**U**niversity of **M**'sila  **D**epartment of **E**nglish

 **S**econd **Y**ear **LMD S**tudents  **W**ritten **E**xpression **C**ourses.T:**B**erkani

**ESSAY TYPES: CRITICAL ESSAY**

**1.Critical Essay Definition:**A critical essay is a piece of writing intended to analyze, interpret or evaluate a specific text or other media forms. More specifically, this type of critical paper is normally viewed by academic audiences and typically supports an argument made by the writer.

The *goal of a critical essay* is to enable writers to hone their critical writing skills. Additionally, the paper should present readers with a thought-provoking explanation or the writer’s interpretation of the medium being critiqued. Furthermore, anyone authoring a critical analysis could be asked to position their thoughts around a specific theme in a book or film on a much broader spectrum. Specifically, writing critically requires the keen ability to weigh what the original author or director might have been attempting to say to their original audience and to explain that in a manner that the new audience can understand.

There are many goals for critical writing, including:

* Offering an objective view of the original writer or painter or director’s work
* Offering a complete analysis of the consistency of the original author’s work
* Offering a thorough assessment of the original author’s work and capability to maintain and support their primary argument or concept
* Presenting the strengths and weaknesses of an article or journal entry
* Criticizing the work of the original writer or artist

**2.Step by Step Guide to Writing a Critical Paper**

 Writing a critical essay might seem complicated, but it doesn’t have to be so. First and foremost, make certain that you understand the requirements and what is expected of you. Often times, students set themselves up for failure by starting their assignment without clearly understanding the assignment details.

**Step One**: Know what is expected: If you are uncertain of the details of the assignment, ask for clarification.

**Step Two**: Develop a strong understanding of the source material. The source material will come in the form of a book, a film, a piece or art of some other media. You will be asked to create a critical paper that analyzes all or part of the source material. Students are cautioned to take care and consider everything from the source material that might enhance their essay. If you are asked to critique a book or film, it is good practice to read (or view) the source material more than once.

**Step Three**: Write down as many notes as possible when assessing the source material. Taking great notes is the key to success for any critical paper. When reviewing your chosen medium, remember to take note of the key ideas or concepts that the original creator included in their work.

**Step Four**: Uncover the primary challenges or patterns in the work being critiqued. Once you’ve reviewed the text or film, or whatever other media you were reviewing, next you will need to identify any key challenges, patterns or problems that might exist. As you note these aspects, other issues or key concepts will begin to emerge. You should be prepared to identify these.

**Step Five**: Uncover solutions to the problems identified. Next, you will need to offer solutions for the problems or patterns that were identified previously. By now, you should be on your way to creating your thesis statement.

**3.The various types of critical essays**

There are several different types of critical analysis that a student authoring a critical review paper might be asked to write. They include, but are not limited to:

* Sociological Criticism
* Reader-response Criticism
* Gender Criticism
* Mythological Criticism
* Biographical Criticism
* New Historicism
* Psychoanalytical Criticism
* Formalist Criticism

**4.Developing the Analysis**

 Once you have developed a working thesis and a list of points that need to be discussed, it is important to assess whether your thesis is defensible and which points support it and which detract from it.

 1. Focus on quality, not quantity. There may be dozens of reasons that support your view. Pick only the best.

 2. Consider opposing viewpoints and possible reasons for defending them. Are any of these reasons compelling? If so, why? If not, why not?

3. Revise and rethink your thesis as various arguments or interpretations emerge. You may have to try different—even opposite—conclusions before you can be sure that your position is the best one.

**5.Critical Essay Structure**

 Every essay, regardless of topic or nature, follows a standard structure which includes the introduction (or thesis statement), the body paragraphs, and the conclusion (or closing statement.) In order for the essay to be considered ‘whole’ each of these parts must be included. That being said, prior to tackling each of these sections, you must first draft an outline suitable for a critical paper. For all papers of this nature, the outline is important because it presents writers with the opportunity to begin to build a roadmap for their essay.

