

BRIEF COMMUNICATION

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COURSE:

THEORIES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

(EDPE 502)

SUMMARY

In 400–500 words, students summarize a course reading for a target audience of their choice and add their own interpretation of the main ideas.

GOALS

Foster students' ability to:

- think critically
- interpret theories
- write concisely

"This assignment is a 'temperature test' – it helps me see early on where students will need support for their final paper."

- Gigi Luk

STEPS

- 1 In the first half of the semester, students choose one course reading to summarize in 400-500 words.
- 2 The instructor provides [guiding questions](#) to help students structure their summary and interpretation.
- 3 The instructor returns students' work with feedback comments well in advance of the final paper so that they can use the comments to inform their final assignment, which calls on students to make use of similar skills.

ASSESSMENT

The assignment is worth 20% of the final grade. Students are provided with an [assessment rubric](#) in myCourses. A TA assesses students' work (assigns a grade and provides specific comments). The instructor reviews students' work and adds general comments.

READY TO TRY IT OUT?

HERE'S SOME ADVICE ...

- Ask students to work with readings that you know well. To assess students' work, you have to be familiar with the theories discussed in the readings.
- Allow class time for students to practice paraphrasing since direct quotes are not permitted in their writing.
- Be ready to answer questions about the instructions because students might be unfamiliar with this type of assignment.

BENEFITS

- Having a target audience of their choice in mind helps students focus their writing.
- An early writing submission allows students with weaker writing skills to get feedback they can use to improve their writing before the end of the course.
- The instructor sees early in the semester what areas students will need help in to achieve the course learning goals.

CHALLENGES

- Students come from different backgrounds (e.g., researcher and practitioner), and some struggle with academic writing.
- Students sometimes mistake this assignment for an exercise solely in summarizing when the assignment also calls for their own interpretation of theories.

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