

EEB 4609W/5609

Writing Assignment – News Summary

Due in Discussion September 18 (grads) and 19 (undergrads) – Bring 2 copies

Objective

The first writing assignment of the course is designed to help you understand how the course relates to broader societal issues by encouraging you to pay attention to and critically evaluate news about environmental and ecological science issues in the popular press. This first assignment will also give your course instructors initial impressions of your writing abilities so that we can address general issues before the final term paper assignment.

Assignment

1. Select an article from a newspaper or news magazine from the last 3 months that deals with some environmental or ecological issue. You can find your article in printed or online news sources, but please avoid blogs.

Hint: national newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have full-time science reporters who cover the environment, so if you have trouble finding articles in local newspapers, try national newspapers or magazines. For example, the *New York Times* publishes a special science section (*Science Times*) every Tuesday.

2. Summarize the main points of article. Be sure to address a) the main issue or problem being addressed, b) the different “sides” of the issues that are presented, and c) the conclusion reached by the author.

Format and Assessment

Your summary should be 1 ½ to 2 pages, double-spaced, Times or Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Be sure to include the complete citation for your article as follows:

Magazine: Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2007. Unconventional crude. *New Yorker*, November 12

Newspaper: Bittman, Mark. 2008. Rethinking the meat-guzzler. *New York Times*, January 2008

Bring two hard copies of your summary to Discussion on Sept 18 (graduate students) or Sept 19 (undergraduate students). In class, you will exchange summaries with another student and spend 10-15 minutes of class conducting a peer response of the other student’s summary. Responses should focus on how well the writer has covered the main points of the article, as outlined above (#2 under “Assignment”) and on the overall organization and clarity of the writing. We will spend the remainder of the Discussion period sharing verbal summaries of the articles with each other, to help make each other aware of the kinds of ecological and environmental issues that are dominating the news. You will hand in the other copy of your summary. It will be scored with a 1, 2 or 3. (1=poor; 2=good; 3=exceptional) and contribute to the overall Discussion/Short-Write grade.

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**Guidelines to doing Peer Response of Writing Assignment – News Summary
Done in Class on September 18 (grads) or 19 (undergrads)**

Objective

This exercise will give you practice in providing constructive response to peers about their writing.

Assignment

Take 10 minutes to read the News Summary assigned to you and address the following questions:

- 1) How well has the writer covered the main points of the article (the main issue being discussed, the different sides presented, and the journalist's conclusion)?
- 2) Are there any places where the writing is particularly clear or particularly unclear? Draw a wavy line under passages that are unclear. Draw a box around particularly clear or well-stated passages.