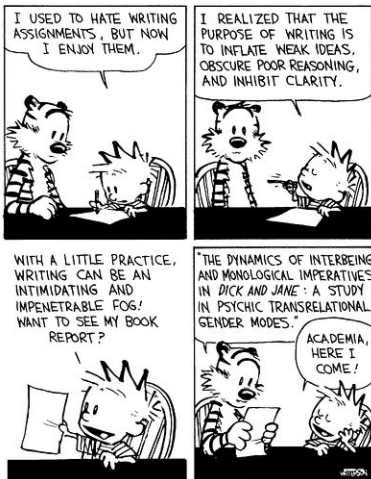


4 Précis Papers

engl 325 B / spring 2013-14 / drew university / chang



The goal for our class is to unpack the terms, territories, and debates jostling under the wide umbrella that is digital humanities or DH. We will read a range of definitions, arguments, analyses, responses, and critiques of DH from academics, practitioners, administrators, teachers, and students. To help us focus our understandings of the conversations and debates, you will write up to 6 short, précis papers, of which the best 4 will be counted toward your grade. These single-spaced, one-page writings serve as critical summaries. Précis papers are close readings of, analyses of, and articulations of the text's main arguments, stakes, and positioning within an academic conversation. These papers will be graded on clarity, focus, coherence, detail, and your ability to concisely formulate arguments.

Goals and Outcomes

Short précis papers are a common genre, a common practice across many different disciplines – writing an abstract, an annotated bibliography entry, a project summary, an academic book review, a business memo – and share similar conventions: **exigence, concision, precision, and evaluation**. In other words, précis papers get to the heart of a text, identify the most important arguments and details, and present them in a clear, accessible way. Since you only have about 600-700 words, you must have a very clear goal in mind, a narrow focus, and use telling details and summary. **Every word and idea must do work**; there is little room for digression or over-generalization. Do not let the brevity fool you. It's very easy to write a short paper full of sound and fury signifying nothing; it's much harder to write a short paper that makes a substantive explication of another's text.

For these short précis papers, you will select **one** reading from the week as your focus. Close read the text (preferably a couple of times). Think about the week's class discussions and what main ideas rose to the surface of the readings and conversation. Then consider the following questions (not as a laundry list to answer, but as a way to brainstorm and focus your précis):

- What is the overall argument or claim? What is the main goal of the whole essay?
- What are the most important subclaims? What are the biggest pieces, sections, or examples of the argument?
- What are the best details or examples that support the claims?
- What kind of text (genre) is it? How is the text organized? Who is the intended audience? Do these matter to the overall arguments?

Successful précis papers will do more than simply list points or describe generally. Analytical or critical summary requires that you distill a longer text into a much shorter one without misrepresenting or misreading the original. Granted, you will not be able to cover everything, but what you summarize, how you arrange the ideas, and why you are summarizing what you have selected is what is important. Keep in mind that these papers are not editorials, personal reflections, or critiques (per se) of the text.

Guidelines and Due Dates

Format: Formal, academic paper
1 page only, typed, no title page, single-spaced, block format or standard paragraphing, proper heading
MLA citation and documentation, bibliography if necessary
preferably as a Word document

Due: at the end of each week by **Saturday by 12 NOON**
e-submit through Moodle: <https://moodle.drew.edu/2/course/view.php?id=1433>