Critical Essay Evaluation Assignment

Evaluation of a critical essay (approx. 5%): Write a 2-3 page summary and analysis of Shirley Garner’s “The Taming of the Shrew: Inside or Outside of the Joke?” It must be in Times New Roman font, size 12, double-spaced, stapled, and include a Works Cited page with a citation of Garner’s article and any other resources you use (no additional resources are required). Please make sure you put your name at the top and use MLA format. To give you some help, here is how you cite Garner’s article (and any article from an anthology) in MLA format:


How To Structure Your Paper

I. Your first paragraph must introduce the writer’s main argument and summarize the approach the author takes to The Taming of the Shrew. Identify the writer’s thesis, and what conversation the writer is either entering (agreeing with) or responding to (disagreeing/complicating). One way to begin is ask: “So what?” What is this article trying to do?

   Summary: Articulate the writer’s thesis or main argument, and discuss his/her key points of evidence (this should take up no more than one paragraph).

II. Your second and third paragraphs should begin to critique the author’s argument. A critique is a detailed analysis and assessment. First, evaluate how effectively (or ineffectively) the author carries out this argument. Then, look at the passages the author is quoting from and how he/she uses these quotations to support the argument. Do you agree with the interpretations the author makes? Do you think other passages from the play might lead to a different conclusion? Is there enough evidence or are you left unconvinced?

   Analysis: Evaluate the strengths and/or weaknesses of the article (this should take up the majority of your paper). Remember to make sure you focus on the article and not the play. Assume your reader has read the play but not the article.

III. In your final paragraph, you want to zoom out somewhat to reflect on the larger picture of your critique. Ask yourself: “What are the assumptions in this article?” Then, ask yourself if you agree with these assumptions or if you think there is something the writer hasn’t considered. What would you offer that the writer left out? What angle is most important to you? Remember, it can’t be all that bad: there must be some value to the article. Even though you just dismantled it in your critique, remind your reader what is to be found in the article that might be useful. A concluding sentence might begin with praise and end with a phrase that sums up your problem with the article. This sentence might look something like this: “Garner offers ______________, but I would have liked to see more consideration of ________________.”
Note: Since your evaluation is only 2-3 pages, I don't expect you to analyze every detail of the article you chose. Perhaps pick one or two things to focus on, like (1) the historical moment in which the article was written, how this effects the tone of the piece, what it's responding to (and whether you think it responds well, is useful and important or if you think it doesn't -- and why); or you might talk about (2) how the author uses evidence in the text and whether you think it's a strong, fully-supported argument or if you can find holes in the assumptions the author makes and other evidence from the play that would have made it a stronger argument; or you might choose to (3) compare it to what other people have argued about the play--where does the article fit into the discourse about the play, and who do you think makes a more compelling argument and why?

Partnering Up for Revision

When you’re finished writing your own evaluation, you’ll be partnered up into pairs to combine your essay with one of your peers’. The two of you will (1) exchange papers and then (2) collaborate to combine the two papers into one, coherent, stronger critique of the article.

Expect that there might be some overlap between your two critiques, or you might find that you disagreed on what the thesis of the article is or what the merits and weaknesses of the article are. That’s okay! That’s the point.

I highly recommend you first read each other’s papers, and then have a conversation about how to improve them both. Decide what you can leave out and what you want to keep moving forward. You might try using a combined Google Document: copy and paste both papers into a shared document and begin combining them and editing them together [What’s a Google Doc? https://support.google.com/docs/answer/49008?hl=en]. Or you might meet outside of class and re-write the final version together while having both drafts in front of you.

Submitting Your Drafts

One copy of your independently written evaluation will be due to me in class on February 22nd to me, and you should also bring one copy with you to exchange with your partner (you could also do this before 2/22 to give yourselves more time to combine them).

One copy of the combined, final version of the critique that both you and your partner have written together will be due to me in class on February 25th. If one or both of you is absent on this day, please coordinate between yourselves to make sure I receive either a hard copy or emailed copy on this day, no later than midnight.