

IN-CLASS ESSAY WRITING CHECKLIST

For this week's in-class write you have read an assigned excerpt from your course text. After I assign a prompt for you to address, you'll have the rest of the class to write a 3-4 paragraph critical response to the question. You may use any resources you wish to help you with this in-class write – your text, this checklist, your own notes, a dictionary. Remember that I'm always looking for complete, grammatically correct sentences; a single thesis idea that you follow through the entire discussion, and body paragraphs that are developed around a single topic idea with sufficient illustration and discussion work to support that topic idea. Please follow the general guidelines I've listed below as you write your essay.

General guidelines

- ✓ Plan out and draft your essay *before* you begin writing your final version – Budget your time well by dividing it equally into prewriting, writing, and proofreading phases
- ✓ Write the assigned essay question atop your essay along with the author, essay title, and page number
- ✓ Assume an “ignorant audience” – introduce and explain *everything* we need to know about the source essay before you actually begin discussing it in detail
- ✓ Double space your work, and use academic language (present tense verbs, 3rd person voice, no slang speech)
- ✓ Including a title? Make sure to choose your own, not the title of the source essay
- ✓ Try and answer the assigned question: Aim for analysis rather than simple summary or agree/disagree work

Opening paragraph

- ✓ Fully introduce your source essay: provide the title, the author, and a brief summary of the work
- ✓ State your thesis argument: this should be written in the form of a direct and complete answer to the question you are answering
- ✓ Save textual quotes for internal paragraphs: opening paragraphs are just for *your* words and ideas

Middle paragraphs

- ✓ Start each body paragraph with a topic sentence(s) *before* introducing and discussing your textual support
- ✓ Provide adequate discussion to support your topic sentences, and use quotes to indicate language that you are quoting from the source text
- ✓ Follow the 75/25 rule: 75% of each body paragraph is your words and ideas, 25% (max) is quoted or paraphrased material

Closing paragraph

- ✓ Concluding statements and closing thoughts should use *new* language
- ✓ Avoid drawing moral lessons from your analysis – Stay with the text, and stay with your analytical responses to the discussion question

Remember what I'm always looking for:

- ✓ A clear and specific thesis statement
- ✓ Good sentence control
- ✓ Focused, well-developed middle paragraphs
- ✓ Effective use of the text for support and illustration