

## READING IN DIFFERENT VOICES

GOAL: A summary, evaluation and self-reflection on “Wood, J. “Gendered education: Communication in schools” (kit).

It is possible to read and respond to texts in a variety of ways. In this assignment, you will assess one article using three different voices: the voice of the author, an evaluative voice, and a self-reflective voice. You will also complete a Time Management Plan and a commentary on it, the on-line tutorial on *Academic Integrity*, and a tutorial exercise on self assessment.

HAND IN: For this assignment, you will hand in

Step One: original Time Management Form, and one paragraph comment on this plan;

Step Two: Completion sheet for on-line tutorial on *Academic Integrity*;

Step Three: Reading in different voices

1: Author’s Voice;

2: Evaluative Voice;

3: Self-Reflective Voice

Step Four: A discussion question.

Step Five: A Self-Assessment.

This exercise is due on the day your assignments are handed back.

CAREFULLY FOLLOW ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW.

LENGTH: approximately 6-7 pages typed double spaced

Exact page lengths are difficult to give. This assignment requires 6-7 pages: 1 page for the time management material, and 5-6 pages for Step Three, plus one paragraph on Time Management. You will also hand in a discussion question, your completion sheet for the tutorial on *Academic Integrity*, and your Time Management Form.

It is fine if your assignment is slightly longer. However, doing this assignment in 15 pages would produce a very different kind of text with more detail and depth. This would not be acceptable. The length guidelines are important because they give you some indication of what is expected.

DUE: \_\_\_\_\_ (see course outline for due date and information about late penalties)

**Hand in the original and keep a paper copy for yourself. This is for your protection.** Do not rely on electronic copies since computers may crash and you may lose your work. For that reason, it is also strongly advised that you regularly print off paper copies of rough work.

GRADE: 15/150 grade points of your final grade

\*You will lose 2% on this assignment if you do not include the completion sheet for the on-line tutorial on *Academic Integrity*.

EVALUATION: An “A” paper will be elegantly written, well-organized, and without spelling and grammar mistakes. It will address all parts of the assignment, and follow the directions carefully. It will demonstrate an understanding of the material, and an ability to identify the main arguments. It will offer complex evaluations of and self reflections on the material. It will have a thoughtful introduction that highlights the author's main objective and thesis, your critical assessment of the article, and the essence of your self reflection. It will use the three parts of the assignment as an organizational template for the main body. It will include a brief conclusion. Do not confuse length with quality. For more information about grading, see “Guidelines for Grades in the Faculty of Arts” in this kit.

## CRITICAL SKILLS

In the university context, *critical skills* refer to a broad range of skills. This is often confusing to students who use the word *critical* to refer to finding fault, judging severely or being negative.

*“Critical skills are the strategies and tools that we use to creatively analyze, compare, synthesize, and communicate information in order to resolve confusions and solve problems. These skills are prized in every society, but they are essential in modern life where we prize independent, intelligent and imaginative thinking as the key to future progress. The primary purpose of university education is to cultivate these skills in future leaders and professionals.”* [From *Foundations for Flourishing in University and Beyond* by John Dwyer and Thomas Klassen, 2005].

*“In a research or reading context, critical thinking means not considering any view as truth simply because a source has been published or seems to be an expert. It requires you to ... ask questions to yourself as you read (or watch or listen). This slight air of initial skepticism urges the resource to convince you of its authority.”*

*From <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/types.html>.*

For more information about the critical skills necessary for employability, see “Critical Skills Required for the Canadian Workforce” (handout).

Each assignment in this course is designed to help develop your critical skills. *Reading in Different Voices* will focus on the skills required to read course texts critically, and analyse scholarly materials for essay research.

### CRITICAL SKILL: READING AND UNDERSTANDING INSTRUCTIONS

A key critical skill is reading, understanding and following directions. You will have an opportunity in your tutorial to discuss this assignment. See course outline for the date. To prepare effectively for this discussion, read over the instructions, answer the questions below, and bring specific questions to your tutorial.

- \*What are the overall goals of this assignment?
- \*What are the various steps you will need to complete?
- \*Do you understand the terms used, expectations, instructions etc?

