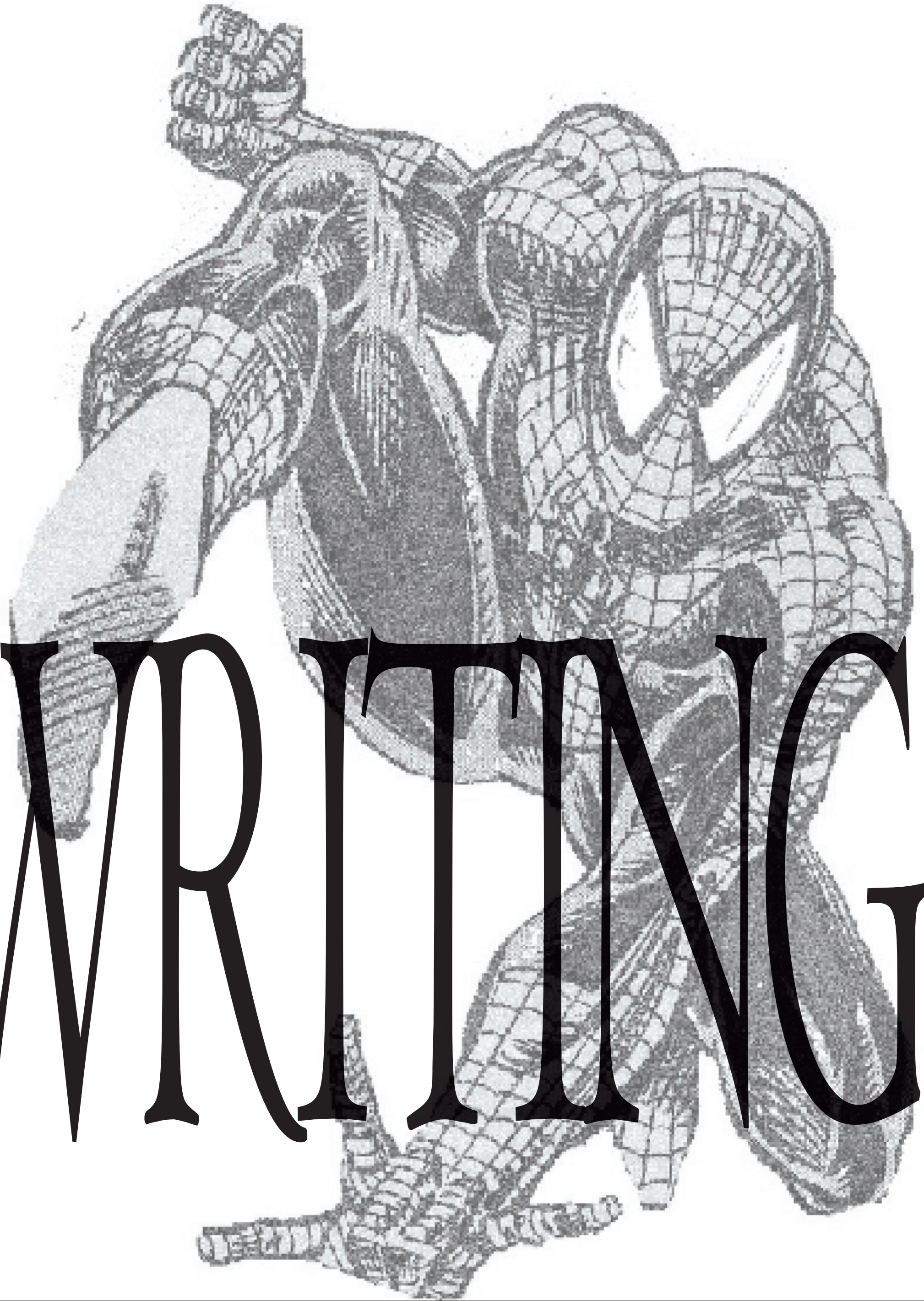
O P I N



WRITING

GUIDE

Our Place in Nature

Contents

INTRODUCTION
- Writing tasks/expectations
- Philosophy of teaching writing

THE WRITING PROCESS
- Introduction
- Working with a tutor
- & Working with peer groups
- Feedback
- Feedback forms

READING, REFLECTING, DRAFTING
- Where essays come from
- Note taking
- Asking questions...answering
- Drafting
- What is a thesis?
- Question primer

RESEARCH
- Introduction to research
- Beginning research
- Evidence
- What you're looking for
- Paraphrase & summary
- Plagiarism

DEVELOPING YOUR THESIS/DEVELOPING YOUR THOUGHTS
- Types of thesis
- Working out Ideas: Outlines & Summary
- Analyzing theses
- Mapping your essay
- Organization: the Introduction

THE HEART OF THE MATTER
- What essays are for...
- Story telling
- Social Sciences and Literature (Sin Boldly)
- Logos, Ethos, Pathos
- Developing a good argument checklist

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC ADVICE on WRITING
- Advice
- Fallacies

YOUR ONLINE WRITING CENTER
- Link to Purdue

FALL

Seminar & Reading Notes

Seminar and Reading notes will generally be contained within your intellectual journal. They are a very distinct component of the journal, however, and demonstrate your engagement in those particular activities. We consider note taking a skill that takes practice and concentration.

Intellectual Journal

your intellectual journal does not NEED to be typed; though typing makes it *much* easier for your faculty to read and respond to your work...

Your intellectual journal is a record of classroom activities and is primarily a place for notes and critical reflections on seminars, lecture, trips, and readings. Your journal will provide striking evidence to your faculty of your engagement with course activities, texts, and concepts, even if you don't talk much in class. You will submit your journal to your seminar faculty for review during week four. No specific expectations regarding length will be given. It is up to you to commit yourself to serious intellectual work through writing on a consistent basis. Your journal should provide ample evidence of this process.

Seminar Essay

Your fall quarter seminar essay will be an evolving and growing exploration of a few focussed questions about "our place in nature." Each week, revised drafts will be submitted that carry your exploration through all of the texts in pursuit of answers, insights, and more questions.

WINTER

Project: *Our Place in Nature: the Book*

Your winter quarter project will combine all of the steps and processes presented in this packet with visual opportunities as you create a final book expressing your two quarters of learning.

EXPECTATIONS

...of your writing process.

WORK WITH A WRITING TUTOR
WORK WITH A PEER FEEDBACK GROUP
WORK WITH FACULTY INDIVIDUALLY
MEET ALL DEADLINES

...of formal presentation of work:

1. All work must be typed and submitted in hard copy.
2. Multi-page work should be stapled in the upper left hand corner.
3. Work should display your name, the date and week number it is turned in, name of the assignment, and draft # (when relevant).
4. Spelling should be accurate. Do not trust your spell-checker. Use a dictionary.
5. References to readings or other texts should be fully cited according to MLA guidelines.

Writing is intimately connected to thought; what we can express in writing, in our own words, we know.

The writing process forces us to learn.

The writing process connects the imagination with the intellect.

Writing is the primary mode of academic expression and discourse.

Writing is a life skill.

The center of the writing process is revision.

Much bad writing must be done before the good writing can begin.

We can always improve our writing.

Good writing is both art and craft.

Writing must have a real intended audience (even if that audience is the self).

Students can improve their writing by working closely with others on specific pieces of writing, not just by agonizing in front of the computer, trying to get it right.

Balanced with peer review and meetings with tutor and faculty, students should expect to spend a significant amount of time writing and revising.

Writing is scary for everyone, and every project starts with a blank page. The development of a writing process is essential to overcoming anxiety and to knowing how to complete a writing project effectively and efficiently.

the steps

the first three steps can all happen in your intel-lectual journal

1. Reading, taking notes

When you take notes while reading, in seminar and lectures, though at first you may simply jot down what was said or a quote from the text, do not expect that to help you write. While your interest in an idea is still strong, you must do your own writing. Put the book down and write a response to what you've read. Having your own words in your notes brings you that much closer to generating ideas for your reflections and drafts.

2. Reflection

Reflective writing usually begins as stream of consciousness free writing on a subject or question. We usually spend the first part of our reflection either asking questions or rephrasing things we've read. Don't rush it. Take the time to write out everything you have rattling around in your head. If ideas are flying around faster than you can write, you might begin with a visual web of ideas; a web/map will also help you to track the relationships between ideas.

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3. Drafting—in search of a thesis

A draft is different from a reflection because you write with a sense of a beginning, middle, and end, and you usually are trying to argue a specific point. First drafts tend to wander. If you have a thesis in your first draft, don't assume you'll still have it by the end of the draft. The most common, and exciting, thing to happen in a draft is that the writer wanders through her ideas for a few pages, then, in an effort to say something really smart at the end, makes a brilliant and insightful stab at an entirely new thesis. The writer can then start over with that brilliant thesis guiding the paper from the beginning.

In the FALL, thesis development and organization will be a long, constantly evolving process. In the WINTER, you will work through it more methodically in the early stages of your project.

4. Thesis development

In order to test the soundness of a thesis and to be sure that it strongly guides a paper, writers can examine the thesis by itself and usually find their entire paper embedded in the wording of that one sentence. Thesis development more often than not involves a readjustment of subject, focus, or emphasis, and often sends the writer back into research.

5. Organization—telling the story

To some extent, the organization of a paper flows from the thesis and from the writer's relationship to her audience. Organizing a paper is not so much about triangles and squares (the five paragraph essay image), as it is about creating a story with a beginning, middle, and meaningful ending.

Revision is the heart of writing. You are expected to be in continual revision mode throughout Fall quarter. In the Winter, your revisions will be turned in to faculty several times as you work toward your final project. Meeting deadlines for revisions is essential; it is in fact more important to meet revision deadlines than it is to turn in the final draft.

6. Revision —thesis, organization, content, paragraph, sentence, word

The revision process has, to some extent been going on since the first draft. But it continues after a "satisfying" draft has been produced. The writer should go back in her process and review research, thesis, organization, and so on. This is the point at which the writer really needs to ask the big questions: What am I trying to say —and what am I actually saying? What makes it important? Is this the best way to say it? Have I constructed a good, powerful argument? Have I considered alternatives carefully and dealt ethically with my opposition? Is the conclusion saitisfactory? What questions remain?

