Sample Student Response Paper: A Level
The following is an example of a high quality 900 word response paper. In this paper the student seamlessly and effectively 1) synthesizes the main ideas of the required readings, 2) critically engages the reading material by bringing in outside examples/anecdotes that either support or challenge the main ideas presented in the texts under consideration and 3) closes the essay with specific questions to be raised in class discussion.

This is precisely what I am looking for in your response papers.

Between Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives: We the Protestors
Response 1 Week 9/17

“Power concedes nothing without a demand.”

This week we explored the demands of the #BlackLivesMatter movement from the perspective of Campaign Zero, Ferguson Action, and We the Protesters. We investigated the ideas and concerns of Judith Butler, George Yancy, Alicia Garza, and Deray Mckesson through their interviews with prominent news organizations. The overarching themes are as follows: #BlackLivesMatter is a unique and needed movement that has made significant change in the past year; the “AllLivesMatter” movement contests the main principle of BLM, which claims that Black lives are not valued in America (the implicit “too”); there are systematic structures in place that benefit whites and police in the US which need to be attacked with the demands of the above-mentioned organizations (under the umbrella of Black Lives Matter). That said, we learned some of the strong forces of Black Lives Matter, and the concrete changes that this movement aims towards.

There were three interviews that we looked at this week. The first was “What’s Wrong With ‘All Lives Matter’?” This question plagued my Facebook timeline the past spring and summer. I have friends who could not see past the fact that #BlackLivesMatter is not an exclusive statement, but rather it is a hope that Black lives will be included and treated equal to their white-counterparts. Like Roberts mentioned, there’s an implicit “too” in the #BlackLivesMatter slogan. Black lives matter too. The need for such slogan is indicative of the inequalities in the democratic experiment of America that derived from the social wrongs of US history. I’ve seen many meme-like images and tweets that explain the problem with All Lives Matter (fire graphic and McGorry’s tweet to left). They address the issue of what's wrong with the “All Lives Matter” concept. I think people have jumped to the conclusion that #BlackLivesMatter is an exclusive and hateful movement, which has turned them off from the idea of #BLM. Butler brings up a good point about the effects of schematic racism. She says, schematic racism makes it so that Whites view Blacks through a lens of fear and threat. I wonder if this fear stems from a hate of Black people or a proposed misconceived threat. If so, how can one change this perception? Garza suggests in her interview that reclaiming public spaces is an answer to how to reclaim the narrative of Black bodies, but going beyond that, how do you change the way people view race? Butler makes some other great points that I will briefly list:
1. Whiteness is a “social power reproducing its dominance” (This is done when a white professional woman walks into a store and no one assumes she is a threat—she’s exercising her privilege and furthering racial inequality without even trying). This is in tandem with our class definition of “race,” which is “an ever-shifting political-social construction that attempts to unevenly categorize people by some imagined attribute.” Another reason why race is not real and is socially constructed.

2. Being “not-racist” is not enough. One must check their privilege and realize how their whiteness (or other dominant attributes) benefits them and supports the supremacist constructions of America.

3. There must be trans-racial collaboration for change to happen in the US. Butler says, and Mckesson reaffirms in his interview with RT, “It is probably important and satisfying as well to let one’s whiteness recede by joining in acts of solidarity with all those who oppose racism. There are ways of fading out whiteness, withdrawing its implicit and explicit claim to racial privilege.”

Alicia Garza in the MSNBC interview laid out some concrete statistics and facts about police brutality, mass incarceration, and the BLM movement. I learned that there are quadruple the amount of blacks in jail for possession of marijuana compared to whites—even though both are cited with using marijuana at the same rate. BLM has twenty-three US chapters, and two international chapters. Fifty-percent of Americans think racism is still an issue that needs to be dealt with (in the last year). Every twenty-eight hours a Black person is killed by police brutality in America. Regarding the 2016 presidential Garza said, “Power concedes nothing without a demand” (this is the trunk of this week’s reflection).

In the RT interview with Deray Mckesson, I really resonated with his Black prophetic fire and all of the demands laid out in Campaign Zero. The ten demands (and I’m writing this for my own edification) are fair police contracts, demilitarization, end for-profit policing, training, body cameras/film the police, community representation, independent investigation and prosecution, limit use of force, community oversight, and broken windows policy (not in that order). There were two other salient aspects of the conversation.

1. BLM strives for an “all lives matter” mentality (we are not there yet, but are starting to get there).
2. Being a white ally means you want to get to a place of having no privilege.

There are a couple of questions I have for Mckesson:
- What are tangible wins for the BLM movement?
- What are some examples of police officers using unfair contracts for their benefit?
- None of the candidates have policies set that address fair police union contracts. What should we make of this?
- Are the organizations like Campaign Zero and We the Protesters divisions under the overarching umbrella of BLM? In other words, does BLM have its own set of demands?
- What does it mean to “decriminalize” harmless offense? Do we want the possession of weed and disturbing the peace to be legal?
- What does it take to stop police from racial profiling? Can we really target the inherent prejudice of individuals through limited training?

A lot of good research and proposed demands. Ready to see how I can take these demands and project them into the communities I inhabit.