

Midterm: Close Reading Exercise

The midterm exercise is a short analysis (about 5-7 pages) of some theoretical issue that we have studied at this point. For this exercise, I ask that you to draw from the readings, aided by class discussion and your RADR posts, to develop a more concrete and refined reflection on some of the main points from our class so far.

Drawing from two of the readings, I want you to engage in a close reading of the texts for comparison and contrast. The aim is to analyze (unpack, break down, separate into component parts) and explicate (develop, explain an idea, and show its implications) each author's argument, analysis, and conclusion. You should develop a main point that you distill from an in-depth and inductive examination. This will be your argument. It should be narrow and closely related to evidence that you cite from the readings.

Often when doing this kind of work – close reading of a text – you first lay out your analysis and only then do you realize your “main point” – almost after the exercise is concluded. This is why it can be seen as a distillation or inductive reasoning. This conclusion often becomes the opening argument or thesis statement of the paper.

Hint: Do not wait until the night before to do this exercise. This is an inductive exercise that needs time to develop (some would say “marinate” in your mind and to unfurl or unravel on paper, often through several drafts.

Finally, this paper could build from some of your RADRs; it may also become a component of your final paper, something on which you will build.

Paper topics:

Hospitality: Several of our authors have considered the role of values, particularly the notion of hospitality, as a guiding principle of care for forced migrants. How have two of our authors analyzed and evaluated this idea? What does hospitality mean? From where has it emerged? Is it even a useful concept in this context? Why do some of our authors find the concept fraught when applied to the global refugee crisis?

The (Refugee) Camp: Take two articles that we have read and explore how the authors employ ‘the camp’ as an analytical device to think about refugees and our world. What does the camp, as a form-of-life, tell us about refugees, global forced migration, and the world we live in?

The Nation-State and the Sovereignty Principle: One of our main emphases up until now has been to understand the ways nation-state frontiers are formed and the international principle of the inviolability of sovereignty. Meditate on this principle, its relationship to the nation-state, and its implications for individuals – citizens, refugees, or otherwise, drawing from two of the readings.

Globalization: While the nation-state and the sovereignty principle are crucial components of the way we organize our world, recent work has highlighted shifts in this organizational framework due to various expressions and consequences of globalization. Examine how two of our authors have framed this issue and its effects on refugees.

Humanitarianism and Human Rights: Several of our scholars have brought of the concepts of humanitarianism, a term often related to periods of conflict, and human rights, referencing a crucial baseline of principles, together. Both concepts emerge through a common understanding of our shared humanity, but they have very different meanings. Consider how two authors meditate on these terms.

Humanity and Life: Given the persistent and often protracted, not to mention desperate and miserable, conditions that many millions of forced migrants throughout the world face today, numerous scholars have begun to draw lessons about the meaning that we, as part of the international community, place on their humanity and lives. Take two of these scholars and consider how they attempt to make sense of the conditions of life of some of our world's most vulnerable people, and what this means for our common humanity.

Violence: Violence has become a crucial point of interrogation and reflection for scholars thinking about issues related to refugees. Using two of the essays we've read, consider these authors' meditations on violence. Violence can come in many forms: structural violence of the state, violence of the law, as well as physical violence.

Role of Law: Some of the authors we have thus far read have been critiquing refugee law in its many forms and on various scales – international and domestic. Take two authors who have written about law and its effects on refugees and compare and contrast.

Privilege and Perspective: Take two essays from the readings we've done so far, and discuss the relationship between perspective and authorial privilege. What does the author want us to understand about perspective and how is this view new and different from other views?

Author's Choice: Perhaps you have already been thinking about some issue that two of our authors have raised, one which isn't included here. Feel free to pursue this, but speak with me about it first.

Due Date: Papers are due on or before **Friday, November 6, 2020, by 11:59 p.m. on Canvas**. I will strive to return this exercise to you in two weeks so that you may get started on your final papers.