

WRITING IN SOCIAL STUDIES 10

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ONE: INTRODUCTION

I. The Purpose of Social Studies 10

The purpose of Social Studies 10 is sometimes difficult for students to grasp. This is because there are multiple and interlocking facets to this course. The first goal of Social Studies 10 is to introduce you to the heritage of social thought. Our aim is to draw you into a conversation with the thinkers included on the syllabus and with the traditions and language of Social Studies. All Social Studies concentrators are required to take Social Studies 10 because it provides us all (tutors and students alike) with common reference points. These references will crop up repeatedly in your tutorials, in classes outside of Social Studies, and in the research and writing of your senior thesis. They are more than just building blocks for social analysis; they are also the “mores” of our intellectual community. Unlike other lecture courses with an attached discussion section, you should think of Social Studies 10 as a seminar with a supplementary lecture. The lectures and readings provide us with a common vocabulary for social analysis.

The curriculum of Social Studies 10 is also an account of a transformation in the realm of ideas. In modern life, we have seen distinct fields of knowledge emerge where there had previously been just one field – philosophy. Adam Smith acknowledged that philosophy was becoming specialized in his 18th century classic *The Wealth of Nations*: “In the progress of society, philosophy or speculation becomes, like every other employment, the principal or sole trade and occupation of a particular class of citizens. Like every other branch of employment too, it is subdivided into a great number of different branches, each of which affords occupation to a peculiar tribe or class of philosophers; and this subdivision of employment in philosophy, as well as in every other business, improves dexterity and saves time. Each individual becomes more expert in his own peculiar branch, more work is done upon the whole, and quantity of science is considerably increased by it” (Smith 21-22).

Intellectual work, like other forms of employment in the 18th and 19th centuries, were parceled out among the different forms of knowledge, some of which are included in Social Studies 10. The disciplines of anthropology, economics, history, politics, and sociology emerged as distinct domains in the 18th and 19th centuries. Each of these fields comes with its own assumptions, methods of analyses, and theoretical orientations. The formation of these different disciplines represents a division of labor in the intellectual enterprise. Part of the goal of the Social Studies 10 curriculum is to introduce you to the intellectual history of the formation of the different disciplines and to gain a wider perspective on social phenomena. As Smith points out, the division of the social sciences into discrete, specialized fields of analysis has been enormously productive, but it also comes at the expense of general knowledge. It can result in “pin-headism.” In the social sciences, this attitude has led to increased specialization, with both negative and positive consequences. The intent of Social Studies 10 is, therefore, to provide a counter-balance to the dominant trend toward specialization in the social sciences.

A final goal of the Social Studies 10 curriculum is to introduce students to classic texts of social analysis and social theory. Yet, if you look over the syllabi for Social Studies 10 from the inception of the program to the present (kept on file in the main office), you will notice that the syllabus has changed dramatically over the years. The vicissitudes of the syllabi have followed the changes in the social and political landscape over the last three decades. A social theorist or theory cannot be simply described as “classic,” for what is considered classic in one period may be out of fashion in another. As soon as we say that we read classic texts, we are then compelled to ask, “why are these texts chosen?” or “why these texts and not others?”

We must still explain why the chosen texts have been recognized as classics. By some accounts, the classic value of these texts is that they describe and analyze the world-historical events that continue to shape the fundamental social fabric of our lives. All of the texts we read confront the “dual revolutions” (political and economic) of the 18th and 19th century in illuminating ways. In this epoch, enormous societal changes took place in production, exchange, and distribution of wealth. These changes were accompanied by the emergence of the democratic state. Each of the social theorists we read provides a different account of these transitions from traditional to modern societies. They ask, “What were the causes and consequences of these changes?” and “What is the relationship between the two prongs (economic and political) of the dual revolutions?” Each has their own diagnosis of these times and each provides their own prescriptions for the ills that have beset us. In a sense, because each theorist brings their own particular questions, biographical specificity, and disciplinary orientation to their analytic project, as a group they are describing not just a single process of modernization or a coherent modern society, but “multiple modernities.” Though these issues are raised by every theorist in the course, the primary goal of the first semester is to understand that different theories provide alternative accounts of the same events. The second semester of the course continues to address this theme, but an additional goal is to provide an account of the “pathologies” of modern life.

II. Writing for Social Studies 10

While much of the learning in Social Studies 10 takes place in the dialogue among students and between students and tutors in the weekly tutorial meetings, those meetings are designed in part to prepare you for the experience of writing the papers. The central purpose of writing the papers is to give you a chance to develop more fully and learn how to articulate your own interpretation of the ideas discussed in lecture and tutorial. The writing assignments, then, are designed in part as a way for you to gain and display your understanding of the ideas and arguments of the theorists read in the course. The papers offer you the opportunity to grapple with the assigned readings in a sustained and careful enough way to achieve a level of comprehension of the theorists’ ideas that is qualitatively different from the understanding gained from only a first reading and discussion in tutorial. The writing assignments – especially when taken in their entirety over the course of the year – are also meant to train you in how to display that knowledge clearly and succinctly to others.

Yet writing is more than just a medium for transmitting one's knowledge of concepts and ideas; central to the writing philosophy of Social Studies 10 is the belief that the practice and experience of writing is itself the only way to come to a real understanding of the ideas read and discussed in the course. Indeed, through the repeated practice of writing you will learn to move beyond the (not so) simple comprehension of authors' arguments to formulating your own interpretation of them. This is, in fact, the most important point of the writing assignments in the course: to facilitate the movement from gaining and displaying a satisfactory comprehension of theorists' arguments to producing an analytic argument of your own, which offers not only an accurate account of what the texts under consideration are arguing but also some deeper insight into the reasons for the particular shape of those arguments, or the hidden tensions within them, or a previously unnoticed connection between apparently independent ideas. Whatever form it takes, articulating your own argumentative position with respect to the course readings amounts to your moving from being a spectator of other people's theorizing to being an increasingly confident participant in the ongoing theoretical conversation that takes place "between" the social theorists on the syllabus.

Learning to make this transition from writing that displays your comprehension of ideas to writing that presents your own argument about and critical position on those ideas will likely prove to be the greatest challenge of the writing assignments in Social Studies 10. It will generally take a number of writing assignments before you learn what this larger task requires of you and how best to try to achieve it. On the way to developing your own critical interpretation, however, there will also be the initial, more mundane challenge of "digesting" and then organizing the large amounts of complex reading material that each paper requires you to address. Writing successful papers in Social Studies 10 requires you to learn effective ways of making your way fairly quickly – though carefully – through the material, with the aim of noticing and beginning to conceptualize relationships – connections and distinctions – between the texts' various claims. Identifying and analyzing these relationships will then be central to your formulating your own interpretive argument.

Part of the challenge in organizing the readings into a workable and interpretable – thus "writable" – form, in turn, is the difficulty of moving between, and at times comparing, the different vocabularies, writing styles, modes of argumentation, and analytic methods that you will find in the readings, not only between the different theorists you read, but often within each theorist's own writing. Learning to recognize these differences will enable you to tackle the final challenge of Social Studies 10 papers: understanding and then articulating the ways in which the different theorists we read are – sometimes explicitly, almost always implicitly – in debate and dialogue with each other. Especially given the year-long and cumulative nature of the course, you will be faced with the challenge – though this should also be an exciting opportunity – of learning to notice how the different theorists are in some sense all writing about the "same" thing – something like the nature of "modern" society – even as the importance of their intellectual contribution often resides in the specific analytic frameworks, modes of analysis, or questions that they bring to bear on that "same" topic. Being able to notice these similarities and differences, and the ongoing "conversation" they establish, is a crucial step in making the move from social theory spectator to full participant.

