

## **Assignment: Peer critique #1**

**Due: Thursday, March 15, 2:30 PM**

As a form of communication, writing is always done for an audience. A piece of writing does not completely succeed unless its audience grasps its meaning. This exercise will help you improve your own writing by asking you to reflect on how well one of your fellow students' essays communicates its intended meaning to you. It will also give your fellow student concrete suggestions for revising his or her essay.

You will be assigned one essay to critique. Your critique should consist of the following:

- A couple of paragraphs (approximately one double-spaced, typed page) addressing the overall effectiveness of the essay. One paragraph should address the content: that is, how well the essay analyzes the primary source on which it focuses. A second paragraph should address style: how effectively the author's conclusions are communicated by the essay. Be positive as well as critical. Please type this part of the critique.
- At least four marginal comments responding to specific sentences or paragraphs in the essay (either style or content).

Here are a few rules to keep in mind as you are writing your critique:

- Criticize the writing, not the writer. Don't say: "You are unclear in this passage"; instead, say, "This passage is unclear," or "I don't understand this passage."
- Explain yourself. If something strikes you as unclear, awkward, or wrong, state why it seems like that to you. Remember that you are trying to help the author improve his or her communication with the audience.
- Offer concrete suggestions for how to improve aspects of the essay that you criticize.
- Be positive as well as negative. Comment on ideas or expressions that you like as well as those you don't like.
- Keep in mind that the purpose of your comments is to help your peer improve his or her essay. Be gentle in your criticism, but if something strikes you as capable of improvement, say so.

### **Evaluation**

Every critique that includes at least four marginal comments and two paragraphs of commentary, done in good faith, will receive an A. A critique is done in good faith if it appears to take the essay's argument seriously and offer serious suggestions for improving it. Critiques with three marginal comments will receive a B. Those with two marginal comments, or only one paragraph of commentary, will receive a C. Those with only one marginal comment will receive a D. Critiques which are not done in good faith, or which use spiteful or malicious language, will receive an F and may not be rewritten.

At the end of the semester, you will include this and your other three peer critiques in the final course portfolio.