

ANTH 488 - Agroecology

Summer B Term 2019 | University of Washington | Professor Devon G. Peña

INSTRUCTIONAL HANDOUT #1: CRITICAL REVIEW NOTES

General instructions.

- **A total of four (4) sets of notes must be prepared for full credit on this course requirement.** These consist of notes on the assigned course texts. Each note is equivalent to a minimum of approximately 2-3 pages.
- **These notes must be posted in a timely manner to Assignments page of our UW Canvas class website.** I will post prompts and my own notes each week to initiate the discussions. The students' threaded responses should follow my prompt and notes. The Discussion post is for peer review purposes.
- **Notes must be submitted by Friday 10pm of each week on Aug 2, 9, 16, and 23.** Penalties for late papers.

Grading.

- Each of the 4 review notes submitted are valued at 10 points toward the final course grade for a total of **40 points**.
- **Penalties for late work.** I will grant students full credit for submitting their reflection papers in a timely manner; each passing day past the deadline will result in a loss of 1 point for each day late. Make every effort to keep pace and submit these reflection papers in a timely manner.

Expectations. This seminar is designed to encourage you to practice a **decolonial analysis** as per Linda Smith's "25 Indigenous Projects." I wish for students go beyond the simple regurgitation of the texts; I expect everyone has already read the text; instead, I insist that students quickly summarize the selected reading and then expend more of their effort on defining the context of the work and offering critical analysis. This means I expect you to "problematize" the text.

Specific ideas on content. I recommend that each set of notes include the following elements:

- First provide a **complete bibliographic source** entry (AAA, ASA, APA, MLA formats are all fine) for the text you are reviewing; place your name; student ID number; and course information at the top.
- **Summary of text.** What are the principal arguments of the reading? This can include a summary of the empirical evidence, the methodology of the text(s), and the theoretical arguments and policy recommendations. Make this the shortest segment of your notes (½ page max).
- **Contextualization and Critique or Problematization.** The student must engage other texts and sources to present the reading in a broader context of discourse, which is often contradictory or at least involves competing perspectives. It is not enough to have a ‘read a text’ and then treat it as some disconnected entity or narrative enclosed within its own semiotic loop. This is not about imitating historicist or formalist context accounts. It is more about “situating” the text(s) and your critique in the context of the broader set of discourses and polyvocal sources that comprise the politics of power/knowledge. Also therefore, what subaltern (or alterNative) sources can you invoke to challenge a hegemonic or presumably radical text? What other knowledge can you introduce against the dominant discursive construct(s)? This is a longer section of your notes (1-1½ pages).
- **Questions and Discussion.** Each student should develop a set of questions (2-3 at most) to help focus your discussion of the readings. This is significant and requires careful consideration of the “framing” of questions related to our critique of the text(s) and our efforts to engage in problematization. Questions and associated critiques lead to ideas for directions for future research; address ambiguities, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the text(s), or identify gaps and unanswered issues. Longer section: ½ page.

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Some guidance on 'critical' frames.

When we write a critical response paper to scholarly research and discourse, many different approaches can be taken. Here is one set of possibilities for how to structure your presentations in your own response papers. In other words, did you prepare a reflection that asks or makes the case for:

1. **Need for Clarification.** The AU (author) claims p, but I don't know what the AU means by saying p. I am clarifying what I believe p is: Does it mean p', p''...?
2. **Counter-Argument.** The AU claims p. I think I know what AU means by p. But why does the AU claim p? I don't see any argument for p (based on the data or evidence presented). I also think the AU could give a different argument for it instead by emphasizing p', p''.
3. **Objection.** The AU claims p (and maybe argues effectively for it). However, I think that p, (or the AU's argument for p), is problematic. Here's my objection to p (or the AU's argument for p): Q. What do you say in response to Q? Note: Objections can address gaps (in evidence, sources, interpretation), conceptual or evidentiary contradictions and ambiguities, unstated assumptions, and numerous other conceptual, methodological, or epistemological errors or biases that result in some sort of problematization, and thus a series of new Qs.
4. **Assistance.** The AU claims p. I agree with the AU that p, but I think the following additional reason(s) which are not mentioned can also be given in support of p: q.
5. **Competing Interpretation.** The AU argues that the findings result or are associated with p. However, I don't think that this is exactly what it says. Instead, I think it says p' (and here's why I think this).
6. **Suggestion of Parallels or Intersections.** The AU claims p. P (or the AU's argument for p) reminds me of so-and-so's claim that q (or the argument for q). Are the two really similar? Does comparing p to q help illuminate p, or is it just misleading?
7. **Notice of Erasure or Distortion.** The AU claims p, but the framing of p erases or distorts a significant convergent or intersecting q (or argument for q). By erasing or distorting q, the AU's interpretation and evidence are rendered problematic because of q', q''... I therefore offer this critique, c, c'...The AU overlooks or dismisses significant voices, viewpoints, or alternative arguments.