

Critical Thinking/Critical Writing

WEEK 13

Today

Critical Thinking and Critical Writing

▣ General Feedback of papers

▣ Moving forward in your writing

Alison Evans – Library Session (Level 5)

Personal Tutor Meeting – Ruth/Andrea –

3:15-4:15pm

General Feedback

- ▶ In text citations are needed, not just on the reference list.
- ▶ Following Harvard Referencing Guidelines - Have your own copy
- ▶ Acknowledgment of Secondary citations.
- ▶ Quotes – Need to be supported by page numbers.
- ▶ Introduction and conclusions
- ▶ Paragraph and sentence structure – Watch out for too small of paragraphs.
- ▶ Weak transition between paragraphs.
- ▶ Use of tenses
- ▶ Grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice – academic phrasing – rather than informal phrasing
- ▶ Proofread your work.
- ▶ Time management.
- ▶ No personal pronouns – I, we, us, our, you.....
- ▶ Support your work.....
- ▶ Double space your work.

Activities to help you with critical thinking..

- ▶ 1. Free writing 7-10 minutes, non stop writing about the topic that you are investigating.
- ▶ Don't worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation. The goal is to just write and generate as much as you can about the subject. The idea is to just start generating ideas.

Clustering/Webbing

- ▶ Put a word that you'd like to focus on in the centre of the page. As fast as you can, free associate, jot down anything and everything that comes to mind.
- ▶ This includes phrases, single words anything related to the word in the centre.
- ▶ Do this for 5-10mins. At the end it may feel like a load of random words, but read through them and see if there are connections that you can use.

Listing

- ▶ On a piece of paper, list all the ideas that you can think of connected to subjects that you want to explore.
- ▶ Any idea or observation is valid, just list!
- ▶ Once you have listed everything that you can think of, walk away, make a cup of tea, do anything for a few minutes. Then..
- ▶ Return and repeat the exercise again.

Cubing

- ▶ This helps you to look at your topic in six different ways (Like a cube!).
- ▶ Take your topic area and...
 - ▶ Describe it
 - ▶ Compare it
 - ▶ Associate it within something else you know
 - ▶ Analyse it (break it into parts)
 - ▶ Apply it to a situation you are familiar with
 - ▶ Argue for and against it
- ▶ Write a paragraph, page or more about each of these different sides

Journalistic Questions

- ▶ Who?
- ▶ What?
- ▶ Where?
- ▶ When?
- ▶ How?
- ▶ Why?

What?

- ▶ What do I want to explore?
 - ▶ Write about a page or so of this
- ▶ Read what you have written and then ask... "So what?"
 - ▶ Again write for a page or more
- ▶ Then finally ask your self "now what?"
 - ▶ This will allow you to consider new ideas related to your theme.

Summarising

- ▶ Sometimes it's helpful to just summarise the papers that you have read. This helps you to solidify your ideas and put perspectives into a summary of position.
- ▶ Write a paragraph or up to a page of a summary.

Metaphor Writing

- ▶ Metaphors or similes can be very helpful as they enable you to create a picture of a new idea. This can help you to understand your view before you put it down into a written format.

Critical Writing (University of Leicester)

<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/di/all-resources/writing/writing-resources/critical-writing>

The most characteristic features of critical writing are:

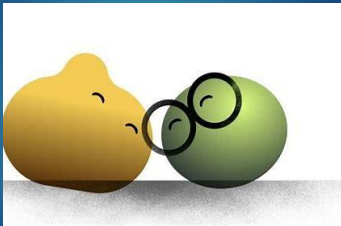
- ▶ a clear and confident refusal to accept the conclusions of other writers without evaluating the arguments and evidence that they provide;
- ▶ a balanced presentation of reasons why the conclusions of other writers may be accepted or may need to be treated with caution;
- ▶ a clear presentation of your own evidence and argument, leading to your conclusion; and
- ▶ a recognition of the limitations in your own evidence, argument, and conclusion.

Descriptive Writing

The most characteristic features of descriptive writing are that it will describe something, but will not go beyond an account of what appears to be there. A certain amount of descriptive writing is needed to establish for example:

- ▶ the setting of the research;
- ▶ a general description of a piece of literature, or art;
- ▶ the list of measurements taken;
- ▶ the timing of the research;
- ▶ an account of the biographical details of a key figure in the discipline; or
- ▶ a brief summary of the history leading up to an event or decision.

So what is the difference?



Descriptive Writing

- ▶ With **descriptive writing** you are not developing argument; you are merely setting the background within which an argument can be developed. You are representing the situation as it stands, without presenting any analysis or discussion.
- ▶ Descriptive writing is relatively simple. There is also the trap that it can be easy to use many, many words from your word limit, simply providing description.
- ▶ In providing only description, you are presenting but not transforming information; you are reporting ideas but not taking them forward in any way. **An assignment using only descriptive writing would therefore gain few marks.**

Critical Writing

- ▶ With critical writing you are participating in the academic debate. This is more challenging and risky. You need to weigh up the evidence and arguments of others, and to contribute your own. You will need to:
 - ▶ consider the quality of the evidence and argument you have read;
 - ▶ identify key positive and negative aspects you can comment upon;
 - ▶ assess their relevance and usefulness to the debate that you are engaging in for your assignment; and
 - ▶ identify how best they can be woven into the argument that you are developing.
- ▶ A much higher level of skill is clearly needed for critical writing than for descriptive writing, and this is reflected in the higher marks it is given.

Finding your academic voice

- ▶ When you engage in critical writing you are developing your own academic voice within your subject. Wellington et al. (2005, p.84) offer some suggestions for distinguishing between the academic and the non-academic voice. They suggest that the academic voice will involve:



- ▶ "healthy scepticism ... but not cynicism;
- ▶ confidence ... but not 'cockiness' or arrogance;
- ▶ judgement which is critical ... but not dismissive;
- ▶ opinions ... without being opinionated;
- ▶ careful evaluation of published work ... not serial shooting at random targets;
- ▶ being 'fair': assessing fairly the strengths and weaknesses of other people's ideas and writing ... without prejudice; and
- ▶ making judgements on the basis of considerable thought and all the available evidence ... as opposed to assertions without reason

Stringing together of quotes

- It can be tempting to string together quotes to support an argument, feeling that the more quotes you include, the stronger your argument. It is important, however, to remember that you also need to *interpret* the quotes to the reader, and to explain their relevance, discuss their validity, and show how they relate to other evidence.

Critical Writing Paragraphs

- Strategic use of paragraphs,
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/all-resources/writing/writing-resources/critical-writing>

Use of Paragraphs

- Paragraphs
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/all-resources/study-guides-pdfs/writing-skills-pdfs/using-paragraphs-v1%20%20-2.pdf>

Grammar Guide

► <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/all-resources/writing/grammar>