III. About the Handbook

The preceding section should have made clear how central writing is to the experience of Social Studies 10. The class is not so much a “Great Books” course as a course that will equip you with the skills necessary to participate in social inquiry. It aims to teach you to communicate your ideas in a comprehensible and persuasive manner. In achieving this goal it helps you, among other things, to sort through the complexity of social phenomena, categorize regularities, notice anomalies, identify key concepts, order priorities and problems, gain critical distance, and formulate plausible solutions.

That writing for Social Studies 10 can involve such a formidable set of tasks is not accidental. The complexity of the social phenomena under consideration demands complex approaches to them. Writing in Social Studies 10 requires the capacity and agility to deploy and integrate diverse sets of skills. Indeed, social theory and analysis usually assume that complex social phenomena are best addressed by combining the perspectives of specific disciplines (such as history, philosophy, and sociology) to reach a generalized explanation of social phenomena. Part two of this booklet is intended to help you recognize the varieties of argumentation you may encounter in reading Social Studies 10 texts. This section should help you to become more efficient readers while exemplifying the multiple approaches available to you as you begin to write for the course. Part two also describes and provides examples of a few ideal-typical approaches to social theory and analysis, including the empirical, the normative, and the logical/analytical. As a social theorist and analyst, you should feel comfortable with all of these common argumentative strategies and be able to move between them in your own papers. There is no one correct way to write a good Social Studies paper. Part two describes and exemplifies some common approaches to help you become aware of some of your argumentative options. What you will finally do with this basic repertoire is up to you.

After exploring the various ways social theorists may proceed in constructing, articulating, and supporting arguments, Part III offers some practical advice on how to tackle writing your own Social Studies papers. It discusses the distinctive challenges of single author versus comparative papers; offers tips on how to ‘deep read’ paper assignments and construct analytical theses from these; and suggests revision strategies. Finally, the booklet lists elements to be found in the superlative, as opposed to the deficient, Social Studies 10 paper. These indicators should help you learn to evaluate your own work before handing it in.

TWO: METHODS

I. Close Reading – The First Step in Developing a Critical Interpretation of a Social Theory

Writing a strong paper in Social Studies requires, before all else, a clear understanding of the arguments of the theorist or theorists that the paper topic asks you to address. Indeed, in some ways, the work of writing a Social Studies 10 paper begins from the first moment you pick up each theorist's writings. A central skill that Social Studies 10 requires you to develop, then, is the ability to read texts closely – to learn to locate the most important, characteristic, and revealing moments in each text quickly, so as to begin to put together a general picture of the themes and arguments most central to that theorist's overall project. Reading in this way is a particular challenge in Social Studies 10, given the difficult – and hefty – nature of the books and essays you will be reading each week. To make your way through such large amounts of dense, often quite abstract, material (though, as you will soon see, it's fascinating and provocative reading, too!), it is important to learn certain simple strategies of reading. Once equipped with these tricks of the trade, not only will your experience of each week's reading be more enjoyable, because you are more critically aware, but you'll also be well on your way to developing your own critical interpretation of the theorists' arguments and the issues that their texts address.

Because you can't always read everything as closely as you (and your tutors) might like the first time around, it is crucial to be able to recognize the more salient portions of the text and distinguish them from the less important ones. The following are some simple and very practical suggestions for how you can more quickly recognize the overall structure and basic themes in the texts you will be reading and then focus on those specific issues you might end up writing about in your paper.

1. Don't neglect the table of contents. While you may be tempted to get on to the "heart of the matter" and start reading the body of the text, a careful reading of the table of contents can reveal important clues about the organizational logic and central concerns of the text. Giving it a close look when you first begin reading, and then periodically as you go on, can provide a very useful "cognitive map" of sorts, giving you a quick sense of the theorist's overall project and helping locate you within the text as a whole. It can also help you spot any chapters to which you might want to pay particular attention, given your own, or your tutorial's, specific interests.

2. Be sure to read the author's introduction. As with the table of contents, the theorist's introduction isn't merely extraneous to the main, or "real," text – it often contains important arguments of its own and almost always helps provide an idea of the theorist's larger project, which, once again, will allow you to have a better sense of how the various pieces you will be reading fit together. This is especially important given that you will frequently be reading only excerpts from a larger work.

3. Pay careful attention to what might be called “argument indicators” – words and phrases like “hence,” “thus,” “in sum,” “in other words,” or other moments when the author telegraphs to the reader that she will now be concluding, or summarizing, a portion of her argument worthy of being highlighted. It is also helpful to look for moments in the text when the author poses a question, which she then goes on to answer. This is frequently its own form of emphasis, suggesting that a particularly central claim or issue is immediately to follow. Finally, it’s worth paying especially careful attention to those moments when a theorist analyzes the arguments of a previous theorist. This is important in part just to avoid the possibility of confusing the position that the author is criticizing with her own position (something that is easier to do than one might at first think). More important, though, paying close attention to such passages is valuable because they frequently offer crucial clues as to the motivation and the stakes of the theorist’s own positions, laying out the distinctiveness, or ground-breaking nature, of their work relative to what has gone before.

4. Be on the lookout for words and phrases that seem to be repeated frequently. Such key terms, even those that might not obviously appear to be of “theoretical” importance, can often reveal themes that are central to a given theorist’s work, perhaps by pointing to important underlying assumptions that are never directly announced by the theorist.

5. Closely related to these key terms are the turns of phrase, figures of speech, metaphors, or even favorite sentence structures that a theorist characteristically relies on. These, too, can be quite revealing of a larger philosophy. For some theorists in particular, their very mode of argumentation and the shape of their sentences and paragraphs act as mirrors, or condensed examples, of some of their most fundamental theoretical claims. In Marx, for example, one frequently comes across dialectical reversals, such as: “In bourgeois society, living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society, accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of living labor.” For Tocqueville, the characteristic rhetorical structure is that of historical irony or paradox: for example, “Thus it was precisely in those parts of France where there had been the most improvement that popular discontent ran highest.” Learning to recognize and locate these distinctive turns of phrase can be a powerful tool for getting to the heart of a theorist’s argument quickly and efficiently.