### CRITICAL SKILL: REFERENCING AND CITATION

Plagiarism and cheating include lifting material from the internet, using text from books without giving credit, paraphrasing text without giving credit, and/or purchasing or borrowing essays. The on-line tutorial on *Academic Integrity* <[http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic\\_integrity/](http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/)> will help you understand issues of academic honesty. One of the key ways to prevent plagiarism is to cite properly and give credit for the words and thoughts of others. Over the year we will take up issues of citation and referencing in detail.

However, for this assignment, only the following is expected of you:

\*If you use a direct quotation from the article, use quotation marks around it and indicate the page number in brackets at the end of the quotation.

\*If you paraphrase extensively, indicate where in the author's text you found these ideas and arguments by adding a page number in brackets at the end of your paraphrased comment.

\*Include a full reference for the article at the end of your assignment. Here is the correct format for this article. This reference indicates that this text is a chapter in a book written by Wood.

Wood, J. (2005). "Gendered education: Communication in schools." In *Gendered lives* [Sixth Edition]. (pp. 189-207). Australia: Thomson.

For more information, see "In-text Citation..." in this *Kit* which offers extensive information about why it is important to reference properly and how to do it.

### **CRITICAL SKILL: TIME MANAGEMENT**

Another important critical skill is time management. Students often do a poor job on assignments because they do not allocate enough time to them or they try to do a large assignment in the few days before it is due. Poor time management produces stress and inhibits learning.

Effective time management involves making a list of all the steps necessary to complete an assignment with an estimate of how long each step will take. You should then block out the time necessary over all the weeks available to you. Do not try to do all the work in a short period of time. This reduces the time available to synthesize the material. You should always try to have your assignments completed one week ahead of time. This gives you time for revisions and for unforeseen personal crises.

For more guidance, see *Time Management at University: Tips to help you make the grade!* and *Time Management for University Students*:

[http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/pdfs/time\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/pdfs/time_brochure.pdf)

<http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/skillbuilding/timemanagement.html>

**The Learning Skills Program** also offers free individual counselling on skill development, including time management <<http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/skills.html>>.

### **STEP ONE: TIME MANAGEMENT**

In order to plan your time effectively, do a time management plan before you begin this assignment. Use the attached form which breaks down this assignment into its different parts. Estimate how much time it will take to complete each step, and identify when you will do this step. In order to assess and improve your time management skills, you should also keep track of how much time you actually spent on each step and the date you completed each one.

When you have completed your assignment, assess your own time management skills, and comment on what you learned about time management (one paragraph).

**HAND IN:** your original Time Management Form, and the one paragraph comment.

## STEP TWO: ON LINE LIBRARY TUTORIAL ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

[http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic\\_integrity/](http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/)

As part of this assignment, you will do an on-line tutorial on *Academic Integrity* which takes about 30-40 minutes to complete. This Tutorial is designed to help you learn about plagiarism, what you can do to avoid it, and how to improve your academic efforts. Keep re-doing the tutorial until you have scored 100%. On completion, print out your quiz results.

**HAND IN:** your quiz results

**You will lose 2% on this assignment if you do not hand in your results with your assignment.**

## STEP THREE: READING IN DIFFERENT VOICES

**Length: 5-6 pages typed double spaced**

Step Three is the essay portion of this assignment. For Step Three, you should include a brief introduction and conclusion (approximately one paragraph each).

Your **introduction** should outline what you will do in Step Three of this assignment. Essay introductions are important for effective university essays. They offer a map to the reader of what to expect. Your **conclusion** should sum up what you have learned as a result of doing Step Three.

When you do university essays in the future, you will work in all three voices. This assignment teaches you how to distinguish among these three voices to prepare you for writing university essays. Each of the three voices is different, that is, each of the voices draws on different material, although all will reference the article. There should be no repetition among the voices.

### 1. **AUTHOR'S VOICE** (approx 1-1½ pages)

For the Author's Voice, you will summarize the author's arguments, methods and conclusions.

#### **i) Read text**

Start by reading the title, introductory paragraph, all headings and sub-headings, and the concluding paragraphs. This will help you to understand the author's purpose and make it easier to read the full text.

#### **ii) Write a descriptive annotation (1 page double spaced).**

An annotation summarizes the author's arguments, methods and conclusions. In an annotation, you are listening to the text and 'speaking' in the voice of the author. Although you use your own words, you need to be true to the meaning and intention of the author. Your goal is to represent fairly what the author has said and meant, rather than to evaluate, assess or judge.

