

21W.011 Fall 2015 Essay #2 Workshop Instructions

Workshop: Thurs. 11/5

Due: Review letters (2 copies) for three essays; marked-up essays. Bring Essay 2 prompt and these instructions. You will be reviewing three essays: one essay that all class members will review and two other essays from your small workshop group. (If your essay is the general workshop essay, your workload is reduced!)

For workshop, review each essay twice. First, read the piece aloud. Then read it silently, writing in marginal comments. Type a letter (one to one and a half pages) to each writer; make two copies of the letters. Your letters should let your fellow students know a few specific strong points in the essay, as well as two or three specific things that need work. We are interested primarily in the larger issues: voice, comparative argument, use of secondary sources and organization. We will focus secondarily on “polishing” the essay in terms of grammar, punctuation, etc. Here are some questions to consider:

1. Do the title and introduction engage you? Does the writer define “keyterms” and provide enough background and context (e.g., historical) for understanding the importance of the topic? Suggest areas for improvement.
2. How much did you learn (or re-learn) about this issue? Does the writer adequately compare different viewpoints on the issue? Is each view fairly and equally presented? Does the organization of the piece work well? (Typically writers have two possible strategies: (a) present one side, then the other (A/B) or alternate between positions, discussing similar aspects of each (A/B/A/B...) Can you make suggestions to improve the organization? (e.g., reorganization or transitional strategies). Note: a good test of the success of this type of essay is to see if the piece can adequately educate a motivated reader about different sides of an issue.
3. Has the author chosen appropriate secondary sources representing different viewpoints? Do the sources seem credible? Has s/he integrated secondary sources well and quoted from those sources appropriately? Do excerpt quotes seem too long/short?) Are there enough sources for each side? Are there other sources (or types of sources) you would suggest? How can s/he could improve in this area?
4. How might an interview (optional) contribute to this essay?
5. How effective is the conclusion in dynamically closing the piece? In the conclusion, does the writer effectively stimulate reflection about the issue?
6. How can the writer strengthen the essay on the paragraph, sentence or word level? Here you might comment on such issues as paragraph cohesion (are there any paragraphs in which the writer might re-order sentences?), word and sentence structure repetition, run-on sentences, and overuse of being and passive verbs.
7. Comment on visuals (maps, photos, charts, graphs, timelines, etc.) that supplement the text. Are there any other visuals (or types of visuals) that you would suggest?

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