

Tracy Fessenden Course Syllabus

Prepared for the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture by:

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The Center is pleased to share with you the syllabi for introductory courses in American religion that were developed in seminars led by Dr. Deborah Dash Moore of Vassar College. In all of the seminar discussions, it was apparent that context, or the particular teaching setting, was an altogether critical factor in envisioning how students should be introduced to a field of study. The justification of approach, included with each syllabus, is thus germane to how you use the syllabus.

I. Syllabus Justification

Arizona State University is a public, urban institution serving close to 50,000 students from every state and more than forty foreign countries. The Religious Studies Department comprises sixteen full-time and several adjunct faculty; many are concurrently affiliated with other departments and programs in the university including Women's Studies; Latin American Studies; African and African-American Studies; East, South, and Southeast Asian Studies, Jewish Studies, American Studies, History, and Humanities. Because Religious Studies courses fill a variety of distribution requirements within the University, most undergraduates will have taken at least one course in the department before graduating. Students represent a wide diversity of religious backgrounds and levels of personal religious commitment. We now have approximately 100 majors and about as many minors, and 40-50 students at various stages in our Master's program. Perhaps because religious studies attracts a rather select group of students, our majors are among the best students in the University, many of them coming from the University Honors College.

Religious Studies 294: Honors remains at this point a hypothetical course. The department now offers a two-semester course in American religious history for undergraduate students and various topics courses in American religion for undergraduates and graduates. I have conceived this course as an Honors course for students in the Honors College, whose student profile approximates that of highly selective liberal arts colleges: students average 1300 on their SATs and come from the top 5% of their high school classes. I would also encourage religious studies majors and other interested students who have taken at least one course in the department to take this course. I envision the course as an alternative to large lecture courses (some of our current offerings enroll as many as 400 students) where student writing and classroom discussion receive comparatively little emphasis. I have designated this class an Honors class in response to the suggestions of my colleagues in the Young Scholars program. In all of my classes, however, I find that "teaching to the top" tends to raise the level of discussion and commitment for all involved.

My general goal, in teaching undergraduates, has been to foster what my Young Scholars colleague Jennifer Rycenga has called "religious literacy." Beyond that, I agree with J. Z. Smith that one of the primary aims of the college religion course should be to teach students to do college-level work. To this end I include some very challenging readings and a variety of writing assignments. The course I have

designed draws together readings from other graduate and undergraduate course I have taught, including "Race and Gender in American Religious History" and "Religion and American Popular Culture."

Two writing assignments I have made use of in other undergraduate classes and include here are the peer critique and daily journal, the latter borrowed from my Young Scholar colleague Paul Thigpen. The peer critique, I have found, encourages students to approach their own writing with the eye of a potential reader and critic. I find that students almost invariably do better on their second papers after having had the chance to write a peer critique of another student's paper. Paul Thigpen identifies some of the many uses of the classroom journal that I have also found particularly effective: The journals allow instructors to monitor student progress between exams, to highlight material in lectures that students have found to be particularly meaningful, to encourage and reward close reading and regular attendance, to provide students with a safe space to articulate issues that may concern them but which they aren't yet ready to share with the entire class, and to allow a forum for the participation of those students who may be reticent in speaking generally. Additionally, I have found the journals particularly valuable in demystifying the writing process: Students experience less stress approaching their papers when writing is already a part of their regular classroom routine.

I also include what I call a vocabulary option on journal assignments: Students can get one point of extra credit on any classroom journal assignment if they indicate a word from the reading which they looked up in a dictionary, along with the new definition they've mastered. While students appreciate this option as a way of making up for lost points due to absences, I find that it also makes reading and participating in class less intimidating by allowing the students to take control of materials whose vocabulary may initially appear to exclude them. In course evaluations from other classes in which I have introduced this technique, students often report that they have learned as much or more from the dictionary than from any of the classroom texts.

