

APPENDIX A

SIMPLIFIED ESSAY WRITING

Every piece you write should contain three elements:

I. Introduction

The introduction is intended to draw the reader into the body of material to follow. It should begin with a general statement or question, sometimes called the "thesis statement" or "thesis question," followed by a quick narrowing down to the main theme to be developed in the body. Set the stage quickly, give appropriate background, then move right into a transition sentence that will set up the reader for the body.

II. Body (Argument)

The body of a written piece is where you elaborate, defend, and expand the thesis introduced in the introduction. The body should support your main contention with supporting evidence and possible objections. A good body presents both sides of a case, pro and con. As you make your case, save your best argument for last. When presenting contrary views, be sure to set forth the strongest arguments so you can avoid being changed with erecting a "straw man."

The body includes three components:

Elaboration: Spell out the details by defining, clarifying and adding relevant, pertinent information.

Illustration: Paint a verbal picture that helps make or clarify your point(s). Well-illustrated pieces are easier to read and follow than those on a high level of abstraction.

Argumentation: Give the reasons, justifications, and rationales for the position or view you have taken in the introduction. Draw inferences for the reader and explain the significance or assertions or claims being made.

When moving from one sub point or argument to another, use connecting or transition words and phrases that enable your reader to more easily follow the flow of your case.

The following is a partial list of logical connectors that you can use:

exceptions - but, alas, however, etc.

illustrations - for instance, for example, etc.

conclusions - thus, so, therefore, consequently, etc.

comparisons - similarly, by contrast, etc.

qualifications - yet, still, etc.

additions - moreover, furthermore, etc.

III. Conclusion

Make your final appeal to the reader, a finishing, all-encompassing statement that wraps up your presentation in a powerful or even dramatic fashion. Normally a single paragraph, brief and concise, will suffice. The purpose of the conclusion is to leave the reader with an idea or thought that captures the essence of the body while provoking further reflection and consideration.

APPENDIX B

HOW TO WRITE A CRITICAL PAPER

“CRITICISM”-n. The art, skill or profession of making discriminating judgments and evaluations.

FIRST, LEARN TO LISTEN AND READ CRITICALLY, ASK YOURSELF FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS AS YOU READ AND LISTEN:

THE ESSENCE OF CRITICAL THINKING

1. What is the book/message about as a whole?
2. What is the author/speaker saying in detail, and how is it said?
3. Is the book/message true, in whole or in part?
4. What is the significance of the book/message?

SECOND, WRITE YOUR PAPER IN FOUR SECTIONS

FOUR ELEMENTS OF A CRITICAL PAPER

PART ONE: DESCRIPTION

Classify the book/message according to kind and subject matter. *Very briefly*, state what the whole of the book/message is about. Enumerate the major parts of the book/message in their order and relation. Define the problem or problems that the author/speaker is trying to solve.

PART TWO: INTERPRETATION

Find the important words (terms) in the book/message and determine the author's/speaker's meaning of these terms, with precision.

Identify the most important sentences (propositions) in the book/message, the ones that express the judgments on which the whole book/message rests. These are the foundational affirmations and denials of the author/speaker. They must be either premises or conclusions. State them in your own words.

Construct the author's/speaker's arguments, beginning with any assumptions and/or self-evident propositions. An argument is the author's/speaker's line of reasoning aimed at demonstrating the truth or falsehood of his or her claims, that is, the coherent series of reasons, statements, or facts that support or establish a point of view. If the arguments are not explicitly expressed in the book/message, you will need to construct them from sequences of sentences.

Determine the author's/speaker's solutions to the problem or question that he or she posed. Ask: Which problems were solved and which were not? Did the author/speaker know which were not solved?

PART THREE: CRITICISM

General Pointers.

From this point on, you will have a chance to argue with the author/speaker and express yourself, but keep in mind the following general maxims of scholarly etiquette:

Do not say that you agree, disagree, or suspend judgment until you have adequately interpreted the book/message. Do not begin criticism until you are able to say, with reasonable certainty, “I understand,” i.e., I have done an adequate job with parts one and two. Complete the task of understanding before rushing in.

When you disagree, do so reasonably and not contentiously.

Demonstrate that you know the difference between knowledge and personal opinion by presenting good reasons for any critical judgments that you make.

