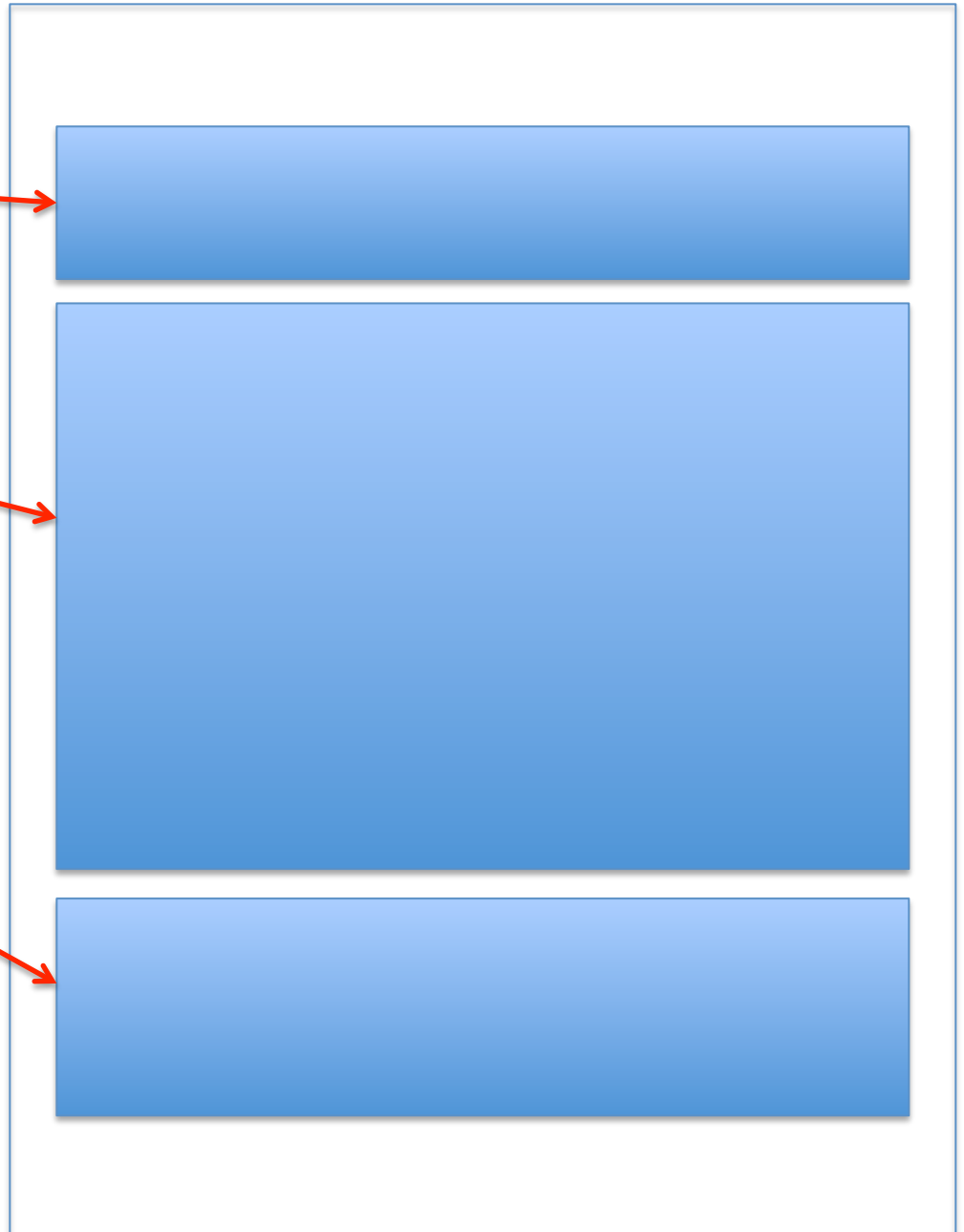


Critical Essay Writing

Introductory Paragraph

- Grab or Hook
- Map or Preview
- Thesis
- More or less one page for undergraduate essays



Grab

- The “**grab**” or “**hook**” should draw the reader in
- DO NOT put vague statements here, such as “In society, language affects culture and culture affects language”
- Current event, pithy example, anecdote
 - E.g. “In a recent speech in Israel, American President Barack Obama praised the ‘righteous among nations who refused to be bystanders.’ His words reflect particular and profound expectations of international relations, which more or less contradict equally powerful expectations of national sovereignty. In this paper, I will explore...”