7. Editing—preparing the final draft

Grammar, word choice, paragraph transitions are all reviewed. Peers are consulted, alternatives experimented with. In this phase, the writer strives to use every element of the reading experience to her favor; she wants nothing to turn the reader off from her work or distract from her ideas.

what it's for

Delaying comfortable thoughts

To the extent that we believe in it, the writing process enables us to delay conclusion, delay gratification, and delay arriving at the conclusions we want, or think we want, from the outset. A good writing process will always make the writer a bit uncomfortable, will thrust her into the unknown, will make her feel stupid for a while.... that feeling is the feeling of one's growing edge: it is essential for learning to occur.

Creating depth/complexity—challenging yourself

The learning mentioned above has to occur for your paper to achieve the depth and complexity that most readers look for in a piece of writing. Just as in our reading of fiction we look for conflict — we love to see characters struggle and overcome incredible odds, in nonfiction we are engaged by a writer who can tackle complex issues. We read for the thrill of discovery, our own and the writer's.

Considering your audience

To create this kind of feeling for a reader, you must have a good relationship with them, which means pursuing truth with integrity, carrying your reader through your own search and to your conclusions. Ultimately, it means knowing your audience. Without knowing the individuals who might compose your real audience, you must conscientiously determine who they might be, what they know, believe, and what their current perspectives might be on your subject. You have to know why they would ever want to read your essay.

Communicating—respecting your audience

The writing process involves peer review as a kind of test audience. Feedback on your writing does not tell you whether you are a good or bad writer; it tells you what individual, real people think about when they read your work. To the extent that your writing is designed for others to read, you use this information to revise and refine your relationship with your reader.

what it might look like

Feedback throughout the process: back to the drawing board

Your faculty and your writing tutors will begin collaborating with you on your writing by questioning the very core of your ideas and by examining how well your use of language conveys what you have intended. Even after a draft has been completed, or even a revision of a draft, feedback might encourage you to start anew.

Back to the drawing board again

As you work through the writing process and clarify your audience, deepen your research, and adjust your thesis, you may find yourself "back at the drawing board" more often than you expect. This is a good thing. It is not "starting over," for you could not have gotten there without the initial ideas and drafts. The essence of a creative process is discarding, moving on, starting over.

Back to research/Extending research

Creating a strong thesis and supporting it well will often require that you go more in depth in your research. Do not expect to write an entire essay out of a single research session. Part of revising is revisiting the library.

Transforming your thesis

As suggested above, sometimes the writing process forces you to completely reexamine your goals. You might get bored with an idea or realize that it is either too broad

or too specific to work.

Using the drafts/Forgetting the drafts

Throughout the process, you should keep every distinct draft of your work. Don't simply work in one computer file and cut away, add, cut away until you're done. Save your drafts, start with a fresh document everytime you make significant changes. You might find your previous drafts useful later. Also, starting with a fresh file makes it easier to freshen your ideas and maintain flexibility in the organization and wording of your work.

Re-Seeing / Reorganizing

Re-seeing is the core of revision. What you produce in the drafting of an essay is like the top layer of your thinking: what has floated to the top is light, foamy, the random effluvia of your experience. By reexamining these materials, questioning your assumptions, seeking out the source of your ideas, you can begin to go deeper. Drafting a paper merely creates the opportunity to begin writing.

what it might feel like

Confusion about theses

It's normal to be unclear about what a thesis is and what makes a good thesis. On top of that, analyzing your thesis is a particularly complex and challenging endeavor. You might feel lost in your own ideas and uncertain as to how it will all fit together in the end.

I'm not interested in anything

You may have trouble coming up with something that seems worth writing about. This feeling usually stems from overestimating the significance that your writing should have. Your essays do not have to say everything; they do not have to solve the world's problems, and you don't have to know all the answers in order to write about a particular problem or idea.

I'm not a writer

You are now. Either no one is born a writer or everyone is.

When logic and analysis seem ridiculous

Examining a thesis and seeking evidence to support your ideas can seem tedious and belabored. I think once you have applied the process you will see it more clearly and be able to quickly apply it to any situation.

Why am I doing this?

We hope that you will write for a real reason. You've probably never done that before. You've written for teachers and according to the exact guidelines that teachers have given. While some of your writing will be of that type this year, some of it will have an at least hypothetical purpose and place in the world. Students, understandably, feel a bit lost until they have landed on a purpose for their writing.

Self-expression vs. Communication

You may think that you are writing when you have expressed yourself on paper and it all makes sense to you. This is a valuable thing to do as part of your writing process and works well in personal journals. But essay writing is always enhanced by a purposeful relationship between reader and writer. You'll find that having to communicate your ideas to a real audience actually forces you to strengthen your ideas.

I can't write

You might feel paralysed by the idea of writing. It might be an incredibly scary task. What we expect of you is that you commit yourself to learning to write better than you can now. This means that whatever you write for us is a starting point for growth. The only cure for the "inability to write" is writing. There's no such thing as writer's block.

I can't think

Thinking is hard. If you find it easy to come up with ideas and communicate them on paper, you're probably not challenging yourself. We want you to be challenged. We are here to help you through the struggle.

My tutor isn't doing anything

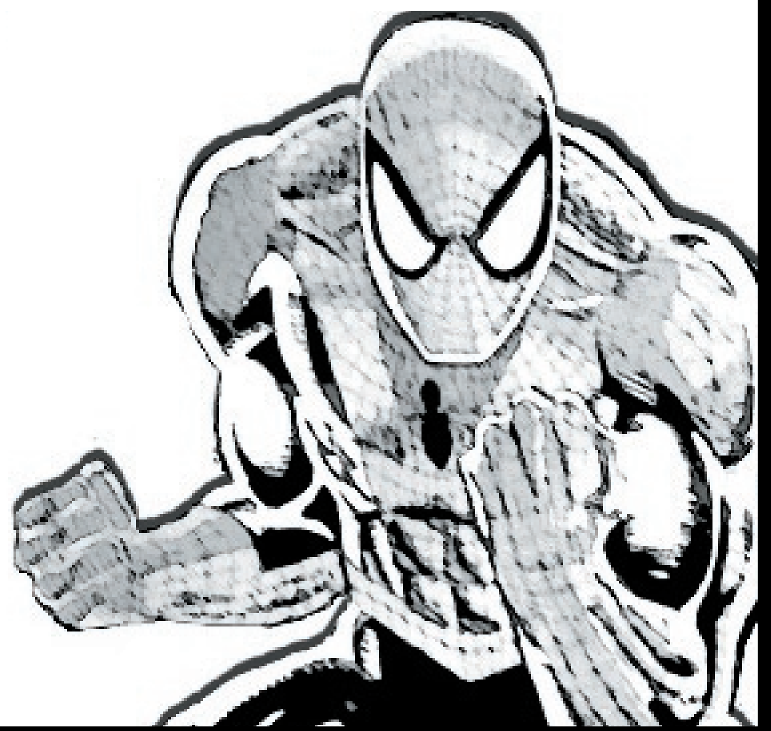
Many students have the expectation that their tutor's job is to revise their paper with them; it is not. Think of them more as coaches who are less involved in the actual act of writing and more involved in giving you the tools and the creative process to be successful when you do it on your own.

A-ha.

You're going to have a moment of "A-ha!" After all of the struggle of drafting and revising, something will click, your writing will change, your ideas will change, the furniture in your brain will have rearranged itself.

I have something to say

If you have faithfully moved through the writing process, you will feel a new kind of mastery over your subject. You will recognize your relationship to your audience; you will see yourself as an audience to others; you will see the potential of being a part of intellectual discourse.



t u t o r s

An essential element of the course is your work with the program's assigned writing tutors. The tutors will work closely with faculty to assist you in developing your writing skills.

By consistently meeting with the same tutor, you have the special gift of someone who knows your work and your writing process well enough to help you through really tough assignments.

Your relationship to your tutor is not meant to be remedial. No matter how skilled or experienced you are with writing, visiting a tutor is an important part of your writing process. All professional writers know this and use friends, relatives, and editors as readers and coaches.

Your writing tutor's job is not to correct your spelling, find all of your grammatical erros, or fix your thesis for you. They will be able to help you to understand grammatical rules that would improve your writing; they can ask you questions to draw out your ideas. Sometimes a tutor may not even read your paper; they might just talk to you about your ideas and force you to articulate what you are trying to do in your paper. Be attentive to the value of this process. Know that by talking about what you are doing, expressing your goals as a writer, you move that much closer to being a serious writer who can follow through on intentions and accomplish any writing task.

p e e r s

Your PEER CRITIQUE GROUP is valuable for many reasons:

it is an interested and engaged audience that knows you and what you are trying to do;

it is an opportunity for consistent feedback on your work and ideas;

it is an opportunity to develop your own critical reading skills as you struggle to give meaningful feedback to others;

it is a lot like a mini-seminar that focusses in detail on specific issues that concern you.

Your peer critique group is a **weekly** commitment in the process of developing your seminar essay (fall qtr) and your final project (winter).

Your peer critique group should utilize this document and other handouts to improve the quality of feedback. Your group should meet with a writing tutor or a faculty at least once to help develop good habits of constructive feedback.

NOTE: If you miss a meeting with your writing tutor, you may make it up in the same week by meeting with any tutor available.

If you miss two tutor appointments in a row (with your assigned tutor), you are automatically dropped from their schedule and must reschedule a regular appointment.

FEEDBACK

r e a d e r s

Providing meaningful, constructive feedback is always a challenge for peer review groups, especially when they first start out. Exposing your writing to new people can be a terrifying experience. While on the one hand we crave real feedback and ways to improve our work, we also want to be praised and, somewhere in our secret hearts, wish we were just perfect already.

The first thing that usually happens in a critique session is that someone will say,

"It's good."

Avoid this. You will feel like saying it. Bite your tongue.

If you want to praise someone's work, praise it by describing your experience of it, praise it by telling the author **how it affected you, what you thought about as you read, what you felt, saw.**

If you don't know where to start, use one of the questionaires in this packet.

If you're not sure what to say or what to think about someone's work, ask the author some questions, follow your curiosity.

As a reader, **be attentive to your experience of a piece**. Don't just read and try to see "what the writer intended." Read and observe what's going on in **your** mind.

w r i t e r s

As a writer, **be prepared to ask your readers** specific questions.

As a writer, be clear with yourself and your readers about **where you are in the process** (*see author's note*). Is your work in a very vulnerable stage? Do you just want feedback on ideas, on style? Do you need someone to propose a major renovation? Do you need ideas or new questions to ask? Counter arguments? Further research? Flow?

