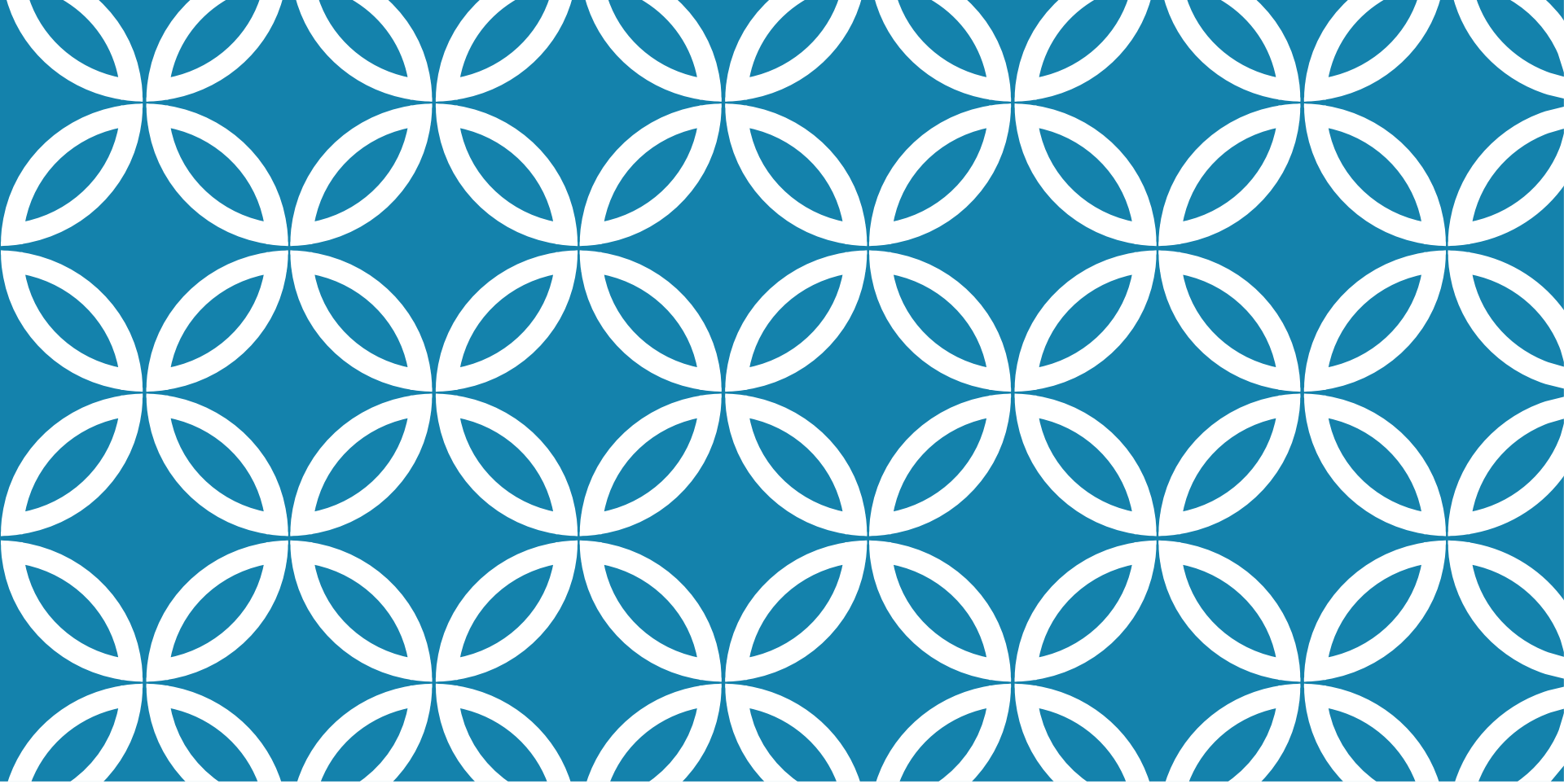


EXPOSITORY WRITING FA 2020

Introduction to Close Reading

Introduction to Tolentino

WHY EXPOSITORY WRITING?

Is this class about writing?

This class is about thinking: *writing is thinking*. This thinking comes with the advantage that since your thought is there on the page in front of you, you can refine it an add to it, in a recursive process in which layers of meaning are added through time.

Goal: to develop independent analytical thought, and that means moving beyond observing and summarizing.

The New Humanities Reader proposes that we must embrace "a new kind of thinking because we live in a world defined by possibilities, and possibilities go hand in hand with risk and unintended consequences" (Miller and Spellmeyer xv).

CLOSE READING

Close reading means to “read creatively” – but this creativity must be rooted in the textual evidence.

We want to creatively confront the ambiguity and complexity emerging from the texts, looking for a new, dynamic synthesis…

… that is, an ongoing process that facilitates the discovery of questions worth asking and conversations worth having.

CLOSE READING: BEST PRACTICES

Read (and re-read) actively.

Read with a pen in hand and underline passages you believe might be important or to which you have an especially strong response, even if you don't yet know why.

Take notes in the margins, on post-it notes, or in a separate document.

In addition to indicating moments that seem important, mark passages in the text that you don't understand.

Ask questions! Questions are a powerful gateway to understanding and creativity.

CLOSE READING: BEST PRACTICES

Aim to clarify moments of confusion.