Since you want to emphasize your own understanding and ability to explain the text, **do not quote directly from the author**. Do not use excerpts from the text as a substitute for explaining the concepts, argument or conclusions in your own words. Your goal is to demonstrate your understanding of the material. Speaking in the author's voice does not mean pretending to be the author but rather attempting to represent her views and arguments without your own interpretations.

You might find this use of the word *argument* confusing. The everyday use of the word refers to a disagreement or altercation. However, in the context of analysing texts and writing essays, the argument is a set of claims made by the author which attempts to persuade a reader to adopt a certain point of view.

In preparation for writing your annotation, be sure you can answer the following questions:

- a) What is the article about, that is, the subject of the article? What controversies or questions is the author addressing?
- b) What is the author's *main* argument, or point of view, on the controversies/questions she is addressing? What are some of the key points the author makes?
- c) What evidence does the author provide to support her arguments?
- d) What is the author's method, that is, how did she gather her evidence to write her article?

*Method* refers to how an author constructs her argument and the type of research data collected and used. For example, she may use comparison and contrast which draws on cross-cultural data or data from different historical periods; qualitative data such as interviews; quantitative data such as statistics; original or primary historical accounts and records; the author's personal experience; theoretical frameworks, the research of others, etc. A central issue is whether an author has done her own original research or used primary historical accounts from the period in question, or whether she relies on secondary sources based on the work of other authors. Many scholars use multiple methods and draw on a range of sources.

- e) What concepts does the author use to build her argument?

A *concept* helps to explain or make sense of data, detail, information, and experience. It is a general idea or notion that goes beyond the empirical and experiential, beyond what we can observe or directly experience. 'Stereotyping' is an example of a concept. Concepts are distinguished from method which refers to how an author constructs her argument. Concepts are central to the construction of arguments and are the building blocks of theories. So, combining the concept of stereotyping with data on various forms of stereotyping (in advertising, for example) and institutional sites where it occurs (in schools, the media or families) provides the foundation for a theory to explain the devaluation of women's experiences.

Concepts are also 'portable', that is, we can 'internalise' them as part of our knowledge base to help make sense of other situations. 'Stereotyping', then, is a concept which can be used to interpret a range of specific experiences so while studying another phenomenon, you might find the concept of stereotyping helps to make sense of it.

Although you may consult a dictionary to deepen your understanding of certain concepts used by the author, be sure to explain the concept as it is used in the article, and in your own words. Your goal is to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts, and their relevance to the author/article. You do not need to translate the concept itself into your own words; so you could, for example, talk about 'colonialism' or 'stereotyping' but the explanation should be in your own words.

The final annotation should demonstrate your understanding of the article. It should

- i) identify the subject of the article;
- ii) explain the author's main argument and conclusion;
- iii) describe briefly the evidence the author provides to support her argument;
- iv) detail the method the author used; and
- v) identify and explain two key concepts the author uses to build her argument.

The annotation should not include all the content or details in the article. Focus only on central points. Do not write more than one page for your annotation. Select the appropriate material to address the five points above succinctly and in your own words. It is actually easier to write more but an excellent annotation depends upon selecting the key points, and choosing what to leave out.

TIP: How to refer to the author? For the first reference to the author, you can write “Julia Wood argues that...”. Subsequent references can say “Wood argues...” or “The author argues..”. You will also find useful “Terms Commonly Used in Essay Topics” (*Fall Reading Kit*). This list suggests a variety of ways to describe the arguments of the author. For example, the author describes, evaluates, illustrates, contrasts, analyzes, considers, explores, examines etc.

For more information, see “Summaries and Reviews of Social Science Literature” in your *Fall Reading Kit*.

## 2. **EVALUATIVE VOICE** (approx 2 pages)

*“Evaluating an argument is about testing the logic of a text as well as its credibility and emotional impact. All writers make assertions that they want you to accept as true. As a critical reader, you should not accept anything on face value but recognize every assertion as an argument that must be carefully evaluated. An argument has two essential parts: a claim and support. The claim asserts an idea, an opinion, a judgment, or a point of view that the writer wants you to accept. The support includes reasons (shared beliefs, assumptions, and values) and evidence (facts, examples, statistics, and authorities) that give readers the basis for accepting the conclusion ... At the most basic level, in order for an argument to be acceptable, the support must be appropriate to the claim and the statements must be consistent with one another.”* From <<http://www.paec.org/david/reading/general.pdf>>

For the Evaluative Voice, you will evaluate and assess the author’s arguments, claims and conclusions which you identified in your annotation. For the Evaluative Voice, you may use the first person (I) when you are presenting your own views. Some of you may have been taught in high school not to use the first person. However, in most university contexts, it is critical to use *I* to distinguish your own views, arguments and points of view from those of others.

