

Template for Writing Reading Responses & Sample Reading Responses

In [title of scholarly reading], [author] introduces the concept of [concept], or [definition of concept in your own words]. [Author] believes that [author's argument about the concept, either in your own words or quote from reading; CITE relevant page(s) from reading].

This concept is useful because [your explanation in 1-3 sentences].

Similarly, [description in 1-3 sentences of a news story, historical event, media example, or another scholar's reading that relates to the above concept, including some form of CITATION]. [Explain in 1-3 sentences how what you described relates to the concept above.] [Your opinion of the above concept in 1-3 sentences.]

Designed by former student Maribel Guarin

Reminders:

- You need a **PAGE-NUMBERED CITATION** from the reading to support the **TERM** or **CONCEPT** you are unpacking.
- You need a **CITATION for your CONNECTION**, which could be a link to a news story or media example, the author of another reading we've done in class, or a bibliographic entry for a scholarly reading from another class.
- Word minimum is **200 OF YOUR OWN WORDS** for undergrads, 300 for graduate students. Quotations, citations, and the title of the reading don't count toward the word minimum.

Below you can read two examples of Reading Response that meet all the requirements and that riff on the above template. These examples respond to optional (not mandatory) course readings.

Example 1

Reading Response to “Diaspora & Digital Media” by Lia Wolock (2020)

In “Diaspora and Digital Media,” Wolock (2020) introduces the concept of diaspora, a term for a group that is spread apart but still connected culturally (p. 190).

This concept is useful because more and more people are living in diaspora as migration increases. They are separated from their homeland or their community, but they are still trying to remain connected. Since people can choose how to understand and connect with their culture, there is no single right way to be diasporic. Instead people can use media to build different kinds of diasporic connections. Wolock describes a few South Asian American digital media projects, saying that these sites “engage a specific vision of South Asian American diaspora—coalitional South Asian America— through community building and imaginative, digitally-mediated labor. This conception of South Asian America is internally diverse, ordinary, fun, politically active in conjunction with other marginalized communities, and quintessentially American” (p. 200).

Similarly, although there are strands of Asian American culture that are associated with anti-Blackness (<https://www.vox.com/22321234/black-asian-american-tensions-solidarity-history>), the *Letters for Black Lives* campaign (<https://lettersforblacklives.com/>) brought together many Asian Americans and Canadians to advocate for equality and understanding. The project crowd-sourced scripts that young people can use to speak to their elders in over 25 Asian languages to advocate for racial justice. Through digital activism these young people worked to produce a version of Asian diaspora that is committed to social justice and civil rights. In my opinion, we’re all part of diasporic communities now, and it’s good to know that I can work to reshape my community if I see injustice or hate taking root.

Word count: 211 own words

Connections: *Vox* article and *Letters for Black Lives* campaign

Example 2

Reading Response to “Modernization” by Silvio Waisbord (2008)

Modernization theory “held up the western experience of development as the model on which non-western countries could break away from poverty and tyranny.” It claimed “that the rise of ‘modern’ societies in ‘developing’ countries had to follow the same path” (Waisbord, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Waisbord argues modernization theory is an inaccurate and harmful way of looking at the world that blames formerly colonized countries for their lack of resources. Modernization theory implies that “developing” countries do not have the same standard of living as “modern” countries *because* the cultures of formerly colonized countries are inherently bad, “backward,” and “traditional,” and that it is their “backward” cultures that need fixing for them to “develop.” According to modernization theory these countries are “underdeveloped” not because their people and resources had been exploited to enrich “modernized” countries, but because such countries are failing to follow the single, clear, and correct modernization path laid out by Western countries. But the scholars promoting modernization theory never explain what exact steps Western countries took to achieve their wealth and stability, and largely ignore the role imperial conquest played in making them wealthy. Blaming the “backward cultures” of formerly colonized countries for their lack of wealth reinforces the belief that other countries and peoples are inherently different from us and they can never fully catch up or become “modern.”

Waisbord’s critique pushes us to read the work of scholars like Lerner (1958) carefully and consider what biases they might have. If you go into a foreign place (ex. a village in Turkey) expecting to find that every social problem is caused by that country’s culture being incurably “backwards,” and that there’s only one right way to be “modern” (that is: looking and acting exactly like the researcher does), it would be difficult to learn anything new and see anything beyond your own preconceptions.

Word count: 265 own words

Connections: assigned class reading by Lerner