

Final Exam: Critique or Revision

For the final exam, you have two options: critique a peer paper or revise your documented essay or oral presentation. No matter what, your job is to demonstrate what you have learned this semester in terms of argument and research. Can you generate focused research questions from a broader topic? Can you identify key claims, assumptions, and support in order to evaluate evidence and critique an argument? Can you construct and support a persuasive argument, conveying it coherently?

The deadline for your final exam is Thursday, December 16, at 11 am, submitted online via email in .doc or .docx format (look for my reply indicating that I have received and can open the document) or in hard copy at my office (Jackson 312). You may submit your final exam early if you wish.

Final Critique

Having listened carefully to the practice presentations in our class and the final presentations at the FYE Roundtables, select one paper as the object of a critique. Ask one of the presenters you heard for a copy of his or her paper and write a critique of that peer paper as the final hurrah in our class.

1. Write 2-5 pages unpacking the argument, probing it for its strengths and weaknesses. Your own paper should be argument-driven, making a claim for whether or not you find the critiqued paper strong or weak, and why.
2. Research behind the writer, reading at least one original source listed in the Works Cited list. Are these good sources? Why or why not? Were the sources used well? How or how not? Would you recommend that the writer use other sources? Why or why not?
3. Critique the argument, identifying the writer's key claims, assumptions, and support, and discussing whether or not they are sensible and persuasive choices. Has the writer argued important points or obvious ones? Is there indeed an argument here or is the paper primarily a presentation of unarguable facts? What did the writer not discuss that you wish had been considered? Why?
4. Attach a copy of the original paper.

Final Revision

Consider deeply the comments you received from me on your oral presentation or documented essay, and take into account any other ideas you have had since presenting in class and in the Roundtables or writing the original paper. Also consider what you have learned from doing the other part: that is, a revised essay might reflect your experience with the oral presentation of your research and receiving peer questions. Then revise your oral presentation or documented essay into an even better argument. A revision does not merely mean proofreading your paper or making grammatical or mechanical corrections, though that should certainly be part of your revision process. Instead, a revision is literally a "re-seeing" of your paper, thinking anew of your evidence and argument, and sharpening them well.

If you revise your documented essay, write a 1- to 2-page introduction to the revision: critique your previous draft (see #3 above) and discuss what changes you have made and why.

If you plan to revise your oral presentation, tell me this in person or via email no later than 11 am Friday, December 10. If any of our class members chooses this option, we will meet together to hear the revised presentation on Thursday, December 16, sometime between 8 and 11 am (precise time TBA).

Grades on revised essays or presentations, if improved, will increase the grade on the original: half of the difference between the original grade and the revised grade will be added to the original grade. The grade on your 1- to 2-page revision introduction will be entered for the Final Exam portion of the class grade.