

## Evaluation and Analysis

### 1) Evaluation

a) Why is it important to think critically about your sources & where they came from or who wrote/spoke them?

### 2) Analysis

a) Why is it so tempting to stick with summary and skip analysis?

i) How do I know if I'm summarizing?

(1) As you read through your essay, ask yourself the following questions:

(a) Am I stating something that would be obvious to a reader or viewer?

(b) Does my essay move through the plot, history, or author's argument in chronological order, or in the exact same order the author used?

(c) Am I simply describing what happens, where it happens, or whom it happens to?

ii) A "yes" to any of these questions may be a sign that you are summarizing. If you answer yes to the questions below, though, it is a sign that your paper may have more analysis (which is usually a good thing):

(a) Am I making an original argument about the text?

(b) Have I arranged my evidence around my own points, rather than just following the author's?

(c) Am I explaining why or how an aspect of the text is significant?

b) What strategies can help me avoid excessive summary?

i) Formulate an argument (including a good thesis) and be sure that your final draft is structured around it, including aspects of the plot, story, history, background, etc. only as evidence for your argument. (You can refer to our handout on constructing thesis statements).

ii) Read critically—imagine having a dialogue with the work you are discussing. What parts do you agree with? What parts do you disagree with? What questions do you have about the work?

iii) Make sure you have clear topic sentences that make arguments in support of your thesis statement.

iv) Use two different highlighters to mark your paper. With one color, highlight areas of summary or description. With the other, highlight areas of analysis. Have lots of analysis and minimal summary/description.

v) Ask yourself: What part of the essay would be obvious to a reader/viewer of the work being discussed? What parts (words, sentences, paragraphs) of the essay could be deleted without loss? In most cases, your paper should focus on points that are essential and that will be interesting to people who have already read or seen the work you are writing about.<sup>1</sup>

c) Using evidence in an argument

i) Does evidence speak for itself?

(1) Absolutely not. After you introduce evidence into your writing, you must say why and how this evidence supports your argument. In other words, you have to explain the significance of the evidence and its function in your paper. What turns a fact or piece of information into evidence is the connection it has with a larger claim or argument: evidence is always evidence for or against something, and you have to make that link clear.

ii) Here are some questions you can ask yourself about a particular bit of evidence:

(1) O.k., I've just stated this point, but so what? Why is it interesting? Why should anyone care?

(2) What does this information imply?

(3) What are the consequences of thinking this way or looking at a problem this way?

(4) I've just described what something is like or how I see it, but why is it like that?

(5) I've just said that something happens—so how does it happen? How does it come to be the way it is?

(6) Why is this information important? Why does it matter?

(7) How is this idea related to my thesis? What connections exist between them? Does it support my thesis? If so, how does it do that?

(8) Can I give an example to illustrate this point?

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<sup>1</sup> The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill