

Digressions Style Guide for Authors:

Review (max 1,000 words)

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Digressions: Amsterdam Journal of Critical Theory, Cultural Analysis, and Creative Writing is a student-run academic journal based at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. We publish articles on critical theory and cultural analysis; reviews of books, films, and art exhibitions; and creative writing. This way, we aim to provide a platform for talented master's, research master's, and Ph.D. students as well as recent graduates to share their research and writing.

As such, it is important to write both academically and accessibly. This document aims to ensure that your text will conform to our house style, and authors are requested to adhere to these guidelines when submitting a text. Should you have any queries about this guide, please do not hesitate to contact your commissioning editor.

General

- Unless noted otherwise below, adhere to the MLA writing guidelines (revised in 2016) as explicated on the Purdue University website:
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.
- The key to writing is revision, i.e., spending time and concentration on the task at hand.

Content

- You can review various sorts of (academic or cultural) artifacts, not limited to books, films, or art exhibitions. Think also of academic conferences or theatrical productions, for instance.
- An academic review contains a critical reflection on, and argues for a value judgment of, a particular artifact.
- Embed your discussion of the artifact in a theoretical context by referring to a handful of theoretical texts most relevant to your discussion.

Structure

- An academic review is a unified, focused text that argues for one specific claim. Because a review is short and concise, there should be no redundant information in it: every word, sentence, and paragraph should contribute to your argument. In other words: avoid general, vague writing; always be precise.
- A well-structured review consists of three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. In the introduction, you posit your claim and announce the body's structure. In the body, you lay out

your argumentation to support your claim. In the conclusion, you restate the claim and recap the body's structure/your argumentation.

- The body consists of a number of paragraphs, also known as body paragraphs. Each of these paragraphs opens with a topic sentence: a sentence that concisely states what you are going to argue in this section of your review, and how the section relates to your main claim. Each body paragraph constitutes a logical step towards supporting your claim; there should be no redundant information in them.
- A body paragraph is a substantial discussion of one particular subject. "Substantial" means that a paragraph consists of at least four full sentences. "One particular subject" implies that a paragraph addresses one topic; not multiple topics, nor no clearly delineated topic at all. Consequently, a paragraph does not run the length of a full page.
- The rule of one topic per paragraph can also be inverted: one paragraph per topic. Avoid repetition; if you need to say something again, it means you have not properly explained it the first time around.

Audience

- Imagine that you are addressing a smart, educated person who will not automatically agree with what you write.
- You can assume that your reader is relatively familiar with the artifact and theoretical texts under discussion; you do not need to provide lengthy plot outlines.

Format

- Submit your text as a Word file.
- Add a cover page containing the following information:
 - ✓ Title (and subtitle) of your text.
 - ✓ A bibliographical reference of the reviewed artifact.
 - ✓ Your first and last name.
 - ✓ Your affiliation, including:
 - current or recently completed academic program and university;
 - optional: any personal or financial interest to be declared (e.g., relevant personal or professional involvement in or relationship with the subject of your text if not already acknowledged in the text; any grants or subsidies used to write the text);
 - optional: thank you's to people who have reviewed or commented on earlier drafts, or a reference to a paper, thesis, or dissertation on which the text is based. Please keep to a minimum.
- Keep your text and document layout as plain as possible. E.g., no page numbers, automatic section numbering, headers, footers, etc.

Style

- Choose between American English and British English; be consistent throughout.

- If you refer to the title of a work often, write it out in full for the first instance, and shorthand for subsequent instances. Thus, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* becomes *Strangelove* in subsequent instances.
- Use the personal pronoun “I.” *I will argue that ...*
- Avoid colloquialisms such as “very,” “enormous,” and “terribly.”
- Avoid sexist language; do not use the masculine pronoun to refer to all genders.
- Use present tense when describing a text. *Juliet appears on the balcony.*
- Write in grammatically complete sentences. If you read your text from end to beginning, each sentence should make grammatical sense on its own. Hence, a sentence does not start as follows: ~~*Which means that ...*~~
- Avoid rambling sentences that run on too long due to excessive use of sub-clauses.
- Write out contractions. **Do not**
- Write carefully! The past tense of “to cast” is “cast,” not “casted”; the same goes for “to broadcast.” There is a distinction between “then” and “than,” “there” and “their,” “men” and “man,” “society’s” and “societies.”

Punctuation

- Use a serial comma. In an enumeration of three or more items, place a comma before the conjunction (“and,” “or”). *Her dress is long, red, and pretty.*
- With the exception of quotes, periods and commas go inside quotation marks. *Rather than “free choice,” I would call this “fate.”*
- Only use single quotation marks inside double quotation marks. *Garber writes: “Rather than ‘free choice,’ I would call this ‘fate’” (14).*
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks.
- Use italics throughout your text (this includes the title of your review) for the titles of longer works and, only when absolute necessary, providing emphasis.

Quotations

- Quote instead of paraphrase!
- Place your omission in quotations in square brackets. [...] If the omission occurs in the original, do not use square brackets. ...
- No indication of omission at the start or the end of a quotation.
- There is a space between the quotation marks at the end of a quotation and the parenthesis that precedes the page number.
- Following a quotation, provide the minimally required information. This can be page number; author and page number; or author, shortened title, and page number. Only in the latter case is there a comma between author and shortened title. (14) (*Garber 14*) (*Garber, Modern 14*).
- Quotations must be exact. If you insert information or change the tense, use square brackets. *Garber writes: “Juliet [does] not yet know that he [Romeo] has already killed himself” (14).*
- If you leave out part of a quotation, even if only a comma, use ellipses with square brackets. *Garber writes: “Juliet [does] not yet know that he [Romeo] has [...] killed himself” (14).*

- Integrate a short quotation into your running text. Make sure the resulting sentence is grammatically correct.
- For a longer quotation, create a block citation. No quotation marks around a block citation.
- Quotations in languages other than English must be translated. You can opt to include the original quotation in a footnote.
- Otherwise, use notes as sparingly as possible. Use footnotes instead of endnotes.

How to quote from a play-text?

- Quotations from *Romeo and Juliet* are not followed by a page number, but instead by act number, scene number, line number. As Juliet famously asks: “O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?” (2.2.36).
- Three lines of verse are quoted in the running text, slash forwards marking the line breaks. She continues: “Deny thy father and refuse thy name. / Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, / And I’ll no longer be a Capulet” (2.2.37-39).
- Four or more lines of verse are quoted as a block citation.

’Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What’s Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. (2.2.41-45)

Illustrations

- It is important that you always obtain permission from the copyright holder to use the illustrations, indicating that *Digressions* is published under a Creative Commons license. Proof of copyright clearance must be provided before final approval of the manuscript. Since obtaining permission can be both time-consuming and expensive, authors are strongly advised *not* to add images to their texts and instead provide links to (legitimate) online sources that are easily accessible to readers in footnotes or the Works Cited list.
- If using images, do not embed them in your Word document. Instead, put placeholders in the text to show where the illustrations go. Type each placeholder on its own line, in square brackets, followed by a period. [Figure 1.] Add a list of Figures at the end of the text, providing caption and source information. Each item is preceded by the corresponding number and period in square brackets again. Send each illustration as a separate file to your editor. Make sure that the illustrations are of good quality.