As I note in the syllabus, the direction of the course is (loosely) chronological, but it is not intended as a comprehensive survey of American religions; much of importance is necessarily omitted. In providing a broad, if selective, overview of the development of religious ideas, rituals, and forms of community from the colonial period to the present, the course gives attention to economic change, politics, immigration, gender, regionalism, and racial and ethnic diversity. I have sought in particular to respond to the religious diversity of Arizona: Devoting a fifth of the course to Native American traditions seemed particularly important in a state that is home to more than twenty tribal governments. Religions to be studied include those of Native Americans; Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish European Americans; Protestant, Catholic, and Muslim African Americans; and others. As I emphasize, each of these groups itself constitutes a diversity; a central theme of the course is the relationship between religious and other identities (racial, national, gender, ethnic), and on the ways in which these identities are conceived, expressed, maintained, and interpreted. The course also looks at the ways in which these groups have attempted to manage their relations with one another, particularly during periods of colonialism, slavery, and immigration.

I have used Gaustad's *Documentary History of Religion in America* and Albanese's *America: Religion and Religions* as resource texts which are supplemented by a range of primary and secondary materials. While students (even Honors students) tend to prefer a less unwieldy set of materials, I have selected the readings for the class both to highlight the deficiencies of any single text and to emphasize that scholarship in religious studies, as in any discipline, is provisional and perspectival. I find that encountering a broad array of materials helps students to an understanding of how scholarship works and so to a richer sense of where they as students fit into the teaching/learning process: that what they study constitutes a living, dynamic field and not just a set of subjects to be memorized and recalled on examinations. In this and in other courses I avoid examinations entirely, choosing to focus on more extended writing projects. What is thus sacrificed in the way of learned particulars (and the instructor's grading time!) is amply compensated for, I find, in the students' new sense of themselves as young scholars whose approach to a subject makes a difference in how that subject is conceived and reproduced in academic settings.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

Tracy Fessenden
Department of Religious Studies

Office hours: After each class by request and 3:00-5:00 on Fridays; other times by appointment

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RELIGION IN AMERICA **Religious Studies 294**

PS H 151
M-W 3:15-4:30

BE SURE TO KEEP THIS SYLLABUS FOR THE ENTIRE SEMESTER. IT CONTAINS READING ASSIGNMENTS AND STUDY MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE COURSE.

Course Description:

This course focuses on important currents, representative populations, significant works, and interpretive methods in American religious history. While the direction of the course is (loosely) chronological, it is not intended as a comprehensive survey of American religions; much of importance is necessarily omitted. In providing a broad, if selective, overview of the development of religious ideas, rituals, and forms of community from the colonial period to the present, the course gives attention to economic change, politics, immigration, gender, regionalism, and racial and ethnic diversity. Religions to be studied include those of Native Americans; Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish European Americans; Protestant, Catholic, and Muslim African Americans; and others. Each of these groups itself constitutes a diversity; a central question of the course will be on the relationship between religious and other identities (racial, national, gender, ethnic), and on the ways in which these identities are conceived, expressed, maintained, and interpreted. We will also look at the ways in which these groups have attempted to manage their relations with one another, particularly during periods of colonialism, slavery, and immigration.

Texts:

- Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religion and Religion*
- Edwin Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in the United States*, vols. 1 and 2
- David G. Hackett, ed., *Religion and American Culture: A Reader*
- Readings in course packet, available at University Copy Shop

Requirements:

Your critical engagement, in the form of informed and imaginative thinking, reading, writing, and discussion.

Three 5-page essays. Guidelines for writing these essays follow the schedule of assignments. Any of these essays may be rewritten and handed in before 4 p.m. on Friday, December 12, but no credit will be given for any paper not received in its original form by the due date specified..

Two peer critiques of other students' essays. Guidelines follow those for writing papers.

A take-home final exam. An additional take-home mid-term exam may be taken at your option.

