

## UNIT 2 OVERVIEW

### SKYLINE ENGL 100

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The focus of this unit is on creating a **critical analysis** of one of the assigned readings from *Rereading America* Chapter 2 on education in America. In terms of your writing work, we're shifting our focus now from *summary writing* (reporting on what you've read) to *textual analysis* (evaluating and interpreting what you've read). You will still be asked to use your summary writing skills (that you just finished practicing last week) in your critical essays, but *from now on that summary work will be restricted to only the first paragraph of your essays*. From here forward, our task is to begin learning how to ask questions about what we read in such a way that we are forced to begin making conclusions *not* about what an author thinks, or about how we feel about his/her ideas or opinions, but rather **what we see an author doing with his or her language to convey meaning to us, and whether or not we think it's successful**. This is critical textual analysis of the sort we'll be practicing throughout the remainder of the term. The focus will always be *why* the writing works or doesn't work, on the strength of the writing itself, *not* the ideas expressed in the writing. We'll be evaluating *how* an author communicates, and how well (or not) she/he does that. You'll see me referring to "rhetorical strategies" in my questions and assignments now – what I mean by that is "methods," that's all. *Rhetorical* means communication, *strategies* means ways. So, **in what way(s) does a writer use the language to communicate his or her ideas to us, and how well does she/he do it** – that's what I want us to ask and answer in our analyses of writing for the rest of the term.

Your forum discussions (and journal responses, if required) this unit further that goal, as they all will from this point forward. Work hard to answer the discussion prompt question(s) as "analytically" (i.e. tied to textual conclusions, and using the text for support and illustration) as you can so that you learn how to be comfortable exploring and expressing your conclusions, questions, frustrations, etc. about the things you read. You're never required to like, agree with or even understand everything I ask you to read; you *are* always required to try and articulate what it is, exactly, in the structures of the writing itself that either excites or repels you. This class is about learning how to talk about what we read in substantive ways that will yield conclusions we can build whole arguments and essays around – the discussion and reading work you do this unit begins that process.

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#### THESIS WORK:

Again, the discussion and reading you engage in this unit is meant to get you thinking about *how you read* and *how others write* in order to convey meaning. But remember, you should be going through a similar process of evaluation when you build and review your own writing. This is why you will find key additional resources to review on the writing process in the unit: how to build a clear and specific thesis argument and how to compose effective introductory paragraphs around them. Some of you may find this information to be review, others not. I include it here at this point in the semester because I want you to understand the primary difference between summary and analysis work: *your own measured analysis*.

Thesis is a fancy word for "main idea." Your analytical essay must contain one of these in the opening paragraph because it is this statement that will direct and bring focus to your discussion work throughout the essay itself. A thesis position, and an introduction that's built around that thesis, is designed to deliver one thing that a summary never does: *your* fundamental idea(s) about something. This is why you need to read well and read carefully: you need to understand what you read in order to make a coherent and legitimate claim about how well or not well it's written. Your good ideas are only as good as your thesis work, which always needs to be clear, specific, thorough and precise (never grand and unsubstantiated, or general and nonspecific, or sweeping in its claims).

Your introductory paragraph is the place where you introduce and summarize the work you'll be discussing, but it's also the place where you advance a substantive thesis argument about how well the work is written and why you think so. When I leave that opening paragraph as your reader, I need to know *exactly* what you're going to say,

*precisely* where you stand. You should be using thorough, concrete academic language (3<sup>rd</sup> person voice; present tense verbs) in your thesis, never abstract concepts. That's what good thesis work should do, and your essays will utterly fail to communicate well if your thesis and introductory work is not there, because your ignorant reader (me!) won't know what it is you are trying to say.

Your thesis is the heartbeat of your essay: *with* one, your essay thrives, but *without* one, it's dead on arrival. Don't let that be your essay: read closely the Thesis and Introduction sheets in this unit, even if you think you already know the material. I want you to understand and value the thesis and introductory processes of your essay drafting so that you create strong, clear work.

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#### ESSAY CONSTRUCTION

There are a few other essay component resources in this unit as well. These are discussed briefly below.

**Topic sentences** are key to the success of any essay: they announce what a paragraph will be discussing, and they also function to remind us what the thesis is attempting to argue. Your internal paragraphs should only be about one central idea, and this one central idea will be stated succinctly in your opening sentence of the paragraph. When we read that sentence, we should understand what your specific point in the paragraph will be, and we should also be able to clearly see how that point is connected to the thesis. The sheet on Topic Sentences I have included in this unit reviews these in detail with you - please read it carefully so that you understand what I am looking for in them.