Identify what you don't understand by keeping track of the passages you find confusing or difficult. It can be tempting to skim over such moments but resist this urge!

You may find these passages challenging because the author is expressing a difficult, complex, or important idea. When re-reading the text, spend time *unpacking* them. Start with an individual sentence that is challenging, and break it down word-by-word, and then paraphrase it until you think you have a good sense of it.

Remember that solid reading comprehension is a necessary precursor to independent interpretation.

CLOSE READING: BEST PRACTICES

Work with idea-rich passages.

Knowing how to select a potentially rewarding, idea-rich passage requires some pre-close reading, some intuition, and *a lot of practice*.

A good first step is to return to a moment of the text that jumped out at you in some way: a passage that surprised, intrigued, troubled, confused, or otherwise provoked you.

Selecting a passage that will reward close reading is often a process of trial and error. You may start a close reading of a passage and then realize it's not going to provide you with as much to think about as another passage may. Then you try another passage! When analyzing a text in this way, it's important to remember that close reading is primarily a process of discovery, not a product. Effective, not to mention responsible, inquiry starts by acknowledging that you don't already know what you might learn.

CLOSE READING: BEST PRACTICES

Recognize patterns and key terms.

The type of idea-rich passages that most reward close reading tend to share certain hallmarks, one of which is their development and use of “key terms” — the words, phrases, and concepts upon which a text’s argument rests.

Pay attention to textual signs that mark out a term as important, such as *repetition, modulation, depth of analysis*, and so on.

At the same time, note that not all important observations about a text’s language center on key terms. It can be just as valuable to investigate moments that seem more modest, be it a definite article where you may have expected an indefinite, an unfamiliar pluralization, or so on.

CLOSE READING: BEST PRACTICES

Attend to diction, syntax, figurative language, style, tone, and so on.

A text's language can always be read not merely for what it says, but how it says it. Put another way, you can always put things another way!

And paying attention to how something is phrased is an integral part of close reading. As you work through a passage, ask *why* the author may have chosen a particular phrasing, or avoided another; why the tone seems to shift at a given moment; and so on.

By asking these and other questions, you'll find yourself able to say much more about how a given text works, as well as what it has to say.

CLOSE READING: BEST PRACTICES

Bear in mind the context of the passage.

When close-reading, it's a good idea to move between the specificity of the passage you're reading and its relation to the rest of the text. Doing so will help ensure that you're not misreading or missing the forest for the trees.

Close reading is a dialogic process that produces an ongoing conversation between the reader's thinking and the passage. Aim to keep going back and forth between the small excerpt you're analyzing and the text as a whole.

CLOSE READING: BEST PRACTICES

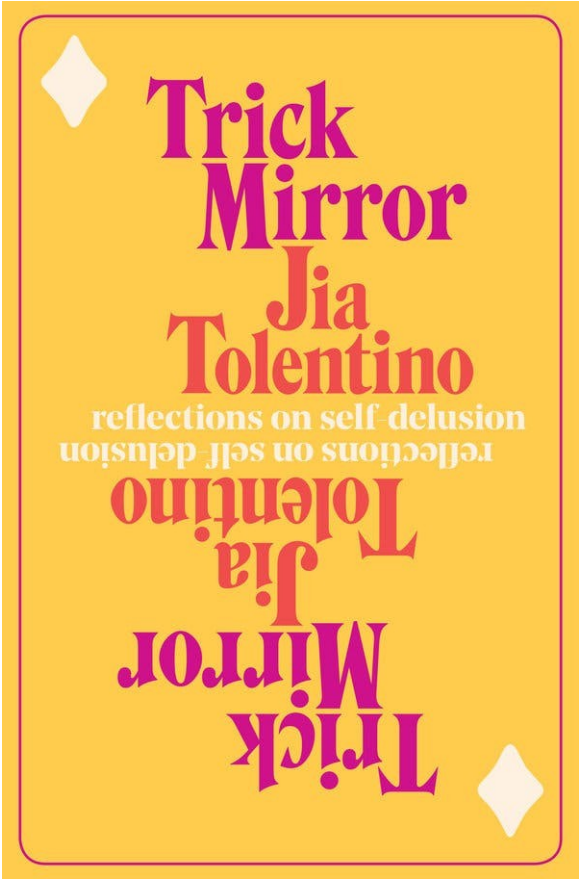
Attend to a text's structure.

Aim to divide the text you're reading into sections (or pay attention to the ways the author has explicitly structured their argument with subsections or subtopics).

What is the interrelation of the units of the text? How does the argument change or develop? How might you describe the logical connections between the argument's different moments? What are its turning points?

JIA'S TOLENTINO "TRICK MIRROR"





JIA'S TOLENTINO "TRICK MIRROR"

Published in 2019

A collection of 9 essays

Each essay is "a mix of reporting, research and personal history" (Doherty)

Tolentino analyzes modern life under "late, digitalized capitalism"

"Always be optimizing"

SCHEDULE

Assignment	Due Date
Comments Text 1	Thursday 9/3 3:00 PM
Textual Analytic Exercise (TAE) RD	Sunday 9/6 11:59 PM
Textual Analytic Exercise (TAE) D	Friday 9/11 11:59 PM
Reading / Comments Text 2	Tuesday 9/15 3:00 PM
Analytic Essay 1 (AE 1) RD	Saturday 9/19 11:59 PM
Analytic Essay 1 (AE 1) D	1313