

## **Peer Review Guidelines: Research Proposal SJSU URBP 298A – Fall 2008**

### **Purpose:**

Peer review or peer feedback plays an important role in our lives. This is true for students, professors, and professionals. The peer review process in our class will generally serve two purposes:

1. Comments from your peer groups will provide you with input on the quality of your ideas and how coherently you have conveyed them to your reader.
2. Reviewing your colleagues' papers will give you insight into other approaches and ideas for your own writing. It will also help you develop the professional skills necessary to comment constructively on your colleagues' work.

One point that is important to emphasize is that our approach in this class is peer *review*, not peer *editing*. Our goal is to examine the overall strengths and weaknesses of the research proposals; students should focus on suggestions for improving the content and coherence of their colleague's work.

### **General Pointers and Techniques:**

1. Be supportive. Your peer review comments should not focus exclusively on what is wrong and what needs to be improved. This can be discouraging for the writer. Make sure to identify strengths of the writing and/or the research ideas. Approach reviewing someone else's paper as if it were your own. Be considerate and thorough, and always be respectful of the author. Remember that peer review is about the *writing*, not the *writer*.
2. Be constructive. Peer feedback is not an exhaustive list of every minor flaw with vague comments such as "This doesn't make sense." Your comments should reference specific issues and make specific suggestions for improvement. For example, "I like how you plan to use phone surveys for your research, but I would like to know more about how you will choose your sample."
3. Be thorough. Read the entire document first without making any notations in order to understand the author's intent, style, and arguments. The second time you read it, pay closer attention to the details and add specific comments and suggestions.

### **Specific Items to Focus On:**

For your peer review, we would like you to focus on two key areas (listed below). This does not mean you do not have to read the entire proposal. However, when providing suggestions for your colleagues, these are the areas to concentrate on:

1. Is the research question well-defined and clearly stated? If not, please suggest modifications.
2. Provide two suggestions for improving the methods section.

### **Peer Review Process for URBP 298A:**

The following is the general process you should use:

1. E-mail a copy of your Research Proposal to your advisor and all of his/her URBP 298A students (or smaller groups depending on advisor) by September 19.
2. E-mail a copy of your reviews of your colleagues' Research Proposal to the appropriate authors and to your advisor by September 24 and bring copies to class that night for a group discussion (for yourself, your advisor, and your fellow students).