Rhetoric 102: Evaluation Essay
Evaluating Your Own Writing

“A Truthful Evaluation Of Yourself Gives Feedback For Growth and Success”
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Getting Started

• Today, we will be in a lab. While in the lab, you will be looking at your writing from last semester, Rhetoric 101, and evaluating it according to specific criteria. You do not need to evaluate for all criteria – choose one that interests you best and collect as much evidence as possible.

• Take your time; look at each essay (final drafts only) and provide honest, helpful feedback. Not only does this serve as practice for your next essay, but it allows for you to see where you have grown in the writing process and where you still need improvement.
Criteria Option #1: Introductions and Conclusions

• If you choose to discuss introductions from your essays, you will want to use the resources available to you regarding introductions via Blackboard.

• In terms of the introduction, you will want to comment on attention-getters, background information, and thesis statements.

• In terms of the conclusion, you will want to focus on transitions, restatement of thesis, relevancy, and solutions.
Criteria Option #2: Organization

- Effective papers generally are well organized and unified, in part because of fairly rigid guidelines that writers follow and that you should try to follow in your papers.

- Each body paragraph of your paper should begin with a topic sentence, a statement of the main point of the paragraph. Just as a thesis statement conveys the main point of an entire essay, a topic sentence conveys the main point of a single body paragraph. As illustrated above, a clear and logical relationship should exist between the topic sentences of a paper and the thesis statement.

- If the purpose of a paragraph is to persuade readers, the topic sentence should present a claim, or something that you can prove with specific evidence. If you begin a body paragraph with a claim, a point to prove, then you know exactly what you will do in the rest of the paragraph: prove the claim. You also know when to end the paragraph: when you think you have convinced readers that your claim is valid and well supported.

- The length and number of body paragraphs in an essay is another thing to consider. In general, each body paragraph should be at least half of a page long (for a double-spaced essay), and essays should have between four and six paragraphs, including the introduction and conclusion.

- Transitions should be present between paragraphs and within paragraphs.

- All information within each body paragraph is focused and pertains to the topic sentence.
Criteria Option #3: Support and Development of Ideas

• The main difference between a convincing, insightful interpretation or argument and a weak interpretation or argument often is the amount of evidence than the writer uses. "Evidence" refers to specific facts.

• Remember this fact: your interpretation or argument will be weak unless it is well supported with specific evidence. This means that, for every claim you present, you need to support it with at least several different pieces of specific evidence. Often, students will present potentially insightful comments, but the comments are not supported or developed with specific evidence. When you come up with an insightful idea, you are most likely basing that idea on some specific facts. To present your interpretation or argument well, you need to state your interpretation and then explain the facts that have led you to this conclusion.

• Effective organization is also important here. If you begin each body paragraph with a claim, and if you then stay focused on supporting that claim with several pieces of evidence, you should have a well-supported and well-developed interpretation.

• As stated above, each body paragraph generally should be at least half of a page long, so, if you find that your body paragraphs are shorter than this, then you might not be developing your ideas in much depth. Often, when a student has trouble reaching the required minimum length for an essay, the problem is the lack of sufficient supporting evidence.

• In an interpretation or argument, you are trying to explain and prove something about your subject, so you need to use plenty of specific evidence as support. A good approach to supporting an interpretation or argument is dividing your interpretation or argument into a few significant and related claims and then supporting each claim thoroughly in one body paragraph.
Criteria Option #4: Insight into the Subject

- Sometimes a student will write a well-organized essay, but the essay does not shed much light on the subject. At the same time, I am often amazed at the insightful interpretations and arguments that students come up with. Every semester, students interpret aspects of texts or present arguments that I had never considered.

- If you are writing an interpretation, you should reread the text or study your subject thoroughly, doing your best to notice something new each time you examine it. As you come up with a possible interpretation to develop in an essay, you should re-examine your subject with that interpretation in mind, marking passages (if your subject is a literary text) and taking plenty of notes on your subject. Studying your subject in this way will make it easier for you to find supporting evidence for your interpretation as you write your essay. So ask yourself, do you provide genuine, interesting insight?

- The insightfulness of an essay often is directly related to the organization and the support and development of the ideas in the essay. If you have well-developed body paragraphs focused on one specific point each, then it is likely that you are going into depth with the ideas you present and are offering an insightful interpretation.

- If you organize your essay well, and if you use plenty of specific evidence to support your thesis and the individual claims that comprise that thesis, then there is a good possibility that your essay will be insightful.
Criteria Option #5: Clarity, Style, and Mechanics

- If any parts of your essay or any sentences seem just a little unclear to you, you can bet that they will be unclear to readers. Take special note of any passages that your peer critics feel are not very clear.

- Given the subject, purpose, and audience for each essay in this course, you should use a formal writing voice. This means that you should avoid use of the first person ("I," "me," "we," etc.) and the use of slang or other informal language. A formal writing voice will make you sound more convincing and more authoritative.

- If you use quotations in a paper, integrating those quotations smoothly, logically, and grammatically into your own sentences is important, so make sure that you are familiar with the information on the Integrating Quotations into Sentences page.

- "Mechanics" refers to the correctness of a paper: complete sentences, correct punctuation, accurate word choice, etc. All of your papers for the course should be free or almost free from errors. Proofread carefully, and consider any constructive comments you receive during peer critiques that relate to the "mechanics" of your writing.

- Remember all grammar we learned last semester, and use those PPT and resources in order to help you identify your growth thus far; also, your teacher provided you with comments on all essays regarding grammar.

Criteria taken from Illinois Valley Community College