Three conditions must be satisfied if controversy is to be well conducted:

- Make an attempt at impartiality by reading/listening sympathetically.
- Acknowledge any emotions that you bring to the dispute.
- State your own assumptions explicitly.

Determine, wherever possible, the origins and the consequences of the author's/speaker's arguments.

Try to locate the origins of the author's/speaker's ideas in the larger picture of history. What movements, currents of thought, or other thinkers might have influenced him or her? Then carry the author's/speaker's ideas to their logical conclusions. To the best of your ability and given the academic background that you already possess, relate the author's/speaker's ideas to those of other authors with whom you are familiar.

Judge the soundness of the author's/speaker's arguments.

As called for, show where the author/speaker is *uninformed*. To support your remarks, you must be able to state the knowledge that the author/speaker lacks and show how it is relevant, i.e., how it affects the conclusions.

As called for, show where the author/speaker is *misinformed*, where assertions are made that are contrary to fact. This kind of defect should be pointed out only if it is relevant to the conclusions. To support your remark, you must be able to argue the truth or greater probability of a position contrary to the author's/speaker's.

As called for, show where the author/speaker is *illogical*, where there are fallacies in reasoning. In general fallacies are of two sorts. There is the *non sequitur*, which means that the conclusion simply does not follow for the reasons that are offered. Then there is the problem of inconsistency, which means that two things the author/speaker has tried to say are incompatible. To make either of these criticisms, you must be able to show the precise respect in which the author's/speaker's argument fails to be forcibly convincing. Be concerned with this defect only if major conclusions are affected by it.

In addition, show where the author/speaker fails to draw any conclusions that are implied by the evidence given or principles involved.

If you have not been able to show that the author/speaker is uninformed, misinformed or illogical on relevant matters, you simply cannot disagree. You must agree, at least in part, although you may suspend judgment on the whole. If you have been convinced, you should admit it. If, despite your failure to support one or more of these critical points, you still honestly feel unconvinced, perhaps you should not have said that you understood in the first place!

Judge the completeness of the author's/speaker's arguments.

Define any inadequacy precisely. Did the author/speaker solve all the problems he/she started with? Did the author/speaker make the best use of available materials and resources? Did the author/speaker see all the implications and ramifications of the problem? Did the author/speaker make all essential or relevant distinctions in his or her presentation?

Judge the value of the book/message.

Your final evaluation must be concerned with the truth and significance of the book/message for a given purpose, i.e., its *value*. This judgment must be based on definite criteria. These criteria should be internal (soundness and completeness) as well as external (relevance to some purpose).

PART FOUR: (OPTIONAL) INTEGRATE THE ACADEMIC AND THE PERSONAL.

Engage the key idea(s) that are most provocative and alive for you. Consider how your experience is similar to or different from what you read. Identify any spiritual issues as they arose for you and your way of responding to or struggling with them. Describe which key ideas, if any, might be applied in your ministry.

SOURCE: Adapted from Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972).

APPENDIX C

HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER

“RESEARCH”- n. Scholarly or scientific investigation or inquiry. v. To study thoroughly; to seek out, to search again.

STEP ONE: CHOOSE A TOPIC

Select a specific, focused topic to research. Where do topic ideas come from? You can often find a topic by looking through your textbooks, particularly in the sections that list suggestions for further reading and study. You can go through lecture notes, examine books and articles in the library, look through subject catalogs or refer to encyclopedias. Often the most interesting topics for you personally are drawn from your own experience – your personal knowledge, interests and beliefs.

STEP TWO: NARROW YOUR TOPIC BY DEVELOPING SOME RESEARCHABLE QUESTIONS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ANSWER

Rather than beginning with a preconceived thesis (a truth claim) that you then must rationalize, narrow your topic by developing a set of questions related to it. You might start with the classic journalists’ questions Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? Or ask, What is positive about “X”? What is negative? What is merely interesting?

Consider your topic from different perspectives. The static perspective focuses on what is. The dynamic perspective looks at action and change. The relative perspective examines relationships and systems. Ask, for example: How can “X” be systematically described? How has “X” changed over time? What other factors are related to “X”? How is one element of “X” related to another?