More often than not, if you develop **a strong critique group**, you will find yourself working FOR them, trying to do your best, seeing your work through their eyes before they read it. In this way, writers increase the effectiveness of their internal critic: you might have two people in your group who routinely disagree; if you can hear their voices in your head responding to your writing, you have a good sense of how your writing might be received by a mixed audience.

g r o u p s

If your group becomes competitive, has a hard time pulling a meeting together, tends to get distracted from their work, or in some other way becomes non-productive, see a faculty as soon as possible to either change groupings or try to revise the group's dynamics.

Read the following peer critique documents well in advance of writing your first draft. Understanding the questions and the process will give you a good sense of how your work will be discussed and evaluated, how you can expect to improve as a writer, and how you will be assisted in moving from first to second draft...

Your author's note is the first thing you share with your peer review group.
Fill out the first three sections before you meet. Fill out the last section after the discussion of your piece.
Copy out the ideas from your "Insights" section for yourself, and turn this form in to your seminar faculty.

The Author's Note

The Author's Note includes three categories of information: a brief history of the draft, strengths, and places for improvement/questions for the reviewers.

The **history of the draft** allows the writer to articulate where s/he is in the process. A series of these documents also chart revisions from draft to draft. Below, write the History of the Draft, including information such as: Where did the idea for this piece originate? How many drafts? Why are you writing this piece?

Strengths require the writer to find specific merit in his/her writing. This encourages writing and keeps the writing process exciting. Below write down the Strengths of your draft.

Places for improvement allows the writer to articulate likely places in the draft for further revision. Reviewers will focus their comments on these areas before commenting on other issues they have identified. Below write down Places for Improvement.

AFTER YOUR MEETING WITH YOUR PEER REVIEW GROUP.
This is where you can document your insights and new paths for revision. Below, write the Insights from the critique of your work. How might these guide you to the development of your next draft?

PEERCRI-TIQUE

It is important that everyone participate in the critique honestly and constructively. You will learn much about your own style and artistic vision through what you have to say about the work of others (and how they receive your comments). It is important that we make mistakes, say stupid things, and make the best of whatever is on our minds. The word "critique" is not meant to imply criticism in the negative sense. It is meant to refer to "critical thinking." I would add to that "creative thinking." Because we are discussing each others' work in process, instead of examining final products, our ideas are both fragile and flexible. We should seek to encourage and collaborate in each others' creative processes, and we should hold each other to high standards of technical and creative rigor.

STEP ONE
The Author reads their "Author's Note" to the group.

STEP TWO
The author may either read their work out loud or have another group member read their work out loud for them.
The value of this should become clear to you.

FIRST RESPONSES (some "reader-based" questions):

Begin by focussing on any questions the author has, which they may have included in their "Author's Note."

Readers (listeners) share your FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

- •What do you remember most?
- •What details stick with you?
- •Do you have a sense of a theme or a core idea emerging?
- •What remains unclear to you that you thought you should know?
- •What areas were confusing?
- •What do you want more of?
- •What was the best part?
- •What surprised you?

DIG DEEPER

•Characterize the author's voice. "Voice" in writing is that element which lets us "hear" the author. It comes from vocabulary, the rhythm marked by commas and a variety of sentence-lengths, and the relationship the writer seems to have with her material. You might characterize voice by comparing it to other writers or to characters in movies. You might do it by reading a few lines out loud "dramatically" to call attention to effective use of voice.

Are there areas where the voice seems absent or weak?

In which parts do you feel most strongly that you are "hearing" the author, a sense of honesty, depth, attitude? If you can't identify any, are there moments in the story when you would like to get more of a sense of the author's voice?

PEER CRITIQUE

Be as specific as you can in your responses. It doesn't help a writer when you say, "I liked it." Or "That was lame." The writer needs to know what specifically you liked and why. The writer needs to know specifically what doesn't work for you and why..

MORE READER-BASED QUESTIONS:

1. What were you thinking as you heard the opening passage?

2. What did you expect from the piece based on the beginning?

3. What further expectations does the essay give you? If you were writing this piece, where would you take it? If this piece were the beginning of a book-length work, what would you expect (or want) to come further on? What would keep you reading?

4. What questions do you have about the author's essay?

5. What did the end of the piece do for you?

6. How might different types of people (different audiences) react differently to the essay?

CRITERION-BASED QUESTIONS

1. Does the piece have a core idea (explicit or implicit) or theme? If it does, is that idea/theme well developed and interesting? If it does not, does it need one?

3. Powerful ideas combined with rich details tend to make for strong writing. Identify powerful ideas and rich details in the piece. If there is a lack, identify areas for development.

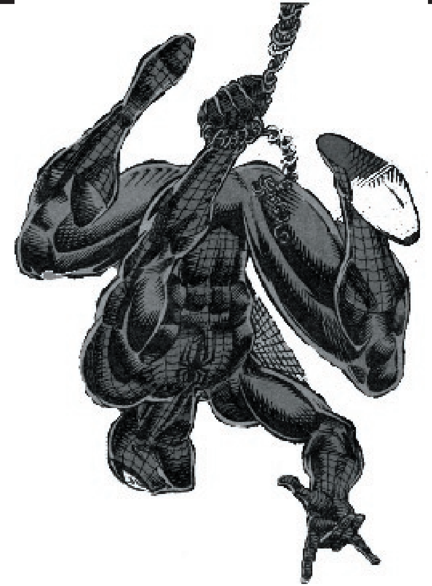
4. Is there a beginning, middle, and end to the piece? (Identify them and how they relate)

5. Is it "full" enough... are there enough words on the page so that the reader feels well-oriented and "fulfilled," that the reader can easily follow the writer's train of thought? How does the writer accomplish this/what can the writer do to improve on this? Are there areas where it is "overfilled," where the details or number of words become cumbersome?

6. Comment on surface matters/style/grammar, etc.

READING, REFLECTING, DRAFTING

where essays come from...



The word "essay," as every guide to writing will tell you, comes from the french word "essayer," to try. An essay, therefore, is the *attempt* to discover the answer to a question or communicate an idea. In the real world, essays often come from a writer's own interests and curiosities or from the perception of a gap in the knowledge or understanding of something within a discipline. Essays come from problems that needsolving, words that need to be defined, events that need to be explained or understood. Essayists are above all storytellers, creators and conveyors of knowledge and culture.

note taking...

When you take notes in your intellectual journal, avoid simply quoting material that you find worthy of noting. If you do feel something is worth quoting, take a moment to write about it in your own words as well. Sometimes even just a sentence or two is enough. When something isn't worth quoting, be conscientious about putting borrowed ideas into your own words, put quotes around borrowed phrases or specialized words. ALWAYS cite your notes, even when you are responding with your own ideas. Whether to cite the source of an idea or fact, to find the source later, or to find out what inspired an idea of your own, citing the *page & source* of a note is an essential step.

reflection...

Reflection comes after reading, when you've covered a significant chunk of material, made some notes, and have the sense that the information and ideas are bubbling to the top of your head, that you are getting full. If you don't pause to reflect in writing about what you've read, you're likely to forget a good deal of it. Reflection is also an important step in the process of trying to understand a text. If you've found it confusing or hard to follow, reflecting in writing can help you to sort things out and formulate some specific questions that might be brought up in seminar. Generally, it is this reflective writing in your journal that will help you to be a strongly engaged participant in seminar. Don't forget that books are not isolated things. Writers depend on their readers to do thinking and research of their own.

asking questions...answering...

Asking questions is an excellent way to build your journal entries. Remember, whenever you ask a question to try to answer it as well. If you can't answer, try to figure out how it might be answered, in the library, on the internet...in seminar.

drafting...

After you've done significant reflections, you should begin to have a sense of something that is worth writing about. When you begin drafting for a seminar essay or another writing project, the goal is not to complain about the reading or passively praise what you like about it. Nor is the goal to simply prove that you read it. The challenge before you is to figure out something that you can say about it. To do this, you must have engaged deeply in the reading and, through analysis, research, and reflection, arrived at an idea that is worth your time and effort: a thesis.

what is a thesis...

A thesis is the direct answer to a question. A thesis should not be an obvious or passive statement; it should not present options but determine answers, solutions. The thesis of your writing is inherently your thought, your conclusion. While it is, in a sense, your opinion, it should be your informed, considered, and passionate opinion. If you feel that what you are writing is "just your opinion," you may not have developed a perspective that allows the development of certainty or conviction. In your reading and note-taking, identifying a writer's thesis is essential to understanding their work. If they don't state it clearly, it behooves you to attempt to draft it for them in your notes. The thesis is the one big statement that organizes and controls all other statements. It is to the essay what a mission statement is to an organization. (there will be much more about theses later...)

READING, REFLECTING, DRAFTING *question primer*

Every thesis can be understood as the answer to a specific question. Therefore, to come up with a good, strong thesis, you need to be able to ask good questions. Once you've come up with that guiding question, your challenge as a writer and a thinker is to focus all of your energy on information and ideas that build an answer to that question.

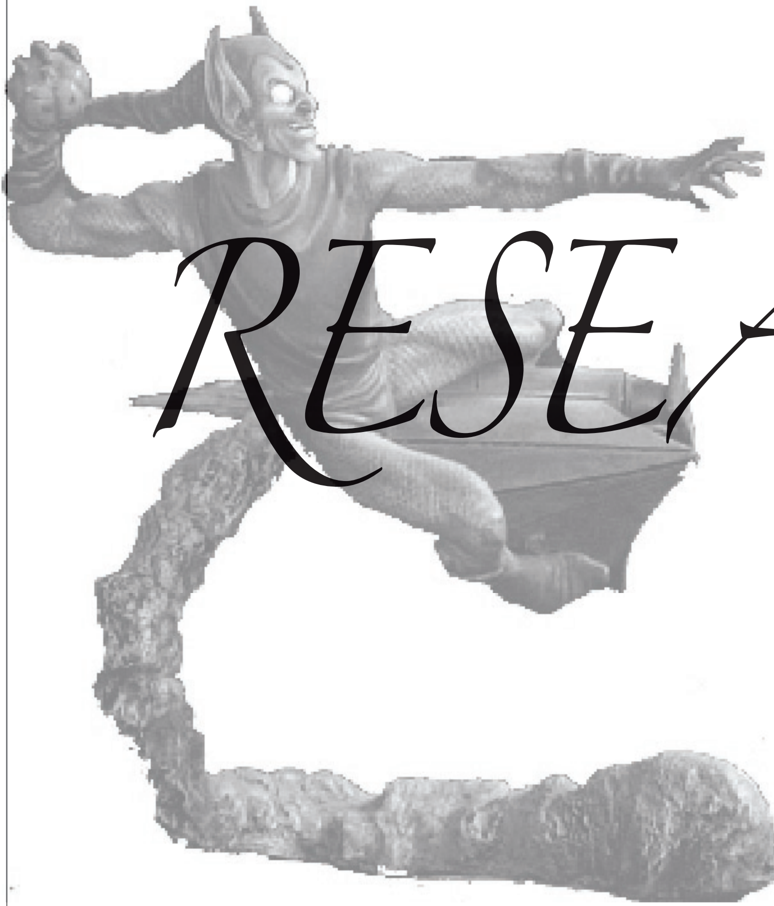
Once you have a good question—or a few—developed in your reflections, you should begin drafting attempts at answering those questions. Keep in mind that the attempts to answer the questions are just the beginning. Once you have an actual, solid, well-developed answer, you start over with that strong, focussed, encompassing thesis.