6. Central to your task as a reader – and then writer – of social theory is to comprehend a large number of abstract concepts – “liberty,” “freedom,” “progress,” “rationality,” “repression,” “authenticity,” etc. Some of these will be found across various authors; others will be distinctive to a particular theorist. While these concepts are generally at the very heart of a theory, however, they are rarely defined by the theorist in any direct or simple way. One suggestion for pinning down the meaning, or multiple meanings, of such concepts is, as you read, to keep a list (perhaps on separate note cards) of the different moments and contexts in which the concept is used. By going over your list after finishing the reading and looking carefully at the different ways and contexts in which the concept is put to use, you will have an excellent basis for formulating a working definition, or definitions, of the concept as it is used by that particular theorist. One crucial point to keep in mind as you work out the meaning of the central concepts in any theorist’s work is that such terms are not always used with their present day, “common sense,”

meanings in mind: the theorist frequently has a very specific, at times idiosyncratic, understanding of the concept in mind. An important part of your task as a reader and interpreter of social theory is to be alert to these nuances of meaning and to work to piece together the specific meaning of the concept for that particular theorist. Thus, when Adam Smith writes about the moral virtue of “sympathy,” he’s referring to something more – and something more complex – than just being nice, or being kind to people in distress. So, too, being “alienated” in Marx’s work means something else than feeling out of place, or misunderstood, or ill at ease, as the phrase might today be understood in everyday conversation. Understanding a social theorist, then, even those writing today, requires what might be called hermeneutic, or interpretive generosity: a sensitivity to the particular ways in which that theorist is putting his central concepts to work in his or her theory.

7. This kind of interpretive generosity is of more general importance, too. There are likely to be moments as you are reading a theorist when you will be tempted to think that you have caught the theorist obviously contradicting herself, or making a claim that simply makes no sense. At such moments, it is helpful to resist the temptation to dismiss their argument as fatally flawed – remember that most of the theorists you are reading have been subject to decades, even centuries, of the closest possible scrutiny, and still they are being read and taken seriously. When you imagine they are saying something glaringly wrong, then, you would be wise to reconsider, at least provisionally. Evidence of blatant self-contradiction is, at least at first, more likely to be due to a misreading on your part than to the inadequacy of the theorist. This is not to say that there are no internal inconsistencies or tensions within the work of virtually every theorist you read in Social Studies 10; on the contrary, discovering and analyzing these moments is one of your central tasks as a critical reader. Nonetheless, as you will come to learn, such internal difficulties are generally subtle and complex enough to require a number of quite careful readings in order to demonstrate their severity and significance.

8. One final suggestion. Every tutorial covers the central themes and arguments of each theorist; yet each tutorial does so in a unique way. Given the particular disciplinary training of your tutor(s) and the specific interests of you and your fellow tutorial members, there are certain questions that your tutorial discussions are likely to address fairly regularly over the course of the year. These can range from a concern with questions of method – e.g., noticing the different kinds of validity claims each theorist is making, or their particular argumentative styles – to an interest in specific theoretical topics – e.g., a concern with the different understandings of the nature of historical change, or of gender, or of the nation-state, held by each theorist. These concerns will be reflected not only in the tutorial discussions – which your interests, of course, help to shape – but also in the tutors’ choice of paper topics. As you begin to be aware of the particular questions that regularly arise in your tutorial discussion, you can learn to read each new theorist with these in mind, thus not only adding to the liveliness of class discussion but also quickening the development of your own critical perspective.

II. From Reading to Writing: Three Types of Argument in Social Theory

There remains, finally, the largest and most important strategy for working through the reading material in Social Studies 10 and developing a critical theoretical position of your own. This is to notice the presence of, and to learn to use, specific forms of argument that are central to all the theoretical work you will be reading and interpreting. Because Social Studies is interdisciplinary, many kinds of arguments are acceptable. Indeed, social theory usually combines perspectives from specific disciplines (e.g., history, philosophy, sociology, economics) to reach an overall explanation of social phenomena. It is important, however, that you be able to recognize different methods and understand what kinds of evidence are appropriate to each, both in your own work and in that of the author you are analyzing. Three modes of argumentation in particular can be distinguished, and are worth understanding in some depth. These might be called in shorthand the empirical approach, the normative approach, and the analytical approach. These forms of argument are best understood as “ideal types”; you will rarely if ever find them in pure form; as we will suggest below, they are almost always mixed in with each other, as one mode of argumentation relies on another for support or elaboration. Nonetheless, the better you get at recognizing the specificity of these different ways of building and arguing for a social theory, the easier it will become not only to make sense of the reading material, but also to develop your own unique interpretation and enter into critical dialogue with the theorists we will all be reading.

The Empirical Approach

One way to approach the material in Social Studies 10 is as if it were a scientific enterprise. The scientific approach considers the world empirically and asks “how can we explain such and such a trend or tendency in past or present forms of social life?” In Social Studies 10, two of the main trends you will focus on are “industrialization” and “democratization.” Though each theorist provides a different account of the causes and effects of industrialization and democratization, these two processes were the central concern of all of the 18th, 19th and 20th century thinkers we encounter in this course. For example, Marx, Durkheim, and Smith each focus on the causes and effects of the division of labor on modern life. Mill, Tocqueville, and Weber each address the rise of mass politics and the professionalization of politics. In order to help you understand why these were the central preoccupations of their time, we strongly suggest that you enroll in a European history course during your sophomore year.

Observing the rise of a market economy and the formation of democratic nation-states, these early social scientists asked, “How should we characterize the nature of this new social landscape?” “What spheres of life have been affected by this trend?” “What is the motor of these changes?” “How do these changes fit into the history of the world?” Though their answers were different, each of these social scientists described the momentous reorganization of public and private life that accompanied, caused, or was affected by the economic division of labor and the rise of mass politics.

Contemporary social scientists ask these sorts of questions about other trends as well. These questions are often concerned with variations over time or across cultures, but they may also ask about the continuing persistence of a particular social form. They may be limited to a

very small corner of the world or extend to the entire globe. Most social scientists will attempt to make generalizable claims about the nature of the world and of the human beings who inhabit it.

The empirical approach is based on the model of the natural sciences. The crucial assumption of the empirical approach is that we can dispassionately observe the objective world and from these observations determine what the nature of a social trend or tendency is. In biology, for example, the scientist objectively observes cells under a microscope to determine its nature. Durkheim's work is a concrete illustration of an empirical approach in social science. Like the natural scientist, he determines whether or not there are pathologies in society and tries to treat the sick cells. He collects evidence of the religious rituals and beliefs of Australian aborigines. He wants to describe the fundamental components of all religions. He puts them under his scientific microscope because he believes they are the simplest forms of religious life. Although there are a few voices in this course who actively question the objectivity of social science, most social empiricists consider objective observation to be the foundation of their science.

However much they seem to borrow from the natural scientist, social scientists have a much harder job than their cousins do. Social trends are not material entities that lend themselves easily to observation in the way that a molecular cell is observable to a natural scientist. The social scientist must find an ingenious way to measure an intangible. Social scientists must "operationalize" the trends that they observe and the variables that affect them. Operationalization means creating a measure of a trend, like "social disintegration," and linking it to a variable, like the "division of labor." To measure "social disintegration," Durkheim counted the number of suicides occurring in different European societies. Why suicides? Durkheim argued that suicide rates represented the number of people in a country who fell outside a social network. Suicide rates were a measure of social dislocation.