Other strategies for question development can focus on narration, process, cause and effect, definition, classification and division, comparison and contrast. For example: In what sequence of events does “X” manifest? What precedes and what follows “X”? Is it possible to say what causes “X”? How can “X” be systematically defined? What classes and subclasses of “X” exist and how are they significant to the whole of “X”? How does “X” compare and contrast with “Y”?

Some ideas will seem worth pursuing; others will seem inappropriate for your purpose, audience or occasion. You will find yourself discarding ideas even as you develop new ones.

STEP THREE: SURVEY THE FIELD

Create a tentative bibliography of your topic by searching relevant databases, library catalogues and existing bibliographies in books. For computerized indexes, carefully choose key words that best capture the essence of your topic. Seek the help of a professional librarian if necessary.

Skim all of the works on the tentative bibliography to acquire a clearer idea of the topic and to ascertain which are most useful for your paper.

Find the passages in the books and articles that are most germane to your needs. Revise your research questions in light of what your literature survey reveals. Search and revise again if necessary.

STEP FOUR: WRITE THE PAPER

The following is a general structure to follow for many kinds of research papers. Adapt it to specific assignments as appropriate.

Introduction. Announce the subject, set the tone and gain the reader’s attention and interest. Provide some general information on the background of your topic.

Statement of the Problem. Announce the purpose of your study. Give the reader a firm sense of what you’re doing and why. List the questions that you will address. List your assumptions, those self-evident conditions that you take for granted. Describe your rationale, the underlying principles and logical basis for

your study. Define the scope of your work and discuss any weaknesses that you can perceive in your approach. Define the key terms that you will use in your paper. Stipulate meanings for ambiguous terms.

Summary of Investigation. Identify the principal works and authors, the main ideas dealing with your topic and any generally accepted concepts and explanations. Organize your review by themes, systematic propositions, historical sequences or other important ideas relative to the research questions that you asked.

Analysis of Findings. You must do more than ask and answer questions. You must show how your questions are answered differently and try to say why. You must be able to point to books and articles that support your classification of answers. In a research paper, the solution to the problem or the answer to the question often is found in the ordered discussion itself rather than in any set of assertions about it. Identify any contradictions, gaps, uncertainties and controversies that you uncovered. Sort, arrange and define the issues that arise. If a question is clear and if you can be reasonably certain that authors answer it in different ways, then an issue has been defined. It is the issue between the authors who answer the question in one way and those who answer it in or another opposing or variant way. Classify the authors according to their views on the issues. An issue is truly joined when two authors who understand a question in the same way answer it in contrary ways. Remember, however, that differences in answers can often be ascribed as much to different conceptions of the question as to different views of the subject.

Maintain objectivity. Remember that none of the opinions in conflict may be wholly true. Try to see all sides fairly. Make a deliberate effort to balance question against question, to forgo any comment that might be prejudicial and to check any tendency toward overemphasis or under-emphasis. Avoid animosity and *ad hominem* arguments. Do not cite authors out of context. Accompany interpretation of authors' views with actual quotations from their texts.

Conclusion. Ask yourself, what conclusions and implications can I draw from my study? Synthesize new information and personal insights in a way that is uniquely yours. Draw on your own insights, make connections, see similarities, and discern what is true. Evaluate your findings with respect to your own theological and philosophical perspectives. However, avoid polemics, triviality and weak theorizing. Make suggestions for future studies if appropriate.

ACADEMIC STYLE REQUIREMENTS

Prepare your paper using the editorial style of Kate Turabian's Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations (see *Scholarly Resources* that follows).

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN DOING HISTORICAL RESEARCH

History has been defined as a dialogue between the present and the past. Historical research is the systematic search for facts relating to questions about the past and the interpretation of these facts. By the studying the past, historians may hope to:

- Acquire knowledge about previously unexamined phenomena
- Better understand present institutions, practices and issues by studying the past.
- Interpret ideas or events that previously have seemed unrelated.
- Synthesize old data or merge it with new historical facts that have been discovered.
- Revise existing histories within the framework of new (and sometimes radical) interpretative frameworks.