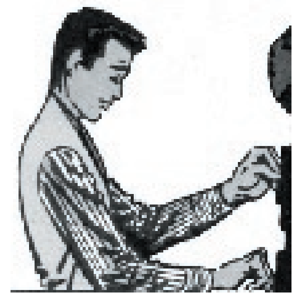
The QUESTIONS below are worded in an abstract form so that X and Y stand in for words, concepts, events, and so on. One way to develop an approach to a text is to simply start throwing stuff in place of these variables and seeing if anything interesting pops up. Keep in mind that these abstract questions are just a starting point. Once you actually put something in place of X, the questions might have to change & develop. Sometimes, you might start with a complex question that doesn't seem to fit any of these formulae. A good exercise is to try to boil it down to one of these to see what you are really trying to get at. If your question can fit one of these formulae, you can be reasonably sure that it will result in a strong structured thesis...

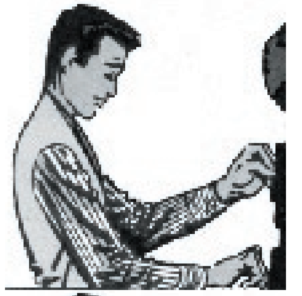
What does X mean?
How can X be described?
What are the components of X?
What are the components of a good X?
How is X accomplished?
How should X be done?
How does X cause Y?
Is X a Y?
Is X a good Y?
What is the essential function of X?
What are the consequences of X?
What are the different types of X?
What is X for?
How does X compare with Y?
What is the current status of X?
Is X similar to Y?
How has X changed over time?
How can X be interpreted?
What is my memory of X?
What is the value of X?
What case can be made for or against X?

questions adapted from: http://www.researchpaper.com/

RESEARCH







In order to answer a question and support your answer, you must do RESEARCH...

To RESEARCH is to look, seek....search AGAIN. You search again for new connections, new possibilities, new ideas.

Research in preparation for seminar or a seminar essay might just mean reading a single book over again with your question (and answer) in mind. But most questions, and most books, demand a bit more. A question that can be answered using a single book tends to degrade into a book-report. Your research should instead be a clashing together of books, essays, ideas that creates sparks, that reveals something in between books that wasn't there, or wasn't clear, before you wrote about it. As you work through the quarter, you'll find books and ideas overlapping and crashing together that will demand synthesis and resolution.

When you enter the research phase of writing, you may not have just one question; you may have several, or you may have a bunch of unclear, uncertain questions rattling around together. Research can be a way of narrowing down questions and figuring out what you want to ask and what really interests you as a writer.

Different kinds of research *are useful for answering different kinds of questions and are emphasized less or more depending on discipline and audience. The categories below do not represent a perfect schema, but give a sense of the broad range of activities that might engage a researcher.*

experimentation: creating or recreating circumstances that allow you to clearly observe the results or causes of some action.

case study collection/analysis: combining numerous case studies from different researchers to examine correspondences and differences.

observation/data collection/analysis: collecting "raw" information (directly or from existing studies, experiments, etc.) and analyzing the significance and relevance of the data.

historical: Using artifacts, first-hand accounts, or other histories to create new stories about the past.

philosophical: Usually building on existing philosophical ideas, especially definitions of words, conceptions of being; also discerning the relevance of philosophical concepts to current dilemas; there is also a philosophical component to most disciplines (philosophy of science, philosophy of history...) that concerns itself with the purposes, methods, and broader speculations that the discipline invites.

relating primary, secondary, and tertiary documents: Research of all kinds relies on the multiple layers of information that have come before. Distinguishing between them is essential to working with integrity and understanding the history and context of a particular question. Much work is done to simply sort out the relationship between these many layers and to reassess their validity and significance in relation to each other.

theoretical synthesis (a particular philosophical activity): This sort of work usually concerns itself with how we communicate about something and attempts to resolve problems of defining current dilemas by showing how different approaches compare and contrast on a theoretical level. Sometimes, making a seemingly new and complex problem seem manageable and old by abstracting it.

contextualization: Researching the cultural, social, and other circumstances of an event, idea, personage, etc. in order to better understand the thing and/or its context.

oral history: collecting histories through interviews. an approach intended to validate lived experience and subjectivity and place it on par with histories reliant on institutionalized perspectives.

public opinion: collecting data through surveys, polls, and so on, in order to understand the likely perspective of a large group of people.

BEGINNING the SEARCH

formulate questions

Though some fields of research will offer their core questions to you at the drop of a hat, others are more difficult to penetrate and orient yourself in without a clear sense of what you want to know. Use the questions from the previous sections, talk to people, interview experts on campus and in the community to get ideas. You can make a better wheel, or use an existing wheel toward good ends, but avoid reinventing it.

review notes

Review your notes. Sometimes a gem of an idea will be left forgotten tangled in other ideas and observations. Sometimes the tiniest seed of a thought can lead to great projects.

collect a wide range of materials

Don't be shy at the library. Bring in a couple tote-bags and fill them with everything you can find. You won't read them all; don't try to. Skimming over books with a critical eye can yield a great deal of information.

use the library first

Use the library. Seek out entire books on your interest area; use the reference librarians to see what other collections or documents might be relevant. Use the online journal databases to find the most current writing on your subject. Try to **identify experts**, **critical moments** in the development of the field/subject, issue, **important works**, and **specialized terms**.

check the web

When you have developed a strong sense of your subject area, identified some authorities, you're ready to explore the web. It's a good idea to put this off because the web is so full of unreliable information; whether it be error, propoganda, or proselytization, a website's quality can be difficult to determine.

focus your search

Now, wading through the heaving mass of information that you have collected, it's time to focus down and build yourself a reading list with work prioritized and categorized according to what they will contribute to your search.

hypothesize

Formulate your thesis. Your thesis at this stage should be a guess. Your focus as you move on from your hypothesis to your focussed search is not simply to prove your thesis, but to explore the information somewhat objectively, remaining open to the possibility of radically revising your ideas.

seek opposition

If you haven't already, seek out writers & works that present the opposite thesis as your own. Understanding the best arguments of your opposition (and empathizing with the authorities that make up that opposition) will help you to build the strongest possible case for your claim.

EVIDENCE

Types of Evidence:

1. Personal experience / memory / observations

Evidence from personal experience, memory, and personal observations are, ironically, the *least* conclusive and the *most* effective. Be wary of this double edge. If you rely too heavily on personal experience, you risk your argument being discounted immediately by a contrasting experience: just because you had a horrible experience traveling in Paris doesn't mean everyone will. If you want to establish that Paris is a horrible destination, you've got to include more than your impressions alone. At the same time, a personal experience, effectively conveyed, can pull your reader into your argument in a very human, intimate way, revealing your passion for your ideas, your motives, and your investment in the outcomes. It also helps the reader to build trust in you by giving them a sense of your character and life experience.

2. Interviews, surveys, questionaires

These can be fascinating to read and speculate on. The results of an interview, in terms of evidence, are much the same as personal experience. Surveys and Questionaires provide a compounded and structured view on the personal experience and perspectives of groups of people. Surveys and questionaires are most effective when extremely limited in scope and audience. The reliability of such methods is highly dependent on the quality of the questions themselves.

3. from Reading: Facts / Examples / Summaries / Testimony

Evidence from reading establishes your authority in your field of study. Facts, examples, summaries, and testimony published by experts give the reader a sense that your evidence has stood the test of time and careful scrutiny.

4. Numerical & statistical data

A component of # 2 & 3 and the product of most studies and experiments, numbers and statistics are easy for readers to digest and interpret, and often have a powerful impact, when used effectively. Be wary of numbers. Statistics are lies. Effective lies. But lies.

USING EVIDENCE

Data selection

As in your other research, you need to be certain that the data you select is current, accurate, and representative. That is, it is the most current information of its kind, it is generated by a reputable source, and its scope matches your use of it.

Authority & Persuasion

The skilled use of all types of evidence lends authority to you as a writer and provides strong support for your claim. The ethical presentation of the information, which shuns propoganda and proselytization, increases a reader's trust in you and makes your argument persuasive. Though you can choose numbers and ways of presenting information that makes it even more persuasive than it might otherwise be, you should strive to present information in the most honest way possible.

Distinguishing fact from inferences

When citing a piece of evidence from another source, you must be clear as to whether the source if providing facts or inferences based on fact, and indicate as much in your use of the evidence.

What you're looking for…

Not all sources are equal...

Following are five key factors in determining the quality of a source, and therefore the evidence or support it can provide for you.

Usually in the process of pre-reading a book or article, you can assess many of the qualities below. Obviously, the qualities below are some that you will aspire to in your own writing.

AUTHORITY: try to ascertain the credentials of an author. Are they considered an authority by other authorities, prominent organizations, etc.? How much have they studied in the field about which they are writing? What other backgrounds do they bring to the work? Do they make reference to auhoritative works? What else has the author written, what awards have they won, what professional positions have they held?

OBJECTIVITY OR CLEAR DISCLOSURE OF ADVOCACY: Is the author clear about his motives? Does he present information objectively and distinguish clearly between his research and his own analysis and interpretations?

COVERAGE: does the website, book, or article go into appropriate depth to develop its arguments, or does it merely skim the surface? Is its topic made clear? Does it provide suitable evidence for its claims? Does it include or consider multiple perspectives?

ACCURACY: Are the sources of information cited? Can you tell what is original and what is taken from someplace else? Does it seem to be accurate, logically consistent? Can you verify information through another source?

