Project #1: Summarizing & Responding

Objective: To demonstrate your detailed understanding of one of four narrative essays by writing a summary of it, as well as to effectively critique or respond to that essay in writing.

Medium: An academically formatted composition of 850 or more words, using a standard size 11 or 12 size font (such as Calibri or Times New Roman).

Strategies: Writing techniques you will learn about and use for this project include Summarizing, Responding, Quoting, and Paraphrasing. It will also include formal citing of research.

1. The Rhetorical Situation
   Understanding what (context), why (purpose), and for whom (audience) you are writing. Exploring your purpose, audience, and context.

The narrative essays we are reading for this project, all of which reflect on the authors’ experiences within educational institutions, were previously published in major newspapers and magazines. Tanya Barrientos, writer of “Se Habla Español,” writes for The Inquirer, and Sherman Alexie, who wrote “Superman and Me,” published his story in the Los Angeles Times. Kate Harding published her article, “How I Bluffed My Way Through College,” at the major online magazine Salon.com, while Walter Kirn published his story, “Lost in the Meritocracy,” at the online site of the well-known print magazine, The Atlantic.

Many of these periodical websites offer a comments page, where readers can give their input and insights, criticisms and perspectives, about the articles they’ve read. Still others might share such articles on their Facebook page so that friends and acquaintances can read, think, and comment. In any case, these stories, and stories like them, are read, understood, and responded to, vital intellectual tasks that are fundamental to all writing.

For this project, imagine that you’ve discovered one of these articles and that you want to figure out something to say about them.

Option 1: You could imagine yourself as one of the readers of these newspapers or magazines, and that you would like to add your input to the comments page, to share with the world your thoughtful insights about the article. But you also want to write something much more thorough and thoughtful that the hateful, vulgar logorrhea that most readers posts on these websites. In other words, you want your comment to be a cut above the rest.

Option 2: You could imagine that you found and want to share this story with your Facebook friends. But you’d also like to add to it what you have to say about it, all to provoke further comments from and conversations with your friends online. In short, you’d like to get your peers online talking about this article, based not only on the article itself but also based on your own response to it.
2. Invention

Discovering, learning, and collecting knowledge about your subject matter
For this project, invention will require active and critical reading of an essay.

You will summarize and respond to the one of four core readings, all of them telling autobiographical stories about the challenges and conflicts of seeking an education:

- Tanya Barrientos’ “Se Habla Español” (MHG pp. 83-87)
- Sherman Alexie’s “Superman & Me” (MHG pp. 89-91)
- Kate Harding’s “How I Bluffed My Way Through College” (http://www.salon.com/2011/04/19/my_mediocre_college_career/)

We will discuss all of these readings in class, and you will need to choose one to write about.

The body of your project will rhetorically describe, summarize, and respond to the core reading you choose. Each of these writing strategies require that read and think about the essay you chose in different ways:

- Rhetorical description involves reading to identify. In particular, you will need to identify the core reading by title and the author by his/her full name as well as things like the text’s apparent purpose, audience, subject matter, genre, and forum. In other words, you will read to find out and tell your readers what the core reading is.
- Summary involves reading to discover and understand the content of a text. You will examine and figure out an interpretation of the intended meaning of the reading—its main point, theme, or key issues—and point to significant details of the text that support this interpretation. In other words, you will tell your reader what the reading is about and what it means.
- Response involves reading to shape your own substantiated opinions about the text. You will wrestle with and debate the reading, expanding your understanding of the text itself and the subject matter, incorporating your own thoughtful insights, ideas, experiences and critiques as they relate to the reading. In other words, this is your chance to say what you think, and why.

In short, to effectively enhance your knowledge and gather your ideas about this reading, you will need to read the essay you chose at least 3 times: once to identify its rhetorical features, once to understand its overall message as well as its key supporting details, and once to develop your own views regarding the text.

While you read, you can gather information about the reading in any number of ways - listing, brainstorming, branching, or any other form of collecting knowledge. One of the best ways to do this is with a double-entry list, where in a left column on a page you identify rhetorical features and summarize key points and in a right column on a page you write down your impressions and opinions. All this allows you to describe rhetorical details, summarize the reading, and develop responses in a clear and concrete way.
We will learn more about effective describing, summarizing, and responding throughout the course.

