**ENG 101.008 “This *Disabled* American Life”**

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**September 20, 2013**

**Peer Review Workshop Guidelines:**

We always write for an audience. But imagining how that audience will respond to our writing and how we might better craft our writing so that they will respond as we have intended is often incredibly difficult to do. One way to make such a process a bit easier is to stop imagining a reader and start asking for feedback from actual readers. Thus, I would like you all to help each other improve your glossary entry drafts by serving as actual readers for each other and providing insightful and respectful feedback, both written and verbal.

In addition to your in-class discussion, **by Saturday at 2pm** please email the people whose drafts you read (and **CC me on these emails**) what you saw as the three greatest strengths and three greatest weaknesses in their paper. And remember to be both specific and constructive in your commentary on these strengths and weaknesses (though each listed strength/weakness need not be more than a few sentences).

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In the course of providing feedback to your peers, it is absolutely crucial that you focus on *both* the strengths and weaknesses of the piece of writing at hand. Moreover, try to put yourself in the shoes of the person you are critiquing and think carefully about how you might provide feedback in the most useful *and* respectful way possible. So, what does that mean?

1. **Be critical.** Peer review doesn’t work if we aren’t willing to be honest with each other. Part of that means sharing our actual opinions and pushing our fellow writers to be better. Don’t let your peers settle. Even if a paper seems perfect (which I doubt one will as these are early drafts), think to yourself how it might be even better.
2. **Be concrete.** When mentioning something point to a specific part of the paper, don’t just talk abstractly.
3. **Be constructive.** Rather than merely pointing out problems, suggest possible solutions and again do so in a specific and concrete manner.
4. **Be supportive.** Don’t just point out the weaknesses of someone’s paper. While it is important to be frank in order to help each other grow as writers, it is also important to support your peers and point out the strengths of their work. Sometimes it is the case that we don’t even recognize the strongest parts of our own writing and thinking until someone else points them out to us.
5. **Be generous.** As these individual entries will ultimately result in a collaboratively produced glossary, it is in all of your interests to help make everyone’s entry be as good as it can possibly be. So, share your ideas and unique perspectives with each other. You might even think about linking to/citing each other’s work in your final glossary entry.
6. **Remember that it is *their* work.** No matter how many good ideas you might have to share with them, or suggestions for how they might improve their entry, always remember that at the end of the day it is *their* paper and thus is up to them to decide what feedback to incorporate and what they think of your comments. It is not unexpected to get different comments from different readers, and even comments that contradict each other, so as a both a writer and peer you must remember that in the end it is the writer’s decision as to what feedback to use and how to use it.

**To help you get started, below I have listed a series of important questions that I think are useful to ask yourself as you are reading someone else’s (or in the future, your own) paper:**

Does the introduction catch your attention and make you want to keep reading? Is it creative and original to the paper, or just a vague cookie-cooker intro that could have been used in a variety of papers?

Does the paper have a clearly articulated and well-focused thesis? Does it make you think and want to read on to see what the writer does to support it?

Does the structure of the paper make sense? Does each paragraph serve a purpose (and support the thesis) and are there adequate transitions between them so that you are not disoriented or confused about how they relate to each other as you read on from one paragraph to the next? Does the paper proceed in the order that you think is most effective? Or might you suggest an alternative structure that might work better?

What are the most interesting and original ideas in the paper? Are they the central to the paper or merely mentioned then left behind? What ideas do you think the writer might develop more fully?

Moreover, does each and every important idea/piece of evidence introduced in the paper receive sufficient consideration and explanation? Or are you left constantly wanting to hear more about the author’s points?