Keep these points in mind as you do historical research:

1. Select a problem or topic for which historical sources are available.

2. Try to use primary as well as secondary historical sources. *Primary sources* (such as diaries, letters, manuscripts, etc.) are firsthand accounts. *Secondary sources* are published histories relating to your problem or topic. These histories include historical information, the historian's interpretations and conclusions, references to other secondary sources, and references to primary sources. An important issue is whether to use another historian's facts without checking the primary sources from which they were

derived. Consider the historian's reputation, likelihood of bias, and accessibility of primary source documents.

3. Subject your sources to external and internal criticism. In *external criticism*, the researcher raises questions about the nature of the historical source: Is genuine? Is the original copy? Who wrote it? Where? When? Under what conditions? *Internal criticism* involves evaluating the accuracy and worth of the statements contained in a historical document. Ask: Is it probable that people would act in the way described by the writer? Is it physically possible for described events to have occurred? Do facts and figures seem reasonable? Is the writer a competent observer? Is he or she biased? Be careful not to reject an observation just because it appears improbable.

4. Be aware of the personal values, biases, and interests that influence selection and interpretation of historical sources. *Revisionism* is the tendency to rewrite history according to the interests and concerns of historians. *Presentism* is the tendency to interpret past events using concepts and perspectives that have originated in more recent times. In planning your own historical study, consider at least two interpretative frameworks for explaining the phenomena. Even if you choose to operate primarily within one framework, the other will provide a basis for assessing the worth of your research procedures and thinking.

5. Make careful use of concepts from other disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, statistics, literary criticism, philosophy) to explain past events. Check the definition of each concept to determine whether it applies to the historical phenomena being studied. If necessary, provide a definition of the concept in the report.

6. Be careful with causal inferences. Causal inference is the process of reaching the conclusion that one set of events brought about, directly or indirectly, a subsequent set of events. Historians cannot "prove" that one event in the past caused another, but they can be aware of, and make explicit, the assumptions that underlie the act of ascribing causality to sequences of historical events. It is more defensible to identify an antecedent event as "a" cause than as "the" cause."

7. Limit generalizability of your interpretations to the people, places or institutions that are justified by the available historical information.

8. Synthesize facts into meaningful chronological and thematic patterns.

SCHOLARLY RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH

ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL BOOKS

Adler, Mortimer J. and Charles Van Doren. How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

Hodges, John C., Mary E. Whitten, Winifred B. Horner, Suzanne S. Webb, and Robert K. Miller. Harbrace College Handbook. Current ed. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

ACADEMIC STYLE MANUAL RECOMMENDED BY TRINITY

Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

DATABASES

FirstSearch [Package of 12 individual databases put together by OCLC]

<http://www.trinitysem.edu/student/oclc.html>

Religious and Theological Abstracts (RTA)

<http://www.trinitysem.edu/student/abstracts.html>

Christian Periodicals Index (CPI)

<http://www.trinitysem.edu/student/cpi.html>

Other Abstracts

Old Testament Abstracts

New Testament Abstracts

Historical Abstracts

Psychological Abstracts

Management and Marketing Abstracts

Philosophy Index

Dissertation Abstracts

Social Abstracts

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“Plagiarism, what is it and how can I avoid it?”

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html>

<http://www.writing.northwestern.edu> - click on "Writing" then "Resources" (Handouts) then on "Avoiding Plagiarism"

ONLINE WRITING HELPS

Note: Web addresses change from time to time. It may be necessary to do your own Internet searches to find suitable help.

How to Proofread and Edit Your Writing

www.cal.bemidji.msus.edu/wrc/handouts/ProofAndEdit.html.

Paradigm Online Writing Assistant

www.powa.org

Online English Grammar

www.edunet.com/english/grammar

Purdue University Online Writing Lab

www.owl.english.purdue.edu

English as a Second or Foreign Language

www.lang.uiuc.edu/r-li5/esl

Researchpaper.com: Resources for writing Research Papers

www.researchpaper.com

Electronic Citation

The Columbia University Press Guide to Online Style

www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos

Writing Helps from Dr. Dan Lioy

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Annotated bibliographies, especially those done by graduate and post-graduate students, need to do more than give a brief synopsis of the work's contents. They need to discuss--in a concise but substantive fashion--the entry's relative strengths and weakness, especially in comparison with the representative body of literature in the field.

Thus, in response to your question, there is no particular suggested length for each annotated bibliographic entry. The main concern is achieving the above in a way that satisfies the requirement without being either too abbreviated or too lengthy.

