

## ZAPS

### What is a zap reflection?

A “zap” is a quick response to the reading that you’re doing this week. I ask you to do them so that you get in the habit of writing about what you read—putting your thoughts into words. You will post your reflections directly onto your digital portfolio, an online tool we’ll develop in class on CUNY Academic Commons which uses WordPress. We will use these reflections to support our in-class discussion, and sometimes even in group discussion, so it’s essential to keep up. Each of your zap posts must include a “featured image,” this can be a screenshot of a paragraph, the book cover, an image that captures your major takeaway points from the reading.

It should answer one of the following questions:

**This is what they said:** You can use your zap as an opportunity to summarize the whole, or a large part, of the readings for the week. This is good practice for taking good notes on sources.

**Now that’s interesting:** What is the part of or points from this reading you found most interesting or important – explain the parts/points and why you find them significant. Make sure it’s clear you read the whole thing, though.

**Wait—I don’t follow:** Pick a theme, part, point, etc. that did not make sense to you, or that you have questions about. Write about it as best you can, demonstrating those things you do follow, and ask your questions.

**I’m not sure I agree:** After demonstrating that you understand what the author is saying, take them on!

**Compare and contrast:** Connect the reading to another reading.

**When I read this, I thought about \_\_\_\_:** Connect the reading to current events, personal experience.

**Mix and match option:** You can write three paragraphs, each one doing one of these—rather than developing your thoughts over a whole

**Cultural critique:** One zap may be used to write about a piece of art or culture that you experience in or about New York City. Give a brief synopsis and interrogate the piece in relation to work, culture and politics of the city (some possible critical thinking questions: what is the

point of view and do you agree? How does it fit with what we have been learning and/or how does it challenge it?). Museum exhibits, films, fiction all count. If you aren't sure if it will count, ask me.

### **Zap Guidelines:**

- Length: 400-500 words. Most if not all of what you write should demonstrate that you did the reading—don't write 500 words about the first three pages; if you focus on one quote from the text, demonstrate you read all the other pages around it too!
- It's a short essay— you don't need to spend a lot of time introducing it, but it should have a point you're making, a direction. If you are taking the "mix and match" option, each paragraph should have a point.
- Use a simple, easy-to-read font, consistent formatting, and a feature image in each of your posts. When posting your reflection on your digital portfolio, please make sure to check off a category for your post and upload an image. You are encouraged to use WordPress tools like a pull-out quote, a text box, border dividers, and subheadings, etc. Please write in full sentences, and proof it: check grammar, spelling, word choice, punctuation, etc.
- Zaps are **due the same week as the reading**—that is, you're writing about something you haven't yet had a chance to speak about in class. If you want to write about the reading AFTER we've discussed it, you can choose to do that, but the length of the paper should then be 700-1000 words, and the zap is due within the week from our class discussion. (The exception is the first zap, which is due for everyone by Week 3).
- Regular zaps will only be accepted the week of the reading/discussion. Longer zaps, written after the discussion, will be accepted up to one week later.
- Better to hand in a half-written zap than none at all.

### **Grading Criteria:**

A zap that is the right length, addresses the reading, demonstrates decent comprehension, and makes sense will get a check.

A zap that is too short, or does not address the reading or appear to comprehend it, or does not make sense (for reasons of written form or content) will get check minus

A zap that makes an original point, demonstrates deep understanding of the reading, and exhibits strong writing will get a check plus.

You can re-submit up to 2 zaps if they receive check minuses. All re-writes due by Week 13.

Total zaps for semester: 5 out of 10, with everyone writing the first for Week 3