GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS:
While your peers will do most of the talking when it comes time to discuss your paper, you’ll get a lot more out of the discussion if you take an active role. Your readers can be a valuable resource, so tell them what you are trying to accomplish and ask them for their advice. To get the most helpful feedback possible, write notes to your readers—at the ends of sections, at places where you are stuck and your paper comes to a dead stop, and/or at the end of the whole draft. What you can mention in such notes includes:

Aspects of the paper that you think don’t work: Alert your readers to the rough spots: tortuous introductions, weak counterarguments, and so forth. That way, your readers won’t waste their time telling you what you already know, and you can ask for advice where you think it will be most useful.

Gaps in your paper: Let your readers know what the problem is and what you think you’re going to do about it. Square brackets are good for this purpose; you can simply write some rough notes about why you’re stuck, what you’re planning to add, and where the information is going to come from.

Questions about particular parts of your paper: Even when you think you’re doing well, it’s always a good idea to get feedback from other readers. You might, for example, think you have a strong counterargument, but you can still ask your group members what they think: do you explain yourself well enough? Do you provide enough evidence? And so forth.

In general, think of notes to your readers as part of a conversation in which you will all share useful information. You know what you’re trying to accomplish, but the people in your group do not: they will be responding as good readers who happen not to know very much about your topic or your purpose. You can make sure that they give you the feedback you need if you tell them what it is that you would most like to know.

When you go to the workshop meeting, remember to bring a copy of your paper for yourself. This will allow you to follow the comments that your peers make about your writing.
GUIDELINES FOR READERS:
Commenting effectively takes time, so plan to spend at least one hour per rough draft. As you read each paper, pay close attention to its structure, strength of evidence, completeness of argument, and overall coherence. Write your comments in the margins as you read; you might not remember your impressions if you don’t record them right away. When you comment, please do the following:

Introduction:
Find the question. Mark it with a “Q.” If the question is only stated implicitly, mark what seems to be the question.
Comment on the clarity of the question. Is it easy to understand what the author is asking?
Comment on the context that the author provides. Do you know what led the author to ask the question? Can you determine the precise historical period in which the author is working?
Find the thesis statement. Double underline it. Comment on whether or not the thesis answers the question the author has posed.
Note where the thesis statement is located. Comment on whether its placement makes it easy to identify or whether it is buried in the middle of a paragraph.
Note how the author words the thesis statement. Comment on whether or not the wording makes it easy for you to tell that this is the thesis.
Does the introduction tell you why you might want to read the paper? If not, comment on what the author could add or change that would make the paper more inviting.

Alternative hypothesis/hypotheses:
Find the counterargument(s). Mark it/them with “CA.”
Comment on the appropriateness of the counterargument. Does it address the same question as does the thesis? Does it (as it should) propose a different answer to that question, or a different interpretation of a piece of evidence?

Body paragraphs:
Find the topic sentence of each paragraph. Underline it.
Note whether each topic sentence is relevant to the thesis and/or to a counterargument. Mark any that seem irrelevant.
Do all of the sentences in each paragraph relate to that paragraph’s topic sentence? Mark any sentences that seem to be out of place.
Can you follow the logical development of the author’s main claims? Mark any place where you seem to lose the thread of the argument. Mark any place where the argument gets repetitive.
Look at the transitions. Does the beginning of each paragraph follow logically from the end of the previous one? Mark an especially effective transition. Mark a transition that you think needs to be revised (if there is one). Suggest, if you can, a way to make that transition work.
The argument as a whole:
Does the author provide evidence in support of both the thesis and the counterargument(s)? Mark any points that seem to require more evidence.
Is each piece of evidence relevant to the thesis or a counterargument? Mark any that are not.
Does the author explain the relevance of the evidence to his/her argument? Point out where the evidence is explained particularly effectively. Mark the places where you believe that more explanation would strengthen or clarify the argument.
Does the author acknowledge the sources of his or her information? Mark any places in the paper where you are unsure of whether the idea comes from the author or from a source.
Does the author use correct citation format? Does the author use quotation marks appropriately? Whenever you see a parenthetical citation, can you tell how much of the material preceding the citation comes from the source?
Overall, do you find the argument persuasive? Comment on how well the author rebuts the alternative hypothesis and argues in support of the thesis.

Conclusion:
Comment on how well the conclusion meets these conventional criteria:
It does not introduce new evidence.
It sums up the argument of the paper.
It goes beyond recapitulating the introduction (e.g., it comments in an interesting way on the “so what?”).
It leaves readers with a last thought or reflection on the topic.

Overall comments:
What did you like best about this paper? (This can be a long list.)
What do you think is the single most important revision the author can make?