**GEOG 300: guidelines for the Critical thinking papers**

# Assignment Overview

The process of thinking critically begins with an open mind, then using research to form conclusive ideas and arguments. In this class, you will write 3 Critical Thinking (CT) papers, valued at 70, 80, and 100 points each. CT papers do not cover both sides of an issue; they are argumentative papers and should take a clear position.

# Minimum Requirements of the CT Papers

**To avoid a paper score of zero, your paper must meet the following 3 requirements:**

1. **Use a minimum of 4 acceptable sources**. An acceptable source for this assignment is a peer-reviewed publication or book that has been published in the last 10 years.
2. **All primary sources must be cited in the text of the paper** using the required in-text citation format: (Authors(s) last name(s) publication year, page number).
3. **The paper must adhere to the 8-section format as outlined below**.

Additionally:

1. **One percentage point will be deducted for each word over or under the required word counts**. The total CT paper must stay within 500-550 words, with an *Analysis* section of 400-450 words.
2. Your CT paper must correspond with the topic assigned to your student ID number.
3. **The initialed “Acknowledgement of CT Paper Requirements” and “CT Paper Grade Sheet” must be attached to the back of your CT paper.** Fifteen percent deduction for each when missing.

# Required Format for the CT Papers

The CT papers follow a very specific format, divided into 8 sections. 🡪 **To avoid a paper score of zero, follow the below format in the exact same order**. Include section sub-headings with the name of the section and the section’s word count (except for the heading and title).

**1. Heading**

Include the following information in the top left corner of your paper:

* Your name
* Student ID #
* Name of your T.A.
* Recitation time & day
* Date
* Question#
* Total word count

**2. Title**

Title your paper with either a declaratory statement or a question. Be creative but ensure that your title is reflective of the topic.

**3. Interpretation**

This is the most important section of your paper! Here you will introduce your paper’s topic and provide a clear thesis statement. Write your thesis by concisely stating your position and introducing 2-4 supporting claims for this position. Be specific and direct.

**4. Analysis**

At 400-450 words, this is the longest section of your CT paper. All the content in this section should directly support your thesis statement from the *Interpretation*.

It is helpful to think of 2-4 supporting claims for your thesis statement, and to then use evidence from your peer reviewed sources to expand on each of them. Include only relevant facts that support your position with accompanying explanations as to how *and* why those facts support your main argument.

Be sure to provide logical transitions from one idea to the next and to organize your thoughts clearly. It helps to dedicate a separate paragraph to each supporting claim.

**5. Evaluation**

This section provides an opportunity to critically examine your peer reviewed sources. Identify biases or limitationsin the studies, experiments, or statistical analyses carried out by the authors, and the effects these may have on their findings and conclusions. Do this for **2** of your peer reviewed sources and specifically state which sources you are evaluating.

**6. Inference**

The intent of this section is to *think* about the broader consequences of your issue. It may be helpful to think in terms of scales. If your issue is on a local scale, what might an effect or impact be on a national, regional, or global scale? Or, a paper focusing on environmental impacts could be extrapolated to the human population or vice versa. Be very specific.

**7. Explanation**

In this section, you will restate your argument, briefly summarize the claims that support your position, and concisely speculate on the broader effects of the topic. This is a conclusion statement and should reinforce the position stated in the *Interpretation*.

**8. Bibliography**

All sources in the *Bibliography* must be cited in APA format and listed in alphabetical order.

**Format structure for citing a journal article in APA format:**

First Author Last Name, First Author First Initial., & Second Author Last Name, Second Author First Initial**.** (publication year)**.** Article title**.** *Journal Title Italicized***,** *volume # italicized* (issue # in parentheses)**,** article page #s**.**

Example:

Romero-Ruiz, M. H., Flantua, S. G. A., Tansey, K., & Berrio, J.C. (2012). Landscape transformations in savannas of northern South America: Land use/cover changes since 1987 in the Llanos Orientales of Colombia. *Applied Geography, 32* (2), 766-776.

**Format structure for citing a book in APA format:**

Author Last Name, First Initial. (year of publication). *Book Title Italicized*. Publisher City, State: Publisher.

Example:

Inkpen, R., & Wilson, G. (2013). *Science, Philosophy and Physical Geography.* New York, NY: Routledge.

For more information APA format (and how to cite other types of sources), please refer to this online **APA Citation Guide:** <http://www.bibme.org/citation-guide/apa/>

# Acceptable Sources to Write the CT Papers: Peer-Reviewed Publications

🡪 **To avoid a paper score of zero, you must cite in-text (and include in the *Bibliography*) a minimum of 4 relevant peer-reviewed sources or books published in the last 10 years.**

Please see the “Guide to Peer-Reviewed Sources” on the course website for more information.

You may use sources that do not meet this criterion (i.e., non-peer-reviewed sources or sources published more than 10 years ago), but only in addition to the 4 required primary sources.

Note: You do not need to distinguish between peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed sources in the *Bibliography*.

## In-text Citations

🡪 **To avoid a paper score of zero, use the following in-text citations format:** (Author(s) Last Name(s) publication year, page number). Example: (Friedman 2008, page 16).

* Every quote, fact, or idea taken from a source must be cited.
* For websites without page numbers use the paragraph number.
* Citations must go after the cited information (at the end of the relevant sentence), but another way to cite something could be: “According to Friedman (2008, page 16) ...”

## Other Paper Requirements

**Selecting a Topic**

Based on a digit from your student ID number, you will be given a list of topics to choose from for each CT paper (the details of this can be found on the “Critical Thinking Papers” link on the course website). **Your paper must be on a topic from the list assigned to you; no exceptions.**

**Word Count**

Only the following sections contribute to the total word count: *Interpretation, Analysis, Evaluation, Inference and Explanation*. The total word count of these sections combined must be between 500 and 550 words, with the *Analysis* being 400 to 450 words. **One percentage point will be deducted for each word over or under the required word counts**.

* Include these 5 sections’ total word count in their respective sub-headings.
* You can count the headings of each section and the in-text citations in your final word count or not; this is your choice, just be consistent throughout your paper.

**Grammar and Style**

* ***Do not use very long or stand-alone quotes!*** Quotes should always be a part of a sentence that you have constructed. Most of the time, information should be paraphrased or summarized in your own words and then cited.
* **Proof-read your paper!** Go to the [OSU Writing Center](http://writingcenter.oregonstate.edu/), ask your T.A. for help, or have a friend read it over. "A" papers do not have grammatical or spelling errors.
* Do not write in the first or second person.
* Do not use contractions.
* Be creative and unique. Each T.A. reads many papers; make yours stand out.

**The “Acknowledgement of CT Paper Requirements” Sheet**

Review and type your initials on each line to show that you understand the minimum requirements of the CT papers. Submit this sheet with each paper.

* **There will be a 15% deduction of your grade if the requirements sheet is missing**.
* A 5% deduction if the requirements sheet is not initialed where required.

**Wow Factor**

The “Wow factor” is worth 10% of your grade in CT. It is an evaluation of the overall quality of your paper and of your ability to follow instructions.