3. Composing
   Writing, shaping, and arranging your composition

1. Writing your description and summary:

   Before you respond to the essay you chose, you should write your rhetorical description and your summary of the text.

   For detailed instructions for describing and summarizing an essay, click HERE and find the Describing and Summarizing presentation.

2. Writing Your Response:

   As you develop your own critical response to the essay, it is important to take notes and jot down your thoughts. Create a list or outline of the points you want to make, and review this list before you start drafting the response. You may find yourself returning to this list to revise it as you write; we are always remembering “one more thing” as we go along. Edit these into your working list so they don’t get lost or end up in confusing places in your writing. In any case, simply reading the core reading once and then starting to write is not enough. Instead, you should look at the core reading again and again, confirming that you have the right understanding of the text and that you can back up the arguments you make with details from the essay. Your responses will be most effective when solidly grounded in a clear understanding of what the core reading actually says (the summary).

   Somewhere during this process, you should develop a thesis statement - a clear, specific, thoughtful, and focused one or two sentence claim that communicates your central viewpoint about the text to your readers. Specifically, the thesis should point to some general principle, value, circumstance, or idea that your readers can learn from or relate to, and that follows from your interpretation of or response to the core reading. For example, the thesis may focus on offering an interpretation of the reading that might not be obvious, focus on responding to a key theme of the reading that is particularly controversial, or focus on the reasons for your thoughtful agreement/disagreement with some aspect of the reading. What is your focused, overall response?

   You should include this thesis statement that indicates your overall response to the core reading—whether it is your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with key ideas, or your insights interpreting and reflecting on the meaning of key ideas in the text. Then your thesis statement should be supported with evidence from the reading and possibly from your outside reading or experience. You should quote or paraphrase and cite specific passages from the essay to back-up your interpretations. Your overall objective is to contribute to the conversation about this core reading and to engage your readers in your
ideas—ideally, helping them to understand some aspect of the reading more fully. To do this effectively, you’ll need to consider your readers/audience carefully as part of the collecting and shaping phase. As you select passages to paraphrase or quote as evidence for your view, think once again about your purpose and audience. What terms might they need to have explained? Which ideas or events might they be familiar with, and which ones may need to be discussed further to make sense to this kind of audience?

For more on how to write your response, click HERE and find the Responding to a Text presentation.

3. Arranging Your Draft:

You must also choose an organizational pattern for the elements of your draft. In general, your composition will probably summarize and describe first and then respond. But this is not the only way such a composition must be organized. Take the elements you wrote above and organize it in a logical pattern you think your readers will be able to follow well. As well, you will need to incorporate introductory and conclusive content. You will have to choose how you will organize the information within each section to support your summary of the text and your response. The key here is to make a deliberate choice.

For details on arranging your Summary & Response project, click HERE and find the Drafting the Summary & Response Project presentation.

Turning in Your First Draft
Due Tues., Sept. 9, by 11:59pm, in Blackboard

By the deadline, you must complete an in-progress draft of your Summarizing & Responding project and post it in Blackboard. "In-Progress" means that you are not expected to bring something in that you would consider completely finished. Rather, you should bring enough typewritten work that your fellow students will understand, after reading it, where your composition is going (at least 575 words). Feel free to include in your draft notes to yourself about what you still need to write. These kind of notes also inform your peers of what you're trying to accomplish so that they can give you additional feedback.

To post your draft...
1. In Blackboard, click on "Peer Response," then click on the "Project #1" Discussion forum.
2. Click the "Create Thread" button.
3. Enter a subject that describes what you are posting.
4. Scroll down to the "attachments" area. Click the "Browse My Computer" button. Find the folder in which you saved your Project #1 draft, select that draft, and click "Open."
5. When done, click the "Submit" button. (DO NOT click the "Save as Draft" button.)

First Draft Specifics:
• 575 words minimum, double-spaced, using 12 point Times New Roman or similar font.
• Clearly developed main point (thesis statement) stating your overall, specific, thoughtful, and focused response.
• An introduction and a conclusion
• Accurate rhetorical description, thorough summary, and meaningful response, supported with evidence from the essay and other sources.
• Observation of the conventions of Standard English
• Include your Situation Analysis in your draft document, before your essay.

