

Metacritical Analysis

Metacriticism: "A criticism of criticism, the goal of which is to scrutinize systematically the terminology, logic, and structure that undergird critical and theoretical discourse in general or any particular mode of such discourse" (Henderson and Brown).

To perform a metacritical analysis is to critique a critic's work; to describe, analyze, evaluate the principles and methods of a critical approach; to question the theoretical foundations of criticism; or to study the history, purpose, or context of a critical text.

Basic Assignment. Choose one of the critical-theoretical texts from this semester's schedule and write a five-page paper that provides a metacritical analysis of it.

If you write a critical analysis of any of the texts on our schedule, you will almost certainly, by definition, be performing a metacritical analysis of it. So don't get hung up on the term "metacritical."

Instead, perhaps using the approaches named above, think about *how* you'd like to approach your metacritical work. Would you like to work on a close reading of Dyer's terminology, an assessment of Mohanty's logic, a critique of the structure of Jameson's essay, a description of the underlying assumptions in Debord's work, an analysis of the political principles in McRobbie's writing, an evaluation of Halberstam's method, a critical questioning of the theoretical foundation of Denning's book, a study of the theoretical context in Benjamin wrote, an explication of Habermas's purpose in defining the public sphere the way he did, an analysis of the historical context for the emergence of the critical ideas that appear in Pieterse, and so on, and so on?

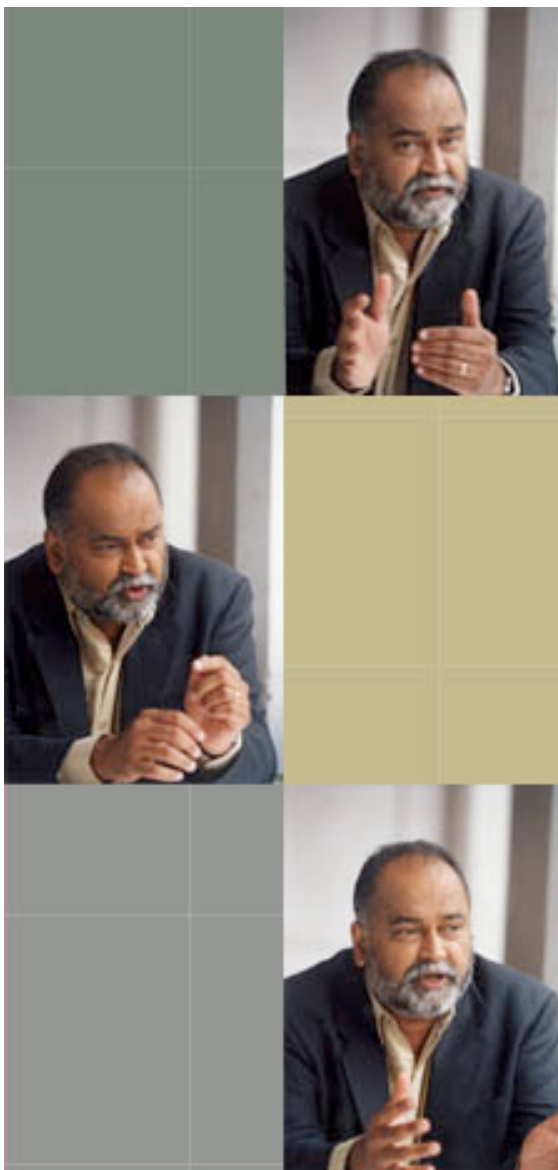
Get the idea?

Reminders and Advice. Your paper should have a clear and interesting major claim or thesis that organizes or focuses your analysis. This paper is primarily an *analysis*—a breaking down of a complex text into its various elements and a close examination of those elements, especially the elements that most need examination because of the



difficulties, ambiguities, or problems that they pose. Analysis is the process of breaking down the text to understand how its various parts contribute to the text (or effect of the text) as a whole. You might also think about analysis as a kind of "reverse engineering," pulling something apart to see how it works.

Thus, you'll need to use careful examination and citation of parts of your selected text to defend and illustrate your analysis. Your paper, perhaps in the conclusion or elsewhere, should also identify the significance or value of your analysis. What, for example, has your analysis shown that would not be obvious to most readers? What's interesting or useful or important about what you've revealed through your analysis?



Finally, the paper should have a good title and page numbers. It should be typed and double-spaced. And it should be proofread carefully for clarity, consistency, and correctness. Please use MLA style to cite texts and provide information on your text (and other sources, if you use other sources, which is not a requirement of this assignment).

Paper Conferences. There is no paper proposal requirement for this paper, but I would be more than happy to meet with you at any point during the next three weeks to discuss your ideas, plans, outline, or draft.

Due Date. Monday, November 20.

Length. 5 pages.

Photographs: Angela McRobbie (front) and Arjun Appadurai (reverse).