

# Final Paper 2.5: Close Reading Of

gis 140 / sec. D / early fall quarter 2006-07 / chang



Close reading is a necessary skill that will be very useful to you no matter your discipline or your eventual profession. Your classes, your work, your government, and even your pastimes will require you to read or evaluate something difficult, to find hand- and footholds in the material, and make sense of it. Basically, “close reading” simply means analyzing a text – be it a photograph, a short story, a poem, a scholarly essay, an operation manual, a tax form, a television commercial – very carefully, crystallizing main ideas, and then drawing conclusions or making decisions based on your analysis. In this class, close reading and the skill to read for the sake of writing will be employed primarily for written texts. The following are key ways to help you close read:

- 1) Read a difficult passage several times. Read out loud, slowly, deliberately. Difficult parts will be easier the second or third time through.
- 2) Annotate the text. This is sometimes called “active reading.” Annotating involves underlining important words, writing notes or questions in the margins, highlighting, bracketing important passages, taking reading notes, and so on.
- 3) Look up difficult terms or concepts or names and keep a running list. Also try to discover the meaning of key words and concepts from the reading. Some terms have specialized definitions that you will learn only from context. Two good places to look online are: <[www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)> and <[www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)>.
- 4) Consider the historical and cultural context of the text. For whom was it written? By whom? Why? Has it been well received?
- 5) Decide how a difficult passage fits into the larger text. What theme(s) does the passage develop?
- 6) Remember the big picture. Why is the text or passage or statement important? What are its overall claims?
- 7) Finally, as mentioned above, actively take specific notes on the reading. Write down key ideas, pages to return to, terms, and quotes that may be helpful in your own understanding and argument.

## Goals and Outcomes

For this sequence’s final paper, look over the readings we have done in class (e.g. Douglass, Alexie, Tan, Hughes, Rosenwasser and Stephen, Stygall, Collins and Blot, the GIS course policies). Select a passage (a couple of paragraphs at least) to close read, to think about, to write about. Select a passage that is interesting both as “words on the page” and as “primary evidence to produce ideas” (Rosenwasser & Stephen 53). You need only focus on a handful of paragraphs, but you should keep your passages in context with the whole of the piece in mind.

Consider the questions raised by In-Class Response Paper 2.1: Reading and Paper 2.2: A Passage, A Method. Draw on the week’s workshops, revision exercises, discussions, and readings as well. Develop a fuller, well-organized, formal close reading of your text, your selected passages. In other words, write a 3- to 4-page distillation of the passage’s main idea, rhetorical strategies, and language. Your paper should **not** be a simple summary. **Read carefully, read conscientiously, and read closely.** Nor should your paper be a simple laundry list of “the method” of close reading. Your claim in this assignment then is what you believe to be the text’s most important idea or ideas and the evidence from the text that supports your claim.

As with your first major paper, your close reading should identify an argument, fully develop ideas, support those ideas with details and direct quotes from the text, and correctly use MLA in-text citation and bibliographic format. Your paper should demonstrate a clear outline and organization, clear and engaging prose, detailed analysis, well-developed paragraphs, and an attention to your audience.

## Guidelines and Due Dates

**Audience:** At base, you are writing for an audience that includes a general academic community, which includes your instructor, your classmates, and the authors of the essays we have read. You should imagine a larger, more inclusive audience. Keep in mind that your audience is varied in many ways, including academic experience and familiarity with the texts, so you'll need to consider of what information each type of reader will need to make sense of your essay. Another good way to think about your audience is to imagine the publication in which your essay could appear such as the *UW Daily*, the *e.g.* website, or a scholarly journal. Unlike your first major paper, the audience for this paper will be more formal, more academic.

**Format:** This assignment is a formal, academic paper and should follow the manuscript guidelines outlined in the course policies:

formal title page, appropriate title for your paper  
3-4 pages, typed, double-spaced, with MLA citations (if needed), stapled  
1 paragraph more specifically describing your audience  
bibliography, correct MLA format (if needed)

**Include:** In-Class Response Paper 2.1  
Revision 2.1.1  
In-Class Response Paper 2.2  
Revision 2.2.2  
Literacy Narrative Draft 2.2.3

**Due:** Tuesday, September 5