

Guidelines for Peer Essay Exchange

Instructions: Answer the following questions when reading your peer's essay. Make sure you provide *constructive* criticism, making suggestions for improving the paper, not just useless approbation.

1. Is there an **introduction** to the paper? Does the introduction introduce the topic of the paper, state a clear and specific thesis, and provide a concise summary of the steps of the argument? Is there any "fanfare," i.e. generalizations or meaningless filler?
2. Is there a clear and specific **thesis statement** in the introduction? Recall that a thesis statement is not a restatement of the question, but is a specific answer to the question; it is an explicit articulation of the conclusion of the paper, that is, claim to be defended throughout the body of the paper. If yes, underline it. If no, what thesis does the student seem to be arguing throughout the paper?
3. Does the author advance **arguments** in support of the thesis? Are the arguments stated clearly in single statements? Is each argument compelling and supported by the primary text? Do the arguments collectively constitute a strong defense of the thesis?
4. Does the author consider **counter-arguments** to their thesis? Are these objections strong, that is, stated clearly and supported by the primary text? Does the author provide an adequate response to these objections?
5. Does the paper demonstrate **creative and critical engagement** with the primary source material? Does it show that the author has worked through the material on their own or does it just seem to follow lecture notes and/or secondary sources?
6. Are there any **significant concepts or terms** that the author does not sufficiently define and explain? All new or unusual concepts and terms should be explained concisely and thoroughly in the author's own words.
7. Is the paper **coherent**, i.e. is it organized in such a way that each argument follows fluidly from that which preceded it and leads logically to that which follows it? Or does it seem to jump from topic to topic? Can you suggest better organization of the arguments and counter-arguments or more fluid transitions?
8. How often are **quotes** used in the paper? Do these quotes serve to 1. Provide supports that the claims and arguments the author is making are anchored in the primary text or 2. Do the work for the author, so the author does not have to explain the primary text in his or her own words? All quotes should be used in the way described by 1.
9. Is every quotation properly cited? Is there a formal and consistent **style of citation** used?
10. Does the paper employ proper **grammar**? Are there any spelling errors, improper punctuation, or subject-verb disagreements? Are there any unclear or awkward formulations? Can you make suggestions for improving these?
11. Does the **conclusion** of the paper tie up loose ends and raise other issues that the paper opens up?
12. Are there any final details that made the paper incoherent or unintelligible? Can you make suggestions for changing these?