

Peer Review Guidelines

As we move through the semester, you will be asked to revise each of the three major writing assignments for the class. For part of that process, you will work with your peers to collaborate on your writing. Rather than look for surface level mistakes, however, I will be asking each of you to carefully annotate the writing of the other writers in your peer review groups (assigned in class). *Treat your peers' writing as a text, just as you would a reading for this or any other class.* Write in the margins, identify key points and arguments, and ask questions. Each essay will go through 3-4 rounds of review:

1. **Annotation:** For this step, you will annotate your own draft. You might do so while writing, or after writing, as a personal reflection on the choices you are making. This step is an opportunity to show me and your peers why you made the choices you did. Include questions for me and your peers or comments that draw attention to an area you would like us to read more carefully or areas where you would like suggestions.
2. **Peer Review:** For the essay you are assigned to peer review, use one of the methods we have discussed in class and enter into conversation with the writer and their annotations. Treat your peer's text like any of the texts we read in class, or like you would an essay you were excited to read in everyday life: Comment on what you like, ask questions, interrogate complex ideas. What is effective (or not)? Your job is to respond to the text as if you were speaking with the writer.
3. **Instructor Annotations:** I will then go in and respond to your annotations and your peer's comments and questions. Once I am done, I will post your essay to the Peer Review discussion forum, so you can download it and review the comments.
4. **Final Submission:** No essay is perfect, not even a final draft. While your final submission should be polished and revised according to the annotations you received from your peers and from me, there may be some ways in which you could continue to revise. As such, your final submission will include all of the comments you received from me and your peers, as well as your responses to **all** of those comments. Even if the comment is something like "Good work!" you can still respond by explaining why you did what you did or reflecting on how you could replicate that good work in other parts of your essay.

Keep in mind that revision is a large part of this class. I am not asking you to look for surface level corrections. I am instead asking you to enter into conversations with your peers about their writing style, their topic, their process, or any other aspect of their writing and research that you might notice.

These steps may seem like a lot of work, but they will become intuitive the more you practice them. Responding to your peers can and should take time, but it will result in your and your peers' development as writers and in a better grade in this and other classes.

Method 1: Dialogue

As you read your peer's draft, enter into dialogue with their annotations as if you were chatting over coffee. As you read, respond to each and every one of your peer's annotations by asking your own questions and narrating your reading experience. As you read, you might consider:

- What is the writer's relationship to their subject?
- What is the main question or argument that the writer is exploring?
- What are key points of evidence that the writer uses to explore that question or argument?
- If you had to choose one aspect of the text for the writer to work on, what would it be?
- What is one aspect of the text that you might use to inform your own writing?

Once you have read the entire text and responded to each of the annotations, write a reverse outline that identifies that main topic of each paragraph and any points of confusion.

Method 2: Narrative

Read your peer's work carefully without making corrections or annotating. At the end of each page, stop and do some writing. Spend 2-3 minutes just writing. Talk to the writer directly. Ask questions and describe. Do *not* tell the writer what to do or how to revise or even how well the writer has or has not accomplished the goals and imitations laid out in our models. As you start writing, you might consider:

- What did you just read? Describe to the writer what you think the last page says and what ideas are most important.
- What are the ideas, concepts, or questions that come to your mind at this pausing point?
- How did you feel when you read particular parts, paragraphs, or sentences on the last page? Point to them. What responses did you have as a reader?

Your final product should consist of a narrative, with one paragraph for each page of writing.*

*From Asao B. Inoue's *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*, pp. 239-240.

Method 3: Questions

Read your peer's work in its entirety without stopping or annotating. Then, go back for a second read. As you read the second time, write down questions in the margins as they come into your mind. Ask these questions directly to the reader and do not make any comments or suggestions. Everything you write should end in a question mark.

Importantly, make sure they are questions that help your peer explore the possibilities in their writing. In other words, don't ask rhetorical questions or questions your peer could ask with a simple yes or no. Instead, ask questions that make you and your reader think. Push back on their ideas and evidence. Identify areas of confusion. Imagine different audiences who might respond differently than the writer expects. Where do you as a reader get stuck? Where do you get bored or confused? Your questions should reflect your reading process, so they should be spontaneous and thoughtful.

Method 4: Badges

Throughout the course, we will develop a series of models for determining what we want to practice in our own writing. For these different practices, we will create "badges"—basically gold stars—that identify success in using that practice to accomplish a particular purpose in writing.

As you read your peer's draft, assign these badges to expressions and choices you feel are successful. For instance, if the person uses evidence well to convince their reader, you could assign a badge for evidence use. If they imitated one of our readings effectively, you might assign an imitation badge. Be sure to mark specific parts of the text. So, instead of saying the entire text is an effective imitation, you should mark one sentence that imitates an expression particularly well.

In addition to assigning badges, you can also ask thoughtful questions to show the writer what your reading experience was like. You should *not*, however, make any suggestions or rewrite your peer's work.