



The Seminar or Response Paper

What is the purpose of a seminar paper?

A seminar paper is a short piece of writing, usually 1-2 pages in length, concerning an aspect of a given text. A seminar paper interprets specific examples and evidence. A seminar paper needs to have an extremely focused thesis; you must be able to thoroughly discuss your point. The seminar paper can be both broadly exploratory and yet it needs to cleave into the work and do some deep analysis. A successful paper will lead into more complex essays and analysis on class themes. The seminar paper is often used as a discussion piece for seminar, but it also can be a vehicle to explore recurring themes that relate to your overall educational goals. Each faculty member will have his or her own specific expectations for the seminar paper.

Here are some ideas and questions to think about while preparing to write your seminar paper.

- What is the author's thesis or agenda?
- How does the text connect with program theme(s)?
- What support for their thesis draws you in the most and why?
- How is evidence from other texts related?
- Discuss further implications of the author's evidence. How can you test out the author's thesis? If it is true, then what else should be true?
- What are some other ways to explain the author's point using your own examples?
- Discuss motives or biases of the author and how they influence his or her conclusions.
- Relate author's notions or evidence to personal experience.
- Explore arguments or points that are unclear or difficult.
- Does the author acknowledge and refute other arguments? How well?
- Is there sufficient evidence to support the author's argument? What else should the author have provided?
- What meaning or impact does this text/evidence have on its intended readers?
- How do the ideas of this text play out in your life and in your times?

Tip: The thesis of your seminar paper can be the answer to one of these questions. Since your paper needs to be concise and focused, you should hone these questions down and choose specific evidence to use for your argument.