

Critical Reflection ECO407

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Overview

- **2 Critical Reflections**

- Critical discussions of short assigned articles
- 900 words
- Due January 31st

- **1 Term paper**

- Paper on a specific topic assigned by Professor Indart
- About 4,000 words in length
- Due March 21st

5 Steps to Writing a Good Essay

- 1 Carve out time to work on the assignment
- 2 Read & understand
- 3 Form your argument
- 4 Write
- 5 Revise

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- Write a first draft, sleep on it and then edit your work with a clear head

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- Identify the author's thesis & supporting arguments
- If you don't understand something, consult your textbook or the internet or attend Prof. Indart's office hour

- To deepen your understanding, read *around* the assigned article
 - Look up references used in the article
 - Search for similar articles on www.project-syndicate.org or other sites (see next slide)
 - Search author's name online (type "author name" in Google Scholar) and find other articles he/she has written or that refer to the article in question (<https://scholar.google.ca/>)

- **What do you think about what you just read?**
 - Where do you agree with the author & why?
 - Where are you skeptical of the author's arguments & why?

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- Try to connect what you are reading with what you have learned in this course and previous courses
 - Is the rationale convincing? What assumptions is the author making and are they justified?
 - What are the economic models being used?
 - Does the author provide solid empirical evidence for her claims?

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Critical Reflection

- Write down your **thesis statement**:
 - This is a one (max two) sentence summary of your main argument which you will state in your introduction (generally towards the end)
 - e.g. *“While I agree with the author that ..., I am less convinced by her claim that ... and will argue that”*

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- Write down your main supporting arguments
 - For 900 words, formulate at least 2 supporting arguments
 - Write a one sentence summary of each of your arguments (which you may include in the actual essay as e.g. paragraph openers)

BEFORE YOU START WRITING:

- **Outline, outline, outline!**

- It will help you immensely to organize your own thoughts
- In your outline, list any sources you want to use to support each argument (not required for Critical Reflection)
- Once you have your outline and your thesis statement, it's easy to write an introduction!

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- Decide what audience you are writing for

- For the critical reflection and term paper, the audience is the “General reading population: who has some understanding of basic economic concepts, but not detailed knowledge”

- Your critical reflection must include:
 - **Introduction**
 - **Body**
 - **Conclusion**

Writing your Introduction:

- Provide context for your essay in one sentence
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- Again, keep it short and concise
 - No more than one paragraph for the Critical Reflection

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- Both should include the **thesis statement** and an overview of the main arguments
- However, your summary of arguments can be more nuanced in the conclusion than in the introduction as the reader by now has the necessary background knowledge
 - Conclusion should summarize what you have shown and **how** you have shown it

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- Things to look out for while editing:
 - Run-on sentences and long paragraphs
 - Break them up, paragraphs should be no longer than half a page (with 1.5 spacing)
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 - Repetition
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- **Run spell check!**
- Use the UofT Writing Centre to help you edit your work

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/>

- **PLAGIARISM:** Representing someone else's ideas, writing or other intellectual property as your own

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 - In all three cases, you **must** cite your source within the main text AND list the full source in your bibliography
 - example in-text citation using APA format: (Krugman, 2012) or (Krugman, 2012, pp. 345-346)

- Choose a citation style, e.g. APA or MLA and stick to it
 - See “Standard Documentation Formats” under “Critical Reflections” on course website
 - For APA (preferred citation style in economics), see <https://www.library.cornell.edu/research/citation/apa>

- How to format your assignment
 - Your assignment should be typed, double spaced and have a font size of at least 12 points
 - Put the word count of your assignment in parentheses at the end. For example, “(850 words)”
 - The title page should have your full name, student id number and the class information
 - The assignment should be either a Word or pdf document

- Make sure you visit the course website under “Critical Reflection” and read:
 - “General Writing Instructions”
 - “Grading Rubric”
- Jessie Lamontagne wrote a one-page step-by-step guide to completing your written assignment which is basically a condensed version of this presentation and accessible via the course website
 - <http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/gindart/stepbystepwritingassignment.pdf>
- I recommend you consult it frequently while completing your critical reflection and term paper

Tutorial Assignment

- Read the article "Why Africa Should Go Cashless"
- In groups of two or three, discuss/answer the following (5 minutes):
 - (1) Which paragraph(s) form(s) the introduction?
 - (2) Which paragraph(s) form(s) the conclusion?
 - (3) Summarize three arguments that are given in favor of the thesis.
 - (4) Provide two arguments that weaken the thesis.
- I will ask one group to present their findings.

Structure of a possible critical reflection on “Why Africa Should Go Cashless”

- Introduction (200 words)
 - Grab reader’s attention (e.g. anecdote about the Indian cashless experience) (50 words)
 - Thesis statement: Although I do support the author’s goal of a cashless African continent, I am skeptical about the feasibility and unintended consequences of such a rapid transformation. (50 words)
 - Accurate and concise representation of authors’ main arguments. (100 words)

Structure of a possible critical reflection on “Why Africa Should Go Cashless”

- Analysis (Body) (600 words)
 - Argument 1: The author neglects poor political institutions in Africa. Such a rapid and orderly transformation is not feasible without an extremely well organized and efficient government apparatus. (One could give some examples) (300 words)
 - Argument 2: Even when a cashless society is feasible, the unintended consequences could be disastrous. (Can you think of some?) (300 words)

Structure of a possible critical reflection on “Why Africa Should Go Cashless”

- Conclusion (100 words)
 - Summarizes the analysis briefly and accurately.

Good luck – Professor Indart and I look forward to reading your well-organized and thought-provoking essays!