PAD 500
SPRING 2008
RESPONSE PAPER GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES
During the course of the semester you are required to write four response papers. These papers integrate the readings for the week and provide your own thoughtful evaluation and criticism. Your paper should draw directly from the texts and should offer an original argument. Excellent papers use current events, journal articles and newspaper articles to apply the material in the course to actual events. Papers should be between three and four pages, typewritten and double spaced.

The Argument
a. Have you made an argument? If you can argue the opposing view to your argument, then you probably have made a real argument. If there is no opposition to what you are saying, then either you have not made an argument or the argument you made is not very interesting.
b. Is the argument original? While you are allowed to take the position of one of the authors in the readings, you should try to come up with an original idea. Original arguments are more interesting and will hold the attention of the reader (me!).

The Readings
a. Did you use all of the readings assigned? An argument should incorporate all of the readings. This will show the reader an understanding of the material, and an ability to provide different points of view to an argument and/or counterargument.
b. Did you apply the readings to your argument or did you merely summarize the readings? Do not summarize the readings! Use the readings to support an argument. Provide the essence of the authors’ ideas, but do not write summaries. This is an important skill to develop. Remember the task – you are using experts in the field to support (or oppose) your argument.

Outside sources
a. Did you provide outside sources? You may use newspaper articles, scholarly journals, reports from government agencies, or findings from research centers to support your argument.
b. Do your sources support your argument? Avoid sources that merely state their opinion. Instead, provide facts or empirical evidence to support your argument. Opinions are only allowed when the person providing the opinion is an expert in the field. Support your argument with evidence from a peer reviewed journal or reputable source.

Counterargument
a. Did you provide a counterargument? You should provide a counterpoint for each point you make in your argument.
b. Did you support your counterargument? Find sources to support the counterargument.
Real life events/examples

a. Does the event relate to your argument? You may choose several events/examples or one event/example. Just make sure that all parts of your argument/counterargument are supported by references to examples or outside sources.

Reference / citations

a. Did you cite every idea that was not your own original thought? Every paper needs to have proper citations for ideas that support your argument. In a short paper like this please refrain from long direct quotes. Summarize the author’s idea in a couple of sentences and provide a citation.

b. Did you provide a reference section? All sources should be included in a reference section, footnotes, endnotes or works cited page.

Grammar / punctuation

a. Did you proofread your paper? If you (or a friend, family member or peer) can read your paper quickly, it is a sign that the paper is coherent and has few or no grammatical or punctuation errors.

Overall Presentation

a. Review the checklist before handing in your paper. As you do this you will be asking yourself a few questions. Is the argument interesting and original? Is the argument supported by the readings, outside sources, and real life examples? Did you provide a well supported counterargument? Did you proofread your paper to check for citations, references, grammar and punctuation?

Grading

“A” papers: Excellent papers that will have an interesting and original argument, clear and precise thesis. These papers will demonstrate the argument by using examples from the text we have read as well as reference current events, journals and newspaper articles. “A” papers do not shy away from disagreement or taking strong stands, they address counterarguments. “A” papers have a very clear argument and structure free from grammatical mistakes.

“B” papers: Good papers with a strong argument and a clear thesis. These papers draw on the text and current events and demonstrate a solid understanding of the material. “B” papers engage the material in a meaningful way and offer original analysis. These papers identify potential critics and have no major structural or grammatical mistakes.

“C” Papers: Average papers that do not offer an original argument or have one or more major problem: structure, grammar and punctuation, argument.

“D” Papers: Unsatisfactory papers that fail to offer an argument about the material or seriously misunderstand the text. These papers often bear evidence of having been hastily or carelessly written.