

Seminar Rules

The seminars are designed to improve your writing by giving you the double opportunity of giving and receiving helpful advice. So that you may fully benefit from these seminars, you need to be aware of the responsibilities that go along with them.

1. A neatly-typed copy of your paper must be handed to each member of your seminar group the class before the group meets to discuss your paper. It is essential that you provide the copies to your group in advance so that each person will have time to read your paper and make well-informed, written comments.

2. Your paper should be double-spaced, as usual, and each line should be numbered for speedy reference.

3. Once you have received a copy of the paper to be discussed, read it carefully and write down the type of comments that pertain to the area which you have been assigned. (You may, and probably should, make notes in the margin of each paper that pertain to other aspects of the paper also--this will allow you to comment intelligently on the presentations of others.) Your comments should be very specific; for example, if you are discussing organization, you might point out a problem on page 3, line 75, and give a suggestion for improvement, or you might point out a particularly strong point or example on page 2, line 34, and explain what makes it strong.

4. Use these criteria when analyzing the papers:

A. Organization (group leader):

- * Does the author guide you through the paper so that you know where you are going? Could this be improved? How?
- * How about transitions between sentences? Are they choppy or seemingly unrelated?
- * Does the author present his or her proposal clearly?
- * Does he or she present opposing views clearly?
- * Does the conclusion do more than just repeat what's been stated? Is there a significant, heightened plea for support?

B. Evidence:

- * Is there enough evidence to support or back up the author's position?

* Does the author use illustrations well? Do they clearly support or illustrate his or her assertions?

* Do we know where the author got the evidence?

C. Refutation:

* Does the author consider opposing views?

* Has he or she considered all of the opposing views that you can think of?

* Does the author face those objections squarely, not skirting the issues? How?

* Would you accept or consider well-thought-out the author's answers to the objections?

D. Ethos:

* How would you describe the author's voice or tone? Is it appropriate? Any place(s) where the tone is inconsistent or inappropriate?

* Any problems with punctuation, spelling, or grammar?

E. Feasibility of Proposal:

* Could the proposal be realistically accepted and carried out?

* Could the author hand this proposal to someone specific who could take action?

* Do you feel the proposal itself needs to be altered in any way?

The questions in each category need to be answered specifically. Give examples from the papers, citing illustrations of good writing as well as passages which need improvement.

You should have at least a page of comments for each category, written legibly so that the authors of the papers can read them, and be prepared to discuss not only your category but everyone else's, too.

Each presentation should be from 5-7 minutes.

The sooner you begin, the easier it will be. Good luck and, after it's over, have a good turkey. You deserve it.