**5.1.The Introduction**

The introduction of your essay should offer a clear description of the topic being reviewed. Your introductory statement should be concise, but thorough enough to allow the reader to determine what your focus will be.

***Tips for writing a strong thesis statement***:

* Remember to embed your thesis statement into your introduction, typically within the first few sentences.
* Be as clear as possible
* Avoid cliché statements.
* Be as specific as you can, and speak to the main purpose of your paper.

**5.2.The Body**

In the body of your essay, every sentence should communicate the point. Each paragraph must support your thesis statement either by offering a claim or presenting an argument. These should be followed up with evidence. Most critical essays will have three to six paragraphs, unless the requirements state otherwise.

**5.3.The Conclusion**

The conclusion of a critical essay is no different than the conclusion of any other type of essay. You should restate your thesis statement and summarize your key argument. It is wise to leave the reader with something to consider or a strong statement that ties into your essay as a whole. Your goal is to leave the reader with the desire to want to learn more, or the urge to research the topic more on their own free time.

**6.Critical Essay Outline**

The outline for your essay will be similar, regardless of the topic chosen. However, for example’s sake, let’s pretend you are writing a critical essay on the topic “**The Female Authority in One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”**, the outline would look like the one depicted below:

**The Female Authority in One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest**

**6.1.Introduction**

* Explain how females are presented as the authority
* Provide a brief description of Nurse Ratched’s character and the other supporting female characters
* Provide a key event in the book that position women as evil or oppressive

**6.2.Body**

* Assess the differences between the male and female population
* Provide an analysis of why the women are the authority and the men are the patients
* Include an explanation of why the female characters are seen as oppressive and manipulative

**6.3.Conclusion**

* Restate the opening argument or thesis statement. Remember to mention why you’ve made the argument you’ve presented.
* Offer a summary of the main points mentioned.

The above-mentioned outline can be customized and tailored to be used for any topic. The key is to always focus on the headings Introduction, Body and Conclusion and to drill down from there, adding three or four key concepts or ideas to each heading and beginning to use that as the framework for your essay.

As you complete your outline, move on to your rough draft, writing quickly, and including each of the key points or challenges you found in your initial review.

From here, you will move on to your final copy. This is where you will pay close attention to detail, spelling, grammar and accuracy of facts. It might even be helpful to have someone else read your essay to make sure that it is easy to understand and engaging.

**7.Examples of critical essay themes**

**7.1.Critical essay topics about literature**

* How was Irony used in your favorite classical book
* Feminist ideologies in a piece of literature
* The context when the author wrote a piece of literature
* Describe the secondary characters in your favorite book
* The similes, metaphors, and other figures of speech used in a poem
* Discuss the recurring theme/mood in a book
* Describe the recurrent genre of literature in a particular era

## 7.2. Critical essay topics about movies and TV

* Pick one novel that you have read, and perform a comparative analysis on its movie adaptation
* What is the general “humor” portrayed or used in mass media today?
* What makes a good and captivating drama series?
* Pick an ‘all-time’ best movie and examine how it portrays popular culture today

## 7.3. Critical essay topics about economics

* The efficiency of the American economic system
* Discuss about the Stock market and how it affects your daily life
* Discuss how to economically spend your money as a student
* Pick one economic issue that you usually hear from the social media and provide ways to solve it
* What are the economic benefits of recycling? Discuss what makes it effective on your context
* Describe how the international relationship of countries are affected by economic relationships

## 7.4. Critical essay topics on history

* Pick one of your favorite ‘historical landmarks’ and discuss what makes it your favorite one
* What are the ideologies that you can see in a historical movie?
* How do historical movies help in shaping the way people think today?
* Choose one of your most favorite historical book and perform a critical analysis on it

## 7.5. Critical essay topics about environment

* The effectiveness of current clean and green campaigns in your own city in combatting Global Warming
* Discuss how social media helps in disseminating “clean and green ideologies” today
* Discuss if capitalism and environmentalism are compatible with each other

**Activity one** :Write a critical essay on the following topic

-What is the importance of critical thinking in academic writing?