

## **A303 Intensive Writing Assignments Dr Bob Mucci Winter 2010**

NOTE: The prerequisite for A303 is the freshman English composition course W131, plus any one of these: junior standing, one other anthro course, or my permission.

A303 students must write four essay reports during the semester in addition to all the assigned A105 work; each report is about two readings in the Annual Editions Physical Anthropology 10/11 book that everyone bought for this course. One of the readings for each report is one that was assigned to all the A105 students, so you should have already read it anyway, and the other is one that only A303 students must read and study carefully. The four reports will form a portfolio, that is, keep them all together in a folder and hand in the whole folder with the old ones along with each new one. Do not delay starting on these assignments; start working on the first one this week so that you can finish it up the following week.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR A303 ESSAY REPORTS:** Each report is due on the date indicated. For each of the four assignments, A303 students are required to write a typed report of about six or seven pages in length in standard format: 12 point type, one inch margins, double spaced, pages numbered. That is, they should look like these instruction pages except be double spaced so I can make corrections. The papers must meet university standards of spelling, grammar, etc. (See following “competencies” statement.) Indicate the assignment number at the top, BUT YOUR NAME should not appear anywhere in the report; instead put your student ID number at the end, so that I do not know whose report I am reading. (Your student ID number is the ten digit number that you were assigned at IUN and begins with a few zeros)

Each of the four reports should consist of three parts; begin each part with a number from 1 to 3. These projects are designed so each report can be done one part at a time, so start early and do a little each day; the first report will seem very long and hard, but students tell me that they go much more quickly after the first one. There is no penalty if your report is a few pages too long, but do not go over ten pages unless the assigned article itself was very long.

I will critique each of your reports in writing as to content, grammar, and style; I expect you to return all previous reports (with their critiques) with each new one to see if you are responding to my comments (so keep all the essays in a folder). At the end of the semester I will grade the whole portfolio, to see if you have improved your writing during the semester and addressed specific problems that we might have identified. I will meet with you individually after the first report is returned to you, and again after the second report; I may require you to rewrite the first report, and even others if they are unacceptable. If I comment about a writing flaw, such as: “Learn how to use commas or apostrophes” or “Short choppy sentences”, you should either consult the IUN Writing Center for assistance, and/or look in any basic writing guide such as *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk et al, available at the IUN Bookstore for about ten dollars. Another alternative is to use the Internet; eg, google “How to use commas” in quotes.

Remember, the point of the intensive writing approach is for you to learn more about the subject through writing about it, and to learn more about writing because you are involved in the content.

To quote Elie Wiesel, "I write to understand as much as to be understood".

Note: review the last page of these instructions before you start on each report

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR EACH ESSAY REPORT**

**PART ONE:** The first part must be a scientific abstract (summary) of the one assigned article. The heading (title) of your abstract must identify the article by title and author, and the abstract itself should be about two pages in length, but longer for longer articles. A good abstract summarizes the main point(s) of the article and the facts and arguments that the author uses to support the conclusions. An abstract is a summary of what the author said; it is not a review nor statement of how you enjoyed it or found it meaningful or flawed; it could have been written by the author themselves. A scientific abstract in biological anthropology is NOT an essay ABOUT the article, but rather a very short version OF the article. (As an example, there is a brief summary (abstract) of each chapter of your textbook at the end of the chapter.) So do NOT make statements like "This article said..." or "Dr Smith went to Nepal to study...", as both of those examples are writing about the article. Instead you should pretend you are the author and write a short version of the article itself. You must convince me by writing these brief overviews that you read each article thoughtfully and understood it. You will have to eliminate most of the details, yet capture the author's purpose, the nature of the findings presented, and the author's reasoning and conclusion in your own words, not by lifting passages from the original. NOTE: if the article was written in the first person ("I went to study the Chimpanzees in 1994... etc"), then you can use the first person also, just pretend you are the author. In any case you should follow the order of ideas and events in the actual article. Your abstract should make sense and be readable by someone who has not read the original article; it should be a brief substitute. A simple way to start is to read one paragraph at a time, and write a phrase or sentence that captures the meaning of that paragraph. Then rewrite your words to read smoothly and capture the basic content. This method will not get you an A on the summary, but it is a good way to learn how to write a summary.

If you are unsure what I mean, try googling "How to write a summary" in quotes, and you will find lots of articles that may help (and some that do not match these instructions, so be careful).

**PART TWO:** The second part should be a review (a critique) of the same article; imagine you are writing a review for an anthropology journal, commenting on the scientific content and style of the article. Part two should be about two pages long.

**HINTS FOR PART TWO:** Good reviews are analytical; the reader of your critique (hey, that's me) should be able to tell that you understood the article, and that you were aware of the author's evidence, logic, and conclusions (think "science"). Your review should provide answers to most of these ten questions (the ones that are appropriate for that article); especially work on the ones that were NOT answered in your summary. You do NOT have to answer the questions by number; just try to include as many of them as possible in your review essay.

