses.**

***DO NOT skip this Final Comment:** This is the MOST important part of your peer review, and no work will be given credit without a complete/thoughtful final comment.