

coms 180

Talking Points

Learning Objectives:

- To engage with course materials in a substantive manner
- To analyze organizational research and develop practical applications
- To prepare for class discussions

Directions:

1. For each new topic of the class, read the associated chapter and articles listed on the syllabus carefully. Then craft a set of Talking Points for each reading to be used in class discussions and projects.

Specifically, craft a document that includes the five items below, **PER READING** unless otherwise noted on the syllabus:

- **A Surprise**—One aspect of the reading that surprised you and why. (A few sentences here)
- **A Concern**—One aspect of the reading you found concerning/problematic and why. (A few sentences here)
- **A Class Question**—One substantive discussion question for the class—**Please highlight for visibility**
- **A Professor Question**—One question for the professor—**Please highlight**
- **A Connection**—Either a connection to Readings or Current Events **[CHOOSE ONE]**
 - **Reading Connection:** One connection between this reading and concepts from past readings. Example: Let's say the article is about negotiating a job offer, you might discuss how that connects to issues of governmentality and gender... how women are (typically) socialized to be "nice" and non-confrontational, and how young people are conditioned to defer to authority and present themselves in attractive ways to prospective employers. **In a paragraph** or two, discuss the connections.
 - **A Current Events Connection**—One connection between this reading and a current event story in the national news. Example: Let's say the article is about gender and sexuality in the workplace, and you notice an article in the Sacramento Bee discussing the 2020 election and how gender influences voting. **Write a paragraph** or two discussing the connections and include a URL to the news article. (Note: "news" generally refers to magazines, newspapers, or TV shows that report a broad spectrum of news stories at local, national, or international levels such as NPR, BBC, Time Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, Sacramento Bee, or the New York Times). Current events connections should be recent, within the last few weeks.
 - **Feel free to mix and match with Reading or Current Events Connections for each week's set of readings.**

Talking Points posts are due on Canvas on Mondays by 12 p.m. when class starts (note the syllabus calendar for any exceptions to this)

2. Have your TP assignments handy during class to aid discussion

25 points for each post; The lowest 3 TP score will be dropped

- Note that your lowest three TP scores will be dropped. On Canvas, there will be a tiny X in grey next to the dropped scores.

Formatting:

Use the 5 categories above as headers, as demonstrated below. It is your discretion as to whether you do all 5 categories for each reading separately, or whether you use the categories as headers, and then list the material from each reading underneath. **Either way, make sure to be clear about where your information is coming from (author last name and year is fine) and include ALL of the readings unless stated otherwise in the week's Module.** (See formatting samples below, with an eye for format, not content or length!)

Example, Format Option 1 (Reviewing readings one at a time):

Article: Malvini Redden, S. (2020). Why In-N-Out is Terrible: A Treatise on Fast Food French Fries. *Journal of Absolutely True Facts*, 1, 22-30.

A Surprise

Despite the competition, McDonald's fries are still the best fast food fries on the planet. While French fry technology has changed in the last 80 years, one company still stands supreme with the crunchiest, perfectly salty fries.

A Concern

The author does not consider mom and pop restaurants, just major chains. It concerns me that the author only considered major chain restaurants, emphasizing a certain French fry hegemony—that good fries only come from large corporate restaurants, when we know that isn't necessarily true. Squeeze Inn, for instance, has excellent fries.

A Class Discussion Question

What your favorite fries and why?

A Question for the Professor

How many fries did you have to eat to complete this research?

Reading Connections

This article connects to past research about restaurants, including Malvini Redden's work discussing how Popeye's Spicy Chicken Sandwich is the King of Chicken Sandwiches, and how Jimboy's tacos are the consistently best drive-thru tacos. Malvini Redden uses participant observation methods to deeply understand fast food and makes important connections to ideas about customer satisfaction, convenience, and organizational identity, which we read about in week 2.

OR

Current Events Connections

This article connects to the article "Why Fast Food Restaurants Should Listen to Their Customers" by Sandra Smartypants, published in the *New York Times* on August 15, 2020. URL: www.newyorktimes/newstoriesimadeupjustnow.com In this article, Smartypants (2020) elaborates on the troubles restaurants are facing in light of COVID-19, and how important it is for them to listen to their customers in order to stay in business.

[Then do the same thing for the next reading and so on]

Example, Format Option 2 (Reviewing all of the readings under a single heading):

Surprises

- A Despite the competition, McDonald's fries are still the best fast food fries on the planet. While French fry technology has changed in the last 80 years, one company still stands supreme with the crunchiest, perfectly salty fries (Malvini Redden, 2020).
- COVID-19 is not affecting casual dining restaurants nearly as badly as predicted. This surprised me because of how many articles have discussed the negative impacts to small businesses. However, it makes some sense given companies like Door Dash and UberEats who are helping restaurants survive (Smith, 2020).

Concerns

- The author does not consider mom and pop restaurants, just major chains. It concerns me that the author only considered major chain restaurants, emphasizing a certain French fry hegemony—that good fries only come from large corporate restaurants, when we know that isn't necessarily true. Squeeze Inn, for instance, has excellent fries (Malvini Redden, 2020)
- The author only focuses on restaurant profits, and does not discuss how COVID-19 is affecting restaurant workers. Focusing on workers would tell a much different story, especially how many are facing reduced hours, COVID exposure, and burnout. Likewise, there's probably a lot to be said about how meal delivery services are taking tip opportunities from workers (Smith, 2020).

Discussion Questions for the Class

- What your favorite fries and why? (Malvini Redden, 2020)
- How many of you currently work as servers or in restaurants? Is it as bad as the author suggests? (Smith, 2020)

Questions for the Professor

- How many fries did you have to eat to complete this research? (Malvini Redden, 2020)
- Have you ever worked as a server? (Smith, 2020)

Connections to Past Readings

- This article connects to past research about restaurants, including Malvini Redden's (2019) work discussing how Popeye's Spicy Chicken Sandwich is the King of Chicken Sandwiches, and how Jimboy's tacos are the consistently best drive-thru tacos. Malvini Redden uses participant observation methods to deeply understand fast food and makes important connections to ideas about customer satisfaction, convenience, and organizational identity, which we read about in week 2. Her most recent article really emphasizes that organizations should pay better attention to customer needs to avoid losing business.
- The Smith (2020) articles connects to a chapter we read in the first week of class from Mumby (2019) who discussed the types of power that shape organizations. It seems like restaurant workers are extremely impacted by governmentality and feel the need to promote themselves and be the ideal worker in order to keep their jobs. It's especially unfair to women and people from minoritized communities because they have to work extra hard.

Connections to Current Events

- The Malvini Redden (2020) article connects to the article “Why Fast Food Restaurants Should Listen to Their Customers” by Sandra Smartypants, published in the *New York Times* on August 15, 2020. URL: www.newyorktimes/newstoriesimadeupjustnow.com In this article, Smartypants (2020) elaborates on the troubles restaurants are facing in light of COVID-19, and how important it is for them to listen to their customers in order to stay in business.
- The Smith (2020) article connects to the article “COVID-19 Wrecks Customer Service Across Industries” by Jack Jackson (2020), published on NPR’s website: www.npr.com/COVIDcustomerservice. Jackson mentions how service jobs are now scarce because of the pandemic and those that remain are overworked and burning out. This connects to our readings about systems of power in that it wouldn’t be surprising if employees are overworking themselves or pretending to be more available than they are to conform to organizational expectations and keep their jobs.