**Introduction to Critical Thinking Papers**

The process of thinking critically begins with an open mind, then forming conclusive ideas and arguments later. The formally written Critically Thinking Paper should read as an argument paper. It is necessary to be clear and concise to make your argument in 550 words.

**There will be three Critical Thinking Papers, valued at 70pts, 80pts, and 100pts.**

* ***TO RECEIVE ANY CREDIT FOR YOUR PAPER YOU MUST MEET THESE THREE REQUIREMENTS:***

**1. *Use acceptable sources to avoid a paper score of zero***.

An acceptable source for this assignment must be a peer-reviewed publication or book, published between 2006 and 2017(for more information, look under “Format/Content Guidelines” on second page).

**2. *Properly cite all four of your primary sources in the text of your paper to avoid a paper score of zero***.

All in-text citations must be in the following format *ONLY*: (Author’s last name(s), publication year; page number (or paragraph if no page number).

**3. *Use only the required format, i.e., Interpretation, Analysis, Evaluation, etc.***

**In Addition, you will lose one point for each word over or under the requirements: *You must have 400-450 words in “Analysis” section and a total for the entire paper of 500 – 550 words. (count the headings and citations or not, your choice.)***

**Critical Thinking Paper Format (there is no flexibility, all papers *must use this format—including headings)*:**

Explanation of Sub-Headings

***Interpretation***

This is, in essence, the introduction to your paper. The goal of this section is to convey to your audience the meaning of your topic, its significance, and how your paper will clarify and elucidate the issue. It might be helpful to attempt to write this section in three sentences: the first clarifying the topic, the second justifying why it is worthy of attention, and the third acting as a thesis statement (a concise explanation of your side of the argument).

**Condensed to its bones:** This is essentially a thesis statement [be VERY specific].

***Analysis***

The “Analysis” section is the largest at 400-450 words. Under this sub-heading it is necessary to provide facts with accompanying explanations as to how and why these support your argument. Be sure to provide logical transitions from one idea to the next, elucidating your train of thought, if necessary. It will be assumed by the reader that the arguments presented are judged to be valid.

**Condensed to its bones:** Include only facts that support your specific argument. This is the largest component of your CT paper.

***Evaluation***

The “Evaluation” section provides an opportunity to critically examine the facts and/or arguments used. It is necessary to point out any biases that might exist in the studies, experiments, or statistical analyses and the effects that they have on conclusions, both in your specific essay and for a popular audience consulting their respective works. It is not sufficient to write that the sources were all taken from academic journals and are therefore valid. Stating that Cook is a professor is insufficient. Did he cite supporting material? Where did Allen get the information for his table/map?

**Condensed to its bones:** Identify bias in the arguments of at least two sources that you are using [Once again, be very specific]. If you are citing a piece written by the CEO of Exxon-Mobil concerning petroleum, note his conflict of interest. Go over the source of the bias. If it helps, think of “bias” as the limitations of this particular paper or book.

***Inference***

The intent of this sub-heading is to highlight for the reader how the specific issue has broader consequences. It may be helpful to think in terms of scales; if your issue is on a local scale, what might the effects be on a national, international, or global scale? Essays concerning natural effects might be extrapolated to the human population or vice versa.

**Condensed to its bones:** Expand your topic to include its significance/impact on the broader scale, or if you are speaking of a global issue, how will it affect the local scale? [be very specific]

***Explanation***

The explanation is analogous to a concluding sentence or paragraph. In this section it is necessary to state your argument, briefly summarize the findings that support your point of view, and concisely speculate on the broader effects; in other words, this may be seen as a re-iteration/reinforcement of the interpretation and inference sections.

**Condensed to its bones:** This is a conclusion statement.

**Other Matters on Format/Content Guidelines**

* ***Word Count***: Once again, you must have 400-450 words under “Analysis” and 100-150 total in other five headings. The total combined number of words for the six subheadings cannot exceed 550 words (this means that you can’t put max words in both “Analysis” and other five headings). Count the headings or not, your choice.
* ***Acronyms***: For example, the first time you use the name of something, you can’t just say “ASPCA.” The first time you format it as “American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)” Further references can be “ASPCA” only.
* ***Acceptable sources:*** Cite a *minimum of four peer-reviewed* sources published in the last ten years, using any combination of the following:
  + Any Book that is appropriate to your topic, including Brown.
  + Any Peer-Reviewed Journal (identified in EBSCO HOST by checking the “peer reviewed” button.)

Other sources are OK ***in addition to the four sources from books and/or peer-reviewed journal sources ONLY***. These additional sources can be anything that you feel pertinent to your argument.

