

Guidelines for Response Papers

The aim of a response paper is

- to check if you have read the text(s)
- to assess and train your ability to understand sociological texts in English
- to assess and train your ability to write small sociological texts in English
- to assess and train your ability to apply theoretical concepts to social phenomena

Requirements:

- A response paper is a structured and continuous text (not only bullets!)
- Each response paper should have a 2-3 pages (between 4000 and 6000 characters)
- Six response papers (graded at least "E") are necessary to pass the course, three of them have to be submitted before the reading week
- Each response paper has to deal with all the required readings for one week (you can focus on one of the texts, but you have to write at least one paragraph about the other, what they are about and how they relate to the text you discuss in detail)
- Each response paper has to be submitted online before the session, where we discuss the texts (otherwise the paper cannot be graded!)
- Check orthography and grammar, before you submit the response paper (otherwise the paper might be rejected!)
- Illustrate the main points of the texts with empirical examples of your own
- Make sure that you deal with the sociologically relevant issues of the text

Recommendations:

- You should always make notes while you read the texts for the class – it not only gives you "raw material" for the response paper, but helps to make texts "stick" too
- Start to turn your notes into a paper, after you have read the whole texts – otherwise you don't know what is important and what not
- A good response paper is partially a summary of the text: you should – at least briefly – sketch the central problem and the structure of the argument of the text
- Summarize the text in your own words (don't quote too much!)
- A good response paper is not only a summary of the text: you can focus on specific details and leave others out; think of examples to illustrate the phenomena under discussion, feel free to discuss and evaluate the text
- A response paper gives you certain degrees of freedom: use it and make sure that you use it wisely (don't write a lot about the stuff you are not sure, if you understood it properly, but focus on the stuff you understood and can use)
- Make sure that you write the name(s) of the author(s) correctly and that the quotes you use are correct (otherwise it makes a really bad impression)
- You will get feedback and a grade on your response paper the following week or so (the first ones longer, the last ones very brief); please keep my criticism in mind for the next response paper you write