ENGL 8906

Introduction to Critical Theory

**Seminar Paper Abstract Format**

**Form:**

* write 500 words (about 2 double-spaced pages)
* double space the text include a title
* “indicate” rather than make the argument or analysis (“This essay argues that…”)
* use present tense when talking about events in a text
* bring copies for everyone
* include a copy of the CFP that you're using as inspiration

**Content:**

* Explain the **critical problem** you are solving: a problem posed by the work itself, by criticism or readings of the work, by the work's reception or reputation, etc. (Alternatively, you might describe a critical task that you are performing which has not been done before, or otherwise needs to be done now.)
* Mention (an)**other critic(s)** or theorist(s) as context for your argument (as support, jumping-off points, or foils)
* **Summarize** your argument through “indicating,” but don't attempt to *make* your argument in an abbreviated way
* You might give us a **taste** of how a small portion of your essay will sound/work.
* Say **why your point matters**, or to whom (to what conversation, debate, critical project)
* Describe the **critical or theoretical apparatus** you will use to help generate, inform, and sustain your discussion.  This might be a single critical idea, set of related ideas, a critical approach or school, etc.

**Advice About the**

**Oxford Way of Introducing an Essay**

*I shall always remember the first essay that I ever took to Professor [Charles] Oman, and the devastating criticism that it evoked. He had told me to write an estimate of Cicero. He waved me into an arm-chair, and told me to read it to him. "Marcus Tullium Cicero," I began, "was born at Arpinum on January 3rd, B.C. 106."*

*"No never," cried my tutor, "under any circumstances, begin an essay like that." And he started me off on half a dozen different tracks. What did Cicero stand for? Was he a genuine politician? Was he a trimmer? Did he do good for the state or evil? "Begin with an epigram, begin with a paradox, or begin with a demonstrably false premise and demolish it. But never, never, start off with such a dry and helpless statement as that 'Marcus Tullius Cicero was born at Arpinum on January 3rd, B.C. 106.'"*

*The whole of Oxford teaching is in that condemnation--ideas not facts, judgments not an index, life not death.*

*- Arthur Waugh,* One Man's Road *(1931):*