

Writing Assignment title: Lecture Reviews

Writing Assignment's author: LaGretia Copp (with Lisa Suter)

Summary: Students earn extra credit by attending on-campus events, lectures, or media offerings related to International Studies, then writing a short summary and response.

Objectives:

1. Critical thinking: Students will be able to critically analyze academic texts, international news, maps, histories, and their own received ideologies and received wisdom for assumptions, political and cultural points of view, and stated and unstated biases.
2. Skills: Students develop core liberal arts skills: reading unfamiliar information and making sense of it; thinking critically about what they're reading; synthesizing material; coming to a conclusion about it; and articulating that conclusion verbally and in writing.
3. Living in the world: Students develop knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to live effectively in a world possessing limited natural resources and characterized by ethnic diversity, cultural pluralism and increasing interdependence.
4. Diversity: Students should gain an awareness of international diversity and learn to think about what the world, or specific issues, might look like from other points of view.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students are asked to place the ideas and information from class into context.
- Students evaluate the perspectives of the speaker, video, or play they go to see.
- Students practice important writing genres such as summary and analysis.

Materials Required: syllabus description (below).

Assignment Activities:

1. Advise students at the beginning of the term that they will observe and analyze lectures and other international cultural events on campus
2. Be sure students understand that they have to clear the events or lectures they have chosen with you in advance, and discuss with them the way you would prefer they go about this. (Should they ask during or after class? By email?)
3. Optional: consider a mini-lesson with students in which you talk about successful writing strategies for this genre. What do you want to see? What works well? Alternatively, what types of moves are less appealing or interesting, or less relevant to the assignment? Why do some students receive less than full credit, for example?
4. Periodically remind students how long they have to turn in these responses.

Comments:

This can be integrated into the class as a regular assignment, or it can be used as extra-credit.

If you use this assignment as extra-credit, there are two decisions you should make in advance, to contribute to the success of this assignment (as far as you as an instructor are concerned). First, you may have too many of these turned in if you do not set a limit to the number of reports a student may do. Consider setting a maximum number at the beginning of the term.

Second, you may want to set a maximum time limit concerning how long after the event they have before turning in their response to you. Ideally this should be no more than a week to two weeks after the eligible event. Otherwise, you may have an avalanche of responses at the end of the term, and they may be written entirely from memory, months after the student took the opportunity of viewing them.

The following is language one faculty member has successfully used in her syllabus for offering this assignment as extra-credit:

Extra Credit

The only way to receive extra credit is if you attend lectures/panels/conferences/films sponsored by university organizations or departments that in some way reflect the international issues and topics of this class. Any student wanting to do extra credit must first consult the professor to ascertain if the lecture topic is eligible. If it is eligible, you may attend the lecture or event and write an approximately two-page, single-spaced reflection paper on the topic. Papers should contain a brief overview of the subject discussed, how the subject related to international studies—especially any issues covered in class—and your own thoughts on the subject. Papers must be handed in no later than one week after the event. Each paper is worth up to 5 points. These points will be added into your total points during the midterm and final grading process.