Writing Workshop Process and Standards

Directions:

1. On the day that the draft is due, bring copies for each member of your workshop group—including one for me.

2. Bring two copies of your typed comments on each draft to the conference: one copy for the author and one copy for me.

3. Your typed comments should include the following information at the top:
   - Critic’s Name
   - Author’s Name
   - Date

4. Typed comments should be thorough and specific, based on the particular criteria for each essay as shown in our readings and in the evaluation criteria. I will evaluate everyone’s typed comments and verbal comments for effort and knowledge of writing strategies. This becomes part of your grade for the final draft.

5. Each author should bring three typed questions about his/her essay to the conference. These questions will form the starting point for our discussion.

Standards for Writing Workshops

- Critics should read the drafts twice, to understand the essays as well as possible.

- Authors should distribute completed, thoughtful rough drafts before the conferences. They don’t need to be perfect, but they should show effort and not be thrown together.

- Drafts should be typed and proofread.

- 20-30 minutes reading and responding to each draft is a reasonable amount of time. A minimum 1/2 page of typed comments is reasonable, though a full page of comments is more likely.

- Everyone should participate in the group discussion.

- Pros and cons for each essay should be included in the written comments. Critics should be honest in their critiques—the more information generated the better.

- Written and verbal comments should be specific.

- Critics should focus on writing strategies and content effectiveness rather than agreeing or disagreeing with an author’s stance (critics must keep an open mind to different perspectives).

- Give the type of effort to others’ essays that you would like them to give to your own.

- Each author should listen carefully and take notes during the discussion of his/her essay.

- Group members are responsible for raising ideas, not for correcting drafts. The individual authors still control their own essay.

- The goal of the writing workshops is to improve writing skills and to improve the individual drafts.
Reminders:

*In a writing workshop, you are only offering suggestions for the author. You should not be correcting the draft. Rather, it is your responsibility in this exercise to point out areas that can be improved and areas that are particularly strong. The author must analyze your comments and decide how to integrate the suggestions into the next draft.

* “Being nice” and only pointing out strengths of a piece of writing, or exaggerating the effectiveness of some aspect of the writing, will not help the author, nor will it help you to recognize writing that needs improvement. Keep in mind that each student in the class is choosing to participate in the writing workshop exercises. In doing so, each student is asking for constructive commentary on the weaknesses as well as the strengths of his/her writing. Therefore, keep your commentary polite yet accurate.

*Remember, you should use the same writing workshop strategies to revise your own drafts.