Map

- The “**map**” or **preview** of the arguments to follow should include a summary and brief description of the **theories** employed in the paper, a summary and brief description of the **examples and topics** to be analyzed, and a comment about **how the theories will be used to analyze** the examples

Thesis

- The thesis is a statement of argument
- It is an analytic statement to be proven/
substantiated in the paper
- **The thesis will make an argument that
answers the “so what?” question**

What is Analysis?

- Analysis is a critical commentary about relationships, causes, effects, structures, power, and social change
- We investigate **WHO** has an interest in these effects, **WHY** they have this interest, (their agenda), and **HOW** these effects are enacted and maintained

Enacting Analysis

- Scholarship (literature)
 - Use literature you have read to provide theory OR to substantiate your arguments with detail, corroboration, etc.
 - Academic sources
 - Journal articles from **peer-reviewed journals**
 - Books
 - Book chapters

Enacting Analysis

- Theory
 - Explain with reference to scholarship
 - Sparingly incorporate quotes to corroborate descriptions in your own words
- Empirical Examples
 - Choose contemporary, provocative examples in relation to what theories can tell us about them

Enacting Analysis

- Deploy theory to deconstruct and explain examples you have selected to analyze
- “Flag post” how the various deconstructed examples you cite contribute to the argument (stated as the thesis) that you are making
 - E.g. “This example illustrates how technological determinism does not account for the social shaping of technology”
- Arrange deconstructed examples into a logical flow that guides the reader toward your argument

Weak Writing

- Vague
 - Tip: The majority of sentences that have “society” as the subject are vague
 - Society is not a clearly defined thing. Who is society? What is society? Does “society” do, have, or believe things?
- Unclear
 - Ask yourself if you really know what you are saying. If you can’t vocalize it, then it won’t be clear to others

Weak Writing

- Repetitive points
 - The reader will lose interest
- Not concise
 - Everything should be written in the most economical way possible so as not to demand too much of the reader's time

Referring to the Work of Scholars

Not strong (and often inaccurate):

- “He looks at”
- “She mentions”
- “They touch on”
- “They say”
- “They talk about”

Strong, scholarly, and accurate:

- “He argues”
- “She claims”
- “They explore”
- “They studied”
- “He theorizes”
- “She illustrates”
- “She elaborates”
- “They analyze”
- “She writes”

Dealing with Critical Feedback

- Critical feedback can come across as mean, crass, and degrading
 - This is not the intent
 - Divest emotionally from negative feedback and think proactively and practically

Dealing With Critical Feedback

- Feedback should be seen as a **reflection of the reader's experience** with your essay
- If you don't agree with a point, ask yourself why the reader had a different opinion than you
 - Did you really convey your idea clearly?
 - Or, do they have a good point that you should incorporate?

Responding to Feedback

- All feedback should be addressed; how it is addressed is up to you
 - Maintain your argument, but clarify
 - Modify your argument
- Just because something is not commented on by your reviewer doesn't mean it should not be changed/edited/scrapped
- *Become a critical reader of your own work*

Editing

- Writing is only 10% of the work of a paper; rewriting is the rest!
- Review feedback. Don't do anything that day. Wait until you're no longer (so) mad/sad
- Come up with a plan
 - Do you need to perform more research?
 - Do new research before touching the paper
 - Read. Take notes. Repeat
 - Then look at the paper anew. Make new plan. Execute

Letting Go

- Nothing you have written is precious
- You might have to delete entire sections
- Be willing

Proofreading

- Read your paper out loud. Does it “sound” good?
- Be relentless
- Perfect Citation Styles
 - Consider buying the program EndNote