

REVIEW AND READING JOURNAL

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COURSES:

DEVELOPMENT AND LIVELIHOODS (GEOG 310)

GEOGRAPHIES OF DEVELOPING ASIA (GEOG 409)

URBAN FIELD STUDIES (GEOG 494)

SUMMARY

In journal entries for a selection of classes, students review class materials and assigned readings, and critique and reflect on their takeaways.

GOALS

- Make class material and assigned readings more meaningful by having students engage critically with them both
- Have students make careful connections between class readings and concepts raised in class, and reflect upon them

“Seeing students ‘get’ the core points from a class and make relevant and careful links to readings is really rewarding!”

- Sarah Turner

STEPS

- ① Students receive [instructions](#) for how to write their journal entries, along with primers to get them started.
- ② Each entry has three parts:
 - a. a review and critique/reflection of the class topic to explore key elements and concepts
 - b. a review and critique/reflection of the related assigned readings
 - c. a description of key themes, highlighting the connections between class material and readings
- ③ Students submit maximum 600-word reflections via myCourses for 75% of the classes for which there are lectures (rather than classes with student presentations). Students can edit these journal entries throughout the term until the final due date at the end of the term.

ASSESSMENT

- Depending on the course, the assignment is worth 25-30% of the final grade.
- The journal is assessed according to five criteria that are shared with students at the beginning of the term:
Ability to:
 1. identify key ideas from both class content and readings
 2. demonstrate evidence of critical reading
 3. make thoughtful connections between readings and class content
 4. substantiate critiques (both positive or negative) with clear arguments and rationales
 5. write clearly and succinctly
- Students can ask for informal feedback a few weeks before the final submission date.

READY TO TRY IT OUT?

HERE'S SOME ADVICE ...

- Give clear instructions as to what you want students to include and how they should structure the entries.
- Encourage succinct writing and explain to students how they can “cut out the fluff.”
- Recommend to students that they ask you or a TA to review one journal entry during office hours well before the deadline—it’s a great way to meet students from large classes in person, and it helps keep them motivated.
- Require journal entries for only 75% of the lecture classes to allow students a “time out” for classes when they might be ill or have other pressing deadlines.

BENEFITS

- Students appreciate having the opportunity to reflect critically on class materials and readings, and being given flexible time in which to do so.
- Students value getting feedback along the way without waiting for a high-stakes test or paper.
- Grading the entries can be rewarding—and even fun!—because students make interesting connections, and it’s encouraging to see the level of engagement that they’ve had throughout the course.

CHALLENGES

Depending on class size, the number of journal entries can be a lot to read and assess. If possible, TAs can help. Alternatively, you can reduce the length of the entries or assign fewer entries.

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