

### About the Response Papers

Each response paper provides a summary and a critique of one of the assigned articles. You will find it helpful to complete the reading guide before you begin writing your response paper. You also want to review the grading rubric from the course website before starting your paper.

Your paper should begin with an introductory paragraph that clearly summarizes your paper. Which article are you critiquing? Provide your reader with a clear sense of your argument. The paper is not a mystery with the final clue revealed at the very end of the last paragraph. Your reader should know where you are heading from the beginning.

Your first task is to summarize the article. What is the question the author is addressing? What approach did the author take? What data set is used by the author? What answer to the question did the author provide? Your summary should be brief. You do not need to replicate the author's argument in this section; that will be part of your critique. Use less than one-third of your paper to summarize the article.

Your primary task is to critique the article. We covered a five-step method of critiquing arguments on January 22.

1. Replicate the argument
2. Identify the key assumption(s)
3. Change one assumption
4. Argue to the conclusion  
If the conclusion has not changed, the assumption you identified was not a critical or key assumption. Return to step 3. If the conclusion has changed, you identified a critical or key assumption. Go on to step 5.
5. Provide evidence in support of your alternative assumption. Your evidence may be empirical evidence, narrative evidence, or a tight logical argument.

Your goal is to determine the conditions under which the author's conclusion is applicable. You are not necessarily disagreeing with the author. Indeed, you may think the author has written a very good, clever, insightful article. But even still, there is always room for further research based on a slightly different take on the same question. The best critiques do not ask the author to do the impossible or the impractical, but instead generate useful ideas about how our understanding of a problem might be further advanced.

Response papers should be 500-750 words (that is usually 2-3 pages typed). The response paper should have 1" margins on all sides, double-spaced, pages numbered, 11-12 pt font. It must be in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. Other formats are not accepted. Put your name, your GSI's name, the date, your section number, and the word count at the top of the first page. The works cited page & the headings should be excluded from the word count.

**Submit papers electronically on bCourses, assignments tab.** You are responsible for ensuring you have attached your paper properly and completed the bCourses submission process. All papers will be evaluated by the TurnItIn software (see [course website](#)) and graded by your GSI.

Late penalty: Papers will be accepted up to two days late. Late papers lose 5 points for every day (or partial day) they are late. Submit 0-24 hours late, and you lose 5 points; submit 24-48 hours late, you lose 10 points. No submissions more than 48 hours late accepted.

### **Writing Tips from Prof. Naomi Lamoreaux's syllabus (Yale, undergrad, US economic history)**

Most writing problems result either from thinking problems or failures to communicate.

Thinking problems can be reduced by working out in advance what you want to argue and by developing an outline that indicates how you will demonstrate your argument—the order of the points you will make and the kinds of evidence you will muster in support of each point.

Papers should go through at least two drafts. No matter how carefully you outline, you will most likely discover new ideas in the process of writing and may even change your argument. You must go back and revise your paper to make it intellectually coherent.

Before you write your second draft, it is useful to make a reverse outline. That is, look at each paragraph, summarize the point that each paragraph actually makes, and lay out these summaries in outline form. Then revise the outline so that it fits what you now want to argue, and rewrite the paper accordingly.

Always, when you are writing, put yourself in the reader's place. Ask yourself questions such as: Have I provided the reader with enough information to understand my point? Have I provided sufficient evidence to convince the reader of my argument? Are there objections that a reader might raise to the argument I am making? Revise your paper so as to provide sufficient information and evidence and to counter potential objections in advance.

Make sure to write clear topic and transition sentences that guide the reader through your argument. Such sentences play a critical role in helping the reader follow the order of your points and understand how they build on one another.

#### Quick tips:

Write in formal English. Do not use slang, contractions, abbreviations, or text-message acronyms. 7

Write in complete sentences. Keep the structure of your sentences simple. Avoid overly long, complex sentences.

Write in the active rather than the passive voice. (For example, write "Congress passed legislation ..." instead of "Legislation was passed by Congress ....")

When writing about the past, use the past tense.

Check to make sure that pronouns have clear referents. Do not use plural pronouns such as "they" when referring to a singular noun such as a committee or a company. Avoid beginning sentences with the word "this" unless it is modifying a noun.

Avoid turning nouns into adjectives. (For example, write "gains from internalization," not "internalization gains.")

Avoid block quotes, especially from secondary sources. If you must include a block quote, it is important to interpret it in your own words in the body of the paper.

Proofread your paper carefully. Review the paper on your computer, looking for words and phrases flagged by your programs that check spelling and grammar. Then print the paper out and read it through again.