Regular completion of the classroom journal. This will consist of two brief entries (one sentence each) made at the end of each class session noting 1) the most important thing you learned from that day's discussion and/or reading; 2) either one point made that day that needs further clarification, or one question raised in your mind by the class and/or reading. These entries will be written in the last five minutes of class and turned in immediately. (If you miss class, you miss the chance to do the classroom journal for that day.) These allow you to raise issues you may not have had a chance to bring up in class, provide a feedback system for me that shows me what you're finding important, and enables me to reward regular reading and attendance. These will be graded as a whole at the end of the semester. Though there is obviously no right or wrong answer to either question on any day, journal grades will depend on 1) completeness (one point off for every entry missing two per class session including those missed for absence from class) and 2) how seriously you take the questions (one point off for every frivolous or "I don't know" answer). To get an extra point on any given day, see the section on vocabulary, below.

Grading:

Assignments will be weighted as follows:

Papers: 15% each for a total of 45% of final grade

Peer critiques: 10% each for a total of 20% of final grade

Classroom journals: 15% of final grade. There will be 30 class sessions (after the first day) for a total of 60 possible journal points. Your grade will be determined as a possible percentage of 60: e.g.; 56 points out of 60= 92%=A; 40 points=66%=D. But see vocabulary, below, for a way to get extra points on your journal.

Final exam: 20% of final grade. (Alternatively, you may choose to have the optional midterm counted as 10% and the final counted as 10% of your grade)

Some notes and reminders:

Copies of Papers and Peer Critiques: Always hand in two copies your papers. One should have your name and student ID number at the top of your first page; the other should have your name and student ID number on a separate page. Do the same with peer critiques. Additionally, it's a good idea to keep a copy or a backup disk for all of the work you hand in. Detailed suggestions for papers and peer critiques appear later in this syllabus; be sure to follow these closely.

Deadlines: You may hand your papers in at any time, but no later than on dates specified in the syllabus. Late papers will not be accepted. If you do not hand your first and second papers in by their respective deadlines, moreover, you will miss the opportunity to write a peer critique of another's paper, which means losing an additional 10%, or a full letter grade, from your final grade for the class. If you are ill or otherwise unable to come to class the day that a paper is due you must have it delivered to my office before 4 p.m.. If you are unable to come to class on the day that papers are distributed for peer critique you must arrange to have your assignment picked up for you by someone else. In both cases, exceptions due to genuine emergencies (car trouble and minor illnesses are not genuine emergencies) will be granted only if I

receive appropriate documentation (e.g. hospital admission form). It is your responsibility to see that I have a copy of the appropriate documentation for my files.

Disabilities: If you have made arrangements with the Disabled Students' Center to accommodate any special needs you may have, please let me know. If for any reason you experience inadequate provisions in this classroom, please schedule an appointment with me so we can take care of the problem.

Re-writes: Students receiving B grades or lower may re-write their papers; be sure to hand in the original version of the paper along with the revision. No re-writes will be accepted after 4 p.m. on Friday, December 12.

Vocabulary: You are sure to encounter a number of unfamiliar words in the reading (I always do!) and perhaps also in the discussions. It's a good idea to read with a dictionary handy so that you can take control of these new words. You can get one point of extra credit on any classroom journal assignment if you indicate a word from the reading which you looked up in a dictionary, along with the new definition you've mastered.

Writing Center: A sheet listing locations and hours for the campus writing centers is attached to this syllabus. I encourage you to take advantage of the services they offer!

Schedule of Presentations, Readings, and Assignments

Part One: Colonial America and the Early National Period

Week One: Introduction and Expectations

Thomas A. Tweed, "Narrating U.S. Religious History," from Tweed, ed., *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (California, 1997) 126 (packet)

Albanese, "Introduction: The Elephant in the Dark," 1-18

Week Two: Native American Religions:

Gaustad I; "Natural Religion"; "Hopi, Zuni, Chinook, Kwakiutl Ceremonies"; "Tsimshian, Pima, Cherokee, Zuni Myths," 5-19