TIMELINESS: Are dates included? Was it written at a time when its perspectives, its information was appropriately accurate? Is the information current, still relevant?

Websites can be particularly difficult to assess—and particularly unreliable. It's especially important to review websites with these criteria in mind.

when you narrow your focus in winter, be sure to...

Cont'd Research & Idea Gathering

revisit textbooks: look over your notes. review course materials; scan through the books and reread sections that seem most relevant to your ideas.
branch out from textbooks: some of our textbooks contain numerous references to other works and authors. Make sure you track these connections down in the library and on the internet.
use library: go to the library. ask a librarian. librarians love you. they love books. they want to help put you and books together.
periodicals: check out the periodical databases online in the library.
community research: are there people/groups in the community that might have experiences or resources related to your ideas? find them!
ask other faculty for resources and ideas: faculty are smart. they teach lots. know stuff. look through a couple course catalogs; look at the art classes, science classes, and other classes that might relate to what you are thinking about, then track down the faculty with a few questions. use them as resources.

...KEEP SANE
notecards: a hundred million nerds can't be wrong; note cards really work. remember to keep bibliographic notes on each card (people often use a numbering system --assign a number to each major resource and put that number in one corner of each related card). notecards also help to keep your ideas and facts from getting mushed together too quickly. you can arrange them in some order as a way of drafting the structure of your essay, then rearrange them —in a flash!
research journal: keep in your intellectual journal: notes, thoughts, quotations, data, and all sources (including every single library catalog number, even if they don't pan out in the moment, you may need to go back later. keep everything!)
use MLA formatting: the Modern Language Association are sadistic bastards with nothing better to do than make up stupid rules to torture you. one day you will rule over them all and make them pay; but today, you are a wart on their least favorite toad: obey.
stay organized: this is the time to practice all those organizational skills you've been putting off. treat yourself to a few folders, a portfolio, a new pencil. chocolate.
stay focussed on your thesis: research can lead you in all directions at once. When you find yourself diving into books and articles or getting wrapped back into Lure of the Local or molotovcocktail.com, make sure you know what you're in there for and how it relates to your thesis.

MLA formatting

The MLA is the Modern Language Association. Among other things, they set the guidelines for scholarship in the humanities and establish methods of respecting intellectual property through citation. All of this technical stuff is to the point of construcing a resource for your readers that allows them to seek out your source material, confirm your analysis of statistics, and allow them to continue your work. The MLA guidelines are also those generally used by publishers of scholarly journals as guidelines for submissions.

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the example below are from the **MLA Handbook for writers of Research Papers**, *fifth edition, by Joseph Gibaldi. It is widely available and comprehensive. Beyond guidelines for citations, the text offers suggestions and rules on all matters of writing, including grammar and punctuation, the writing process, and details of formatting title pages, page numebring, illustrations.*

•Our only demand is that you use MLA guidelines to format your citations and your bibliogrpahy, which will have the title: Works Cited.".

Medieval Europe was a place both of "raids, pillages, slavery, and extortion" and of "traveling merchants, monetary exchange, towns if not cities, and active markets in grain" (Townsend 10).

• Note that even if the author had come up with her own wording, not using any direct quotation from Townsend, she would have cited the idea as Townsend's.
• Note that the period at the end of the sentence comes after the citation (the citation is considered part of the sentence).
• For further details on variations, consult the handout.

• The citation refers the reader to an item on your list of Works Cited (alphabetized by author's last name). That item would appear as follows:

Townsend, Robert M. The Medieval Village Economy. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.

• Notice that the first line of the citation is not indented. All subsequent lines of an item are. This makes it easier to scan for a particular source.
•The punctuation is specific.
• The scheme is: Author's name. Title of Work. Location of Publication: Publisher, year published.

Numerous variations are exemplified in the MLA Guide, including formats for electronic/web sources, unauthored sources, anthologies, etc.

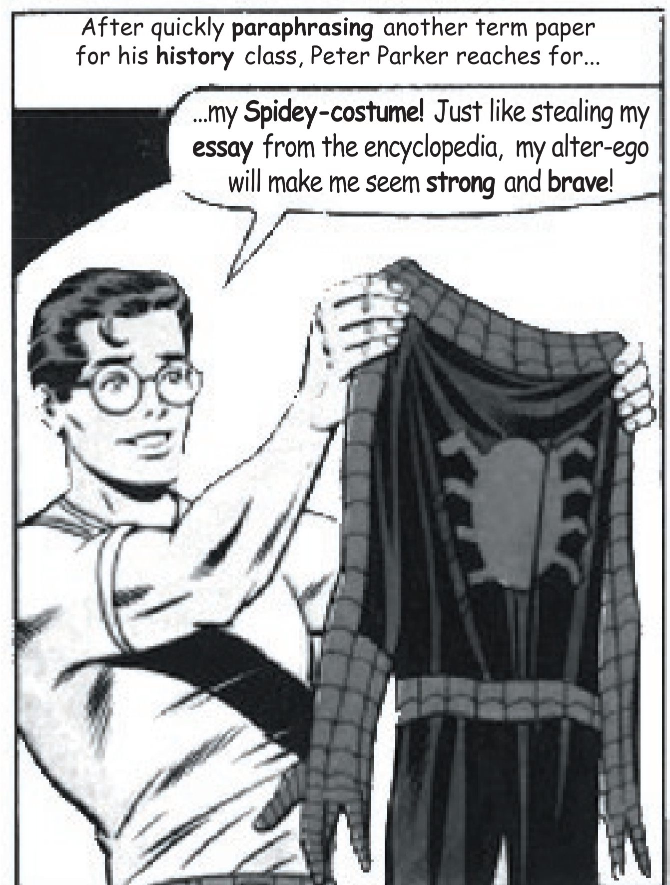
IMPORTANT: *DO NOT ASK Rob or Steve how to cite something unless you are holding the MLA guide in your hand and showing us what makes your source difficult to properly cite. We do not, nor should you, care to memorize anything but the basics of creating your works cited page. Get the book. It's easy to use and makes you feel special.*

summarizing

Summarizing what you have read is an essential part of note-taking. When writing your essays, being able to summarize another writer's argument in your own words is vital to communicating the fruits of your research effectively. Though your reader wants to know that you have consulted all kinds of other works and that you are using them well and citing them, your reader doesn't want to have to deal with them: your job is to digest all of that material yourself and give it to your reader on your terms, in your language, in a way that makes everything relevant and smoothly connected to what you are writing. When summarizing a text in the context of your paper, you must be very clear that you are recording someone else's thoughts. If you summarize at length, the reader should be reminded directly that you are relaying someone else's argument. Your work would include phrases like... "Johnson goes on to argue that...", "Johnson claims...", "Johnsons concludes..." and so on.

paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a dangerous habit. It is not a way of building an essay; nor is it a way of summarizing someone else's ideas. Paraphrasing should be limited to situations in which you feel a writer has said something very well and you simply want to alter, shorten, or write something closely resembling what they wrote. Any time that you paraphrase should be a time when you could easily include a phrase like, "To paraphrase Johnson..."



Don't do it.

What is it?

Anytime you borrow an idea or wording or data from a source without citing that source, you are plagiarising. If you're not sure if something constitutes plagiarism, consult your writing tutor or faculty before you turn your assignment in. When in doubt...cite.

Why it happens...

You might get lazy, nervous, mad, bored, or something else with the idea of writing an essay and you think it will be better just to scrape by this time than to have to turn in something crappy or nothing at all.

You might have a learning disability, delay, or a temporary setback in emotional or intellectual well being that makes writing particularly challenging and you think just cheating will get you by and you rationalize it a million different ways.

You might just not want to take the time to understand something well enough to put it into your own words, but you want your teacher to think that he is reading your ideas.

You might not have ideas of your own about something.

What happens after you do it?

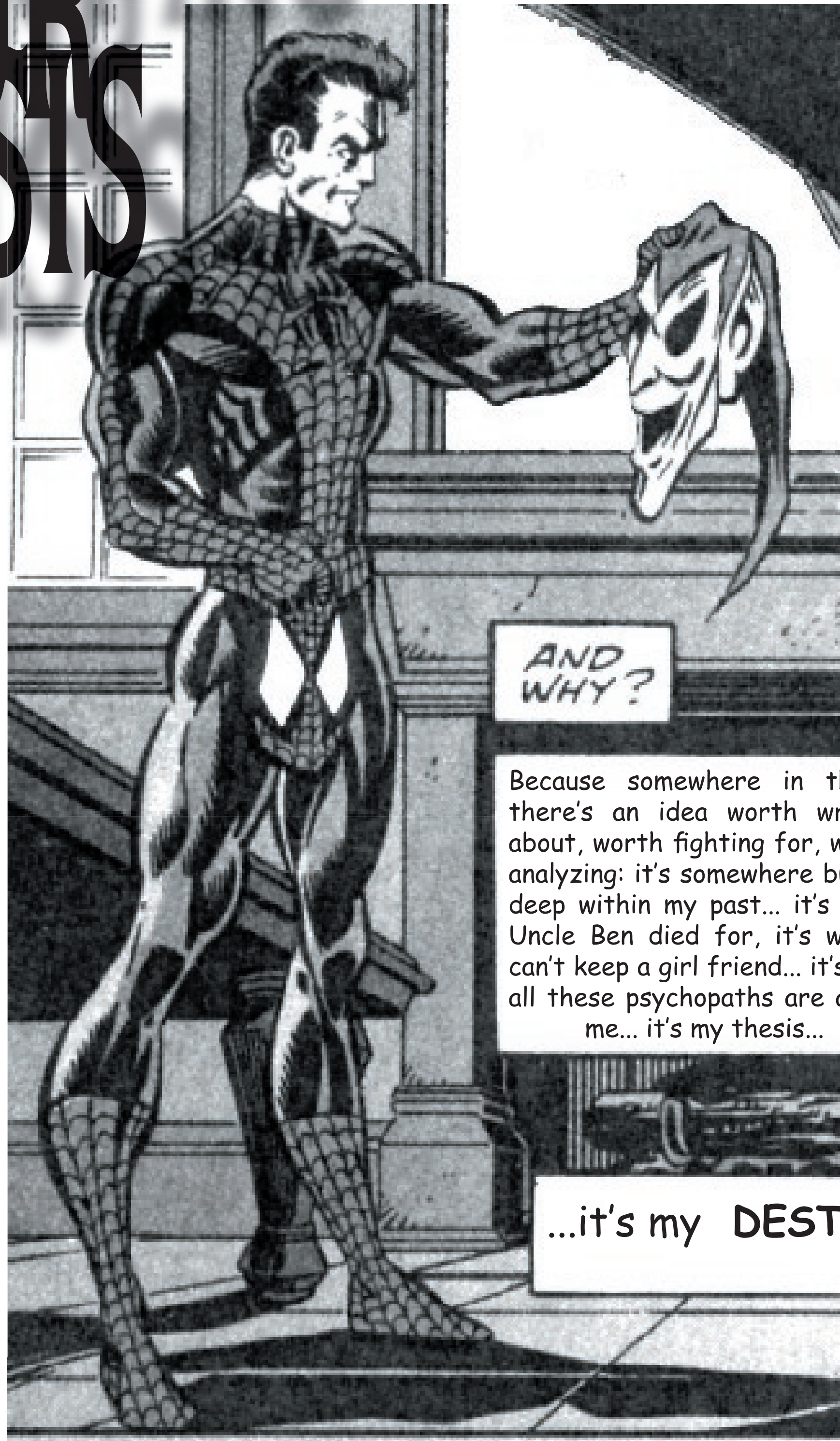
1. **You get caught. It's incredibly easy to spot plagiarized material; it's also incredibly easy to prove it using web technology and through campus networks.**
2. **You meet with your faculty team.**
3. **You meet with the academic dean.**
4. **You are given no credit for the quarter.**
5. **You are potentially expelled from school or put on academic probation.**
6. **You are asked to leave the program.**

