

## SOUTH AFRICA: CONTESTED TRANSITIONS

### Analytic Essay 1: Instructions

As you have already discovered in your reading, every author brings to her/his work a perspective on the world, a basic understanding of human nature, a set of values, and generalized expectations about the specific topic studied. In short, every book or article is, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by factors external to the topic studied. That is perhaps especially true for writing on Africa, since most authors begin either with a preference for certain sorts of change or with a preference for maintaining the current situation.

Therefore, it is necessary to read critically: identifying and criticizing the assumptions (stated or unstated) authors make; identifying and criticizing the data authors use; evaluating the logical elaboration of authors' arguments; and setting those arguments in a larger context.

This Analytic Essay is designed to permit you to refine your skills of analysis and criticism and particularly to develop your ability to use a reading to stimulate a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the topic discussed.

The Analytic Essay will begin with Steve Biko, "Black Souls in White Skins?" in Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, A Selection of His Writings with a Personal Memoir by Aelred Stubbs (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 19–26. You are to:

1. Read Biko's argument carefully.
2. Indicate, in a brief paragraph, Biko's *major argument*. (You should not say what the article is about, but rather you should summarize the principal point(s) the author is trying to make.)
3. Indicate and criticize the *major assumptions and unsupported assertions* (both stated and unstated) this selection includes. (Every author takes some things for granted--s/he assumes them to be true and does not explain or defend them. What are they? Are they in fact true? What theoretical framework(s) does Biko take for granted? Be careful to distinguish between the *assumptions* on which the argument rests, which may not be stated and which do not need support because they are assumed to be true, and the *unsupported assertions* that are part of the argument.)
4. List and criticize the *types of data* used. (What sorts of sources does the author rely on? Are the data that are presented accurate? Are the data presented relevant to the argument? Have any relevant sorts of data been omitted? What sorts of evidence would make this argument more persuasive?)
5. Comment on the *logical development of Biko's argument*. (Do the conclusions follow logically from the assumptions, the data, and the analysis?)

[Instructions 2-5 should be answered in no more than 3 pages.]

6. Write a brief essay (2-3 additional pages), drawing on your work thus far this Quarter and on other material you find relevant, and incorporating material from films and class discussions, criticizing and elaborating the major argument raised in this article.

**DUE: posted on the class web site and in class, Tuesday, 3 February 2009**