

# Critical Response Papers

## Instructions

Each student will write two critical response papers over the course of the semester. Each paper will not exceed 1,000 words including tables, references, captions, footnotes, and endnotes. A paper must be turned in within two weeks of the discussion of the reading it responds to. For example, if a response paper addresses a reading discussed on March 17 (respectively, March 18), the latest it can be turned in is March 31 (respectively, April 1). **Important:** Late papers will not be accepted (and thus will receive a grade of zero) unless you have documentation of a medical or family emergency.

A critical response paper has two goals: to summarize the main idea of a course reading and to provide a critical assessment. A response paper should include the following elements: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

## Introduction

The introduction provides basic information about the reading. This includes:

- The names of the authors and the publication you are responding to.
- A brief summary of the main idea, arguments, and evidence the authors present.

## Body of the Paper

The body contains your arguments. Here are some examples of the kind of arguments you might want to make (this is not an exhaustive list).

- For theoretical readings:
  - Use historical evidence to evaluate the plausibility of the assumptions the authors make.
  - Propose an important factor that the theory neglects and show how including this factor would change the conclusion.
  - Characterize an additional implication of the theory that the authors do not discuss.
- For empirical readings:
  - Pursue an alternative interpretation of the evidence the authors present.
  - Evaluate how the case fits (or fails to fit) a particular theoretical model.
  - Argue, based on a theoretical model, for how the case would have played out differently if some factor had been different.

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion is a restatement of what you said in your paper. Note that it should include no new information.