

# CRITIQUES

You will turn in multiple argument critiques this semester. These critiques demonstrate your critical analysis of the essays and your critical thinking about issues they raise. These critiques must be typed and grammatically clear enough for me to read them. However, I assess them primarily on the ideas you present and your willingness, in the critique, to push your thinking beyond initial reactions. I expect that you'll read each essay at least twice in order to achieve this critical thinking. These responses are due at the beginning of class.

These critiques follow the guidelines outlined in Chapter 4. In particular, focus on pages 41-53. Follow the example on the next two pages.

## Critique structure

Each critique should follow this basic structure. Critiques must be at least 2 pages long, formatted to MLA requirements.

- Introduction—identify who wrote the essay and when and where it appeared; determine the intended audience for the essay.
- Analysis—Using the list of “Concepts and Questions for Analyzing an Argument” on pages 52, analyze the argument. Follow the pattern used in the book on pages 52-53. In each response you must identify a point from the essay followed by your critical analysis (comment). In every critique, you must analyze the claim or thesis, the reasons, and the evidence. The example in the textbook only provides critical questions. I want to see creating questions and responding to those critical questions.

If you provide direct quotes from the essay, you must cite page numbers according to MLA.

- Concluding point—based on your analysis, provide a concluding comment about how convincing it is or is not and how it has influenced your opinion about the issue.

## Evaluation

If your critique meets the structure above, you will receive the available points.

- Any critique received after class has met will be considered late.
- Any critique that is not long enough will not receive all the points.
- Any critique that is not on the assigned readings will not receive all the points.
- Any critique that clearly indicates to me that you did not read the entire selection will not receive all the points.
- Any critique that clearly indicates to me that you are not trying to provide analysis, or that you are not thinking about what it is you are reading, will not receive all the points.

**CHANGE YOUR  
THOUGHTS  
AND YOU  
CHANGE YOUR  
WORLD.\***

Due Dates listed in  
Weekly Schedule

English 1301  
Turner  
Fall 2011

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\* Norman Vincent Peale  
(1898 - 1993)

Student Name

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English 1301

5 September 2011

### Critique of “Open Your Ears to Biased Professors”

This is an analysis of “Open Your Ears to Biased Professors” written by David Fryman. The essay was written in 2004 for the Brandeis University school newspaper, *The Justice*. The audience was probably college age students currently on campus and alumni of the university.

#### 1. Thesis

Fryman: College students should listen to biased and opinionated professors with critical respect.

Comment: Note that you have to piece together the thesis from several statements he makes. We can respond by asking what sort of opinions merit critical respect? I argue that opinions that demonstrate mature reasoning should merit critical respect. Those that lack mature reasoning, such as denial of the Holocaust, don't merit critical respect.

#### 2. Reasons

Fryman: “Many faculty members are at the top of their fields” (50).

Comment: Clearly, this statement is a reason—it explains why the author thinks students should accord professors respect. We can respond by agreeing that some professors are quite accomplished in their fields. But when they venture outside them, do their opinions count for more than any other relatively well-informed person's? I argue that their opinions do matter because their years of training in critical thinking gives their opinions respect. However, we should be willing to make them provide reasons for those opinions. If they cannot provide reasons, then like any other argument they lose value.

### 3. Evidence

Fryman: “Many [professors] showed partiality to the political left or right” (49).

Comment: In backing up one of his statements—that it bothered him at first when professors offered their opinions—he points to political bias as one of the irritating factors. We can ask under what circumstances would expression of political opinions be appropriate? I believe that Fryman isn’t clearly distinguishing critical discussion from opinions. I think he saw them as opinions when he disagreed, but critical thinking when he agreed.

### 4. Key Terms

Fryman: “hang-ups and prejudices” (50)

Comment

Fryman admits that professors have such things when he talks about the relationship between opinions and truth (paragraph 5). We can ask what exactly is a “hang-up” and how do we distinguish it from a legitimate concern with something? We all have prejudices. When are they justified and therefore worth taking seriously? I don’t know how you justify a prejudice, as a prejudice by definition implies that the person is not willing to listen with mature reasoning. At that point, the nature of the prejudice itself is worth discussing and should be investigated critically.

Conclusion

From reading Fryman, I’ve been able to think more critically about what I expect from professors in my college classrooms, much more than I have before. I believe they have training that gives their opinion respect and that their points should be treated that way. However, I also know that that doesn’t mean that I take their ideas without critically thinking about them. I may even find I disagree, once I’ve thought about them with mature reasoning.