For this section, do not summarize the author's arguments. You have already done a summary in the annotation. You are also no longer speaking in the author's voice but in your own evaluative voice, using analysis and critical thinking to assess the arguments. The length of the article or how easy it is to read are not relevant to this kind of evaluation; rather, you are trying to evaluate the arguments, evidence, method and conclusions.

**A critical evaluation does not necessarily find fault or weakness. It also identifies strengths and persuasive arguments.** For further guidance, see “A Guide To Effective Listening , Active Reading, Asking Questions, and Successful Tutorial Participation” (*Skill and Assignment Kit*).

You are also not being asked to state an 'opinion' or a personal preference about the issues raised in the article. For more information about the difference between an opinion and an argument, see “What is an Argument? (And What is Not)” and “Fallacies” (*Fall Reading Kit*).

Here are the kinds of questions you **might** answer in order to develop your evaluation.

Identify areas where the arguments are persuasive and explain why.

Identify areas where the arguments are not persuasive and explain why.

Does the evidence adequately support the arguments and conclusions? Are the author's claims substantiated? Why or why not? Give some examples. Consider the facts, observations, experiences, examples, theories, concepts and research the author puts forward to support her claims.

Are there weak points or gaps in reasoning? Questions left unanswered? Does the author acknowledge these problems? Explain with specific reference to the article.

What assumptions does the author make? Are these stated or implied? Are they valid or do they weaken the argument?

*Assumptions* are those aspects of an author's argument that are taken-for-granted rather than analysed and defended. Sometimes the author is very explicit about these assumptions. Sometimes you need to be an active reader to identify unspoken or underlying suppositions guiding the argument.

Remember to assess the article based on the author's stated goals and objectives. If the author has explicitly stated that her purpose is "x", and you think that she should have done "y", you can state this as a criticism only if what you think is missing represents a gap or weakness in her argument. For example, if an author indicates that her intent is to examine the depiction of women in today's mass media, and you think that it would have been interesting to also investigate the depiction of men, you can comment on this absence but should not see it as a weakness of the article. Instead, you should assess the article in relation to the author's stated goals.

### **3. SELF-REFLECTIVE VOICE (approx 2 pages)**

*"When you read a text, you read it through the lens of your own experience. Your understanding of the words on the page and their significance is informed by what you have come to know and value from living in a particular time and place."* (From <http://www.paec.org/david/reading/general.pdf>)

For the Self-reflective voice, you are writing as a *critical reviewer of your own responses* to the article. For this voice, you may use the first person (I) in order to distinguish your own views, arguments and points of view from those of others.

It is important to judge an argument on its own merits and not allow your preconceptions to interfere with your evaluation. One way to prevent your biases from interfering with your evaluation is to become self-conscious about your own pre-existing assumptions. Articulating them clearly and evaluating them is a foundation for critical reading and thinking.

In preparation for writing this section, re-read the article and place an X in the margin at each point where your attitudes or beliefs are challenged, and a √ at those points where you agree with the argument.

Examine your responses to this article and reflect on challenges to your beliefs and values by answering the following questions.

**i) Briefly describe your views on this subject matter *prior* to reading the article. Explore the origins of these views, that is, when, where and from whom did you learn these ideas.**

**ii) Identify your emotional responses to the issues raised in these texts.** Your responses might include anger, confusion, ambivalence, discomfort, excitement, surprise, resistance, denial, enthusiasm, etc. Explore the origins of your emotional responses.

**iii) Have your views and/or feelings changed as a result of reading this material? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?**

In this part of the assignment, you are no longer analysing the text but rather you are investigating your own responses to the issues raised in it. As in the Evaluative Voice, you are speaking in your own voice but you have shifted to a self-reflective perspective. This means that there are no right answers. However, the goal is not to defend your opinions, views and feelings, but to problematize them. Analyse critically your responses to the material in this article. Do not offer a personal opinion on the subject matter. The major factor taken into consideration in marking this section will be your ability to identify, problematize and reflect on your pre-existing beliefs and emotional responses to the material.