Here are some tips for writing substantive annotated bibliographies:

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FORMAT

Your annotations should include the following elements. You should name the author of the source (or if it is anonymous use terms like "the author" or "the writer") followed by a rhetorically accurate verb (such as asserts, argues, suggest, believes, reports, insists, indicates, contends) and a 'that' clause containing the major proposition (thesis statement) of the work. Then explain how the author develops or supports the thesis, usually reflecting the order of development in the work. You should also state the author's apparent purpose followed by an 'in order to' phrase. Finally, you should describe the intended audience of the source. You will also want to evaluate the usefulness, reliability, strengths and weaknesses of the source. You should use a standardized referencing format.

The following example is in MLA format.

Example:

Goodall, Jane. "Primate Research is Inhumane." *Animal Rights: Opposing Viewpoints*. Ed. Janelle Rohr. San Diego: Greenhaven, 1989. 95-100.

Goodall argues that most laboratories using primates engage in inhumane practices. She supports her argument through detailed descriptions of lab environments and draws special attention to the neglect of psychological comforts which these primates endure until they sometimes become insane. Her purpose is to speak on behalf of the chimpanzees (because they cannot speak for themselves) in order to persuade her readers to see that if we do not fight for improvements in lab care "we make a mockery of the whole concept of justice." Goodall writes for a non-specialist audience interested in the issues of animal rights: there were no extensive footnotes or bibliography and the diction was aimed at a well-educated, but general, audience. This source was a useful introduction to the topic and seems reliable, but was fairly short and very basic. Goodall is a well-known primate researcher and is passionate in her defense of primates, but did not present all points of the issue or counterarguments.

In these annotations you should concentrate on analyzing the source to discover how credible it is and the persuasive strategies used by its author. The annotations should help you keep track of your sources as well as encourage you to read carefully and thoroughly. Additional questions you might consider in writing your annotations:

- 1) Is the author "qualified" to write on the subject and in what way?
- 2) Does the author have a bias or agenda or make assumptions that affect her data or argument?
- 3) What method of collecting data to support claims is used by the author? Interviews? Library research? Laboratory experiments? Case studies? Questionnaires?
- 4) How does this study compare to similar studies? Does it agree or disagree with conventional wisdom, established scholarship, government policy, and so on? Are there other works to which this one is specifically indebted or against which it reacts?

Your annotations should be detailed but also succinct, probably no more than 300 words. As in the example, you should give bibliographic information in an approved style for a list of works cited.

Please allow me to offer my thoughts (as a Trinity faculty member who often grades this sort of assignment). Perhaps this information will be useful, too, for other Trinity online students.

The rule of thumb is that 1-page of copy (double-spaced) is equivalent to 250 words. Thus, a minimum of 12 pages would be equivalent to 3,000 words. This, then, should be your gross minimum goal.

I say this because at the doctoral level folks like myself will be looking for other things, too, to evaluate the quality of your work. Below are some general research paper guidelines you will be wise to consider.

Regards,
Dan Liroy, Th.D.
Trinity

GENERAL RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

Research papers should follow the guidelines of formal academic writing. Prepare an essay that introduces

a topic and then presents a thesis (argument) about a particular issue. The body of the paper should be a formal expository argument supporting the thesis. The thesis is derived from your academic research and analytical thinking about the research. Remember that evaluators have strong feelings about maintaining the standards of formal academic writing. Thus, poor writing influences the evaluator's ability to assess the depth of learning the student is attempting to convey.

It is important when exploring or developing the ideas and concepts of others, to correctly attribute your research sources using an appropriate documentation style. Although you can offer your own interpretations and ideas in your essay, you also need to refer to expert research sources and writers in the field under discussion. Remember to paraphrase your source material rather than to have extensive and frequent quotes.

The point here is that the evaluator is not interested in reviewing extensive excerpts from various texts that are inserted for "filler." Unsuccessful essays are those that take voluminous excerpts from texts and then connect them with a few narrative statements written by the student. Inferior essays also tend to wander aimlessly through the narrative, rather than be characterized by clear and concise writing.

Successful essays, in contrast, exhibit critical thinking skills and academic discipline. Analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and logical development are the key skills the student applies to interpret ideas, works of literature, or historical events into a meaningful structure. Research and reading of multiple and conflicting sources are essential to the development of adequate essays. An essay that merely recounts events or facts summarizes other people's ideas, or reports on a book's characters or plot is not fully developed.

