

CIS 640: Writing in Computer Research

Fall 2012

Assignment #1

How to write about a reading

DUE: October 1, 2012 5pm. Send PDF version to Prof. Douglas.

The first paper you write will be very short—only two pages maximum. It should be single-spaced and with 1” margins. At the top, please state the name of the paper you are reviewing, your name and the date. The paper must follow professional standards for format and citation. It must have excellent spelling and grammar.

I am most concerned about your understanding and analysis of the reading, rather than repeating its content back to me. For that reason, only 25% of the total paper should describe the content. The remaining 75% should be your analysis.

In order to help you with these papers, I suggest that you organize your writing around the following topics and questions. Note that a passing paper requires writing an essay based on these topics, not just stating the question and answering it!

State what the reading is about (25%)

1. What is the main point, the problem statement, or the hypothesis of the author?
2. What are the secondary issues?
3. Why is the problem important?
4. Describe the method or technique the author used to solve the problem or confirm the hypothesis?
5. Describe the results obtained. Note these might consist of a combination of logical argument, experimental even statistical inference, or perhaps simply the invention of a new algorithm or technique.
6. What is the author's evaluation of his or her own success?
7. What future work does the author intend to do?

Critical thinking (75%)

1. Are the author's ideas important? Explain how the author's research topic fits into research by other people in the same field.
2. How is it related to other areas of this field and computer science in general?
3. Did you think the author's methods were sound? Explain.
4. Were you convinced by the author's results? Explain.
5. Do you understand well enough what has been written to be able to a) find more examples of this problem and its solution (do so!); 2) extend his or her analysis or repeat the experiment; 3) convince others.
6. What did you like best about the reading?
7. What did you like least?

List of references of supplementary reading--no more than 4.