Albanese, "Original Manyness: Native American Traditions," 24-49

Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "The Pueblo Indian World in the Sixteenth Century," in Hackett, 5-25

Week Three: Colonial Encounters I

Clendinnen, Inga. "Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty: Cortes and the Conquest of Mexico" *Representations* 33 (1991) 65-100 (course packet)

Gaustad I: "National Religion"; "Spain: Expulsion of the Moors"; "Expulsion of the Jews"; "Dividing the New World," 20-24; "Society of Jesus," 26-28; "Europe in America: New Spain"; "Ponce de León"; "Bartholomew de Las Casas"; "Dominicans in Florida"; "Pedro Menéndez de Avilés"; "Franciscans and Indian Revolt"; "Franciscans in New Mexico," 57-72

Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," in Hackett 55-72

Week Four: Colonial Encounters 2

The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America, ed. Colin G. Calloway (Bedford 1994); Introduction, "Times are Altered with Us Indians," ch. 1, "Voices from the Shore" and ch. 2 "Cultural Conflicts, Contests, and Confluences" (course packet)

Gaustad I: "Martin Luther," 29-32; "Francis I and John Calvin," 38-40; "England Anew"; "Virginia: John Rolfe and Pocahontas"; "AntiCatholicism"; "Massachusetts: Reasons for Removal (Pilgrims)"; "Reasons for Removal (Puritans)"; "A Modell of Christian Charity," 93-106; "The English and the Indian: Indian Missions in Massachusetts"; "King Philips War"; "William Penn and the Indians"; "Virginia Indians and the College of William and Mary," 120-125; "Indian Captivity Narrative, 1682," 189-192

Gina Ingoglia, adapt. Pocahontas (Disney Press, 1995), chs. 3, 4, 10 (course packet)

Week Five: Puritans

Albanese, from ch. 4, "Word from the Beginning: American Protestant Origins and the Liberal Tradition," 103-132

David D. Hall, "A World of Wonders: The Mentality of the Supernatural in Seventeenth-century New England," in Hackett, 27-52

Gaustad I: "Congregationalism (Puritanism)"; "Puritan Poets: Anne Bradstreet"; "Proposals of 1705"; "Jonathan Mayhew and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel," 132-144

Elisa New, "'Both Great and Small': Adult Proportion and Divine Scale in Edward Taylor's 'Preface' and The New England Primer," Early American Literature 28 (1993) (course packet)

Week Six: Dilemmas of Pluralism: Religious, Racial, and Gender Conflict in the New World

David Wills, "The Central Themes of American Religious History: Pluralism, Puritanism, and the Encounter of Black and White" Religion and Intellectual Life 5.1 (Fall 1987): 30-41 (course packet)

Gaustad I: "Megapolensis and the Jews, 1655," 85; "Maryland and Roman Catholics," 109-112; "Pennsylvania and the Quakers," 112-114; "Against 'Jesuits and Popish Priests,'" 147-148; "Anne Hutchinson"; "Mary Dyer"; "Witchcraft at Salem: Trial of George Burroughs"; "Cotton Mather and Spectral Evidence," 132-140; "Puritan Antislavery"; "Episcopal Frustration"; "Quaker Abolitionism," 184-189

Albanese, from Chapter 2: "Israel in a Promised Land: Jewish Religion and People-hood" 50-55

Albert J. Raboteau, "African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel," in Hackett 73-88

Paper One due this week

Part Two: The Nineteenth Century

Week Seven: African American Religious Innovations I

William B. Gravely, "The Dialectic of DoubleConsciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808-1863," in Hackett (pages)

Gaustad I: "Methodism (Black)," 300-303; "Black Religion and Slavery"; "Slave Religion"; "Daniel A. Payne"; "Frederick Douglass"; "Sojourner Truth." 467-476

Charles Joiner, "'Believer I Know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity" in Hackett 185108

