

## The Critique Paper: An Introduction

A critique is defined as a formalized, critical evaluation of a text. This means that you will examine Levitt and Dubner's argument and then determine how good or bad of a job they did. As I try to emphasize on the assignment sheet, a critique is more than just a personal opinion; it is an analysis of an argument based on a set of criteria.

If you've ever watched any competition reality TV shows (If you claim you haven't, really, be honest with yourself, you loved watching that eight hour marathon of *Project Runway*) you have seen short critiques at the end of every episode. The contestants are prodded into a dramatically lit room where intimidating judges stare at them like vultures. The uncomfortable questioning from the judges and stammered answering from the contestants follows. Then the judges proceed to praise or eviscerate the work of the contestants. The judge's conclusions are usually based on some kind of criteria, which is like a list of things the item under scrutiny must have in order to be considered "good". For this dish to be successful it must have these qualities. An excellent film must have these things. A great wardrobe must do these things for the wearer.

Admittedly, many of these things - food, films, fashion - do not really have solid, objective criteria that every judge agrees is the sole criteria from which to critique a work. Just look at the ongoing debate in the world of literary studies about whether or not *The Lord of the Rings* should be considered *real* literature. Keep in mind, however, the critiques you will be writing will be based on evaluating arguments, which has a slightly more sturdy set of criteria.

Because this paper is notorious for giving some people a hard time, I have divided the "lecture" into several sections, which I will post throughout this week (Week 3) and into next week. Please read them all and take a look at the example; then, if you have any questions or if you're still in the dark, please ask me.