

## Project 2: The Technical Summary – 20 points

**Purpose:** To compose a technical summary that accurately and concisely overviews a lengthy document from your discipline.

**Audience:** Your instructor, your peers, and future employers.

### The Assignment

Synthesizing dense, complex information for non-subject matter experts (SMEs) is one of the most important writing skills you will deploy in graduate school or the workplace. For this assignment, choose a peer-reviewed article or lengthy article written for other experts/scholars/scientists, etc., and write a summary of that work for non-SMEs. Your summary should avoid plagiarizing the original work you are synthesizing—a challenging task—while answering the following questions adapted from the summary chapter by Pechenik (p. 123-124):

1. Why was the work undertaken? To answer this, draw especially from information given in the Introduction and Discussion sections of the paper.
2. What specific questions were addressed? Summarize each question in a single sentence.
3. How were these questions addressed? What specific approaches were taken to address each question on your list?
4. What assumptions were made by the author(s)? Might any of them be wrong? Are they testable? How might they be tested?
5. What were the major findings of the study/work?
6. What was particularly interesting about the paper? The questions asked? Some aspect of the methodology? Some particular result or set of results? Some particular conclusion?
7. What questions remain unanswered by the study? These may be questions addressed by the study/work but not answered conclusively, or they may be new questions arising from the findings of the study under consideration.

When you choose the piece you will summarize, please remember that your summary must be around 2,500 words (5 pages). So the original work will have to be substantial enough to require a 5-page summary. Consider that many pieces are summarized in 2 or 3 pages. So the study/work you choose will have to be pretty long. A peer-reviewed article that has a word count of 10,000 would be a good option. If you aren't sure about the piece you have in mind, make an appointment with me.

### Goals of the Assignment

The goals of this assignment are to accomplish the following:

- Writing Process – Develop and understand various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, testing, and revising a reader-focused summary
- Research – Understand and use secondary research methods to produce an effective summary
- Document Design – Learn to communicate with visual information, understanding and implementing various principles of format, layout, and design of an effective summary

### Format for the Technical Summary

Your summary should follow the organization outlined in the Pechenik chapter and the professional document format outlined in *Technical Communication Today*, that is, single-spaced, professionally formatted, etc.

### **Summary Feedback Form**

*On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest score, rate the following:*

Introduction paragraph:

Body paragraphs/summary information:

Conclusion:

Grammar and mechanics (syntax, word choice, punctuation, citation – *avoiding plagiarism*):

*Please answer these questions about the technical summary:*

Was the summary clear and concise?

Did it effectively synthesize the original work's information for non-SMEs? If so, why? If not, why not?

What did you like about the summary?

What did you not like about the summary?

Do you have any suggestions about the summary to make them more effective?

### **Revision**

You will have opportunities to revise your work throughout the research and writing process, and you will be able to revise *one individual assignment* after you have submitted your final draft. The revision is due with Project 3 on our final exam day. You may not use the revision due date as an extension for this assignment. I will average the grades from your original and your revised documents for your final assignment grade.