In a sense, what we measure will depend upon how we define and operationalize the trend we are studying. For example, to measure trends in racism since school integration in America, a social scientist might count the number of "hate crimes" committed in the school districts of a city. However, we might respond that "hate crime" statistics are unreliable sources of data because they are often under reported or we could conduct an analysis of the same question (racism in America since integration) by studying a Southern city or by studying a rural population instead of an urban school system. Criticizing the "operationalization" of the question is part of the dialogue that social scientists have with one another. Part of your task in Social Studies is to enter this dialogue. As you approach the reading and writing assignments in this course, you should consider how it is that a thinker is defining her question, how she operationalizes the variables employed, and how the results are affected by these choices. While one way of operationalizing a social trend may be better than another for answering a certain question, there is no incontestable way of measuring social trends. As long as we can question the measuring tool of a thinker, the social-scientific approach is always open to different interpretations of the same problem. As you read these texts you will want to ask yourself: What choices did the researcher make and how did they affect his results? Do you agree with his interpretation of those results? What is missing from his explanation? Moreover, how would

you design a better measuring tool and why is it better? What recommendations does the author make to address the social problem under consideration and how well do you think his solutions will work?

Before concluding this discussion of the empirical approach, it should be pointed out that an unstated goal of the scientific endeavor is to determine the health of a society and recommend solutions that would improve that society's ability to meet the needs of its populace. A social scientist may ask, in such cases, if these social trends are welcome improvements or unwelcome failures. Many will criticize, or at least problematize, what they see as the consequences or results of such and such a trend. They may even make a recommendation about how to address a trend if it is seen as a social problem. Social policies are based, in large part, on social scientific findings about society.

When these thinkers make judgments about social trends, they are making normative assessments. Empiricism begins with observation and ends with description. Normative arguments, in contrast, pursue the value of what the scientist has observed and described. For example, Tocqueville and Burke each observed and described the democratizing trend in Europe and America. Nevertheless, beyond their observations (which are remarkable for their similarity), these men also judge this democratic tendency. Interestingly, though they have observed the same trends, their judgments do not coincide; Tocqueville judges the benefits of democracy to outweigh its limitations, while Burke wants to return to an age of chivalry and reciprocation. These different normative arguments about the new democratic form of society are based upon empirical evidence, but they go beyond the evidence by evaluating the trend.

Part of your reading and writing assignments will entail knowing when and how an author is making an empirical or a normative argument. In the next section, we will have a more complete discussion of this normative approach. You should, however, keep in mind that these types of approaches (normative, empirical, analytical) are "ideal types." That is, we can separate them only schematically or analytically. In the texts, the lines between these approaches will be fuzzier and harder to distinguish.

The Normative Approach

A second approach to questions of social theory, one which you will encounter in varying degrees in each of the theorists in Social Studies 10, consists in the deployment of normative arguments. Rather than claiming to describe or discover the nature of social reality, as in the empirical approach, the normative approach makes claims about how society should be organized. It proposes arguments for the standards, or "norms," that should govern society and people's actions within it. Thus, alongside social theorists' arguments about the causes, nature, and extent of industrialization and democratization, for example, you will also encounter – often in the very same paragraphs – claims about the value of those trends and the best way to respond to and, if possible, shape them, so as to serve one set of values instead of another. For example, you will come across normative arguments in Social Studies 10 ranging from the claim that democratic political institutions are to be preserved (or instituted) in order to respect the intrinsic equality of every citizen, to ones that hold that capitalist forms of ownership in fact deny the very

freedom they are supposed to exemplify, by locking those without capital into positions of permanent inequality and limited opportunity.

Normative arguments, then, can be put forth in order to justify – to present the reasons for or the positive values served by – an existing institution or social practice, or else to make an argument for the value or necessity of changing such institutions or practices. This latter approach can take the form of a claim that an existing institution fails to recognize or respect some value or set of values (fairness, equality, justice) that is apparently external to or as yet unrecognized by it, or else that the institution fails in practice to respect certain values that it explicitly endorses in principle. Perhaps the most famous recent version of this last kind of argument was the critique of racial segregation, made in the name of the principles of equality formally enshrined in the U.S. Constitution but not respected in American social and legal practice.

While many of the normative arguments you will encounter in Social Studies 10 will be critical in nature, aiming to reveal the moral or ethical inadequacies of societies at the time of the theorist's writing, normative claims do not have to be critical in this sense. They are just as often launched in defense of established institutions and social practices, as in the robust defense of traditional social roles, existing political institutions, and the established church hierarchy that Edmund Burke offers in his writings on the French Revolution.

What's more, as the example of Burke's defense of tradition will also make clear, a normative approach to social theorizing need not invoke obviously moral considerations, such as those of justice, or fairness, or equality. It can equally involve claims for the value of social stability, or "merely" practical considerations such as efficiency. For behind political and social arguments in the name of such considerations, there frequently stand less obvious claims about the human values – perhaps the value of a particular experience of community, or of a specific form of personality – that are made possible when one respects the practical requirements of stability or efficiency.

Normative arguments about the desirability of particular social institutions, you should also begin to notice, are very often supported by a claim – at times explicit, at other times merely implied – about the "nature" of man, or of human societies, or of physical reality itself. Indeed, while it is crucial to be able to recognize the difference between a normative and an empirical or historical claim, it is frequently (if not always) difficult to separate normative arguments entirely from arguments about the nature of social reality or "human nature." Defenders of tradition are today perhaps the most likely to invoke supposedly natural qualities in support of certain traditional differences in the way different categories of people are treated (most obviously with respect to gender differences). Yet they are by no means the only ones to do so. Critics of traditional or existing institutions are also known to rely on contestable understandings of what is "natural" to defend the normative aspect of their social theories. Many critiques of capitalism, for example, depend for their normative force on a particular understanding of the possibilities of human (moral and psychological) development, which are thought to be unduly limited under capitalism. Many of the best known versions of feminist theory and practice, in turn, are distinguished from one another in part by the degree to which they understand socially

recognized gender differences to be natural – that is, rooted in biological distinctions between men and women – rather than produced (or “constructed”) by imperatives particular to a given society, imperatives which can, at least in principle, be changed. (There are, in turn, equally contentious debates over how societies ought to treat those differences that are seen as based in nature so as to best achieve the feminist goal of equal treatment and respect for women and men.)

In a slightly different sense, arguments that appear at first glance to be merely normative can turn out to rely on a particular understanding of the nature of social reality. Thus, while Tocqueville presents a strong defense of democratic society against its aristocratic critics, he does so in large part because he sees democracy as the end product of certain large-scale historical developments that can never be reversed. Rather than rejecting democracy and fighting a destructive battle against the tide of history, Tocqueville argues that it is better to “educate” democracy and democratic citizens, so as to shape them in a way that counteracts their dangers. Tocqueville’s endorsement of democracy is, in this sense, a qualified one, as will be many of the normative arguments you will come across in Social Studies 10. He holds not that democracy is an unmitigated good, but rather that it is valuable relative to the particular social conditions and trends that Tocqueville understood – through empirical analysis – to exist at the time of his writing.

A social theorist’s normative claims can, then, be criticized on two distinct grounds: one can argue that they are flawed because the values or ideals they propose are in some way wrong, or because their defense of those values rests on inaccurate assumptions about the nature of social or human reality.

In either case, however, it is of fundamental importance to recognize that the normative claims put forth by the social theorists you will be reading take the form of arguments – that is, the presentation of reasons that aim to justify and persuade one of the value of particular social practices and institutions. Rather than being mere assertions, such claims appeal to norms and values that the theorist thinks are either already assumed (explicitly or implicitly) by the theorist’s imagined audience of readers, or else are objectively true in a way that reasoned reflection would confirm. Your engagement with the texts of Social Studies, both in class and in your papers, will be most profitable when it too takes this same argumentative form.

