

Critical Review assignment

(1st version due in Ses #11, revised version due in Ses #13)

Write a critical (“critical” in this context does not imply negative) essay that responds to two articles and the larger issue that they address. Your task is to help your readers make sense of these articles and the conflicting stances of their writers. Tell us what we can learn by considering what they have to say? In some cases, the two articles will be preceded by a brief introduction or editorial written by one of the journal editors. You can draw on this introductory article for background information. Feel free to quote from it.

Over the course of your essay, you should respond, directly or indirectly, to the questions listed below. While the questions follow a logical sequence as listed here, you may treat them in whatever order seems natural as you are writing.

What is at issue here?

Why does it matter?

What are the writers’ positions?

What priorities or concerns determine their differing views?

How can we make sense of their differences? (What is the broader context that might help us make sense of these differences?)

Can you envision some way in which their differences might be resolved?

Be sure to identify in the body of your essay the articles, their writers, and the journal in which they appear. Support your comments and analysis with evidence from the articles. Please document your sources using the MLA in-text citation system. This system is ill-suited to the requirements of a long research paper, but it will serve you well in a short critical paper that focuses on two works. At the end of your review, you should provide a list of works cited.

This essay calls for many of the same skills you may have brought to bear in past literature papers: close reading, thoughtful analysis, and respect for the priorities of the original writer. Some of you may have written a “compare and contrast” paper in the past. While this paper will benefit from a similar approach to your initial reading and analysis of the articles, the resulting essay should not take the form of a point-by-point comparison. Your readers will have difficulty making sense of your articles if you constantly switch back and forth between them. Your task is to help your readers think clearly about your pair of articles and the issues they raise. To do so, you will need to organize your essay in a way that lets you get at ideas and insights. You will also need to summarize key features of the articles since you cannot assume that your readers are familiar with them. **Bring four copies of first version to class.**

Please attach a brief letter discussing the current status of your critical review. Let us know how you feel about what you have written and what you might like to do differently in the next version. The final version should be roughly **six pages** long.