1. What was the author's purpose in doing research and/or writing the article?
2. What questions did the author raise, and try to answer?
3. What information from field work and research did the author use ("data"); was it from her own work?
4. What reasoning and logical steps did the author use to try and answer her "questions"?
5. What was the author's conclusion (or inferences),?
6. What assumptions did the author make, or take for granted? (often not pointed out in the article)
7. What are the implications of the author's conclusions? (Maybe for a species, a particular human group, or for all humans)
8. From what point of view was the author looking? Could there have been other points of view?
9. What questions were left unanswered?
10. Were the author's conclusions demonstrated by the data presented, or were there other possible explanations? (Include any faulty reasoning or biases you saw; remember "critical thinking".)

It is a good idea to admit if there is anything you don't understand, or find difficult or contradictory. It would help to also comment on how the article relates to the content of the textbook, lectures, and other readings, but see part three instructions. Also, this part is your chance to comment on how and why you found each to be informative, confusing, enjoyable, meaningful, etc.

**PART THREE:** This part is a comparison of the assigned A303 article you just wrote about with another article that you already read for the A105 class itself. You do NOT have to write a summary or critique for that A105 article. What you do have to write is a comparison of the two articles; discuss how these two articles are similar or different in content, method, reasoning, purpose, and conclusion from each other. In other words, compare the animals, fossils, scientific evidence, etc in the two articles, and also compare the authors' approaches. This part is usually about two pages long also. You can also make comparisons about what you learned from them, clarity, ease of reading, etc. It is also good to relate them both to the general content of the course (textbook, lectures, other readings, etc).

Most of your grade for A303 is determined by the A105 exams, etc., on the same curve; I will then look at your A303 portfolio to see if it raises or lowers your grade, counting it as one-fourth of your total grade.

One-week-late reports ARE accepted, but with loss of points. However, I will NOT accept any late assignment that is OVER one week late IF I have graded and returned that assignment to other students; if you get more than a week behind, send me an email immediately so we can come up with a solution.

**NOTE: if you have not handed in a acceptable Assignment One or an acceptable rewrite of it by Thursday February 18, then you are not ready to take intensive writing at this time; you should either change to A105 or drop the course completely, as you cannot pass A303 without submitting satisfactory writing assignments in a timely manner.**

### **Intensive Writing Assignments for A303**

all articles are in the *AE Physical Anthropology 10/11* book:

#### **Assignment One; due Thursday February 4**

summary and critique of: # 12. "Thinking Like a Monkey,"  
compare with A105 reading: # 16. "What Are Friends For?"

#### **Assignment Two; due Thursday March 4**

summary and critique of: # 6. "The Latest Face of Creationism"  
compare with A105 reading: # 7. "Why Should Students Learn Evolution?"

#### **Assignment Three; due Thursday April 1**

summary and critique of: # 25 "The Scavenging of 'Peking Man'"  
compare with A105 reading: # 24 "Scavenger Hunt"

#### **Assignment Four; due Thursday April 22**

summary and critique of: # 35 "Born Gay"  
compare with A105 reading: # 33 "The Brain"

Students' writing at Indiana University Northwest is expected to reflect the following basic competencies:

1. The purpose of the writing should be evident, the directions of the assignment followed.
2. Topics and ideas need to be narrowed to a manageable scope.
3. Ideas should be stated clearly and thoroughly discussed: the reader shouldn't have to infer meanings. Information presented should be accurate and complete.
4. The tone, diction, and structure of the writing should reveal a sense of audience.
5. Material should be organized and presented in a sensible manner.
  - An introduction should lead the reader smoothly into the body of the writing.
  - Adequate transitions should be used to connect ideas as they develop in the writing.
  - Supporting paragraphs should stay with the main point of the writing and relate clearly to each other
  - A conclusion will often be necessary to reemphasize the writer's central idea and attitude.
6. A thesis should be present (or clearly implied) which shows the writer's point of view and/or purpose, and all materials in the writing must be relevant to that thesis. Various rhetorical strategies should be used to advance that thesis. (Examples of such strategies could include: cause and effect, comparison and contrast, definition, process analysis, persuasion, illustration, classification, description, and narration. Skills such as hypothesis testing and summary recall should be exhibited when appropriate.)
7. Sentences should be fluent and clear on first reading. Their construction should be varied, their form concise.
8. Word choice should be varied and accurate in denotation and connotation. Word choice should reflect awareness of audience and purpose (for example, use of first person, jargon, or contractions in many instances is allowable, at other times not).
9. Grammatical and mechanical errors should be avoided. These errors would include: shifts in verb tense, improper verb endings, lack of agreement between subject and verb, improper use of commas and apostrophes, failure of pronouns to agree with their antecedents, and unclear pronoun references.