Critiquing a Journal Article: Guidelines

1. Choosing the Article

Choose an article in a subject that you have studied either in class or in independent study/research. You will need to read this article very carefully and determine if there are techniques, conclusions or other areas that you disagree with, think are great, or have suggestions that you could make for different approaches. A “critique” is really an analysis of a paper, project, technique, etc., and not necessarily a criticism. For our purposes it will be necessary to critique the entire paper. You must have at least one and preferably two or three (but not more) references to the literature to support your analysis.

2. Style

- Your name – upper right hand corner
- Title of the paper critiqued, reference to the journal, date, volume, pages, etc. – at top, centered
- References including authors, journal, title, data and pagination – at the end of the critique. All references should also be mentioned in the body of the critiques, e.g., “As shown by Johnson and Bailley (1964), …” or “James and Jones (1992) demonstrated that…” The date is needed in the text only when you have two or more references to the same authors.
- A typical critiques should not exceed three pages, double-spaced, typewritten. Normally no less than one page will be needed to make your case for your analysis of the paper.
- An journal publication analysis as in a full termpaper should be 5-7 pages, 1.5 – double linespacing.
- Underline or italicize genus and species of organism, foreign words (E. coli, E. coli, et al., viz., etc.).
- All critiques should be written in the first person as the contents represent your ideas. You should strive to write a “tight” critique, that is, one that does not contain unnecessary verbiage.
- Your audience should be a group of scientists-to-be at your level of understanding. You should background and write in a way that your colleagues in the class would understand and appreciate your logic.
- You should always write a rough draft and ten revise it. It may take several drafts to make a good critique. You should label each draft clearly as a DRAFT and turn them in with the final critique.
- Attach photocopies of the article and all references to the back of your paper.
3. **Helpful Hints**

- Your choice of paper on which to base your critique is the first and most important step. Choose something in an area, and using techniques, that you have as much knowledge of as possible. You may choose to criticize or comment a technique, conclusion, or approach, or add new thoughts to what the authors could have done or should do next.

- Your logic is the second most important aspect: be certain that you logically present your argument and that the references that you use back up your concepts and ideas.

- Finally, since this is a training exercise in **professional communication**, be certain that you carefully construct and proofread your paper. Avoid jargon and do not include any unsubstantiated statements.