**Internal paragraphs**, or "body paragraphs" as they're often referred to, are a second and related component (to Topic Sentences) in your essay building work. They have a clear overall function: to develop an aspect of your thesis idea - the topic idea. This development work follows a uniform structure:

1. State your topic idea in the first sentence of the body paragraph
2. Provide 1-2 sentences of contextual material that explains the background and sets the stage for the textual support (a quote or a paraphrase from the text) that you are about to give us to help you tie your discussion back to the text and provide clear illustration material for your topic idea
3. Insert either a direct quote from the text or a paraphrase of it, making sure to compose the proper sentence lead-in so that the entire sentence is grammatically correct
4. Provide several sentences of analysis and discussion and description that seeks to explain to us why you have given us this textual support and how it illustrates your topic idea and helps support your thesis argument
5. Compose an effective transition phrase or sentence that helps move us out of this paragraph discussion and into the next one below it

That's the body paragraph model. Think of it as a quote sandwich: textual citation material goes in the middle, your own analysis goes on either side.

Please **follow the 75/25 Rule** when composing your internal paragraphs: only 25% (maximum) of any body paragraph should be externally cited material. The other 75% of the paragraph will be YOUR OWN IDEAS, YOUR OWN DISCUSSION. That way, you won't run the risk of letting an author's words overtake your own good ideas and letting him or her speak for you, which I never want. Always use other voices in support of your own to amplify and echo and illustrate your own good ideas. Never let others speak in your place, and never assume your ignorant reader (me!) will understand something about a text that you want me to see without you clearly explaining it to me. Pretend I don't know. Explain everything.

**Note:** you *do not* need to complete or submit the exercises you will find on the Topic Sentence and Paragraph sheets - just read and review the skills covered there so that you can apply them in your own work.

**Transitions between paragraphs** and **Conclusion paragraphs** are the final two pieces of the essay building process that we haven't yet addressed. Please review these sheets to remind yourself what good, effective transitions and conclusions do in essay work, and what they should look like. I realize that for many of you these sheets are review – that's alright. Read them just the same, so that you can be sure to create effective transitions and conclusions in your own writing, as these will make your essay work stronger and I'll be looking specifically at these elements in your writing when I grade your next essays.

**Note:** you *do not* need to complete or submit the exercises you will find on the Transitions and Conclusions sheets - just read and review the skills covered there so that you can apply them in your own work.

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#### QUOTATION INTEGRATION

Pay particular attention to the **Quotation Integration sheet** as well, as it outlines how to handle textual citations, which your essays this unit will be required to incorporate in your discussion. Use it as a regular reference that you can come back to throughout the term when you need a reminder about how to properly integrate primary and secondary source material into your work. I recommend you not only study it but print it out: in your essays from now you will be required to integrate quoted material from the texts you write about in order to support and illustrate your own conclusions, **and it is absolutely critical that you understand exactly how to correctly integrate, format and cite quoted and paraphrased material in your own work, as I will be looking closely at this when I evaluate your work.**

Pay attention to the basic textual integration form: Fully introduce your textual passage with a sentence that puts the citation in context for us, then insert the quote with your own lead-in language that is grammatically integrated smoothly with the actual quote: the whole sentence, including both your lead-in and the actual quote, should read as *one grammatically correct sentence*, not two. Finally, make sure your citation format is correct: close the quote with quotation marks, *then* insert your citation in which you will **ONLY** place the author's last name and a page number (no additional punctuation or page abbreviations, no title of the work), *then* place your period. It looks like this:

In a highly ironic twist at the end of "Cathedral," the main character has an epiphany that transforms the way he sees his world, and he exclaims to his blind companion that the grainy cathedral image they're both looking at on television is "like nothing else in my life up to now" (Carver 228).

Remember, in this class I am looking for error-free work from all of you that correctly cites (quotes and paraphrases) your source text. It's quite important that you learn how to integrate quotes and paraphrases correctly in your discussion work, as this is a core skill I will be evaluating in your work throughout the term.

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#### WORKS CITED LISTS

A works cited list is what many of you already may know as a *bibliography* – it's the sheet we put at the end of an essay or a research project that lists all the title and publishing details for each primary and secondary source referenced in the essay or project itself (a *primary source* is a given work like a book or an essay; a *secondary source* is anything that's written *by somebody else* about a primary source). **You'll be required to include a works cited list with your essay in this unit (essays will not be accepted for credit without one).** It will be on its own sheet

that's attached to the end of your essay, and it will have to list only one work – the *Rereading America* selection you write about in your essay. It is important for you to learn how to create these lists correctly because this is a core composition skill you will be called upon to demonstrate proficiency in throughout your academic career, no matter what career track you're taking. To help you with this I have included several resources that show you what correct list citations look like and how to create them. When you build these lists, it is *extremely* important that you pay attention to the "small things" – line spacing, tabbing, capitals, italics, etc., because it is these formatting details, along with the correctness and completeness of the actual information you include, that will mean the difference between a correctly built list you won't have to resubmit for credit, and an incorrectly built list that you will.

