English 200
Summary Paper
Dr. Silvio

For this assignment you are to choose one of the argumentative essays from our syllabus and write a one page summary of its argument according to the principles we discussed in class. Your summary must be in prose/essay form (not a list in other words of main ideas)

This summary must be completely objective: keep your opinion out. You are simply summarizing the argument, not evaluating it.

You may not quote from the essay. One of the purposes of this assignment is to teach you how to put another’s ideas into your own words.

Because it is only one page, you must be sure that you concentrate on explaining the main claim of the essay and its supporting claims.

Tips:

If you choose to explain how the author uses evidence to support his or her claims, be sure that you clearly identify the claim that is being supported. For instance, if you discuss how the author uses a certain example, it is crucially important that you first establish what the claim is that the example supports. Thus, if I was summarizing Robinson’s essay “Some thoughts on Restitution,” I would not want to simply note that he explains the example of the Southern Homestead Act as part of his essay. For the summary it is more important to clearly explain what claim this example is supporting, namely that other attempts to provide restitution for slavery have been tried but have failed because they were not properly implemented. In other words do not confuse the support with the claim and always emphasize the claim when summarizing an argument.

Avoid following the exact organization of the essay. Do not try to summarize the main idea of each paragraph in other words. Authors often repeat their claims several times in, but you only have to identify it once. Thus, if the author says the same thing three times, you don’t have to repeat it three times in your summary. Also, sometimes claims are not directly stated but are implied or suggested. Your job is to condense the argument and extract the basic claims.

Avoid paraphrasing. Be sure that you put the author’s ideas into your own words and that you do not simply paraphrase his or her language. If you are unclear about the difference between summary and paraphrase, please see me or ask in class.