

CCI Critical Engagement Assignment

WRITING TO UNDERSTAND, EXPLORE, AND DISCOVER The Assignment

The most important aspect of the Critical Engagement Assignment is to see it as a form of practice—a process that writers go through. While these assignments are rather structured for our course, your goal is to develop/modify this writerly practice for your future in and beyond college.

Our Critical Engagement Assignments focus on several goals for our course. These include

- Engaging in close, critical reading that encourages reflection, analysis and evaluation of texts and their ideas.
- Developing a practice of writing in order to gain the foundations to engage in purposeful public discourse (invention and idea development).
- Synthesizing ideas in the service of understanding and communication. In other words providing you the experience to purposefully place texts in conversation with each other.
- Discovering your own ideas in response to the reading and connecting them and your experiences to find your own take on the issue/topic.

The ultimate goal of the critical engagement assignments is to allow you to focus your ideas to develop an essay where you are becoming part of the conversation on a selected topic/issue. But before you provide your own take and participate on your own in the conversation (through your essay), you need to identify the other speakers and conversations that will inform (but not drive) your own essay.

What others say dominate the first two parts of the critical assignment. What you have to say is the focus of the third part.

Remember, the critical engagement assignment is not an essay—parts will need to be written in paragraph format, but you may also use headings and bullets (see outline below).

The parts:

1. Contextual introduction of the texts and summaries of the articles you have selected or been assigned.
2. A written “dialogic” that places the authors in conversation with each other on key issues/points related to what they have written (the key issues may be identified as subheadings to the key issue/point) . These key issues/questions may be defined for you by your instructor, or you might be selecting these on your own.
3. Your own “take” on key issues/points these texts discuss.

CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT ASSIGNMENT OUTLINE**1. Introduction and summaries of texts/sources**

For each introduction and summary include the following for each reading.

- Article title
- Who the author is.
- Publication information
- The author's relationship to or experience with the issue.
- The purpose and audience for the article.
- The major points the author makes and the evidence the author provides to support those points (you can use bullet points here).

2. Critical synthesis of the key issues/points

For this part of the assignment you are putting the three articles/authors in a conversation with each other on these issues/points. Using signal phrases to identify who says what is very important in this section.

One approach here is to imagine that these authors are sitting at a table, say at Starbucks and drinking cappuccinos. They are discussing and questioning each other about what they have written. You are sitting at the next table listening and recording their conversation.

- Consider where they agree, disagree, and/or have differing basic assumption, have completely different interpretations, and/or offer different evidence for their assumptions/conclusions.
- Write so that someone who is not necessarily familiar with these articles or authors can understand and follow it.
- Be sure to identify which author is saying what with signal phrases
- Quote and paraphrase appropriately (so you can reuse part of this for your essay)

3. Your take on the key issues/points

In this section your voice takes control and you offer your own ideas on the key points or respond to what your authors have said. Think of this section as forming your own message and purpose for the foundation of what you will write in your own essay.

CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WORKSHEET

This worksheet (which works better in a landscape format) is a model of how to approach critically engaging with your texts/readings. What is important is pull and separate ideas from your readings so that you can focus and closely analyze (while keeping the larger text in mind). This worksheet represents writing practices that help you identify and develop key ideas and themes.

Sample Critical Analysis Worksheet		
<p>Reading 1: Contextual Introduction (author, background, publication information).</p>	<p>Reading 2: Contextual Introduction (author, background, publication information).</p>	<p>Reading 3: Contextual Introduction (author, background, publication information).</p>
<p>Reading 1: Broad Summary (in your words)</p>	<p>Reading 2: Broad Summary (in your words)</p>	<p>Reading 3: Broad Summary (in your words)</p>
<p>Specific Question 1/ Reading 1:</p> <p>Author's General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author's words are.</i></p>	<p>Specific Question1/ Reading 2:</p> <p>Author's General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author's words are.</i></p>	<p>Specific Question 1/ Reading 3:</p> <p>Author's General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author's words are.</i></p>

<p>Specific Question 2/ Reading 1:</p> <p>Author’s General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author’s words are.</i></p>	<p>Specific Question 2/ Reading 2:</p> <p>Author’s General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author’s words are.</i></p>	<p>Specific Question 2/ Reading 3:</p> <p>Author’s General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author’s words are.</i></p>
<p>Specific Question 3/ Reading 1:</p> <p>Author’s General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author’s words are.</i></p>	<p>Specific Question 3/ Reading 2:</p> <p>Author’s General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author’s words are.</i></p>	<p>Specific Question 3/ Reading 3:</p> <p>Author’s General response</p> <p>Type quotes or paraphrases here</p> <p><i>Type comments or ideas you see like this. Right justification and italics separates what you are saying from what the author’s words are.</i></p>