A Guide to Academic Writing

Writing is required in all academic fields in college—history, sociology, psychology, science, mathematics, philosophy, business, engineering, criminal justice—not just English. Your professors expect you to communicate what you are learning, using a variety of genres, styles, and formats. Here are a few types of writing you may be asked to do in college.

**Journals/field notes**
Think of journals and field-notes as the clay for your future thoughts, observations, and ideas; these are informal.

**Literature reviews**
Categorize, conceptualize, or synthesize relevant opinions (i.e., scholarly articles) on a specific issue.

**Analysis papers**
Analyze any piece of literature or artifact, such as a painting or design, scientific experiment or literary criticism, etc., to promote your own interpretation of a particular theory or style.

**Critiques**
Analyze a journal article, website, or work of art (i.e., literary, musical, theatrical, visual), or work of any kind to assess relevance, performance, or credibility.

**Evalutative essays**
Analyze a particular artifact—literary, artistic, or scientific; a concept, theory, or experience—and discuss strengths and weaknesses.

**Narratives**
Present collected data through use of informal methods (e.g., sharing stories, writing imaginary letters to parents or diary entries of a person in history).

**Case studies**
Present a problem, discuss others’ thoughts on the issue (see lit. review), describe and analyze data/evidence, and draw conclusions.

**Research and lab reports**
Identify research questions, contextualize the question in the research literature (see lit. review); identify hypotheses, methods of data collection and reduction and analysis; discuss findings.