Accidental plagiarism: *There is such a thing. Whether due to faulty citations, misunderstanding of requirements, or lack of clarity about what needs to be cited, these accidents are dealt with within the program and are seen as learning opportunities.*

THE CURE

Go to your faculty or an advisor immediately if you have been considering plagiarizing. If you have already turned in plagiarized material, go to your faculty immediately and withdraw the assignment. Your faculty would much rather have a one on one meeting with a frustrated, lost, or bored student than to read plagiarized material.

DEVELOPING YOUR THESIS



There are at least 6 types of claim:

1. definitional (X is Y) -where Y needs to be defined
2. categorical (X is Y) - when Y doesn't need to be defined
3. causal (X causes Y)
4. evaluative (X is a good Y)
5. analogical (X is like Y)
6. proposal ([someone] should do X)

these claim types stem directly from some of the most common questions that lead to a thesis; see p15 for more questions and consider how they lead to similar thesis structures.

to create a thesis, each claim sould be followed by a "because" or "for the reason that" or "in that" or "so that" or "by" that leads to a list of directly related reasons.

Let's run through the claim types in more detail:

1. DEFINITIONAL & 2. CATEGORICAL

claim w/ reasons

Spiderman is a symbol of puberty because
-Spiderman represents a powerful & responsible adult male;
-Spiderman represents Peter Parker's anxieties and fantasies about competency and potency;
-Spiderman represents the spontaneous physical and psychological changes that young males experience at Peter's age
.

I'm calling this claim definitional instead of categorical because the term "symbol of puberty" is slippery and subjective enough that it's hard to pin down exactly what it means. Basically, different people have different ideas of what constitutes a "symbol of puberty;" so, in order be clear with my audience, I'll have to spend some time defining it. If the "*Y*' term were something simple like "hero," I might not have to spend any time defining that, so I could consider that a **categorical** claim.

Notice that each of my reasons says something directly about Spiderman, the subject of the claim and what it is or what it does. In fact, ***each of my reasons is a miniature claim***. If each of the things I say about Spiderman matches with what I clearly and reasonably define as the components of "symbol of puberty", then my case will have been made.

Defining things is tricky business. Just because something exhibits a hundred of the qualities of a time machine, without the flux capacitor, it's just a Delorian. Depending on the strength of my examples, I may have to conclude the entire essay with a discussion of whether all similar superheroes are symbols of pubescence, or if there are exceptions, or if possessing merely one of these qualities makes something symbolic, and so on.

thesis: X is Y because
-X is a
-X is b
-X causes c

definition of *Y*
clearly...
Y is a
Y is b
Y causes c

so, when we see that

main argument
X is a
X is b
X causes c

dramatic conclusion
then,
clearly... X is Y

3. CAUSAL

Spiderman causes supervillains to rise up and wreak havoc because
Superheroes make supervillainy necessary for criminal minds;
Spiderman's powers cause other mutants to envy him and seek power and cause destruction.

Notice first that the word "causes" doesn't need to be in my claim. I could have written it thus: "Spiderman is the reason that supervillains rise up...." But it is important for me to write it out with the word "causes" because it actually forces me to make my claim simple and direct. If you write a claim in which "causes" seems inaccurate, consider alternatives: "is a contributing factor," "makes possible," "suggests the possibility of."

The task of a causal essay is to address each of my reasons in sections that show (in some order) that whatever quality is presented in my reason really does somehow lead to the result described in my claim.

The abstraction below attempts to summarize the different ways that a set of causes can lead to a specific result...

X causes Y by
doing a
doing b
doing c

variations

x does a which leads to Y;
x does b which leads to Y;
x does c which leads to Y.

x does a which contributes to Y;
x does b which contributes to Y;
x does c which contributes to Y.

only x can cause a;
having done a, b becomes possible;
through a & b, c can finally come about;
when a, b, & c are all in place, then Y.

it's important to note that every reason, every connection, in a causal claim is also causal

4. EVALUATIVE & 5. ANALOGICAL

I've put these two together because they are clearly very similar to the "definitional" claim in structure. In fact each of them follow that structure with the difference only of the additonal evaluative word ("good") or the nature of the "Y" term (an analogy). This structural similarity means that defending these types of claims consists of clearly defining the Y term and then convincingly demonstrating that X possesses the same qualities as Y.

Evaluative: Spiderman is a good role model because...
-he takes responsibility for his actions;
-he values family and friends;
-he has power without craving it;
-he seeks justice in an unjust world!

Notice in the **evaluative claim**, the writer might need to clearly define, not just role model, but also the difference between "good" and "bad" role model. From there on, the structure of the argument is about the same as any definitional claim (if X equals b and Y equals b, the X equals Y). If "good role model" is "b," and Spiderman is also "b," then Spiderman is a "good role model."

notice the causal claim embedded in this example

Analogical: Though of a vastly different origin and outward effect, Peter Parker's double life creates psychological repurcussions much like those suffered by the famous Dr. Jekyl as seen in...
-Parker's increasing anxiety about his powers;
-Parker's fears about causing suffering;
-Parker's gradually surrender to his alter ego's dominance.

In the **analogical claim**, the reasons relate implicitly to "both" the X and the Y term, for obvious reasons. One of the most important parts of an analogical claim is being able to make clear to the reader why your analogy is important, interesting, or useful (which isn't necessarilly evident in the thesis). Otherwise, you can get lost in an analogy that may work but means little. The example above, for instance, might fit better as a sub-claim to a larger thesis about how the spiderman narrative gains its power and significance by adapting and borrowing from timeless myths and archetypes.

6. PROPOSAL

All children should read Spiderman comics because...
-they teach responsibility;
-they contain age-old themes that teach about identity and maturity;
-they show that good can overcome evil!

Notice first that the reasons for this claim make more little claims. The most common type of reason is causal when supporting a proposal, because normally we think that we should do something because it will cause certain results.

The challenge before this writer is not simply showing that Spiderman comics really do these things, but that doing these things is important, good, or necessary.

If my Thesis question is:

IS ART DEAD?

My Complete Thesis might be:
Art is dead because it no longer takes part in meaningful socio-political discourse, has little impact on anyone outside of its hermetic culture, and has detached itself from historical roots that might have kept it vital.

WORKING OUT YOUR IDEAS...

ask yourself questions

What exactly am I referring to as "art"? What does it mean for a concept, or word, movement, or practice like "art" to be dead?

What is meaningful social-political discourse? Are there good examples of art being involved in this? How can I tell that it has stopped, that it won't start again tomorrow?

How does one measure art's "impact" on people? What makes the culture of art "hermetic"?

What are art's historical roots, and how can I tell that it has become detached?

To appeal to emotions, you must have a sense of your audience's concerns. Why should your audience care about the death of art?

What are some dire results of the lack of social/political responsibility?

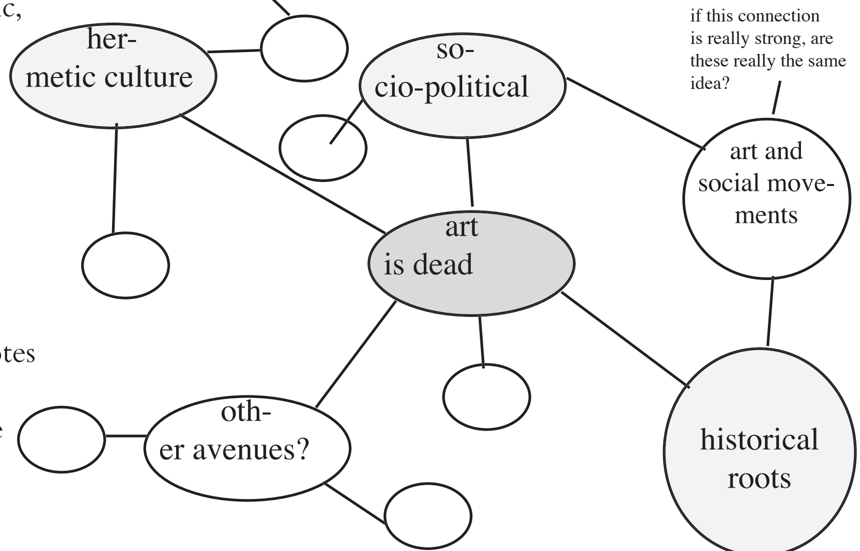
What's funny about it? -- humor has great emotional appeal.

OUTLINE-AS-YOU-GO

Outlining is a good way to start your essay, but many writers find it useful to write a draft first, or at least get some words on the page before starting an outline. In any case, don't think of outlines as the painful exercise it was in grade school. Outlines can be organic, linear, visual, what-have-you.

Try making a mind map if listing words doesn't help you.

Once you've written a draft, note in the margins what each paragraph is about.
...Sometimes working with those notes on a separate sheet and reorganizing them, adding new thoughts, can give you a fresh approach to your ideas.



