

RESPONSE PAPERS

ASSIGNMENT

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to submit written responses to 3 of the assigned readings/films. Here are some basic guidelines to follow:

- ❶ Responses should be brief: **300 – 500 words**.
- ❷ Responses must address one or more of the **next class session's** assigned readings or the assigned film.
- ❸ **Choose your own approach.** If you are not sure what approach to take, here are some – but not all! – possibilities (these approaches will work for films, too):
 - a discussion of one or two major themes of the work (this can include speculation on what may have led the author to address them);
 - a comparison / contrast between the current text and a past text;
 - a consideration of the genre of the work and the relationship of its form to its content;
 - an analysis of point of view and narrator (who is the narrator? is s/he reliable or unreliable?) and the ways in which these affect your response to the work;
 - a thoughtful reflection on why a particular passage or text proved difficult or frustrating;
 - a discussion of why a particular reading made a significant impression on you (this approach requires the provision of *specific* description(s) of your experience of reading the work).
- ❹* **The only approach to AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE: pure summary.** Your response cannot receive more than 2 points if it does no more than summarize the plot of a text.
- ❺ **Formulate one question** that you will answer, and **stay close to it** throughout the entire response. If you make several interesting but unconnected observations about the text/film, rather than stick to thinking about one thing for all 300 words, you'll be sacrificing some points.
- ❻ **Strike a reasonable balance between content and grammar.** Try to think of response papers as informal exercises in “thinking in writing” (rather than a formal essay) and direct most of your energies toward expressing your ideas clearly. Once you've got your 300 words, then, if you have time, you can go back over them and try to eliminate grammatical problems. That being said, it should be added that ***you will not lose points for spelling or grammar.***

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of these response paper assignments are to:

- encourage some critical thinking about the readings and how they reflect course objectives and content (refer to your syllabus for a description of course objectives)
- prepare you for discussion
- give instructor/TA opportunities to incorporate your ideas into discussion
- allow instructor/TA to respond to your individual questions and concerns

IMPORTANT: You are *ALWAYS* responsible for doing the reading and participating in discussion, regardless of whether you have a response due on that day or not!

HOW TO SUBMIT RESPONSE PAPERS

- ❶ Compose your response using Microsoft Word and save it to your computer's hard drive or to some other storage device
- ❷ Title your document using **your last name and the last name of the author** (for films, you can use the title or part of the title of the film). Examples: "nafpaktitis-gorky.doc" or "jefferson-circus.doc"
- ❸ Go to the class Collab site for RUTR 2320
- ❹ Click on "Assignments"
- ❺ Click on "Submit Homework" for the reading assignment or film for which you are submitting a response
- ❻ Click on the button that says "Add Attachment," to find your response text, when you find it, upload and submit it. **IMPORTANT:** Be sure that you get a confirmation screen message from Collab before leaving the assignment page!

*Please print out and bring a hard copy
of your response paper to class and discussion
for reference in case you are asked to talk about it!*

DEADLINES

Commentaries are **due by midnight of the day before the class meeting where the text will be discussed.** (Collab will say 11:55PM, but you can submit your response without penalty until midnight.) See the schedule of response deadlines to find out when your responses are due. If you submit your commentary after midnight, Toolkit will automatically flag it as late.

EVALUATION SCALE

9-10 points	<p>You posed a question and thought in writing about how to answer it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the question being addressed is clearly stated • demonstrates careful reading and critical reflection on assigned text (i.e., not just facts, but what they might mean) • stays on topic throughout
7-8 points	<p>It's clear that you read the text, but comments are somewhat loosely connected and don't really address a particular question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • question being addressed can be determined from context • commentary reflects careful reading • commentary stays mainly on topic
3-6 points	<p>It's hard to tell whether or not you've read the text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult to determine question being addressed • reveals lack of familiarity with readings • strays from one topic to another
1-2 points	Response simply summarizes a reading without addressing a particular question
0 points	No response submitted

Note: Although the instructor and TA *will* carefully read all of your responses and may make reference to them in class or discussion, they will usually not provide written comments on response papers, beyond assigning points.