* ***What is a Peer-Reviewed Journal??????*** This is how the OSU Library explains how to identify a peer-reviewed journal: *"Peer-reviewed journals can be identified in several different ways: Journals identify themselves as peer-reviewed (in the small print describing who they are in each issue, or on the publisher's website about the journal). You can also do a search in several databases such as Academic Search Premier and limit your results to "Scholarly" or "peer-reviewed." If using this search engine, note that we ONLY accept articles that appear in EBSCO supported databases with “peer-reviewed” button checked.*
* **Go to the end of this document for “A Guide to find Peer-Reviewed Sources” by Melva Trevino.**
* ***In-Text Citations --*** *Every quote; fact or idea taken from an outside source needs to be cited, using ONLY the following format:*

(Author(s) *last* name publication year, page number (or paragraph number if no page number)

Example: (Friedman 2008, page 16)

Citations must go after the cited information (at the end of the relevant sentence). Another way to cite something could be: “According to Friedman (2008, page 16) ...” For web-based sources without page numbers give the paragraph number. Direct quotes must be in quote marks.

* **The bibliography**: Use the format for APA *ONLY*.

Example of citations for *professional journal articles*:

Baldi, G., Houspanossian, J., Murray, F., Rosales, A. A., Rueda, C.V., & Jobbágy, E.G. (2014). Cultivating the Dry Forests of South America: Diversity of Land Users and Imprints on Ecosystem Functioning. *Journal of Arid Environments, 123*, 1-13. doi:10.1016/j.jaridenv.2014.05.027

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. doi:10.1016/j.apgeog.2011.08.010

**Condensed to its bones**: First author last name, First author first initial., & Second author last name, Second author first initial. (Publication year only). Title of publication. *Name of journal italicized*, *journal volume number italicized*  (issue number), page number range. doi: doi information (if accessed online)

Example for a *book*:

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

\*Note: All entries must be alphabetized. Articles accessed online should include doi information.

For more information on this, please refer to the **Reference List sections ONLY** of this very useful website:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/>

* **Note the following important requirements**:
  + Do not use first person. What is the first person? Writing from the “I” point of view (this includes, “we” and “our”, the plural forms of first person).
  + Do not use contractions. Examples: don’t, isn’t, won’t 🡪 Use: do not, is not, will not.
* Include Your Name; Student ID #; Recitation Time; TA Name; Word Count; and Question # (-1 point each.)
* Attach a score sheet; -15 if missing; -5 for not initialing score sheet; -5 for no title, -5 if paper and grade sheet not stapled together.

**Other Considerations**

* Make your paper creative and unique. Each TA reads many, many papers. Make yours stand out.
* Proof-read your paper, or have a friend with some talent for written English (or the OSU Writing and Learning Center) look it over. "A" papers do not have grammatical and spelling errors.
* TAs will all follow the same guidelines when grading papers, but we all have different personalities and backgrounds. We do work to have our average grades be pretty close at the end of the term.

All Papers will adhere to the Critical Thinking format outlined above. To think critically about something is not as intuitive as it might sound, so we will compartmentalize papers into this format. The word limits of 400-450 for the “Analysis” section and 100-125 words total for all other headings, must be strictly adhered to. Note that there is some flexibility between Analysis and the other headings, but the paper total MUST not exceed 550 words. To write concisely, glance at your paper’s title after writing each sentence. Does it fit, is it necessary, can it be written more effectively as a shorter sentence?

These Critical Thinking paper will not cover both sides of an issue. Some would call them “Position” papers. Take sides--***always*** title your paper with either a declaratory statement, or a question. For example: Your broad topic is “Wind Energy.” Your title could be “The Future is Blowin’ in the Wind.” Or “Wind Generated Energy is too Chancy.” Or “Why is Wind Generated Electricity the Fastest Growing of all Renewable Sources?” (This title could actually be argued either way, i.e. It’s good that it is growing OR Subsidies are skewing the market.)

**A Guide TO Finding Peer-Reviewed Sources**

**OVERVIEW**

You must cite at least 4 relevant references that are peer-reviewed and from the last ten years within the “Analysis” section of each CT Paper (two peer-reviewed sources for the written report section of the group project assignment.

Note: You may use other sources that do not meet this criteria, but ONLY in addition to the four primary references.

Note: Do not distinguish between peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed sources within your Bibliography. If you list your references in the correct format, then your TA can tell the difference between the sources.

**What does ‘peer-reviewed’ mean?**

* Peer-reviewed publications are those that have been reviewed and evaluated by scientists, academics, and/or professionals working within the same field as the author(s) of the publication.
* Using peer-reviewed publications ensures that the information you cite from that publication is legitimate, accurate, and unbiased.

**What classifies as a peer-reviewed publication?**

* Articles from professional, peer-reviewed journals.
  + These are the most commonly used sources by students writing research papers.
* Books (and Textbooks) For CT Papers, we accept ANY book pertinent to your topic.
* \*Reports and publications\* of *some* governmental and non-governmental agencies. Note: Be careful when using these types of sources, as they may not be peer-reviewed.
* Examples include US Government \*publications\* and those published by agencies such as the UN, the FAO, the IPCC, the World Bank, etc.
  + \*Reports and publications\*, NOT brochures, NOT websites, NOT fact pages, etc...
* What about publications from other governments?
  + It depends on the country. ASK your TA for guidance before using them.

