Critical Reading Assignment (CRA)
Writing Assignment #1
MMW 121
Fall 2014

Page Length: Two (2) pages of summary, plus your annotated printout of the article/essay
Value: 5% of course grade
Due Date: Beginning of section during Week 3. After this time, late penalties will apply (see MMW Style Sheet). Even with late penalties, your CRA will not be accepted after section during Week 5, after which time it will be considered “not completed” and will result in a grade of F for the course. Any exception to this deadline must be approved with specific and legitimate documentation in advance by your TA.

Learning Goals and Outcomes
In this assignment, you will:

- refine your critical reading and analytic reasoning skills by carefully identifying the components of an academic argument in an academic source. The source assigned to your track can be found by going to UCSD Library Course Reserves (set up your UCSD Library account to access this).
- summarize, in your own words, the main points of an academic argument.

While in the next and final writing assignments you will evaluate the strength of scholarly arguments in this assignment your focus will be to fully understand what the author’s argument is, and to describe how the author constructs the argument. You are being asked to slow down and “listen” to what one scholar is arguing before rushing to judgment or expressing your opinion.

In this assignment, you will read the article or essay as if you fully agree with the scholar’s argument. You will identify the components of the argument with annotations, and you will summarize the argument in your own words without evaluating it (save that for the final assignment). Do not use any outside sources and do not bring in any outside material. In the process of annotating the text and summarizing the argument, you will improve your skills in critical reading and paraphrasing. You will continue to develop all of these skills in the next writing assignments, and you will use them to evaluate scholarship, make your own arguments, and write better research papers in MMW 122 and other courses.

Part I (40%) – Annotations: Identify and Label the Components of a Scholarly Argument
Print/photocopy your assigned source. Annotate the text by writing labels and brief comments in the left and right margins of the text, noting how each paragraph contributes to the scholar’s argument. See the “Sample Annotated Essay” posted to the MMW Website.

Left margin: In the left margin next to each paragraph of the text, comment on what each paragraph says about the topic of the essay.

Right margin: In the right margin next to each paragraph of the text, comment on what each paragraph does structure the argument. What is the purpose of each paragraph in making the scholar’s argument?
You should locate and label any or all of the following that apply. Make brief notes in the margin that illustrate answers to the Questions to Consider below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Questions to consider . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic/Background</td>
<td>What is the topic of the essay? On which event, issue, institution, phenomenon, and/or person does the author focus? In which time period did the subject of the essay exist or take place? In which geographical area? What background information did the author find it necessary to provide?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>What problem does the author raise and attempt to solve? How does this problem lead the author to ask the following question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>What research question does the author pose (implicitly or explicitly)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>What is the answer to the author’s research question or the solution to the problem that s/he poses? Where does the author state/restate the thesis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claims</td>
<td>What claims does the author develop and support in making his/her overall argument?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>What evidence is provided to support each claim? (In writing your summary, be specific when naming the evidence used by author.) Is this evidence: facts, examples, metaphors, case studies, statistics, testimonies? Something else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-evidence/Counter-argument</td>
<td>Does the author refer to points of view different from his/her own? Where does s/he address counter-evidence or counter-arguments? Label the evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuttal</td>
<td>Does the author give reasons to explain the weakness of the counter-evidence/counter-argument, or explain why his/her claims are stronger than others’ claims?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance/implications</td>
<td>Does the author explain why his/her question or thesis is significant or suggest implications of his/her argument?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part II (60%) – Summarizing the Argument (2 pages)**

Now that you have identified what the scholar is arguing and how the argument is constructed, you will write a summary, in prose, of the argument in your own words.

State the main ideas and key points of the argument simply, objectively, and accurately in your own words in order to demonstrate that you understand the problem and question the author raises and the argument s/he makes to address the problem or answer the question. Do not judge or evaluate the scholar’s argument, just explain it and all of its relevant components: the problem, question, thesis, and main claims and evidence used to support the thesis. Pay attention to counter-arguments/evidence, how the author addresses the evidence supporting these alternative hypotheses, and how the author discusses the significance of the thesis and implications of it.

To demonstrate that you understand the argument, your summary must be written in your own words. Since you will not use many of the author’s exact words, you will not include direct quotations. You should, however, paraphrase the author’s ideas (still in your own words) or use data from the author’s text; this paraphrased material or data must, of course, include an in-text citation containing the page number. If you are not sure of the difference between a quotation, a paraphrase, and a summary, or you need help to determine if/when to use citations, see Easy Writer, pp. 193-197.
Requirements: All MMW papers are held to the requirements, policies, and penalties outlined in the MMW Style Sheet. It is your responsibility to read and follow the Style Sheet before submitting any MMW paper.

What to submit:

___ (1) Printed article/essay with hand-written annotations in the margins
___ (2) Two-page Critical Reading Assignment argument summary
___ (3) Print the grading rubric and submit it with your CRA summary.
___ (3) Submit your two-page CRA summary to Turnitin.com by midnight on the day you submit the paper copy to your TA. The version you submit to Turnitin.com must be exactly the same as version you submit to your TA.

Your TA will not grade your assignment until all of these have been submitted. Late penalties will apply until the assignment is completely submitted.

(9.17.14)