Nonetheless, as one engages with the normative claims of a given social theorist, or compares the competing arguments of different theorists, one will frequently (some would claim always) come to a certain point where the giving of reasons seems to come to an end and the theorist’s fundamental values and assumption are simply there, to be accepted or rejected. One of your primary (and most empowering) tasks as you develop your own interpretation of various theorists is to recognize this point in their arguments, even when they do their best to cover it up. Identifying such moments amounts to uncovering the theorists’ most fundamental commitments and assumptions, ones which they and their followers may not themselves recognize, and which may not ultimately be consistent with their other beliefs and commitments. To the extent that you are able to locate these moments in a theorist’s argument and begin to work out how the

various strands of a theorist's project do or do not fit together, you will be well on your way to writing a fine essay. Indeed, getting to this point in your knowledge of the theorists' arguments is one of the central goals of the course as a whole. It is the door through which you will be able to enter into the ongoing conversation of social theory at the same level of analysis at which our pantheon of social theorists work – and thus, in a sense, as their equal.

The Analytical Approach, or Immanent Critique

You will often witness the social theorists you read engaging in precisely this sort of ongoing conversation. On these occasions, the authors address and analyze arguments of contemporary or preceding authors. This analytical approach is sometimes called immanent critique. Such immanent critique usually combines appreciative appropriation with sharp criticism. Marx, for example, painstakingly pursues the logic of Adam Smith's economic insights, all the while preparing his condemnation of capitalism.

While an "external" critique assesses an author in light of new or different data and/or according to differing values, an "immanent critique" attempts to see how well the scrutinized author meets her own standards, adheres to her own precepts, or makes use of the evidence available to her. An author who engages in immanent critique (Author A) actually does two closely interlinked things, often simultaneously: reconstruction and evaluation. She reconstructs certain key argument(s) made by her subject (Author B), often by first distilling it into its component parts (premises and conclusions); and she evaluates the argument's merits, often rejecting or recuperating its weak spots, while building on its strengths. In this way, an "immanent" critique can be used to nourish the critical author's own theoretical projects.

Reconstruction

The task of reconstructing an argument is trickier than it may first appear. Reconstruction almost inevitably shades into evaluation within the analytical enterprise. For this reason, you should view one author's summary of another's position with some skepticism. However, such reconstruction when well done can also sharpen an originally hazy or diffuse argument. Indeed, the best authors frequently go out of their way to strengthen their erstwhile adversary's logic in the process of reconstructing it. This act of generosity has the additional advantage of anticipating any counter-counter arguments.

A successful reconstruction first locates the place(s) where the substance of the argument to be reconstructed appears. Author A will refer her readers to the relevant portions of Author B's text through quotations, citations, and references (often in footnotes). Author A will then demarcate the aspects of the argument to be discussed. The challenge and importance of the task of demarcation should not be underestimated. Arguments are complex entities, and promiscuous, often coupling with other arguments and veering off in directions of dubious relevance to Author A's central concern(s). The way an argument is demarcated will determine how the entire reconstructive enterprise will proceed. Finally, the critical author will delineate as best she can the logic of the argument, either through a narrative summary connecting the key ideas or in the form of premises leading up to a conclusion. Reconstruction according to the

logic of premises and conclusion can help focus evaluative energy on certain key questions, such as: What premises does the author use to support or prepare for her thesis/conclusion? How did the author arrive at these premises? Are they empirical? based in common sense? derived from earlier argumentation? What relationship do the premises bear to each other? Does one depend on another? Do they logically deliver the stated conclusion? Such questions penetrate the argumentation, and lead directly to the task of evaluation.

Evaluation, or Critique

As this list of questions shows, there are many ways to evaluate and criticize an argument. Marx, for example, in On the Jewish Question carefully lays out the arguments of one Bruno Bauer. He then (i) brings empirical evidence against Bauer (there exists a state that meets the criteria of a secular state as specified by Bauer, but does not follow the pattern predicted by Bauer); (ii) engages in a normative critique of Bauer (political emancipation is inferior to human emancipation); and (iii) engages in analytical or immanent critique by pointing out conflicts and tensions in Bauer's arguments and flaws in his dialectical reasoning (the liberal state does not subsume the religious spirit, but sustains it as a necessary supplement).

Here are some typical ways in which Author A may critique Author B's text:

--Contents. Author A may notice discrepancies between the content or substance of certain premises, between one or more premise and the conclusion, or between the conclusions of different arguments made at separate points in the text. On some occasions, the conflict may be that premises assumed in one argument clash with conclusions drawn in another. Sometimes this will be irrelevant, but at other times it may menace the integrity of the larger project.

--Implications. A tension or conflict may also arise concerning implications that are highly likely or even necessary consequences of the argument being advanced. Although criticizing this type of problem requires extrapolation, it is still considered immanent critique if the implications are shown to have a sufficiently logical relation (e.g., are entailed in) to the original argument. For example, Habermas accuses Foucault of contradiction. In claiming that all truth is a product of power regimes, says Habermas, Foucault is also implicitly claiming that it is true that all truth is a product of power regimes.

--Form of Argument. Some immanent critique will take aim not at the substance but at the form of the argument. Here Author A may charge that the premises to which the analyzed author appeals simply can not deliver the conclusions she claims they do. Perhaps the premises fall short of justifying the conclusion, and additional steps would be needed to justify it. The question then becomes whether the author could, on the basis of the evidence and/or the logic thus far displayed, take these necessary steps. In some cases, taking the necessary steps would mean fundamental alterations in the project as presented.

At the other extreme, the primary argument may beg the question, i.e., the premises may assume what is supposed to be proved through them. Rather than being insufficiently supported, the argument in this case will be trivial or even tautological. Students often believe they have

discovered such problems in the texts they are reading. Be warned that what may appear as a circular conclusion at one point in a text may very well be parsed out elsewhere. Circularity and tautology may also be a deliberate rhetorical device, or a restatement, with some non-trivial specification, of first principles. Ask yourself – could this conclusion be otherwise defended? How might one do so? What purpose does it serve in the text as a whole? What purpose does it serve at this specific point in the text? Remember, while no one is immune to logical errors, the authors we read in Social Studies 10 are not amateurs. Consider well before you level a charge of circularity.

How You Can Join the Critical Conversation

Given the nature of the Social Studies papers you will be asked to write (to which we will turn shortly), attentiveness to the analytical approach masterfully displayed by the likes of Mill, Marx, and Habermas can be instructive to you as a writer. Emulating it in your own papers is an excellent way to deepen your understanding of Social Studies 10 material. Focusing on crucial but located passages allows you to read and reread portions of the text with a depth and nuance rarely possible in normal weekly preparation for lecture and tutorial. Attention to the logic of specific arguments can give you a feel for how an author thinks. For example, once you have carefully worked through a sampling of Marx's dialectical method, you will begin to see certain patterns, and his dense writing style will suddenly become less mysterious.