**What does NOT classify as a peer-reviewed source?**

* Newspaper articles
* Magazine articles
* A published master thesis or a doctoral dissertation
* Any website (including Wikipedia, although a Wikipedia article can be an excellent source for finding peer-reviewed material—and a good overview of your topic to help you understand it)
* Blogs

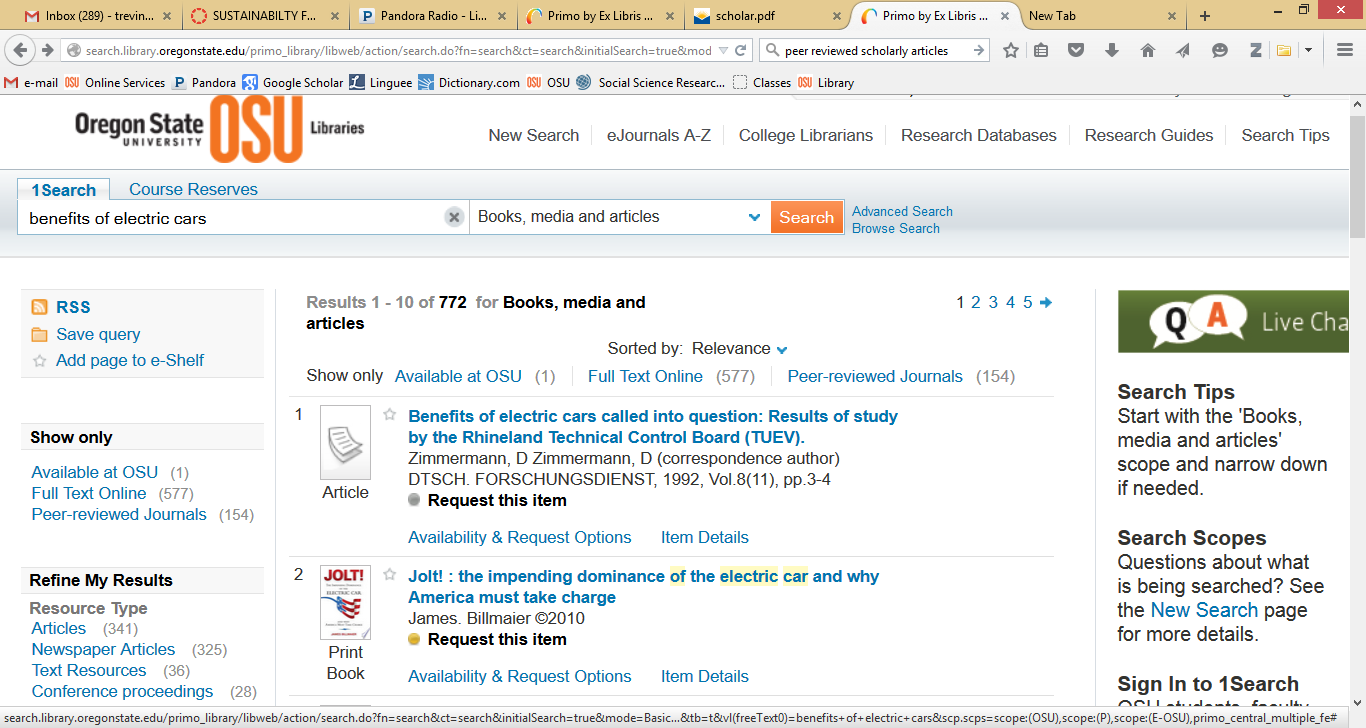
**FINDING Peer-Reviewed Sources**

As a university student, you have access to a wealth of *free* peer-reviewed information. Take advantage of this while you’re here!!!

* You may find books and e-books through the OSU Library website, but it is also a useful tool for finding peer-reviewed journal articles.

**How to Find Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles through the OSU Library Website**

* Go to oregonstate.edu
* Click on the “Library” link at the top of the page
* Type some key words related to the topic you’re researching
  + It helps to play around with this, as you will get different results if you change some of these words. For example, you can type “sustainability of electric cars”, then try something like “benefits of electric vehicles”, or “disadvantages of electric cars”, etc.
* IMPORTANT: Once you are on the page showing the results of your search, make sure you click on “Peer-reviewed Journals”, located to the left, under “Show only” (as shown by the red arrow below)
  + This will ensure that you only look through sources that classify as ‘peer-reviewed’



**Alternative Search Engines**

You can use other search engines and databases if you wish. Google Scholar is a popularly used tool for finding peer-reviewed journal articles, but you must be careful when using it, as this database is not as clear about the quality of the results from your search (as the OSU Library website can be). To check to be sure that a Google Scholar article is peer reviewed, plug it into the OSU search engine with “peer-reviewed Journals button checked. OR, ask your TA for guidance.

🡪If you’re not certain whether a source you want to use is peer-reviewed or not, contact your instructor or the T.A. and have them approve (or disapprove) of the source.