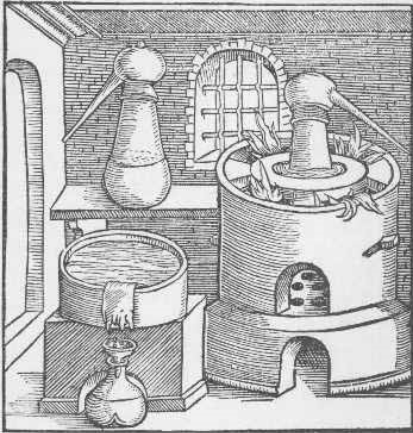


# 5 Précis Papers

wgs 201 / spring 2017 / university of oregon / chang



The central intellectual, theoretical, and academic activity of this class is reading and writing analytically, rhetorically, critically. You will **write up to 10** short, critical précis papers, of which **the best 5 will be counted toward your grade**. These short, single-spaced, one-page writings serve as close readings of, analytical summaries of, and articulations of the main arguments and ideas of one of the week's theoretical texts. These responses are not personal reactions or applications of theory and will be graded on clarity, focus, coherence, and your ability to formulate concise detail.

Summary is a skill important to reading, writing, and academic inquiry. On the one hand, summarizing is about distilling or condensing a text, outlining a text's main ideas, putting into your own words an overview of the most important parts of a text. On the other hand, summarizing is about digesting the text, understanding what you need from it so that you can make decisions about the text. What is important about the text? What are its main arguments? Does it connect to your writing, your research? Does it speak to other texts or contexts? In other words, the skill and art of summary is often the first step in reading, writing, and inquiry since you need to "get" the text before you can ask questions of it or enter into conversation with it. Summary is important when you want to quick gloss, an academic sound bite that provides your writing and your reader with the gist of a useful text. Though a summary is not an "active" argument, it is still a kind of persuasion; the decisions you make—what you choose to include or exclude—reveal what you think is key and important.

## Goals and Outcomes

For these short response papers, you will select **one** primary reading, one chapter or essay from the week as your focus. Close read the texts (preferably a couple of times). Then generate what you think the most significant ideas, definitions, concerns or arguments are for your text. Your précis should be specific, detailed, focused on what you decide are the most salient points, and it must express the overall invention of the text. Because the summary is supposed to be short and precise, get to the heart of the matter, make decisions about what is vital to include in your paper, and avoid unnecessary generalizations irrelevant to the text. **Every word and idea must do work**; there is little room for digression or over-generalization. Do not let the brevity fool you. It's very easy to write a short paper full of sound and fury signifying nothing; it's much harder to write a short paper that makes substantive summary and precise connections. Your précis should include and address the following:

- 1) A brief introduction to the text, the author, and its main invention or argument
- 2) One to three significant points, arguments, terms, or ideas; avoid digression
- 3) Support your summary with very brief quotes or examples directly from the text

An outstanding précis does more than describe what the text is about or what the author is saying. You are doing more than just retelling the "story" of the reading. An outstanding summary is selective, precise, and connects the details to the text's bigger picture. Finally, an outstanding summary has a goal in mind and reveals the analytical choices you made.

## Guidelines and Due Dates

**Format:** formal, academic paper, précis paper formatting  
**1 page only**, typed, no title page, **single-spaced**, standard paragraphing, proper heading, neatly printed  
MLA citation and documentation, bibliography (for outside sources) if necessary  
see the course policies for response paper formatting guidelines

**Due:** at the end of each week by **Saturday by 5 PM**  
e-submit through Canvas: <https://canvas.uoregon.edu/courses/85264/assignments>