#### **STEP FOUR: A DISCUSSION QUESTION ON THIS ARTICLE.**

Write one level 3 **or** 4 question about this article. You do not need to answer this question.

For information about different levels of questions, see “A Guide To Active Reading, Asking Questions, Effective Listening And Successful Tutorial Participation” (*Skill and Assignment Kit*).

Include two copies of your discussion question, one attached to your assignment and one on a separate sheet with your name on it.

#### **STEP FIVE: TUTORIAL EXERCISE: A SELF-ASSESSMENT**

On the day your assignment is returned (see Course Outline for date), bring a clean copy of your assignment and, based on a careful re-reading of it, a two-paragraph statement

- \*describing its strengths and weaknesses, and
- \*one change you would make to improve it.



## **PRESENTING A UNIVERSITY PAPER**

1. The cover page should include the title of your essay, your name, student number, the course number and title, the course director's name, the name of your tutorial leader, the number of your tutorial, and the date.
2. Number the pages.
3. Double space your text.
4. Use a 12 point font with standard one inch margins.
5. Indent each paragraph. Do not space between paragraphs.
6. Staple your paper. Do **not** put your assignment in a plastic sleeve or folder.
7. Use headings as appropriate. For this assignment, it would be appropriate to have headings for each of the three voices: Author's Voice, Evaluative Voice, and Self-Reflective Voice.

## **FEEDBACK ON DRAFTS**

Given that this might be your first university assignment, you probably would like your Tutorial Leader to look over a draft. Unfortunately she does not have the time to do this kind of work. However, there are some excellent options for you:

- i) Visit your Tutorial Leader in her office hour with any questions and/or a brief point form outline. She will be able to spend some time looking it over with you.
- ii) Sign up for a writing tutor in the Writing Department. If you plan ahead, you will be able to take your draft to a writing tutor. See Course Outline for more details.
- iii) Exchange papers in your study groups. Given the shared knowledge of the material, such feedback will likely be very helpful.
- iv) Use the Checklist below as a basis to assess your paper (and those of other students in your study groups).

Note: The fact that your Tutorial Leader, a writing tutor has gone over your assignment does not guarantee that you will receive an 'A' grade.

## ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

Before you hand in your assignment, use this checklist to ensure that you have followed all instructions. This checklist is also used by your Tutorial Leader as a reference point for grading your assignment. If you find problem areas, revise before you hand in the assignment.

- i) Do you have an introduction for Step Three? It should be brief but include an outline of what you will do in this portion of the assignment.
- ii) Check the length of your annotation. It should be no more than one page. If you have used any quotations in the annotation, remove them. Summarize **in your own words**.
- iii) Have you identified and explained **key** concepts?
- iv) In your evaluation of the texts, do not state an opinion. Rather analyse the construction of the arguments. Are your assertions supported by evidence? What evidence? Be specific.
- v) When you speak in a self-reflective voice, have you **problematized** your feelings? Understanding your emotional responses will improve your critical reading skills.
- vi) In your self-reflective voice, have you explained the origins of feelings, and of your pre-existing views on the subject matter?
- vii) Have you distinguished among the three voices: the author's voice, an evaluative voice and a self-reflective voice? Remove any overlap or repetition between sections. Ensure that the appropriate voice is used in each section.
- viii) For Step Three, do you have a conclusion? This should sum up what you have learned as a result of doing this portion of the assignment.
- ix) Have you included a discussion question? And handed in two copies of the question, one on a separate sheet with your name?
- x) Is your writing clear, well organized and coherent?
- xi) Have you used sub-headings to indicate the separate sections of the paper?
- xii) Have you corrected all typing, spelling, punctuation and grammar errors? Do not rely on spell check programs on the computer.
- xiii) Is your assignment the required length?
- xiv) Have you included your Time Management Plan and one paragraph comment on what you learned about your time management skills?
- xv) Have you included the completion sheet for the on-line tutorial on *Academic Integrity*?
- xvi) Have you followed the instructions for "Presenting a University Paper"?