

Assignment 2: The Rhetorical Analysis/Peer Critique

Purpose: No pedagogical tool this semester will prove more powerful at improving your writing than the workshop/peer critique process. Invariably, it's easier to see the flaws and opportunities for improvement in *other* people's writing; the point of workshop is to offer authors a set of fresh eyes to help them revise their pieces. There are advantages to the critic as well: ideally, with practice, you'll one day be able to turn your refined critical eye toward your own work.

Audience: Your audience for each critique is the author of the workshoped essay. You may write in letter form or essay form, but you're writing directly to the author (and at the end of each workshop, you will e-mail the author your critique for their essay).

Assignment: For every essay in your workshop group, you must compose a 1-page single-spaced critique, commenting on both macro- and micro-issues in the document. Macro-issues include:

- **Issues Presented and Answers:** Does the memo clearly lay out issues/questions responsive to the assignment and provide clear answers to those questions?
- **Statement of Facts:** Is the statement of facts sufficiently abbreviated, only including the facts necessary to the analysis that follows? Conversely, are any facts missing that are later revealed in the discussion?
- **Discussion:** Is the discussion organized in a way that makes sense? Does it sufficiently explain the reasoning behind the memo's answers? Are there clear and cogent statements of the law? Are they followed by a logical application of the law to the case's facts? Has the author followed IRAC?
- **Conclusion:** Does the author provide a satisfying and clear summary of the memo's findings?
- **Structure:** Are there any transitions that feel startling or abrupt? Bear in mind that abrupt transitions usually point to a larger problem with argumentation: the author needs to clarify the relationship between example X and example Y, showing how these ideas build on each other and relate to the main points of the memo.

Micro-issues include:

- **Style:** Choose a sampling of sentences/phrases that are awkward, wordy, or confusing and explain to the writer what feels off.
- **Mechanics:** Have you noticed any consistent or distracting errors? Look out for common mistakes, such as comma splices, subject/verb disagreement, weak verbs and citation errors.
- **Formatting:** Could the document be more reader-friendly and/or more clearly laid out?

Tips:

- Don't be afraid to compliment! Though the bulk of your analysis will more than likely be critical, you should also take time to praise the author for whatever he or she is doing well.
- Be specific: vague criticisms are almost always useless without examples to make them clear. Every time you point out an issue, cite an example of that issue from the text and provide page numbers.

Deadline: The midnight before each workshop day (there will be 6 total: 3 for A1 and 3 for A3), combine all the critiques for all the essays to be workshoped the next day (this should be 3-4 essays) into one document and upload it onto Blackboard. Your grade for A3 depends on your timely submission of all peer critiques meeting the above expectations for both the A1 and A3 workshops.