Albanese, "Black Center: African-American Religion and Nationhood," 193-218

Papers distributed for peer critique

Week Eight: Mormons, Millennialism, and Utopias

Gaustad I, "Peabody on Brook Farm"; "Oneida Community and Bible Communism"; "Complex Marriage"; "Scientific Propagation"; "Latter Day Saints and the New Revelation"; "Joseph Smith's First Vision"; "Printing of the Book of Mormon"; "Joseph Smith's Revelation on Plural marriage"; "Joseph Smith's Martyrdom"; "Brigham Young Assumes leadership"; "Exodus Announced"; "Requirements for the Journey"; "Church Authorities Appeal to Iowa Governor," 340-363

Albanese, "Visions of Paradise Planted: NineteenthCentury New Religions," 220-248

Jan Shipp, "The Genesis of Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition," in Hackett 167-184

Peer critiques due

Week Nine: Catholics and Nativism

David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Countersubversion: an Analysis of AntiMasonic, AntiCatholic, and AntiMormon Literature," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 47 (1960-61) (course packet)

Gaustad I, "Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance," 26-27; "Franciscans and Indian Revolt," 68-70; "English America's First Mass," 112-114; "Nativism"; "Samuel F.B. Morse"; "Awful Disclosures"; "Religious KnowNothingism," 459-466; Gaustad 2: "Roman Catholicism"; "Education"; "Ethnicity"; "Liberty," 39-48; "Society of St. Vincent de Paul"; "Advice to Catholic Girls," (pages)

Albanese, "Bread and Mortar: The Presence of Roman Catholicism," 74-101, "The Roman Catholic 'Plot,' 501-509

Optional take-home midterm available this week, to be turned in before next Monday's class

Week Ten: American Religion and "Woman's Sphere"

Gaustad I: "Sojourner Truth," 475-76; "Women's Rights: The Grimké Sisters and Theodore Weld," 503-507; Gaustad II, "Women's Work," 61-71

Mary P. Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840," in Hackett, 147-167

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Alice Fletcher, "The Indian Woman and Her Problem," *Southern Workman* 28 (1899) 172-176 (course packet)

Colleen McDannell, "Catholic Domesticity," in Hackett, 291-314

Week Eleven: Religion, Abolition, and Reconstruction

Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition," *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988): 28-59 (course packet)

Gaustad I, "White Abolitionists: Elijah Lovejoy," 477-82; "Abraham Lincoln," 518-524; Gaustad II, "To Bind Up the Nation's Wounds," 6-21; "Welcome to the Ransomed," 21-31

Gail Bederman, "'Civilization,' the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells Anti-lynching Campaign (1892-1894) *Radical History Review* 52 (1992) (course packet)

Charles Reagan Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion," in Hackett, 229-246

Paper two due this week

Part Three: The Twentieth Century

Week Twelve: African American Religious Innovations 2

Jon Michael Spencer, "Theologies of the Blues," from *Blues and Evil* (pages)

Karen McCarthy Brown, "The Power to Heal in Haitian Vodou: Reflections on Women, Religion, and Medicine," in Hackett 479-495

Gaustad II, "African Americans"; "Liberation Theology"; "Muslim Theology," 555-559

Papers distributed for peer critique

Week Thirteen: Judaism and Twentieth-Century America

Albanese, from Chapter Two, "Israel in a Promised Land: Jewish Religion and Peoplehood, 57-73; from "The Jewish 'Conspiracy,'" 509-512

Gaustad II: "Judaism," 49-60; "Jewish Welfare Board," 188-190; "Cooperative Judaism," 193-194; "Judaism," 400-411; "The World and Its Wars," 437-449

Deborah Dash Moore, "Seeking Jewish Spiritual Roots in Miami and Los Angeles," in Hackett, 383-406

Selections from Jack Salzman, Adina Black, and Gretchen Sorin, eds. *Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews* (New York: Braziller, 1992) (course packet)

Peer critiques due

Week Fourteen: Religion and Social Protest: The Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam

Excerpts from James Carroll, *An American Requiem* (course packet)

