

**FTCP Capstone Project “Introducing the Critique”**  
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When introducing a new essay, it's important for me as an instructor to get the students as excited and involved about the paper as possible. With this, I always begin a new essay with an introductory lesson that exhibits the purpose of the assignment and what is expected from the students. In order to successfully reach students, it's essential that I communicate in ways that compliments my personality and who I am as a learner. With that, I include many aural exercises where students listen to sounds, music, or story in order to jumpstart their morning journals or simply free write by letting what they hear guide their writing. It's clear that students react in a positive way to these lessons because they are actively learning. Instead of sitting at their computers listening to me explain the assignment or read some scribbles on the board, I have them actually working through the assignment with me.

For the Critique assignment, the class participates in a number of auditory exercises and board work that gets them writing. In beginning this lesson on Critique we start by defining the word “criteria” and how it relates to the process of offering up a critique about something. Once the class has kicked some ideas around, I will write a brief explanation of the term on the board and move on to discussing what a “judgment” is and how it relates to a set of criteria when evaluating an essay, film, or piece of music. After both definitions for criteria and judgment are on the board, I will ask the class what is some criteria for a good apology. I like to use the example of apology because it is something all the students can weigh in on. When the students begin to shout out their ideas, I only take three answers and list them on the board. Based on the criteria they come up with I will create a judgment “A good apology is ...,” and then the class will listen to a clip from an apology line on [thislife.org](http://thislife.org). The episode is called “Dial ‘S’ for Sorry,” and it is a recording taken from an actual apology from a radio show in Chicago. While listening to the random apologies, the students are to keep in mind the criteria of a good apology, and pick which caller fulfilled each point listed on the board. When the clip is finished the students have to choose one apology from the episode and critique it using the criteria and judgment from the board.

After the students have completed this part of the lesson, I will ask them to take out a sheet of paper and anonymously write their own apologies. Keeping in mind the criteria from the board, I let them choose to write a fictional or true apology. Usually, I will participate in this portion of the exercise. Once everyone is done I will ask them to ball up their papers and drop them into a bag so we can each pick one out and read to the class. This is where the exercise sometimes gets very interesting because some students are very open and honest with their apologies. Introducing the critique essay this way helps the students understand the principles of working with a judgment and using criteria to evaluate an apology, literary work, or film. This form of active learning also encourages the quiet students to participate because everyone in the class has to read one of the anonymous apologies.