

Response Paper Guidelines

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The main purpose of the response paper is to enhance your learning by prompting you to critically reflect on the reading materials and the links to other texts and ideas. To this end, the paper should summarize key findings of several of the assigned reading material and discuss a specific issue in the readings, either by comparing how the different texts relate to the chosen issue or by using additional literature to discuss the topic. Another purpose of the paper is to demonstrate analytical writing abilities. In the response papers you can show your ability to work with different pieces of information and build a coherent argument.

A response paper is not a summary of the texts. It involves a certain degree of analysis of the claims made in the papers and constitutes an informed reaction to them. To write the response paper, you have to understand the arguments that each text makes individually and also assess how they relate to each other. It is your job to understand, frame, and introduce the relevance of the question, synthesize the intellectual work of the authors, and provide a considered discussion of the issue. I urge you to write the text for an imaginary lay reader who doesn't know anything about the subject. Thus, don't write it for me assuming that I know what 'securitization' means.

For general pointers, please see my recommendations on *How to write a research paper*. This includes my appeals to actively use the spell-check function and do a focused round (or two) of proofreading of the printed paper.

How many texts should you use?

The response paper should not be a response to one text only. Generally, I expect that you look at the different arguments and perspectives from several texts. You can also refer to readings that were part of other sessions, in fact, these will often be relevant. E.g., if you write about a securitization issue after our session on the securitization of refugees and migration, I expect you to reference texts and ideas from that session.

If you pick a specific issue that is obviously the key theme of an additional reading (a reading in the reading list that you are normally not obliged to read), in most cases I expect you to have considered that reading too. On the other hand, it is not necessary to compare all texts that are assigned for the respective week. In particular, sometimes I have assigned readings to address different topics under the umbrella of the thematic area that we cover that week. Hence, you don't have to try to force all texts into a comparison.

Generally, it is not expected that you do additional research. Hence I don't expect a long bibliography and comprehensive references. But if you feel that it would be beneficial to refer to other sources, feel free to do so. If you only refer to the texts from the weekly readings, no formal references are needed. If you include other texts, please adhere to the Chicago Style citation style, both for in-text citations and for the references in the back.¹

¹ You find the relevant pages from the APSA style-guide in Files on CourseWorks. Also see my guidelines on How to write a research paper.

Formalities

- Length:** 600-800 words, including footnotes but excluding references. Please include the word count without references in the header and make sure the paper has not less than 600 and not more than 800 words.
- Deadline:** Midnight the day before the day of the respective class. This is Monday 23:59 pm before our Tuesday class.
- Form of submission:** Word document (not pdf) sent via email to daniel.naujoks@columbia.edu. Please name the file *Lastname_Response Paper_Week [number]* (e.g.: Gautam_Response Paper_Week 2) and use the file name as subject line of your email.
- Header:** Every paper has to have a header that states your name, the course name, the semester, what this document is (Response Paper and the week it relates to) and the word count. A title of your paper is optional.
- Weight for final grade:** As indicated in the syllabus, you can substitute 15 percentage points of your participation grade with one response paper.

Evaluation

I will grade the papers assessing the following three categories:

Evaluation category	Max points	Comments
Question/ issue	20	Asking good questions is the key starting point for a good response paper. You have much discretion in selecting the issue you want to reflect on and that you want to compare the texts on. However, I will evaluate how relevant the question is, how much it shows consideration of certain issues and how much you focus on specific and manageable aspects of the texts. For example, forcing aspects into a response paper that do not really form a coherent paper would lead to a lower assessment of the paper.
Depth, exhaustiveness and clarity of argument	60	<p>Your argumentation and the originality of your arguments are at the center of the response paper. I evaluate the value and clarity of ideas you present and stringency of argumentation. How considerate are you, how much are you sensitized to discuss the issues from various perspectives?</p> <p>As outlined above, questions from the guiding principles of the class or incorporating arguments from previous sessions of the course can provide depth to the argument and supplement the ideas that you find in the weekly readings that you are discussing in the response paper.</p> <p>I also urge you to define your key terms and concepts (and if need be discuss them briefly). <i>Don't write the text for me but with an audience in mind that doesn't know anything about the subject.</i> Thus, be clear and don't start from certain assumptions.</p> <p>This also means discussing (and were appropriate) scrutinizing the empirical basis of certain arguments (what evidence does the author present?). You don't have to do additional research but if you feel intrigued by an argument feel free to do so in order to make your argument stronger.</p>

		<p>Integrated discussions generally better than discussing the issues in course reading 1 and then course reading 2. This may depend on the concrete issue and it's not a fixed rule. But in my experience, discussions that are focused on the issue and use the text to discuss the issue are generally better than discussions that revolve around texts. Thus, instead of reporting what paper 1 says and then paper 2 and then paper 3, in most cases it is better to pull arguments from the different texts.</p> <p><i>1 makes a convincing case that apples are green. However, 2 shows that in some cases apples can be red too, especially in cases of paint wars. 3 reconciles both perspectives but also diverges from A's general claim ...</i></p> <p>A good response paper includes your own voice that weighs the different arguments. You can use "I" in the paper but you can also formulate the discussions in neutral terms. This is a style question and I am open to either. However, the tone should be academic, not just reflective.</p>
Style, structure, spelling mistakes, references	20	<p>I will evaluate your writing style, grammar, spelling mistakes, and the structure of the paper, how you incorporate other references, if you follow the reference style and the other formalities (thus, please read the section on formalities carefully. It should be easy to follow the guidelines.)</p> <p>You don't have to use sub-headings but they are often useful to structure a text and to help the reader.</p> <p>Please avoid too many direct quotes (see <i>How to write a research paper</i>).</p> <p>Needless to say that any kind of plagiarism will not be tolerated (see academic integrity statement in the Syllabus).</p>
Total	100	