REL 450 Religion & the Paranormal

Critical Reading Exercise (CRE) Guidelines

This assignment requires that you complete ONE critical reading exercise (CRE) for each of the five books we will be reading over the course of the semester, as outlined in the syllabus. Each CRE must cover all the assigned pages from the reading assignment as listed on the syllabus and it is due on the day those readings are discussed in class.

* If you want to gain extra credit you can do additional CREs on reading pages that are not assigned. Any extra credit is due by the last day of class.

The required format is paragraph (not outline) prose writing. The following are the basic rules for writing a good CRE.

- Read the assigned chapter(s) and mark what you see as the most important points being made by the author (emphasis on author perspective, not reader perspective)
- Items to look for: key theoretical ideas, central concerns of the author in the chapter, problems raised by the author, alternatives to those problems, types of information used (sources: secondary, primary, ethnographic?), possible lack of clarity or author biases
- The CRE should describe only the most basic information; get to the point quickly and avoid commentary and analysis; what are the key points of the chapter?
- What to avoid: too much detail, rapid skimming, superficial analysis, repetition, getting side tracked on *examples* (focus on key ideas, not examples of those ideas)
- Writing: be sure to write coherent, well-organized paragraphs; compressed sentences, lack of complete sentences, and bad grammar will lower your grade. Writing should be a clear and excellent summary of exactly what the author emphasizes in the reading.

Style Guide: All of the following must be part of your CRE—failure to follow these guidelines will lower your grade.

- CREs should be approximately 1.5 pages, with 1” margins and 12 pt. typeface and double (not single or 1.5) spacing. You can print back-to-back to save paper or use two sheets stapled in the upper left corner.
- CREs must have a title which gives the book title, author, book title, and list of pages for the chosen reading assignment (e. g. J. Kripal, Authors of the Impossible, pp. 37-91), that way I know what you are summarizing.
- You must also have your name in the upper right corner.
- Finally, you must give a word count of the number of words in the summary, in parentheses at the end of the last paragraph (as below). The word range must be between 550-650 words, more or less will mean a penalty.
- You do not need any references or notes in the summary, just good, well-organized writing. Stay centered and be concise about the most important ideas! (445 words)