

Peer review in academia

For Nursing 500 onsite

September 5, 2012

What is peer review?

- <http://library.uvic.ca/instruction/research/peerreview.html>

Peer review

- Journal articles, books, grant proposals
- Expert opinion
- Impartiality
- Blind vs. open review
- Criteria – varies for discipline / journal
- Failure of peer review?
- Benefits of peer review?

Three (or four) responses

- Rejection (not right for us; not good enough; no comments)
- Rejection with some encouragement – try again?
- Accepted if you do certain revisions (conditional acceptance)
- Accepted

Example

- Submission 2009 of article to English Studies in Canada (ESC) of an article
- “Converting the Church: Richard Rodriguez and the Browning of Catholicism”
- Two reviewers – Five criteria
- Significance; Accessibility; Originality; Authority; Presentation

Example of comments

- Significance: This essay uses three books by Mexican-American author Richard Rodriguez to explore the apparent contradiction of an openly gay man who is also an active member of the Catholic church . . . The article as it now stands leaves major questions in my mind as to **whether or not the author is arguing** that a contradiction exists

Example of comments

- Accessibility: I was surprised not to see any references to the work of Chicana lesbians (Cherrie Moraga, for example) or to the place of Catholicism in Chicano culture (see Mario Garcia's recent book *Catolicos: Resistance and Affirmation in Chicano Catholic History*). This author has made ample use of literature on Rodriguez, but his/her arguments might be improved by going to sources that treat the issues more broadly.

Examples of comments

- Accessibility, cont'd:
- The author needs to be **more precise** in laying out the issues related to this field; s/he starts the essay, for example, with a mention of Rodriguez's celebration of assimilation, mixing, conversion, and hybridity, and never gives the reader an indication as to how these contested words relate to or differ from each other. A **similar lack of precision** in the use of language appears with words like assimilation and conversion, and ultimately this **lack of precision is the problem with the argument in general.**

Examples of comments

- Presentation:
- Technical issues: The essay needs a **much tighter theoretical focus**; it begins, for example, with three epigraphs. The author needs to decide on one (perhaps the first) and then **work to make sure that every other part of the essay supports it.**
- The manuscript shows some evidence of **sloppy preparation . . .**

What to do?

- List feedback as global/ local (as with class paper)
- For larger issues, you may need to read more and work out / lay out definitions, arguments, and exclusions with more precision
- Work from large issues (theoretical/ filling in information and sources) to small (sloppy presentation).
- Check off items in list; resubmit. Enjoy seeing your name in print 😊

Peer review is a gift

- Learn from the experts in the field
- If you don't agree, don't do it (and explain why)
- Don't compromise your integrity
- Your paper is often better as a result of you revising in response to peer review
- Consider peer review is part of the academic conversation