Gaustad II, "Peace and War: Vietnam," 449-455; "Civil Rights and the Churches: Martin Luther King, Jr.," "Black Manifesto, 1969"; "Response to Racism and Manifesto," 493-501

Excerpts from *Black Survival: Past, Present, and Future: A Report of the Second National Black Sister's Conference* (Philadelphia, 1970) (course packet)

James H. Cone, "Martin and Malcom: Integrationism and Nationalism in African American Religious History," in Hackett 407-422

Week Fifteen: When Worlds Collide: Fundamentalisms and the New Age

Albanese, "Fundamentals of the New Age: An Epilogue on Presentday Pluralism," 350-394

Gaustad II: "Revival and Retreat"; "Postwar Revivalism: Billy Graham," 512-516; "Radical Left: Neopaganism and the New Age," 546-550; "Radical Right: Televangelism and Political Power," 550-554

Grant Wacker, "Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish: Primitivism, Pragmatism, and the Pentecostal Character," 437-458 in Hackett

Week Sixteen: Contemporary Native American Religion and the Quest for Self-Determination

Andi Smith, "To All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life," in Carol Adams, ed., *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 168-71 (course packet)

William K. Powers, "When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens," 423-435 in Hackett

Joseph Jorgenson, "Religious Solutions and Native American Struggles: Ghost Dance, Sun Dance, and Beyond," in Bruce Lincoln, ed., *Religion, Rebellion, and Revolution* (St. Martins 1995) (course packet)

Gaustad II, "Native Americans," 565-569

Takehome final exam distributed

Paper three due at 4:00 Dec. 12

Take-home final due at 4:00 Dec. 15

Guidelines for Writing Papers

- Get started. Give yourself 10 or 15 minutes to begin freewriting on some aspect of the readings and/or discussions. You may wish to begin with one of the "suggestions for papers" on the syllabus (or not). What intrigues you? What gets your imagination going? What perplexes, moves, or angers you? What would you want to talk about with the author of a work we've read if he or she were in the room? Write about the things that you would like to consider more deeply. The

point of this exercise is to generate a fruitful question, one that engages you creatively and intellectually, and forces you to look at more than one side of an issue. Put your writing aside. When you return to it, recast what you've written in the form of a short paragraph that sets forth the question or problem and your plan for engaging it. This paragraph may or may not find its way into your paper; for now, think of it as a map.

- Get organized. Papers must always exhibit thoughtful organization, best exemplified by a concise and explicit thesis paragraph. This point cannot be emphasized enough. When you have just five pages you must narrow your thesis (based on your fruitful question, above) right away, and stick to it throughout your paper. Think carefully about whether your idea is workable in the space allotted. For example, "Native American Religions" is simply too broad a topic, but a comparison between two Native American creation stories may not be.
- Get a title. You've probably noticed from your own reading how titles work for you, giving you a sense of what's coming up in a book or a chapter or, even more, a sense of what the writer thinks is most important about what's coming up. Titles can be tools not only for the reader but for the writer as well. Developing a title forces you to think clearly about your purpose in writing the paper. What, in essence, am I writing about? What is the most important thing I wish to say? How can I use a title to capture my reader's attention or direct it in specific ways?
- Consider your connections. That is, consider how your opening paragraph or introduction leads into the successive claims that form the body of your essay, and how in turn your conclusion brings us around again (now with a fresh perspective) to your opening paragraph. Smooth transitions between paragraphs are a sign of a writer in control of her material. Big jumps between paragraphs usually suggest a writer at loose ends. If you are going to make a big jump think about whether and how that kind of move works for your essay as a whole.
- Back up general claims with concrete examples. If you are going to make a claim about something, anything, you need an example both to illustrate your claim and to persuade your reader that your claim is worth considering. How good your example is will decide whether we are swayed or not. As you know from your own reading, descriptive writers tend to hold our attention a lot better than those who speak in general and abstract terms.
- Give your paper narrative energy by using verbs that suggest action. You might want to circle the word "is" every time it appears in your paper: In each case you're likely to have spotted a passive construction (no action) that can be converted into an active construction by rewriting it with active verbs. Put your subjects to work; keep them busy.
- Keep summarizing to a minimum. It will often be necessary to restate an author's idea or argument so that you can go to work on interpreting, analyzing, or contesting it. But summaries should occupy no more than about 25% of your paper; if, in reading through your essay, you find you've given more than one or two pages total to another's ideas or arguments, you need to rethink your plan of attack. In any event, you need to cite your paraphrases of another's work just as you would cite a direct quotation.

