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HOW TO REVIEW JOURNAL ARTICLES:

Guidelines to Assist Students in a Critical Analysis of Periodical Articles

A. Introduction

What exactly is a journal, a periodical or a magazine? It is a compilation of articles published "periodically". Periodicals can be popular, such as "Time", "Alberta Report", "Rolling Stone", etc., or they can be scholarly, such as "Canadian Journal of Sociology", "American Literature", "The Quarterly Review of Biology" or "Journal of Pediatric Nursing". For a more detailed distinction of these types of periodicals please see: [Distinguishing Scholarly Journals from Other Periodicals](#). The main purpose of scholarly publications is the exchange of new ideas and of research findings in such fields as Nursing, Philosophy, Literature, Sociology, Psychology and others. Scholarly Periodicals are also academic resources for other researchers to keep abreast of the latest findings, and they are a platform for discussions and reviews of other published works on the same topic. In other words, they should be seen as a form of "dialogue", a scholarly interaction, a response to ideas and an invitation to address a critical issue.

B. Selecting an article and its initial appraisal

Always consult your course instructor first concerning the preferences on the preparation of a critical review of a journal article. If no instructions have been given, you may want to first see some periodicals in this library. The Library Catalogue ([OPAC](#)) will give you an overview on which

periodicals are available in your field of study, and in what format they can be found. If you need help in finding periodicals please also see the [Research Databases](#) or ask at the circulation desk. Select at least three articles for initial appraisal and **scan** the **table of contents**. Scanning through **introductions**, **topic sentences** and **conclusions** in articles about the Humanities, and scanning through **abstracts** in articles about the Sciences will help you decide which article to choose. If a particular journal has already been assigned to you for review, then select a few articles, scan them or read them briefly and decide which appeals most to you to write about. If you are only requested to write an annotation or an abstract, please see [Annotations and Abstracts](#).

C. Author of the Article

Identify the author and the work under examination. Often you need to provide a full bibliographic citation, but, not all disciplines require this step; therefore, consult with your instructor. If known, state the author's qualifications and authority in his/her field of research.

D. Summary

Write a brief and concise summary of the article's content, in which you clarify the author's purpose. This summary can be worked into the main body of your essay after the introduction.

E. Analysis of the article

When you do a critical evaluation of a periodical article keep a number of questions in mind as you analyze the work in a close reading. Here is a list of things to ask yourself when you evaluate the author's argument:

- Does the title reflect its content?
- Is it an original contribution in its field?
- If this is a scholarly paper, how and why is it valuable?
- Is it accessible, or is it an exercise of esoteric verbosity?
- Is the article thought provoking?
- What overall valuable "insights" does the article provide?
- Does it have any flaws? Any omissions?
- Overall is the paper a valuable and interesting contribution?
- If the findings are important to this field of study, how are they important?
- What other sources are there to back this up?

F. Preparation of the critical analysis

As an undergraduate student evaluating secondary resources keep the author's purpose in mind as you take notes while reading, then just follow the usual guidelines for a research paper preparation. Select a topic that's interesting to you, and be well informed about it. Ask additional questions and take notes as you go along. Prepare an outline as a guidance and remember

to include the brief summary into your text. Argue your points well, and **always** substantiate your findings with examples from the text under scrutiny, and, if necessary, with additional sources from other works and authors. Use the proper documentation according to style, either, **MLA** or **APA** , available as a handout in the library, and as a reference book. Remember that the title of your paper too must reflect its content. In your conclusion restate all your findings about the article, as well as its usefulness and, if possible, suggest further avenues of discussion on the topic.

G. Additional resources

- [How to critically analyze information sources, from UCLA Library](#)
- [Critical reviews of journal articles, from University of Alberta](#)
- [Critical reviews of journal articles for history students at Keyano College](#)



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