Moreover, careful scrutiny of arguments can expose problematic presuppositions or even shaky logic. Whether or not you like the conclusions an author arrives at, revealing the weak points in the argument allows you either to strengthen the author's position by correcting for its weaknesses, or to show why his or her conclusions themselves must be modified or perhaps even rejected. Engaging another's argument at the analytical level lets you to match rigor with the author you are examining. It is an excellent way to awaken your thought, hone your logical acumen, and begin to develop original positions and cast them into relief.

THREE: GETTING DOWN TO WRITING

Most of the authors you will be reading forge a distinctive hybrid of the empirical, normative, and analytical approaches in their work. It is up to you to sort them out and choose the approaches that most appeal to you as you prepare to compose your own social-theoretical essays.

Social Studies 10 seeks to introduce you to the writings of major contributors to social theory and analysis. The focus is on your ability to confront these texts, to understand and at times criticize them as you go on to develop social analytical skills of your own. Because of this emphasis on the social analytic enterprise, Social Studies 10 encourages original work in direct dialogue with the texts. Tutors are less interested in outside research than in helping you to articulate your distinctive insights with wit and rigor.

For the most part, writing assignments will fall under two categories, single-author analyses and comparative papers. The previous section outlined three approaches – the empirical, the normative, and the logical/analytical – that you can apply when writing either type of paper. We now turn to the specific challenges of each.

I. Two Kinds of Papers: Single Author vs. Comparative

Single-author papers demand attention to the cogency and complexity of an author's work. Since Social Studies 10 often assigns representative samples from an author's entire corpus, you may become aware of subtle (or not so subtle) changes in the author's views over time. You may wish to point out how the early work is closer to fulfilling a normative position you endorse, or how the later work is superior because it takes account of empirical data unrecognized by the author in her youth. Alternatively, you may wish to argue that an apparent change of heart is chimerical, and that a corpus that seems *prima facie* inconsistent is actually of a piece. You may also elect to treat a small segment of the whole under consideration. If so, it will be incumbent upon you to show why this segment is crucial (e.g., because it is the linchpin of a larger argument, because it sheds new light on the author's work, and/or because it bears on issues that have pressing contemporary relevance, such as bureaucratic sclerosis), and how this segment relates to the author's overall project. In other words, it is imperative that you persuade your reader why the problem you have chosen is interesting – and problematic – to begin with.

The key to a successful single-author paper is a thesis statement that inaugurates a careful and nuanced reading of the author's texts through an original, perceptive, and fecund insight. The thesis statement should be as simple and clear as possible, as you will have the remainder of the paper to draw out its implications and complexities. These implications and complexities will structure the paper, guiding your selection of relevant summary and citation, and mandating the kinds of evidence you will bring to bear in supporting your claims.

An example of a single-author paper thesis statement is the following: (version 1) “Despite X’s consistent moral commitment to redistribution as a way of securing equality of opportunity, his policy recommendations may actually inhibit such redistribution.” A more ambitious paper might add: (version 2) “This inconsistency can be accounted for by A [e.g., errors in application or data; hypocrisy or naiveté about ‘equality of opportunity,’ etc.], and perhaps be corrected by B [adjusting for errors, abandoning hypocrisy; etc.]” The remainder of the paper would show the consistency of X’s moral commitment to redistribution, and reveal its logical connection to a higher-order commitment to equality of opportunity. It would then delineate the policy recommendations the author supports, and show how these may actually inhibit redistribution. The paper writer in version 2 would go on to state and defend the hypothesis as to why the policy fell out of synch with the normativity, and discuss ways the discrepancy might be rectified.

A useful heuristic in single-author papers is the invention of a worthy adversary who has read the same texts as you but disagrees radically with your conclusions (this adversary may or may not have the face of a fellow student or tutor!). What counter-arguments would this adversary offer? How would she/he support these? How would you bring this adversary around to your views? The more intelligent your imaginary opponent, the more intelligent you will have to be in responding to her.

Comparative papers have the advantage of setting up two sets of views for you to compare. What are the similarities and differences between, say, Mill and Tocqueville on the dangers of democratization? What are the sources of their fears? What is each trying to protect?

Whereas in a single author paper you may notice fluctuations or inconsistencies over the course of a life’s work, in comparative papers you will often be surprised to find similarities between two otherwise very different authors. Alternatively, you may see how diverse approaches to similar phenomena can reach radically different conclusions. You may also discover that one author can correct for another’s shortsightedness, etc.

The trick in composing successful introductory paragraphs in comparative papers is the careful delimitation of your subject matter. Here there will probably be less urgency to convince the reader of the controversial quality of the topic you have selected (although it rarely hurts to do so), since the convergence/divergence of two distinct perspectives on the topic tends to imply this. Nonetheless, you must assume responsibility for delimiting the scope of its significance for your essay. For example, it would be quite impossible to compare in a complete fashion Mill and Tocqueville’s views of democratization in a single ten-page paper. Instead, you may wish to compare, e.g., their views of citizens’ virtue under conditions of mass democracy, or their specific institutional/policy recommendations.

A thesis statement for a comparative paper may take many forms, but it must underscore salient points of commonality and difference that can both ground and animate the dialogue you intend to enact. Additionally, you should indicate (either in your thesis statement or elsewhere in your introduction) the stance you will be taking toward the positions you are exploring: for instance, critical of both, endorsing one rather than another, or reconciling and/or correcting

each. An example of a critical thesis statement: “While X and Y appear to be equally committed to redistribution of wealth as a moral principle, the divergence of their policy recommendations can be traced back to presuppositions about human nature that bias their policy choices.” Such a thesis statement will then require its author to 1) summarize and support the claim of similarity, 2) show how X and Y advocate different policies as means to achieving this end, and 3) reveal how the means are determined not by the ends, which are in a simple sense compatible, but by certain assumptions about human beings (e.g., X thinks human beings are lazy, while Y thinks they are benevolent). Furthermore, the use of the word ‘bias’ in the thesis statement implies that the paper writer has reservations about this approach. She/he may wish to criticize any recourse to human nature and show how certain policies could secure redistribution whether human beings are benevolent, lazy, both or neither. (N.B. Because she/he is perceptive, the author of this hypothetical paper will acknowledge that her skepticism regarding arguments from human nature may undermine the very normative arguments used to support the goal of redistribution in the first place. Nonetheless, the author will recognize that this implication exceeds the focus of the paper, which centers on the best policy choices needed to meet the stated goal, and will mark this wider implication without pursuing it further.)

II. Making Sense of Your Assignment

A crucial step – indeed, the crucial first step – in writing a strong Social Studies paper is to determine as precisely as possible what the assignment is asking you to do. Your first task, in other words, is to interpret the paper topic itself. Keeping in mind one simple principle can go a long way towards insuring a less fraught relationship with your assignment: beyond the specific language the assignment uses and the particular issues it invites you to address, the fundamental thing it will also be asking of you is to craft a clear and well-defended argument of your own. This means an argument that displays both a solid command of the theorists you discuss and a strong theoretical voice of your own. While paper assignments can take many different forms, this is without fail the bottom line for all Social Studies 10 essays.