Your Situation Analysis
Along with your first draft, you will submit a situation analysis, examining the rhetorical situation you have chosen to write in. In your situation analysis, explain the following:

• Audience: Describe your intended audience in detail, including possible demographic details (age, gender, race, socio-economic class, general political and/or religious views, etc). Why might this audience want to read your composition? What does your audience stand to gain by reading your composition?
• Purpose: Explain your goals or purpose for writing. What do YOU hope to accomplish by writing this composition? What do you hope your audience gets out of it?
• Context: How do you imagine your readers will get an opportunity to read your composition (consider the Situation Options above)? Why do you think it is relevant to write about this subject matter now?

4. Peer Response
Testing your work out on others and sharing feedback on each other’s writing in order to mutually improve each other’s work.

Due Tues., Sept. 16, by 11:59pm in Blackboard

By the deadline, you should respond to the drafts of at least 2 of your peers. To do this, do the following...

1. In Blackboard, click on "Peer Response," then click on the "Project #1" Discussion forum.
2. In the forum Select two of your peers' drafts to read. You should only read and respond to drafts that either do not have any feedback posted at all or that have only one response. DO NOT respond to a peer's draft if they already have two responses, unless the deadline is approaching and there no peers with fewer than two responses available.
3. For each peer's draft, download their draft and read it (twice, if possible).
4. After you’ve read the peer's draft, respond to it. In the peer's discussion thread, click on the "Reply" button. Then, in the textbox, write feedback about your peer's draft using the Peer Response questions on p. 54 of The McGraw-Hill Guide. As you write, use these peer response questions as guideposts. Not all questions must be answered explicitly and if there is some other feedback you think you ought to share that isn't represented in a question, feel free to share it. Also, as you're giving feedback, think about the project description and the two situation options provided. Note that each peer response you give should be a minimum of 200 words.
5. When done giving your feedback, click "Submit." (DO NOT click "Save Draft.")

5. Revision
Reflecting on feedback and new insights and making significant improvements to your draft.

After you have received feedback from your peers, you need to review that feedback. But you shouldn't just accept and follow whatever feedback you receive. Instead, you should evaluate the feedback and decide which feedback to consider when revising. After you have decided which feedback to consider, then you should make a plan for how you will change your draft based on that feedback. Only after all this should you actually revise your draft, making the changes you think will actually improve your written work.

As you revise, you should also think about how your draft will be evaluated. Review the following grading criteria as you reflect on and revise your draft to find other improvements you think you can make (these are the same criteria your instructor will use to evaluate your composition and apply a grade):

1. **Introduction & Conclusion** – Beginning of the composition prepares readers for what they are going to read - a summary of a specific educational narrative as well as a specific response to that article – In a thought provoking or interesting way. The conclusion leaves readers with a lasting thought or impression that contributes to the message the author is trying to communicate to the audience.

2. **Purpose** – The composition focuses clearly and specifically on one educational narrative and focuses on one specific, thoughtful, and thorough response to that narrative. This focus is communicate through the use of a thesis statement or similar statement of the main idea and this focus must be maintained throughout the composition.

3. **Content** – The composition accurately identifies and summarizes the core reading so that it captures both overall meaning and significant details or subpoints. The composition also provides a well-developed response to core reading that supports the thesis/main claim through the use of evidence from the core reading itself, evidence from other sources, and/or evidence from the student's own knowledge and experiences. At least five well-chosen quotations (word, phrases, and/or key sentences) and/or paraphrases are used from the core reading and are given credit using correct in-text citation.

4. **Arrangement** – Sections of the composition are organized logically and coherently, in such a way that it improves readers’ ability to understand the summary and response. This includes careful consideration of the order in which details and main points from the essay are presented as well as the order in which details supporting the response are delivered. This also includes verbal cues, such as transitions, the author gives in his or her writing that informs readers of the organizational pattern used in the composition.

