Appendix F
Guidelines for Writing a Peer Response

Peer Reviews

1. Read through your classmate’s paper once without stopping. It is important to get the big picture of the essay before you focus on the individual parts.

2. Reread the essay with a pencil/pen in hand and make notes in the margins or between the lines with your thoughts or questions about the author’s ideas, organization, or anything else you notice. Note: this stage of the writing process is not the time to be proofreading, because the author probably will make major changes to the entire paper, not to mention the individual words and sentences. Focus instead on the paper’s organization, paragraph structure, supporting details, transitions, etc. You will be using this marked-up draft in the workshop discussion, and you will be giving it to the author.

3. Respond to the following set of questions. You can either frame the response as a letter to the author, making sure that you cover all this ground, or you can write a coherent paragraph or more about each aspect of the paper. Your response should be 1–1 1/2 pages long, single-spaced. Make your comments as constructive and specific as you can so that the author can use them to improve the paper. Provide positive feedback along with constructive suggestions. Print out two copies (one for the author and one for the instructor) and bring them to the workshop; put your name on top and then the title of the paper and the author.

A. Argument: Restate the paper’s argument and then evaluate its effectiveness. For example, you can discuss whether you found the argument interesting and/or provocative or whether it does not push far enough beyond the fairly obvious. If you had trouble identifying the argument—perhaps because there are multiple arguments or the paper remains in generalities—help the author see where you had problems.
B. What’s Working? Help the author see what is working really well in the paper, so that he/she is sure not to lose that in revision.

C. What’s Not Working Yet? Help the author see where you struggled when reading the paper, perhaps because a point isn’t clear or evidence is not clearly related to the overall argument or the organization is hard to follow, etc.

In these general categories, here are a few things you should be sure to cover:

- **Evidence:** Which claims need more evidence, more detail, or more support in order to be convincing? Where is evidence not clearly linked to specific claims? Where are there generalizations without specific evidence?
- **Detail:** Where would more detail usefully illustrate an author’s point?
- **Organization:** Can you explain the organization of the paper in a way that makes sense? If not, where did you get lost, and how might this be rectified? Identify any parts of the paper that you thought were repetitive or unnecessary.
- **Introduction:** Does the introduction make you want to keep reading? If so, could you also determine the focus as well as perhaps the argument of the paper? Can you suggest ways to make the introduction clearer and/or more interesting?
- **Conclusion:** In what way does the conclusion do more than regurgitate the argument of the paper? Could it do more, or should it do less?