What exactly does it mean to “construct an argument of your own”? In an important sense, learning what this entails ultimately demands a lot of practice; indeed, providing opportunities for this practice is one of the chief purposes of papers in Social Studies 10. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that producing a good argument involves at least two central tasks. First, it involves the description and assessment of a theorist(s)’s reasoning or argumentation: this will require, among other things, that you summarize arguments concisely, draw out the theorist’s implicit assumptions, evaluate the evidence used to defend these arguments, consider their possible implications, and imagine possible counter-arguments. Part of the goal in this process is to show that you know, and are able to capture in writing, what makes the theorist(s) you are writing about distinctive relative to the other theorists you read (both in Social Studies 10 and in other courses). Second, an argument involves making a judgment about the merits of the theorist(s) and arguments under discussion. This requires that you evaluate the persuasiveness, coherence, plausibility, and/or morality of the theoretical positions at issue. Frequently – though not always – this will involve your taking a position of your own on that issue (though this should always take the form of a well-argued and defended claim, rather than just the assertion

of a personal preference). As has been discussed and will be developed further in the following section, these two tasks of “summary” (or reconstruction) and “evaluation” cannot ultimately be considered separate processes: in a strong essay the two strands are seamlessly tied together, so that the critical judgment is contained in the very description of the theorist’s arguments, and vice versa.

There are various ways that your paper topics will encourage you to undertake this kind of thinking and writing. While they will all be inviting you to build your own argument, they can do so in subtly different ways. The various tutorial leaders are responsible for devising their own paper topics. There is generally significant overlap between the topics assigned by the different tutorials, however, both the style and the substance of the assignments can, at times, vary widely. The following is a brief list of some of the forms that Social Studies 10 paper topics most frequently take. These categories are not mutually exclusive – you will most often encounter more than one of them in a single assignment.

1. Paper topics frequently consist of a series of separate but related questions. Sometimes the list of questions to be considered can be quite long. The important thing to keep in mind when responding to these topics is that you are rarely expected to answer directly each of the questions and should never structure your paper as a sequence of responses to each particular question. Rather than seeing the assignment as a series of questions that need answering, or a list of issues that need to be addressed, you should understand the questions instead as provocations to construct an argument of your own. Providing answers to the specific questions posed can be a means to proposing your own critical interpretation, but never a substitute for it.
2. Your assignment might ask you to “discuss” a given topic (e.g., “Discuss the role of socially necessary illusions in the theories of Marx and Smith”). It is important not to be confused by “discuss” in this setting. “Discuss” might suggest at first glance the kind of casual exchange one might have over dinner, where the conversation may end up following no particular order or direction. In the context of an assignment, however, “discussion” entails something very different: it requires you to build a logically organized and carefully defended argument of your own out of the close consideration of one or more theoretical texts. It generally asks you to build a set of larger claims about the theorist(s) at hand out of the careful consideration of the more limited topic or issue it explicitly asks you to address.
3. Other assignments will ask to “analyze” a topic or a particular aspect of a theorist’s argument (e.g., “Analyze Weber’s discussion of contemporary ‘polytheism’ in the two Vocation essays”). There is often a significant degree of overlap between “analyze” and “discuss.” Generally speaking, however, analyzing a given topic or theme in a theorist’s work requires that you to break an argument down into its most important component parts so as then to be able to reveal the underlying assumptions, purposes, or values that lie behind it. From the act of disaggregating a particular argument, you are expected to go on to fit those specific aspects of the theorist’s argument into his or her general project – thus paving the way for your own critical interpretation, grounded in clear textual evidence, of the ultimate meaning, importance or persuasiveness of that project.

4. Some assignments offer you a head start in this process by providing you with a particular quotation to work with. Here, too, you are being invited to develop an interpretation of the theorist's larger project – and its degree of success – from out of the particular language and themes that can be isolated in the given passage. These paper topics offer a helpful reminder of the importance for all papers of grounding the argument in the actual language of the theorist's texts.

5. Some paper topics ask you to explain how a theorist handles or presents a particular issue or claim (e.g., “How does Weber treat the various dimensions of the problem ‘science and religion’ today in Science as a Vocation”). This sort of question is generally asking you to analyze the particular logic of a given argument or theme – and thus, once again, to move from the description of the particular to an evaluation of the whole.

6. Another way that paper topics try to provoke you into this kind of analysis is with the question why? (e.g., “Why does Weber see an understanding of the question of theodicy as important to understanding the relation between politics, morality, and revolution?”). This little word “why” asks you to investigate and then recapitulate the theorist's reasoning – that is, to explain the reasons that the theorist argues what she or he does. This will generally include those reasons that the theorist explicitly states as well as those that might be implied by the explicit reasons or else grounded in certain larger assumptions that the theorist relies on but rarely or never makes explicit. Explaining “why” a theorist argues the way she does thus requires you to place a particular, generally explicit, claim that she makes within the context of her theory as a whole – and to build an interpretation of your own out of that connection.

7. Many Social Studies paper topics will ask you to compare and contrast two theorists, or certain aspects of their theories. (The request to “compare and contrast” can be explicit, or it can take a less direct form: e.g., “How might Marx respond to Tocqueville's discussion of the causes and remedies of individualism?”). This sort of question most obviously invites you to recognize the points of intersection and divergence between the theorists' arguments. However, responding effectively to such a question involves much more than simply listing, paragraph by paragraph, the similarities and differences between the theorists. Instead, it generally requires you to translate one theorist's set of terms into the other's, or perhaps into a common language, thus necessarily enlarging the frame of analysis. It will also generally – and at times explicitly – ask you to consider issues or aspects of the problem that both theorists ignore or fail to address persuasively, thus demanding that you step outside the particular frameworks of either theorist and view the two of them from a distinctive theoretical position of your own. In both these ways, a “compare and contrast” paper topic expects you to use your analysis of the specific points of agreement and disagreement as a means to formulate a more general interpretive claim about the distinctive nature of each theorist's project or worldview.

While all the tutors do their best to devise clear and productive paper topics, even the most carefully crafted assignment may require clarification. For this reason, many tutors set aside time in class to discuss any uncertainties you might have about the wording or purpose of the assignment. However, since ambiguities or difficulties in clarifying a paper topic frequently

emerge only after you have had a chance to begin formulating your response, you are encouraged not only to consult this section of the handbook as often as is helpful, but also, when necessary, to ask your tutor(s) for clarification about what is expected of you for that particular assignment. For this same reason, you are strongly advised to begin formulating your response to the assignment as quickly as possible, so that you will have ample time to ask the kinds of clarifying and exploratory questions that can go a long way toward formulating a strong argumentative thesis.

III. Writing and Revising: From First Draft to the Finished Product

Why Revise?

Revision often makes the difference between a good paper and a superlative paper. Crudely speaking, students who learn to revise their essays will be rewarded for their efforts. Second or even third drafts of papers are more coherent, more organized, more argumentative, and have more nuances, than a first draft. Taking the time to draft and redraft your papers will significantly improve the style, structure, and sense of your essay.

The process of revising a paper can take several forms. (1) The most difficult and most rewarding way to revise a paper is by refining your argument. This is equivalent to laying down a new road to a new destination. It involves constructing and refining your evaluation of the theories we read. (2) Revision may also mean reorganization. Making your argument clear to your readers is the bottom-line goal of reorganizational revising. Here you will be putting up the street signs and road maps so that your reader can follow you to your destination. You are practicing a kind of “traffic” control. (3) Finally, you can revise a paper by rereading it for grammatical and spelling accuracy and format consistency. This is “polishing work” that helps to beautify the road to your conclusions.