5. **Audience & Tone** – The composition demonstrates the author's awareness of and attempt to appeal to the audience, which include individuals that may read this summary and response based on options 1 or 2 above, demonstrating an understanding of and attendance to what the audience may know and may not know. This may include using humor and/or suspense to entertain this audience effectively and appropriately but may also include using strategies that attempt get the audience to feel a certain way about the
problem being narrated or to make the author appear fair, trustworthy, evenhanded, truthful, etc. The composition also uses language that attempts to be professional and respectful of the audience. But attention may also be paid to using language that evokes appropriate emotions—humor, goodwill, frustration, indignation—either because the author felt them or because he or she wants the audience to feel them.

6. **Style** – Words and language conventions chosen are precise, descriptive, and accurately used. Sentences are articulate, varied in size and complexity, and are not redundant. Paragraphs are constructed carefully, so that breaks in paragraphs are chosen in line with narrative conventions and each paragraph accomplishes a distinct purpose that contributes to the focus of the composition and aids in the coherence and understandability of the composition. The composition consistently and appropriately makes choices about point-of-view. Third person point of view (pronouns such as “he,” “she,” “it,” “him,” “her,” “they,” “their,” “theirs,” etc.) is primarily used in order to refer to the core reading and other knowledge outside the student's own experiences, while first person point of view (pronouns such as “I,” “me,” “my,” “mine,” “we,” “us,” “our,” “ours,” etc.) is used only where the author refers to himself or herself as well as his or her experiences. Second person point of view (pronouns such as “you,” “your,” “yours,” etc.) ought to be avoided.

7. **Format** – Correct document format followed (12-point Times New Roman font, double-spacing, no hard returns, title block or page, correct pagination and headers, correct Works Cited or References page) and correct in-text citations consistently used based on the research style the author chose.

8. **Grammar, Punctuation, & Spelling** – The composition follows grammatical, punctuation, and spelling conventions for Edited American English, with few if any errors.

### 6. Editing

Making minor changes and fine-tuning your draft before you turn it in

After you feel you have effectively communicated your ideas in your draft, you should concern yourself with smaller changes - things like formatting (based on medium and genre), grammar and punctuation, word choice, etc., - the fine-tuning to your draft that ought to happen before you turn in any written work.

Things you should change and fine-tune include the following:

- Be sure that the main text of the final draft is at least 800 words and that you are using a standard size 11 or 12 size font. (A font like Calibri or Times New Roman will work nicely.)
- Add a Works Cited page (MLA) or a References page (APA).
- Check to make sure you correctly cited quotations and paraphrases from the core reading, based on the style format you chose to use. All knowledge, information, and details, whether quoted or paraphrased from the original educational narrative, must be cited in-

Turning in Your Final Draft
Due Tues., Sept. 23, by 11:59pm

To deliver your final draft...
1. Go to Blackboard, and click on the "Deliveries" link.
2. Click on the "Project #1: Summarizing & Responding" link.
3. Scroll down and use the "Attach File" function to attach your Summary & Response. (DO NOT copy and paste into the text box provided). To do this, click the "Browse My Computer" button. Find the folder in which you saved your Project #1 draft, select that draft, and click "Open."
4. When done, click the "Submit" button. (DO NOT click the "Save as Draft" button.)
5. In your "My Grades" link, an exclamation mark icon should appear next to the name of this project. This confirms that you successfully turned in the project.

Final Draft Specifics:
- 800 words minimum, double-spaced, using 12 point Times New Roman or similar font.
- Formatted using MLA or APA manuscript style with in-text citations and Works Cited or References list.
- Clearly developed main point (thesis) stating your overall, specific, thoughtful, and focused response.
- Accurate summarizing and meaningful response, supported with evidence from the essay and other sources.
- Use of topic sentences and transitions to orient readers and help them follow along.
- Observation of the conventions of Standard English
- Use of at least 5 cited paraphrases (key details or ideas rephrased in your own words) and/or quotations (words, phrases, or key sentences), with correct in-text citations in either MLA or APA style.
- Include your Cover Letter in your draft document, in place of the abstract (APA) or as the first page of your document (MLA).

Your Cover Letter:
Along with your final draft, you will submit a situation analysis - a letter to your instructor identifying the changes made between the first and final draft based on the feedback you received from your peers and other insights you've since developed about the art of writing. In your cover letter, describe the following:

- Describe and explain feedback you received from your peers and how you revised your first draft based on that feedback.
- Describe and explain how the final draft is different from the first draft.
- Discuss any problems you encountered in your revisions and how you solved them.