You'll find in the unit the following materials to help you learn about and build your own list and entries:

- ✓ **The Hacker Works Cited Guide:** a comprehensive list of source examples that are meant to show you precisely how to format virtually any kind of source you can think of.
- ✓ **EasyBib.com:** an automatic list entry builder tool that makes your entry for you, so that all you have to do is copy/paste the completed entry into your own correctly formatted works cited list. (\*Please note, however, that while it is fine with me if you use this site to build your own source list entries, the entries themselves that the site creates for you will only include the information that you manually type in to the source information fields provided – if you neglect to supply an author or a title or a publishing date, the site will not add it, and your entry will then be incorrect because it does not supply all the required information for an entry. You must still make sure that the entry is complete and correctly lists all of the required information.)

Use the two sites together: look at the examples to see what your particular source citation should look like, and then use the entry builder site to create your entry, making sure to double check that all the right information is there before you copy/paste it into your own list.

Again, it is your responsibility to make sure your entries are complete and correctly formatted, not the computer's or the website's.

- ✓ **Template Works Cited List:** an annotated example of *exactly* what your own first lists of selections from *Rereading America* should look like. Print it out, study it closely and refer back to it as you make your own list.
- ✓ **Two Works Cited List Samples:** use these sample entries and lists as models for your own work.

\*Because it is so critical that these kinds of list entries be precisely correct, I will be very strict in my grading: if required information is not included, or spelled incorrectly, or put in the wrong place, or formatted incorrectly, or lacks the proper punctuation, your list will not receive any credit nor will the essay itself that the list is attached to.

Here are a few quick tips to help you create a correctly formatted list:

When citing a source from a collection of readings like *Rereading America*, note from the **Template** that you must include titles of *both* the book and your individual essay source, in the right order, and you must also include the names of the book's editors as well as the names of the essay author(s) of the specific entry you are citing, again in the right places in the citation. Please study the template closely to find out where to put these different pieces of information, and note that book titles are either italicized or underlined (not both) but essay titles are always placed in quotation marks only (NOT italicized or underlined).

Also:

- >> **Double space** your list, just like you see on the Template
- >> **Tab in once** all lines after the first line of your list entry, just like you see on the Template
- >> Title your list **List of Works Cited** or **Works Cited List**, just as you see on the Template - do not italicize, bold, or underline this title, and make sure it is center-spaced on the page

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**PROPERLY FORMATTED & SAVED FILES:**

This is how you must format your essay prior to submission. Please see the **Sample Format Page** in the course for more details:

Treat essays for this class exactly like you would for a regular face-to-face class: Use **1.25 inch margins** all the way around, **double-space** your work, eliminate extra spacing between paragraphs. Use a standard typeface (e.g. Times, New Century Schoolbook, Garamond, Calibri or Ariel) and use an **11 or 12 pt. font** (nothing larger or smaller please), black text (no colors please!). Arrange your text “ragged” down the right-hand margin and flush to the left margin (this is the default setting in Microsoft Word), and indent each paragraph one tab. **Put your name, the date, and the essay assignment in the top left corner of the first page, and please include page numbers.**

This is how you must format your essay *file* prior to submission.

Please note that you must submit **.doc** or **.docx** file attachment types *only* when you submit your essays to me (this applies to both emailed drafts, if required, as well as final versions using course upload tools). **I cannot open, read, comment on or grade any other file types, including but not limited to rft, txt, pdf, pages, and wps files.**

Do not send me an essay that has not been either created in Microsoft Word or converted to a Microsoft Word document and saved as either a **.doc** or **.docx** file. (Do not manually type “doc” or “docx” at the end of your document – the software will do that automatically when you save your file before sending it to me if you are using standard word processing applications.)

The way you name your essay files, in order to keep me from losing them on my computer, must also be **exactly** as follows in order to receive credit:

**Your LAST name only + a short description of the ASSIGNMENT.** Capitalize each new word in the title. Do not include your first name, do not include my name.

So, I'll pretend my last name is Smith and I'm submitting a final version of an essay for grading either by email or by using the course upload tools. Either way, I would save that essay file by naming it like this: **SmithSummary.docx**.

For **draft** versions of your essay, put the word **DRAFT** in all caps into your file title before you email the draft to me, like this: **SmithChapter2DRAFT.docx**.

For **revised** versions of your essay, please put the word **REVISION** in all caps into your file title before you email the revision to me, like this: **SmithResearchREVISION.docx**.

Capitalize each new word, include only your **last** name (not your full name, and not my name), and do not put any extra spaces between words or any punctuation anywhere in the file title.

Again, these guidelines are extremely important – please follow them exactly as described. I handle hundreds of student files each semester, and your adherence to these guidelines is the only way I can keep track of everyone's work and guarantee that it gets graded and returned to you.

**Submissions that do not follow these guidelines will be returned unread and marked down a full letter grade for not having fulfilled basic file requirements – even if they are otherwise submitted on time and satisfy all other minimum assignment criteria.**