Summary and Response Assignment Sheet

Throughout your academic career and even in your everyday life, you will often be asked to respond to arguments you see in a textbooks, in a professional articles, in political debates, and even in advertisements or on TV programs. What we believe, how we vote, and even how we spend our money all are, in one way or another, a response to the ideas and arguments we encounter on a daily basis. Thus, it’s important not only to develop the ability to think, read, and listen critically so that you can fully understand the messages of textbooks, news sources, politicians, and advertisements, but also to learn to explain and defend your own opinions and beliefs in response to those messages. In this course, we will help you work on your critical thinking and analysis skills so that you can adequately comprehend and appropriately respond to written and visual arguments alike, ultimately giving you the tools you need to enter broader academic and social conversation both inside and outside your classes.

The Summary and Response Essay will ask you to enter into a larger academic conversation by developing an essay in response to one of the following essays: either “The Smurfette Principle” by Katha Pollitt or “Television as Teacher” by Neil Postman. Your job will be to take a stance in response to Pollitt’s or Postman’s argument and defend your position with reasons and evidence.

Assignment Guidelines

Title: The title should be creative and representative not just of the basic topic of the paper, but also of the major point being made in the paper.

Introduction: The introduction should include an attention grabber and introduce the topic of the essay being analyzed, placing it within the larger societal context. Please choose one of the methods of introduction in Inquiry Chapter 9 as a model for the introduction.

Summary Paragraph: This paragraph should provide a brief overview of the professional essay’s major claims and organization without trying to cover every detail of the essay’s argument. By providing us an overview of the main points, tone, and basic methods of the essay, you should be able to give us a “feel” for the content of the essay. Your summary should be a well-developed paragraph which is no more than half a page long and should include the following:

1. A statement of the author’s full name and the essay’s full title as well as a very general statement of the essay’s major argument in the first sentence.
2. An overview of the major claims and tone used to support the essay’s argument.
3. A transitional bridge into and statement of your essay’s thesis.

Thesis Statement: The thesis statement should present an arguable claim in response to the professional essay. Be sure your thesis statement responds to the professional essay’s argument and doesn’t merely restate the professional essay’s claim or make a disconnected claim about the subject of the professional essay. The thesis should be located at the end of your summary paragraph.

Response Section: Because it is the main focus of your essay, the response section should include at least 3 fully developed body paragraphs, each with a clear topic sentence and each clearly focused on a
separate reason which supports, explains, or proves your thesis. Each paragraph should engage and respond to a particular claim or element of the professional essay.

**Conclusion:** The conclusion should reiterate the main point of your essay by restating the thesis in different words and tying together the claims made throughout your essay in final support of your judgment. Please use one of the examples from Chapter 9 of *Inquiry* as a model for your conclusion.

**(Important Note:** The goal of this essay is to respond to the professional essay, not to merely restate or explain what the professional essay says. Remember that the summary paragraph is just a small portion of your essay. The main focus should be response.)

**Essays for Response:** You can choose to write your essay in response to either of the following professional essays:

- Option 1: Pollitt’s “The Smurfette Principle” OR
- Option 2: Postman’s “Television as Teacher”

**Outside Sources:** No outside research is allowed. Do not read or bring in outside ideas or statistics. The response to the professional essay should be entirely based on your own experiences, observations, opinions, and knowledge.

**Source Integration and Documentation:** Your essay must incorporate at least two quotations from the essay you’re responding to and should include an in-text citation each time you paraphrase, summarize, or quote from the professional essay. You should also include a works cited entry for the professional essay to which you’re responding.

**Style:** Avoid using the first person (I, we, us, my, our) and the second person (you, your) unless you incorporate first person to provide a brief personal example.

**Format:** Standard MLA formatting; double spaced; 12 point, Times New Roman font; one-inch margins; Works Cited page

**Length:** 3-5 pages, double spaced (not including Works Cited)