

Critical Analysis Guidelines

For the final assignment, your purpose is to explore and critically analyze an issue that is central to Kay's "A New Course." In developing a critical analysis, you will make sense of a topic or theme for your audience by analyzing and discussing some of the ideas in Kay's text, in light of some of the ideas in other texts. The ideas you broach from other texts may differ—and often will—from Kay's, but make sure that the topics explored within the texts are closely related. Choose the focus of your essay based on a topic shared by the texts you analyze. Analyze what perspectives and positions about the central subject each text adds to your understanding of that focus, with the goal of shaping your essay to further and complicate an issue that is, above all, central to Kay's text.

To develop your focus, consider what major issues the texts all comment on. What perspective can you give your audience based on your understanding of these texts? How does your analysis shape your focus? Are there perspectives or points of view missing? By asking such questions, you will be able to advance new claims about your topic.

An effective critical analysis supports claims with evidence. That evidence will come directly from the texts you analyze, and your credibility depends on how successfully you negotiate the different perspectives from the texts. To guide your reader, present and evolve a thesis. Develop the thesis through claims that are supported by various types of evidence. You will need to use a balance of paraphrase, direct quotes, and analysis to develop those claims. Relying on personal opinion is not enough to write this essay. Effective critical analysis will depend on careful integration of two to three sources in addition to the primary text, and you will need to synthesize the source material toward a significant focus.

As you write this essay, use the following tips to help guide your drafting process:

- Work early to find a connection and point of analysis between the sources you choose. Consider topic, purpose, and audience as you do so. Use the possibilities we brainstormed in class to get started.
- The organization of your critical analysis will depend on how you approach the texts you choose to analyze. Organize your essay to deliver information that will help your reader understand the next topic, and so on. Use transitions to guide the reader, and remember to practice MEALL.
- This is neither a polarized argumentative essay nor a simplistic compare and contrast paper. The goal is to bring texts into conversation with one another in order to explore an issue (review *RFW*, "Reading and Writing Arguments" ch. 6). Work to negotiate differences and distinctions, move beyond pros and cons, and lead the texts into shared dialogue in order to develop an informed perspective about the issue at hand.
- Continue to think carefully about rhetorical appeals and conventions used in the texts you analyze, and also be aware of the uses of each in your own draft.
- Remember that the synthesis of Kay and the other texts you choose is not merely an exercise in bringing texts together; your essay should be guided by a particular purpose, formulated in a thesis that identifies your topic and your position.

Assignment Criteria:

- All drafts will be double-spaced, 12-point font (standard one-inch margins), and observe MLA format and citation rules.
- Draft one (3-4 pages) due on Wednesday, 3/1 at the beginning of class. **Bring peer review and teacher copies to class.**
- Draft two (4-5 pages) due on Friday, 3/10 at the beginning of class. **Bring peer review and teacher copies to class.**
- Final draft will be approximately 5-6 pages and include 2-3 sources in addition to the primary text.
- **Final draft is due on Monday, 3/20.**