Clearly, then, a number of reputable scholarly sources should be consulted. A portion of these should be recent publications (published within the last fifteen years) that provide a broad overview of your topic. An additional number of sources may be more narrowly focused on the particular issue under consideration. Knowledge of current theory and recent research is necessary. Use scholarly literature that describes recent theories and research. The student's own experience may be used to support the thesis in the essay, but it should play a secondary role.

Students should carefully and deeply probe a specific topic or the content of a scholarly work. Essays should be well-developed, well-organized, interesting, original, and supported with references to criticism. They should reflect an understanding of the time period or of the genre or of a particular theme. They should reflect critical thinking and awareness of the theory related to the content. They should follow the guidelines of formal academic writing.

Graduate and postgraduate papers differ from undergraduate papers in several ways. First, graduate and postgraduate essays contain more discussion and insight into the theory and background of the field. These essays may, if appropriate to the course, discuss several different theoretical approaches and provide more discussion about emerging and state-of-the-art issues, ideas, and practices. These essays will contain more citations and references.

Students need to back up their opinions with sources that demonstrate the validity of their approach as well as demonstrate opposing points of view. Students should be just as concerned with the quality of the sources in a reference list as in the quantity of sources. The evaluation of the quality of a source is based on its contribution to current theory, the timeliness of the source, and the depth of

information the source provides.

Here are some tips for writing substantive book review assignments:

BOOK REVIEW FORMAT

There are two keys to writing a good book review. First, the student must summarize the author's position on the topic so that the reader has a basis for evaluating the student's critique. The key is to say enough so that the reader has a firm understanding of the author's argument, but avoid adding so much detail that there is insufficient room for the critique.

The second and *most important key* to the paper is the analysis of the author's opinion. The student should discuss whether, based on the author's logical and evidentiary support for his or her position, that position is justifiable. For example, consider the article entitled "Is Business Bluffing Ethical?" from the *Harvard Business Review*. The author argues that a number of practices that society considers unethical are not unethical in the business world. His evidence for this argument is that businesspeople routinely engage in such practices and do not consider them unethical. Two examples of such practices he cites are deceptive labeling of food packages and the neglect of known safety hazards when corporations manufacture products.

The author's case is defective on two grounds:

1. Many of the practices he cites, including those noted above, are in fact considered unethical by many people in business. Therefore, his basic factual premise is incorrect. Here, I am challenging the author's evidence. The student would cite evidence disputing the author's statement that businesspeople consider such practices ethical.
2. Even if it is true that businesspeople consider such practices ethical, that does not mean that in fact they *are* ethical. One could conclude alternatively that many business practices are not ethical. To conclude that the practices *are* ethical, one must cite ethical principles, not merely common practice. Here, I am challenging the author's logic.

In your paper you would expand on these two points with additional evidence and argument. Note again that the above points critique the author's *evidence* and his *logic*. That should be the focus of your paper, whether you agree or disagree with the author (and critiquing an author does not mean that you must disagree): merely saying that you agree or disagree, or that the author's points are valid or invalid, is unhelpful. You need to ask yourself *why* you agree or disagree: how is the author's logic coherent or flawed; do his or her examples and evidence stand up to scrutiny, or does other evidence contradict them? Although you are not required to do additional research on the topic of the article, you may do so, and may turn up evidence that either supports or contradicts the author's point. Or, you may have evidence from your own experience and knowledge of the topic.

After you have written your paper, review the conclusions you have drawn. Then take the "why" test. For each conclusion ask yourself, *Why* is this conclusion true? *Why* do I know this to be the case? Then ask yourself, is the answer in your paper? If it is not, you have not supported your conclusion. Supporting your conclusions with persuasive argument or evidence is the key to writing an effective paper. The following are common mistakes in writing a paper such as this:

- Making assertions (conclusions) without supporting them. This is the most common flaw in such papers; always use the "why" test.
- Writing a summary of the article but not critiquing it.
- Writing an essay on the topic rather than specifically critiquing the author's position.
- Not summarizing the article sufficiently so that the reader can understand your critique (or, putting in too much detail).