- Make a mental note of thanks to whoever taught you to write a concise, clean, grammatical sentence and put his or her lessons to work. Cut the dead wood from sentences and vary your sentence structure. Avoid repetition. Banish sentence fragments, use punctuation (especially commas and apostrophes for possession and contractions) appropriately, and make sure your pronouns agree with their antecedents. Use genderneutral language (hint: there is no such animal as "Man") and vary the gender of gendered pronouns if you use them. Don't expect your spellcheck to take the place of a good dictionary. If you need a brushup on grammar and writing mechanics, check out the writing center.

Guidelines for Writing Peer Critiques

First, read the entire essay thoroughly one or more times, making margin notes when appropriate. Next, write one to two singlespaced pages (or two to three doublespaced pages) in answer to the following questions. You may wish to begin a new paragraph in response to each topic. Since copies of the peer critiques will be returned to the authors, feel free to address the author in the second person; e.g., "You confuse me when you write that..." or "You make an excellent point on page 2," etc.

- What fruitful question(s) or issues(s) does the author engage? Why is the question or issue a fruitful one (or why not)?
- What is the author's thesis? (You may wish to restate the author's thesis in your own words.) Is the thesis appropriate for an essay of this length? Does the author stick to the thesis throughout the essay, developing and substantiating it, or does she wander from it at crucial points? If the thesis is missing or undeveloped, be sure to indicate this.
- Does the title capture your attention and/or direct it in specific ways? Does the title "work" for the essay as a whole?
- Are the connections the author draws sound? Does the opening paragraph lead smoothly into the successive claims made in the essay? Does the conclusion enable you as a reader to return to the opening paragraph with a new perspective or deepened understanding, or does the essay end on a flat note? Are there any big jumps between paragraphs? Do these work for the essay or detract from it?
- Are general claims or points backed up with concrete examples? Are the examples relevant and wellchosen? Are you swayed by the evidence or examples the author presents? Are there controversial claims being made that lack appropriate evidence or justification? Is the author speaking primarily from unsupported opinions or does he substantiate his opinions with evidence and examples from relevant texts? An author needn't refrain from making controversial statements or agree with other authors, but he does need to make a compelling case for his disagreements.
- Does the essay "flow"? Are the verbs primarily active, energetic ones, or passive ones? Are certain sentences particularly strong or particularly weak?

- Are summarizing statements used appropriately? Do summaries of another author's work make up too large a proportion of the essay? Are there places where lengthier or more detailed summaries would have added to the essay?
- How's the grammar? Spelling? Punctuation? Is the author a friend of sentence fragments or toowordy constructions? Are texts and other materials appropriately cited?
- Does the essay accomplish what it sets out to do? In offering an overall assessment of the essay, be explicit about what worked for you (or didn't) and why. Give praise where praise is due. If appropriate, offer supportive, constructive suggestions for revision; for example, indicate whether the essay is too short or too long for its purposes, and how it might be expanded or edited. End your peer critique with a version of the inclass journal: "The most important thing I learned from this essay is..."; "A question I'm left with is..." Do not grade the essay. For better or worse, that's my job.

The peer critiques will be graded according to the seriousness and discernment you devote to them; points will be deducted for careless readings or unconstructive remarks. Be sure to hand in two copies of the peer critique, one with your name and one without, together with the essay itself.