Writing Session: Evaluative Writing

• Your summaries will be handed back on Wednesday.
• Stage 2 of Pre-Draft Assignment due on Thursday (2/12): Article Evaluations (see LATTE)
Clines’ Article

• David Clines, “The Ten Commandments, Reading from Left to Right,” in *Interested Parties: The Theology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible.*
Evaluative Writing – Part 1

What does it mean to evaluate/critique in an academic paper?

• Striving for objectivity
• Critical thinking
  – What is the author’s argument/main point?
  – Is it a good argument?
• Reporting strengths and/or weaknesses (BE SPECIFIC!) to support your position
Thinking Critically – 1

What is the author’s argument?
Thinking Critically – 2

• Deductive reasoning deals w/ certainty:

Everyone taking this class is a Brandeis student.
Shoshana is taking this class.
Shoshana is a Brandeis student.

• Inductive reasoning deals w/ probability:

The earth is on average flat as far as we can go.
There are no people who walk upside down.
The earth is flat.
Evaluative Writing – Part 2

Is the author making a good argument?

• Assessment: Sound? Weak but salvageable? Condemn?!
• Support your case – BE SPECIFIC!
• Building your argument: Thesis, Evidence, Conclusion
• Your logic and critical thinking process should be clear = your critique should be critiqueable!
Good? Bad? A Little of Both?

1. Agree because of Good Argument
2. Disagree because of Bad Argument
3. Agree in spite of Bad Argument
   a) Good Argument in Disguise
   b) Bad Argument with Potential
4. Disagree in spite of Good Argument or Argument with Merits
Summary of Evaluative Writing

• Aim for objectivity
• Provide your criteria
• Build a clear and coherent case
• Your critique should be critiqueable!
• Avoid pejorative language
Evaluative Summary Sentence

• Summarizes, in one sentence, your overall evaluation of the article.
• Represents your final conclusion regarding the article, a generalization that logically flows from the specifics of your evaluation.

• An example evaluative summary for Jacob Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly ‘Picture of Dorian Gray,’” in Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology, 75-84:

  Milgrom’s interpretation of the nature of the hattat offering as a rite of purgation for the sanctuary offers the greatest amount of explanatory power as it takes into account the bulk of the biblical evidence as well as comparative material.
Reverse Outlining

- For information on the reverse outline and on how to use it in your paper revision process, see LATTE: Writing a Reverse Outline: Helpful Links.
Next Class

We will explore in more detail various approaches to biblical law—both anthropological approaches and ancient near eastern comparative approaches.

Please be sure to do the readings (not too extensive) so class makes sense.