RELS 298 Body, Mind, & Spirit

Response Paper Guidelines

The purpose of this assignment is for you to demonstrate that you have read the required assignment, assimilated its basic ideas, and then respond to those ideas in a thoughtful, insightful manner. First read the assigned pages and mark or underline everything you think is central or critical to the author’s point of view. Second, go back over the reading and look at your underlines and select those ideas that best represent the “bare bones” of the author, his or her core ideas. Third write your paper according to the following guidelines. Be sure to read critically, not just passively, what do you agree with and what do you disagree with or find poorly expressed or confusing by the author?

ONE: Title your paper with a short title of the book, with author’s name, top center of paper, followed by your name; one inch margins, 12 point font about the same size as the font on this paper; a good norm is 12 pt. Times New Roman, but choose whatever works best for you. Set up page numbering on the top right corner as shown here. Double space all writing, NO single space papers.

TWO: Give an overview summary of the core ideas of the book, use the author’s last name, “Fuller argues” or the “author believes” and so on. This should be a coherent but brief analysis of the core ideas of the book. Length about 1.5 pages. Be sure to give citations by page number if you quote the author directly (Fuller, xx) where xx = pages. Do not use other sources, just use the book assigned. This is challenging, you have to pick the best ideas that stand out for you, you cannot cover all ideas, just the very central concerns. Be selective but accurate, choose what you think are the important issues, give a brief synopsis of each.

THREE: Write up your response – what is most valuable or significant for you about this book, what ideas stands out as important or central? What is the goal of the author? How do you respond to that goal? What is the author’s intent? Are you convinced by his or her argument? Do you disagree with any points made by the author? What are the strong points and the weak points of the author’s argument? Do you like this book? Why or why not? Was there anything unclear, obscure, hard to understand, or vague in the book? The response can be a separate section OR integral to your analysis of ideas; choose one or the other strategy, NOT both – either give a response as you go OR give a separate response after the summary.

FOUR: Write a very brief conclusion, summarize your thoughts, one paragraph; overall what is your evaluation of the book? Informative? Unclear? Too abstract? Not enough (or too many) examples? Did you learn anything about Body, Mind & Spirit theory? Give your honest opinion, there is no right answer here – the assignment is for you to read and respond, showing careful reading and a thoughtful response. This is part of professional writing in Religious Studies, so show your most polished style, good vocabulary, and clear thinking.

AVOID: Try not to use “slang” expressions, write in good grammatical English. Do not make jokes or asides just to be entertaining; a sense of humor can work, if done respectfully. Avoid misspelling, spell check will NOT get everything, so read it over carefully. Do not be superficial, or glib, I am looking for concise and coherent thinking, not just good writing style; a good style with superficial thought will learn a low grade. Do not be timid! If you have ideas, express them and trust your own judgment, own your paper, make it something that genuinely expresses your real thinking, not just a passing notion or a random assortment of disconnected thoughts. To be an author, you have to write well and communicate clearly, that’s the goal.