

## College Composition Online Peer Review Assignment Prompt

Course: ENC1102/ENC1939  
Instructor: Nico Cassanetti

**Total Points Possible: 100 Points**

### **Assignment Objective**

One of the components of most writing classes is doing one-on-one or small group peer review sessions. Peer review helps you strengthen your skills as both an analytical reader and writer by asking you to look critically at both the content and the mechanics of writing thesis-driven academic essays. Whether or not you have previous experience with peer review, doing peer review in an online course will most likely be a new experience for everyone and will require each participant to be accountable, responsible and organized (more on that later).

For this assignment, you will be doing an in-depth peer review on a rough draft of TWO of your classmates' papers. This GRADED ASSIGNMENT will be an opportunity to give and receive feedback and perspective on your drafts, AND to make sure you give yourself time to revise and edit your work before turning in your final paper drafts. For each paper you peer review, you will be required to include three components:

1. Thoughtful margin notes/comments (2 strengths/2 weaknesses)
2. (At least 2) Questions to consider
3. A (min. 300-word) feedback letter

*Requirements for what to include in/how to approach margin notes, questions to consider and feedback letters are explained in the **Peer Review Guidelines** on the next page*

### **Directions for Submissions and Completing Peer Review:**

Each student will be required to submit a rough draft of their papers by the Friday deadline indicated in the assignment prompt/on the Canvas calendar. On Saturday morning, I will put each student into groups of 3 (or 4 if needed) in Achieve so you will be able to complete the Peer Review Assignment following the guidelines in this prompt. You will have until Monday at 11:59pm to complete the peer reviews.

There are very easy guides AND videos that can be found by clicking the following hypertext: [Submitting your rough draft](#) and [completing peer review](#) in Achieve

NOTE: If you prefer to write the paper first in Microsoft Word that is totally acceptable, but you will have to either import it or copy/paste it into the Achieve assignment.

## **PEER REVIEW GUIDELINES:**

**MARGIN NOTES:** All peer review assignments must include margin notes throughout the paper that identify specific moments in the writing that deserve a closer look (either for their strengths or weaknesses). Identifying these examples is quite useful to a writer, so underline/highlight/bracket these examples and explain (briefly) what is worth noting. To do this well, you should be writing in full sentences selective marginal comments and/or praise to reinforce and exemplify what you will elaborate on in your feedback letter (e.g., “This point is unclear because...” or “You do a nice job here of...”).

During your critique, you must identify **at least TWO** successful characteristics and/or moments in each draft. (Ex: Do they have a strong voice? Did they approach the paper in a unique and interesting way? Did they create a successful overall flow to the paper?) and at least TWO moments/components that could be revisited in their next revisions. Make sure to give explanation and/or examples when you note both areas to improve and areas of strength.

You will also be able to elaborate on any “patterns” of success or errors in your feedback letter (see below), so if you feel like what you have to say is too long for a 1in margin, simply write (“see note about this moment in my letter”). You should also use the margin notes to identify typos or syntax/grammar issues but remember: This is not about pointing out grammar and spelling issues—you are not a copyeditor, you are a reader, and you should be approaching this assignment as an analytical reader and fellow writer.

**OFFERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:** A great way to approach successful peer review is by offering the writer a set of questions to consider during their revision process.

For each essay you read, you must leave at least TWO questions for your peer review partner to consider in terms of their topic/argument/ intentions with their paper--basically don't ask them what a specific sentence is trying to say (although that's a great margin note!), but something more rhetorical/philosophical that they should consider as they pursue their vision. These questions should appear in your feedback letter, but you can write them in the margins as well.

**FEEDBACK LETTER:** Unlike the margin notes that focus on a specific area of the paper, your feedback letter should offer the writer “overall thoughts” about the paper you think would be useful during the revision process. This is also a place where you can expand on your margin notes—feel free to reference them in your note—ex: “I think you did an excellent job describing the effects of \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ (see my margin note on page 2).” If you noted a “pattern of error” (aka: something they consistently struggle with) throughout the paper, offer some suggestions to help them revise, or just give them your feelings on how this colored your reading.

**This letter must be no less than 300 words** and should be turned in either by copying and pasting the text into the Canvas Comment or attaching it as a file directly to the essay you are reviewing. The directions for composing the letter are as follows:

1. Once you've read the draft and commented in-text, you will write a response in the form of a letter to the writer. Please begin by explaining your perception of the argument (both as a thesis and how it evolves throughout the piece) in clear terms in order to allow the writer to gauge whether their point is being understood as intended. Also explain how you are reading their subpoints/subtopics as being relevant and supportive of the central argument.

2. The second paragraph should include what you see as the piece's greatest strength(s) and struggles. Reference exact moments that serve as examples of your point/opinion. (ie. Think about: what paragraphs/lines really stuck with you? What is working in terms of logic and evidence? Your emotional connection or investment? Authorial voice? What is unique about the piece? How might it make you interpret the topic differently? What remained with you after you put the piece down? And, of course, why?

This paragraph should also include the **questions to consider** I mentioned earlier. Please also include "things to think about," i.e., suggestions for strengthening the piece. Avoid the mentality of, "if I were writing this, I'd do XYZ," and think instead about how the writer could better fulfill his/her intentions as you understand them (ex. how might they make their personal piece resonate with a broader audience?)

**A NOTE ON MANNERS:** Peer review isn't just about focusing on what you believe could be improved in your partner's paper, (though that is part of it); peer review should also offer praise and acknowledge of what the writer is doing well. No matter how "great" you think your partner's draft is there is always room to expand, complicate and elevate the writing--that's the point of this course, right? So don't just say "you're doing great!" or "I loved it"...give them something that can take away and think about as they move forward.

Be kind, be constructive, and be honest. Regardless of writing strength, everyone has something to offer in these sessions. If you feel as though your partner is a more seasoned essay writer than you are, that doesn't mean your feedback is not useful. "Strong essays" can still be repetitive, can be confusing or dense or lack personality (be boring). If you are assigned to Peer Review a "strong paper" don't just say "this was great"—really zero in on the moments that MADE it great.

## **RECAP (aka: How to get an A on your Peer Review Assignment)**

An A-range Peer Review will include:

- Extensive margin notes throughout that offer constructive suggestions or comments about specific moments in the text, and/or refer to more complex thought that are described in the feedback letter.
- A feedback letter (see above) that elaborates on your margin notes and offers global thoughts, questions and suggestions for the writer to consider as they revise.
- Within your margin comments and your feedback letter, an A range Peer Review will have offered:

1. At least two moments from the essay you believe are strong/successful AND WHY
2. At least two moments from the essay you believe could use some revisions AND WHY
3. At least two “large questions” the writer should consider in their pursuits.
4. Both the margin comments and feedback letter are submitted on time and correctly following all the directions provided.

Peer review is a **GRADED** exercise based on the effort, thoughtfulness and thoroughness of your critique. Give yourself time to do a good job!

For anyone who is still worried about how to do Peer Review, I have uploaded a handout to **The Assignment Corner Module** entitled “A Comprehensive Outline for Conducting Peer Review” that you can use as a blueprint while reading and commenting.