SUMMARY of APROACH

At some point, you'll want to take stock of what you are working towards, why you are doing it, who you are doing it for, and how. You can do this by writing or thinking through what we can call a Summary of Aproach. Here is what the summary should do:

• It establishes what makes your thesis **important**—answers the questions: **How does your thesis matter to the world? Who cares?**

• It explains what resources you will be using, draws connections between your ideas and the **ideas of others** (both with those who agree with you and those who disagree). It answers the questions: **Who has done thinking about this, and what positions have experts taken?** Identify a few key quotations from sources.

• It provides a summary of your **logical and emotional approach**. It answers the questions: **How do you make sense of it? What evidence, experiences, and concepts will help your reader to understand your position? How will you make the reader experience the urgency, beauty, passion that you do for the subject?**

• It defines your *real* intended **audience**. As a follow-up to "who cares?", defining your audience helps you to determine the level of discourse you are to use, your vocabulary, to what extent you have to explain any complex terms, or provide historical information. Importantly, you must identify how much your audience agrees with you and in what ways they disagree*. **Are you preaching to the choir? Educating the new recruits? Or are you engaging your opposition? Does your audience know more or less than you about the world? Does your audience have power/influence; what kind?** Sometimes, a good way to explore the possibilities of audience is to examine some magazines in your subject area. Magazine editors and writers always have a keen sense of their audience's tastes and beliefs.

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*One of the most important aspects of audience-determination is knowing on which points and on what values and beliefs your audience agrees with you. Sometimes merely defining these factors will determine your audience clearly for you.

THESIS ANALYSIS

A good analysis of your thesis allows you to begin breaking your argument down into manageable parts; it can even alert you to ideas, problems, and ways of considering your audience

These are the terms of thesis analysis:

Grounds, Evidence for Grounds…
Assumption, Backing, Evidence for Backing…
Conditions of Rebuttal…

I'll use the following claim with one reason to create examples for each term (in your analysis, you'll work through this process for EACH reason:

US foreign policy is terrorism **because**…

—US foreign policy promotes the US goverment taking preemptive agressive actions that harm civilians in violation of the UN Charter.

Grounds: the support of each reason. (the reasons for the reason, if you will—because every reason is a mini-claim, it could become a thesis for an essay of smaller scope; you can think of each section of your argument as a mini-essay with the reason as thesis.)

US foreign policy promotes the US goverment taking preemptive agressive actions that harm civilians in violation of the UN Charter...

grounds:

by shielding the US from accountability to the world community
by selectively ignoring standards and rules for military intervention

Evidence for grounds: the *kind* of evidence that will best support each ground. note, the "KIND" of evidence, not the actual evidence. Kinds of evidence might include anecdotes, statistics, quotes from experts; the point is to think of what might be available and what type of evidence will provide the best support for your grounds and be most convincing to your audience.

- *by shielding the US from accountability to the world community*
  - *history and definition of war crimes*
  - *expert statement about nature of accountability in UN*
  - *historical examples of US's lack of accountability*
- *by selectively ignoring standards and rules for military intervention*
  - *expert examination of US rationale for interventions*
  - *double standards in terms of "rogue nation" status*

Assumption: the assumption or value behind each reason.
reason: *US foreign policy promotes the US goverment taking preemptive agressive actions that harm civilians in violation of the UN Charter...*
warrant: Anything that promotes preemptive aggression and harms civilians in violation of the UN charter can/should be considered terrorism.

Backing for Assumption: essentially, the reasons for each warrant
Anything that promotes preemptive aggression and harms civilians in violation of the UN charter can/should be considered terrorism….
because

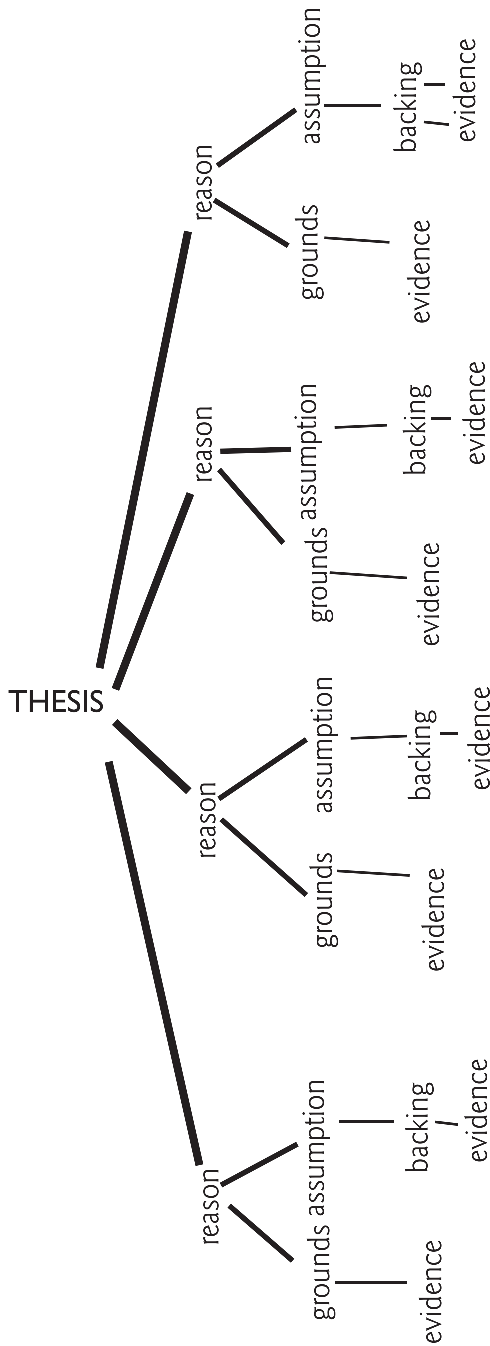
- *because preemptive aggression against a nation is terrorism*
- *because intentionally harming civilians for political ends is terrorism*
- *because international agreements define such acts of violence as terrorism*

Evidence of backing: again, the KIND of evidence I would use to support my backing.
- *because preemptive aggression against a nation is terrorism*
  Examples of acts the US has labeled as terrorism.
  Textbook/UN definition of preemptive aggression
- *because intentionally harming civilians for political ends is terrorism*
  Examples.
  Definition of "harm" to include property, psychological, physical.
- *because international agreements define such acts of violence as terrorism*
  Cite UN Charter & other international agreements governing~

Conditions of rebuttal (counter-reason/grounds): these are the counter arguments against my particular reasons and grounds, including the types of evidence that could be used against my reasons and grounds.
•Alternative interpretations of US Foreign Policy. •Redefinition of preemptive according to different standards of threat. •Definitions of threat. •Relevance of civilian deaths: one might argue that the US does not seek civilian casualties, that those that occur are an acceptable risk. •Different interpretation of UN charter; justification of US's special status in UN policies.

Conditions of rebuttal (counter-assumption/backing): these are the counter arguments that target your assumptions and the evidence supporting those assumptions.
•Definition of terrorism that excludes the possibility of Nations committing acts of terror. •Examples of preemptive aggression that have accorded with UN policy.

You might imagine your analyzed thesis to look something like the diagram below:



This diagram gives you a nice sense of the LOGICAL STRUCTURE of your essay. Sketching out the results of your thesis analysis in this way will give you a good big picture of what you're doing. As you look over such a diagram, you can see where there are weak links, less and more evidence, and warrants that are more or less important to making your case successfully.

But a diagram like this does nothing to show the flow of ideas, nor does it begin to give you any room for creativity. It is BARE BONES - a skeletal version of your idea.

To move beyond this, you can make a "map" of your essay. The map of your essay can be visually creative and take many forms.

Here is an image as you think about this activity: in the olden days, a Greek orator (speechmaker) would organize and memorize his speech by associating each section and idea (even phrases) with aspects of a temple or other large building. When recalling his speech, all he had to do was take a walk in his memory through the building. In the case of your essay-map, think of taking the reader on a tour through that building. You might, alternately, conceive of your "map" as literally that: imagine the mysterious and enchanting maps contained in fantasy books, and imagine charting your reader's great journey from one end to the other. Label your map carerfully, with each section depicting the feel and purpose of that stage of the writing. Indicate the facts, stories, and images that make it meaningful.

Have fun. Use your creativity and playfulness to enhance your intellectual work.

ESSAY MAP

the INTRODUCTION

laying the groundwork for your thesis

The introduction to an essay has a number of jobs to do.

the introduction...

- grabs your reader's attention
- leads your reader into the general subject area and issues/problems/ideas related to thesis
- introduces important or special vocabulary that you'll be using
- leads logically and emotionally to your thesis statement

the introduction should NOT contain your "thesis question." Though this technique is occasionally appropriate, it is usually a false and limited way of leading to your thesis.

That's a lot to do. Even worse, none of it can be done overtly without boring your reader to tears.

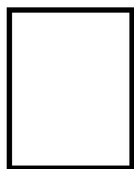
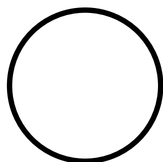
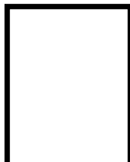
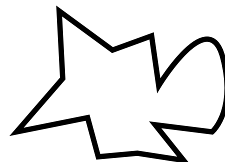
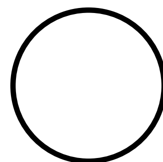
Instead, you have to **grab their attention** with a surprising statement, an appeal to something of great importance, or a juicy detail—think of the first lines of great novels you've read, the mangled fingers of an old Iraqi farmer cupping her daughter's cheeks.

The attention grabber needs to **lead naturally into the subject at hand:** don't force it. CONNECT YOUR IDEAS TO WHAT YOUR AUDIENCE ALREADY KNOWS, what they care about and believe. Sometimes a personal connection, experience, or reflection is a good way to get from the opening to talking about the general subject. In our case, it can even be something in your experience reading the book or doing some other class activity. Alternately, the major topic may be the part where you are generating a sense of urgency ("As we hover on the brink of war, we musn't forget the importance of composting.") As you lead into the subject at hand, you are essentially summarizing portions of your argument, packing them in or embedding them into the careful language of the introduction.

As you introduce your topic and build towards your thesis, you'll want to **use some key terminology** in a way that the reader will understand what you mean. Sometimes, you may need to outright define it. In Lure of the Local, much of the introduction is busy defining terms (place, home, community...). Though her terms may seem common, she used them in very particular ways. Please do not quote the dictionary; though the dictionary defines words, it does not tell us what they mean. If a dictionary definition would suffice in explaining a word you are using, then you don't have to explain it.

