

Anth 201: Video Prompt Assignment

See also: [Anth 201 Syllabus](#) | [Video Prompts](#)
[Community Action Project](#) | [Student Comments](#)

Sections: [Format](#) | [Description](#) | [Grading](#) | [Tips](#)

Format of Response Papers

Video responses should follow the following guidelines:

-1 inch margins on top, bottom, and both sides

-standard 12 pt. font (no script fonts!)

-In the upper LEFT corner type the following information in a single spaced block:

Your Name

Anth. 201

Video title/Date

Your discussion leader's name

-double space the paper except for the name block

-use standard formatting conventions such as indentation, grammatical construction, and punctuation. I will be very annoyed if you don't use spel cheque.

-multiple pages must be STAPLED together.

-if you have more than one page, number the pages on the bottom, centered

-do NOT add a cover sheet -- save a tree!

-double-sided printing is fine.

Description of Video Response Papers

During this course we will view nine videos with ethnographic content. Some were produced by anthropologists specifically to demonstrate ethnographic information; others were selected for their contribution to understanding the course material. All have rich content to further understanding of the concepts introduced in the Miller text. You will write short, thoughtful response papers on seven of the nine videos. It is up to you which two assignments to skip. Because you have the option of which response papers to write, no late papers will be accepted.

For each video I will provide "prompts" for thinking and writing. You are not to answer these as a series of questions. They are designed to kick-start your thought processes. You may wish to respond directly to ONE of the prompting questions but you are also free to create your own topic for discussion. In fact, you are encouraged to do so.

Remember that there is a difference between an opinion and an argument. We are all entitled to our own opinions but we are not entitled to our own facts. In these response papers I want you to base your arguments on the evidence in the video. While emotional response and "gut reactions" are a useful point of starting your own thinking about these videos, the paper itself should be grounded in the facts and logical argument.

These papers are not film reviews. They are selected for their teaching and learning value and not their cinematic or entertainment value. Such comments as "the video dragged a little in the middle" are inappropriate for this assignment.

After the First Contact papers are graded (the first assignment) I will post examples of very good papers as models (with the authors' permission).

There are several reasons for this assignment:

1. to approach learning from another angle besides reading texts
2. to encourage careful reflection about the content of the videos
3. to give students the opportunity to sharpen their critical viewing and writing skills by applying the terms and concepts in the Miller text to the videos
4. to provide an opportunity for evaluation that is not test-based
5. to give students (especially freshmen) helpful feedback/evaluation of their writing

These are very short papers (1-2 pages). They should not be burdensome to write -- hopefully each video is full of tasty topics for you to reflect upon. This is your chance to show me that you are learning the concepts and terminology of anthropology. Enjoy it!!

How Video Response Papers are Graded

The following points are used to assign a grade to the video response papers:

1. Follows production guidelines.

Papers which are single spaced will not be graded because there is no room for commentary. The name block must be on the LEFT side (saves time in sorting and posting). Your discussion leader's name must be the last entry on the name block (again for sorting).

2. Develops a claim, a thesis or an argument.
Put your thesis statements in italics for easy identification.

3. Contains a brief introduction, a thesis or argument, a supportive body, and a conclusion.
Note: do not summarize the entire video in the introduction. You can assume the audience for this paper (Andy and I) have seen the video. Your introduction should introduce the topic you will discuss rather than rehash the video.

4. Uses specific evidence from the video to support the claim, thesis or argument in the body of the paper.
Note: Statements such as "that's just ridiculous" are summary judgements -- not arguments supported by facts. Avoid such statements. Statements such as "I found this so interesting" also do not give the reader information about analysis.

5. Incorporates terms or concepts from the Miller text in the paper.

6. Carefully edited for spelling, grammar, syntax, and tone. By "tone" I mean that it is written in a formal, academic way.

The final points are based on both writing and content.

- 10- Outstanding in both writing and content (rare)
- 9- Outstanding in either writing or content and very well done in the other category
- 8- Above average in writing and content
- 7- Meets requirements
- 6- Does not meet requirements
- Below 6 - seriously deficient

DO NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE if you experience difficulties writing these papers. See the TA or me early in the quarter. Bring a rough draft or your graded paper for suggestions. Go to the Writing Center. Have a peer do a critical reading.

Take charge of your education!

Tips from years of reading these essays, in no particular order:

1. There is no need to excessively contrast practices of other cultures with how "we" do it. The TA and I know what the common American practices are. The class will have a discussion of how problematic the notion of "we" is.
2. Carefully consider whether you write in first (I or we), second (you), or third person (he, she, they). Second person is very, very rarely appropriate for academic writing and I urge you to avoid it. First person is appropriate if you are giving a personal example or taking ownership of a claim (for example, "I argue that . . .").
3. Avoid slang and conversational prose in favor of a more formal tone. Phrases such as "where he's coming from" and "it's awesome" are too informal (not to mention overused) to appear in a formal essay.

4. Video responses are not critiques of the film per se. Comments such as "I found the middle section a little boring" is beside the point. These videos are selected for their educational value -- not their entertainment value.

5. The strongest use of verbs comes from past or present tense. It is sometimes necessary for meaning to use more complex verb forms (past perfect, future conditional etc.) but excessive use of these tenses is distracting and weakens the effect of your writing. Every time you find yourself writing a complex verb structure (helping verbs such as has, has been, has been having) see if you can revise it to a straightforward past or present tense form. It is a good habit to develop.

6. Active voice is stronger writing than passive voice. In active voice the subject is doing the action (of the verb); in passive voice the action is being done to the subject.

7. Video titles should be in italics.

8. "Like" indicates similarity: "My love is like a red, red rose." If you mean actual sameness, use "such as." "They did work like digging gardens" is wrong because they didn't do something similar to digging gardens, they actually dug them. The correct wording is "They did work such as digging gardens."

9. Stick to the evidence in the video when constructing your argument. Often students have preconceived ideas about the lifeways of other people which show up in these essays -- and are just flat wrong. Don't make claims you can't back up with evidence. Don't construct a "backstory" out of your imagination. The most common kinds of such misconceptions are students assuming that "before white people came" that "people X lived in complete harmony with nature and each other."

10. One of the most frequent errors is confusion between "their" (a possessive adjective) and "there" (a noun). Try to catch them.