How to Refine an Argument: Substantive Revisions

The best papers have a clearly articulated and logically coherent argument that proceeds systematically and builds toward a conclusion. It is rarely the case that a writer will produce a fully conceptualized argument in a first draft. Indeed, papers with incoherent arguments (or no argument at all) are typical of beginners who do not revise their first drafts. Students in Social Studies 10 are no exception to this rule. Often times, writers discover their ideas only through the process of writing a first draft. Their ideas become clear to them only after the first draft is completed. For this reason, an essay will make a stronger and subtler argument for every draft it goes through. This type of revision requires reconceptualizing and rewriting large portions of your essay.

Summary and Evaluation

An argument builds upon a summary of another thinker’s ideas. In addition to summarizing the thinker’s own system of thought, your papers are expected to make an evaluative argument about

their ideas. An argument provides an evaluation of a theorist's assumptions and conclusions. In order to develop an argument, you can start with simple questions: What do you find odious in a theorist's work? What appeals to you and why? Eventually you should ask more pointed questions: What assumptions is the theorist making and how do these influence her results? The answers to these questions will provide you with a thesis statement for your argument. The thesis states, in one neat package, the most important plank of your argument.

When writing for Social Studies 10, it is important to remember that you need only discuss and evaluate those ideas that are directly relevant to your argument. You need not include a complete summary of every idea that we have encountered in a given unit. For example, in a paper that asks you to compare Marx and Weber's stances toward modern capitalism, you need not summarize Marx's theory of primitive accumulation, but you may need to discuss the theory of historical materialism. Though the ability to summarize is important, many beginning students wait until the last page (if at all) to express their argument or position toward the theorist under discussion. If you find that you are summarizing a theorist without presenting an argument, look at the final pages of your first draft for an argument that you can infuse into every paragraph of the next draft.

The First Draft

First drafts that masquerade as final drafts often lack an argument that informs every paragraph, even summary paragraphs. Therefore, we suggest that you think of your first draft as a means toward a mature argumentative position. First drafts may be written in many different ways. Some are written "fast and loose" in a timed writing exercise, while others are the result of careful deliberation, proceeding step by step through a pre-planned outline and thesis. The former will take less time up-front but more time in revision. This strategy is best if you are stuck or uncertain about your argument. The latter strategy will be more time-consuming at first, with less time left over for revision. For this reason, this strategy is best when you already have a clear picture of your argument. In any case, there is no absolute rule about writing a first draft, except that it should not be considered a final product.

Second Drafts

Having formulated an argumentative thesis for the paper, every paragraph of the second (and successive) drafts should now attempt to relate to and/or elaborate upon that main idea. You may need to cut sections that no longer fit into the argument of your paper. Alternatively, you may need to write new passages or sections that expand upon your argument. Be especially careful to back up the new claims with evidence (textual or otherwise) that supports your position. Trim the passages that are adequate summaries of an idea but do not pertain to your argument. Your goal with your second, and successive, drafts is a perfect synthesis of summary and evaluation spread evenly across every page.

Reorganizing For Your Reader: Structural Revisions

Once you have conceptualized your argument and interjected it into every paragraph of the paper, you may notice that the paper becomes more difficult to read than it was as a first draft. This is not unusual: as your papers become more complex, your summaries may lose some clarity or the flow of the argument may be difficult to follow. To correct this, you may want to show your draft to a tutor or a peer (preferably not a member of Social Studies), asking how well they can understand your summaries and follow your arguments. Their fresh eyes will help you to determine the best possible order of the “steps” in your argument. This editing process will also help you to identify passages that need to be clarified, sentences that need to be expanded or cut, and assumptions that need to be unpacked.

Reorganization is the process of making your paper “reader-friendly.” What does this mean? When you write a first draft, you are often writing your ideas so that they make sense to you. However, when you revise, you are trying to make your ideas legible to others. By constructively “cutting and pasting” sections of your essay or improving the transitions between sections, you can usually improve the flow of the paper, making it simpler to follow your argument. Some tips on making your paper “reader-friendly”: It may be helpful to include a “road map” (a short paragraph that describes the steps of your argument) in the introduction after the first statement of your thesis. It may also be appropriate to divide your paper into subsections with headings that can act like street signs for your reader. Transitions from paragraph to paragraph should link the leading idea of one paragraph to the previous paragraph. Conclusions should restate the thesis in light of the arguments presented. Refreshing the reader’s memory of the steps in the argument is also valuable in the conclusion.

Style and Format Revisions

Maintaining a consistent format throughout your papers requires attention to detail. We recommend that you buy or borrow a manual of style (such as The Chicago Manual of Style). A resource like this is invaluable, especially if common computer programs, such as spell-checkers, supplement it. Each discipline has its own format for footnotes so you should check with your tutors to see what format they prefer.

In addition to these general recommendations, the tutors for Social Studies have noticed that students tend to make common formatting and stylistic errors. In light of the frequency of these errors, we have compiled the following list of questions to ask yourself before handing in your paper.

--Are my sentences “active” constructions?

--Do my sentences express one idea or do they run on with multiple, dangling clauses?

--Do I waste valuable space with “empty sentences” or “trite formulations” that merely hold a place for or mask an idea that still needs to be expressed?

--Do I use unnecessary words in order to sound sophisticated? Is there a simpler way to say the same thing?

--Do I use trite words (e.g. “nice,” “interesting”) that carry little meaning?

--Do I use a consistent format of footnotes and citations?

--Have I numbered my pages? Have I included a cover page and reference page or bibliography?

IV. Evaluation

Given the interpretive and argumentative nature of the writing involved, there can be no simple or scientific formula for grading a Social Studies paper. What we offer here is, instead, a more schematic distillation of the basic points that the preceding chapters have been making over and over in different ways. To give you a fuller sense of the particular criteria by which your work will be judged, individual tutors may choose to give their tutorials a different or more detailed grading rubric that they will be relying on when evaluating your papers.

A superlative paper generally does most if not all of the following things:

1. provides a convincing, well-defended, and interesting thesis
2. contributes an innovative interpretation of a theorist’s text or positions
3. paraphrases the theorist in one’s own words, avoiding jargon and excessive quotation
4. situates the question in terms of the theorist’s larger project
5. draws out the implications of a theorist’s arguments
6. suggests the strongest objections to its own thesis – and then answers them

A deficient paper may fail in the following ways:

7. lacks a clear argument – offers only a descriptive thesis leading to a laundry list of separate points
8. lacks critical distance – merely regurgitates texts
9. fails to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant aspects of the work(s) in question
10. offers merely polemical, rather than well-reasoned and defended, claims
11. lacks evidence for its claims
12. lacks logical connections between arguments
13. uses lengthy, excessive, irrelevant, or unintegrated quotations
14. makes insufficient or distorting references to texts
15. doesn't define its key terms
16. contains confusing grammar or writing style

*Finally, as a last bit of advice, it's important to remember to have some fun with your assignments. Chances are, if you are having a good time writing, your reader will likewise enjoy reading what you have to say. Writing in Social Studies 10, while challenging, is a wonderful opportunity to develop and offer your own perspective on some of the most important and enduring questions about social life. ☺