Finally, and overall, your introduction is **leading logically and emotionally to your thesis. ...**the attention getter is appropriate to your thesis, the subject area is neither too broad nor too narrow, and the vocabulary seems immediately relevant: these are all logical progressions toward your thesis. The emotion part is a little tricky. The idea of emotional development is that by the time you get to the thesis, the reader is wanting it, ready for it, and will greet it with a mix of recognition, "yes, I see...," and intrigue, "really?... how interesting." In addition, the thesis should be drawing directly on whatever emotional appeals you've made in your attention getter and whatnot. If you've tried to make people sad, your thesis should respond to this sadness.

the heart of the matter

this section includes the following edifying topics

What essays are for...

essays in the real world and in our lives.

Story telling

Beginning with the belief that essay writing is a form of storytelling, this section draws some connections between the art of the story and the art of the essay that are sure to help you craft a better essay.

Social Sciences and Literature

(Sin Boldly)

This section draws from the thoughts of David Wilson on writing about literature and the social sciences, two particularly sticky areas.

Logos, Ethos, Pathos

Logos, Ethos and Pathos are the building blocks of a strong argument in writing. This section will show you what they are and how to use them.

An essay is an act of:

...inquiry : writing is a way of thinking as painting is a way of seeing.

...self-expression : writing externalizes the self, makes it an object, apparent, worthy of study and reflection, and gives form to “formless” experiences

...self-exploration : writing reveals aspects of the self hidden, both in the moment and upon later reflection; writing is a record of conscious desires, temporary realities.

...activism : writing is a powerful tool in all political and social situations. a written conviction always precedes revolution and change.

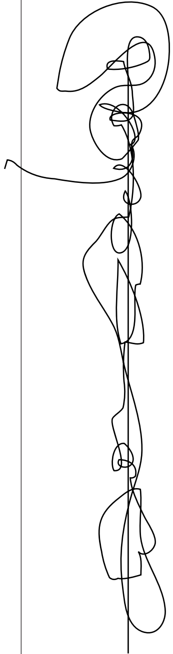
...redefining the world : to the extent that the human world is made of words, writing essays contributes to the telling of the world.

...voicing conviction : writing is a record of our personal and social values; the written word is a covenant with one’s better self.

...engaging peers : writing is based in community, in the need and desire to share with and receive from others our most urgent revelations.

...memory : writing is an aid to memory; it relieves us of mental clutter; writing essays stores more complex thoughts than our brains can safely carry.

the heart of the matter



***Stories**, one might say, are the fabric of consciousness and the fabric of culture. Recognizing the depth at which stories permeate our very sense of ourselves and the world, it becomes clear how important it is to make a study of the quality, character, and content of the stories that we tell.*

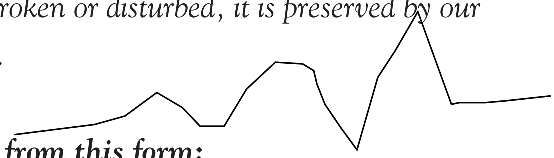
A good essay is essentially a story like any other.

***Stories have shapes**, forms that can be represented visually. Every story can be depicted as a path between two points, the beginning and the end. No matter how convoluted the path, there is always a beginning and end of the experience of a story.*

Certain shapes have endured or, one might imagine, are rigorously preserved by our culture.

conflict & climax narrative: "heroic tranformation"

One enduring story can be represented by a line that gradually and/or jaggedly climbs to an intense peak, then falls back to rest. The line represents conflict building towards a final conflict and resolution. Even when the pattern is broken or disturbed, it is preserved by our dependence on it to create the sense of disturbance.



There are a few things the essayist can learn from this form:

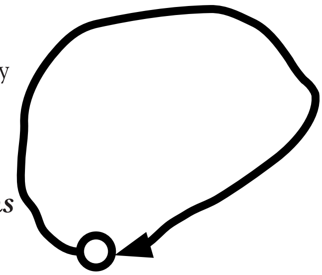
1. The most difficult, insightful, effective, or dramatic point of an argument will be effective as the last, just before the resolution & conclusion.

2.Insofar as the form can represent the hero's quest, the essayist (or her cause), too, can gain allies and suffer defeats until the final conflict, transformation, or conquest.

3. An essay can partake of the same kind of drama as the form suggests: insofar as the dramatic story line is repeated in real life, in historical events, so our record of them, our search for understanding can take this form.

4. Our search for understanding is a dramatic process. While it may not be advisable to lead the reader directly through our research, our disappointments, our sense of accomplishment, providing a sense of the intellectual drama of working out ideas can be a strong pull through an essay.

the odyssey



Similar in many respects but different in others, the circular form seems to reappear in stories and essays. *The five paragraph essay, with the thesis repearing at the end, is an example of a cyclical work. The idea is that the thesis is stated, supported, then restated; the cycle is from statement to restatement, and the idea is that, upon restatement, the reader experiences the thesis differently, acknowledges its truth, power, accuracy. That, however, is probably the least interesting example, but the essential shift is instructive:* ***when the reader comes to the end THINGS WILL HAVE CHANGED.***

The archetypal reference made here is the journey of Odysseus, the "Odyssey." Odysseus travels to and from Troy. ***The getting there is nothing; the being there is complicated; the return is phenomenal and arduous. An interesting question is, What is "there"?***

Disassociating from Odysseus a bit, "there" is commonly understood as being a separate realm, a realm of magic, ghosts, mystery, gods, magic, satan, nature, wilderness, darkness, hell, heaven, ***….all places of great potential, places that tranform us and the world, our sense of the world, because we identify them as being outside our normal realm of experience.***

While being there may be tough, it's the return that's really the work of the hero: *Zarathustra coming down from the mountain, Jesus returning from the desert, Buddha from enlightenment, Luke Skywalker from Dagoba. Stories of returns are especially challenging. That's why, at the end of Close Encounters of the Third Kind, we only have a departure, an indecipherable mystery remains, pleasing, but not heroic. Few war movies bring the characters back home successfully.*

Another construct to apply to this circle is that the starting point is grounded, concrete *(or in some cases, literally on the ground, or in reality as we know it) and as we travel to the other side of the circle, we are ascending into the air, into the ethereal, the magical, off the ground, into the abstract, cocneptual. In an essay, this could be as simple as beginning with a story, a real human experience, and using it to lead into abstract ideas, philosophies.* ***The return brings us back to reality, somewhat changed by the journey, wiser, prepareed to communicate, to REpresent.***

SIN BOLDY

following are two chapters from David R. Williams' book on writing the college essay. These chapters are included to elaborate on two particularly important and confounding disciplines that we will encounter a good deal of this year. While everything Mr Williams says is not entirely agreeable,he makes strong points and charts good territory for further conversation on the challenge of writing literature and social science essays.

LOGOS

ETHOS

Pathos

LOGOS:

the word:

Logos is the logical organization of meaning. More than just the assemblage of facts, logos is used to refer to the thinking that makes an argument or idea seem good, reasonable; it is the common or uncommon sense that ties the facts together. Logos results from a sound and thorough thesis analysis that includes recognition of assumptions, provides quality evidence to support claims, and responds effectively to the particular demands of the claim type.

ETHOS:

character:

Ethos refers to the ethical construction and communication of an idea: "character" therefore refers to one's integrity. The ethos in an essay is the trustworthiness and integrity of the author combined with the quality of the sources of information and ideas; in general, ethos demands that the writer's argument as a whole respect the reader's intelligence and respect the larger discourse in which the writer is participating. Ethos is achieved through solid research, clear presentation of information and ideas, and due consideration of rebuttals/opposition. An ethical argument uses no fallacies to manipulate the reader.

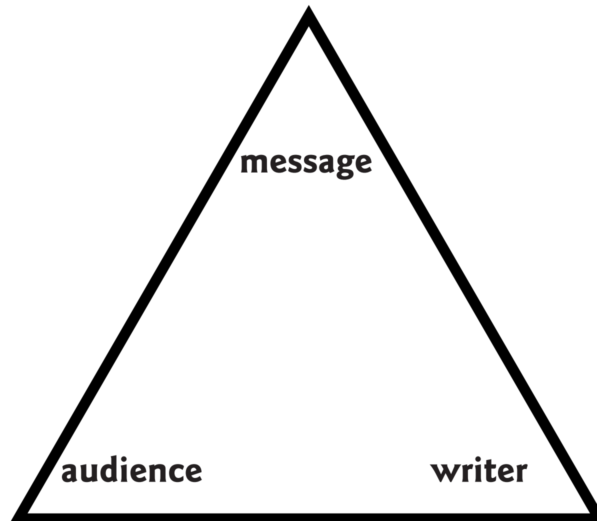
PATHOS:

suffering & experience:

Pathos is that aspect of an argument that appeals to the reader's imagination and sympathy. Put coarsely, pathos is an appeal to emotion. Without ethos, pathos falls easily into manipulation. But along with strong logos and ethos, pathos can shine as the most powerful and memorable aspect of an argument (and of the reading experience). A dramatic story at the opening of an essay can color the entire piece. With pathos as a key element of argumentation, we can see how fiction and poetry construct arguments with pathos at the forefront; but even fiction and poetry ultimately fail without logos and ethos. Good pathos stems from passion and urgency—from understanding why your ideas matter to others.

The Rhetorical Triangle

LOGOS: How can I make the argument internally consistent? How can I find the best reasons and support them with the best evidence?



PATHOS: How can I make the reader open to my message? How can I best appeal to my reader's values and interests? How can I engage my reader emotionally and imaginatively?

ETHOS:How can I present myself effectively? How can I enhance my credibility and trustworthiness?

from Writing Arguments, Ramage, Bean, Johnson

Developing a Good Argument Checklist

1. significance/urgency of issue

a. How does your argument relate to current events, trends?
b. What makes your argument urgent/important to your audience?
c. What is your stake in the controversy; how does it affect you?

2. definable disagreement

a. Can you discern two or more perspectives on the issues/questions that you are working on?
b. Are there groups, organizations, public figures representing these different perspective?
c. Can you identify effective arguments on all sides of the issue?

3. clear audience

a. Who is your audience?
b. How much do they know or care about your subject? What is their attitude about it?
c. What are their likely objections to your argument?
d. What values/beliefs do you share with your audience?
e. What do you expect your audience to do with the ideas you give them?

4. quality of resources

a. Do you trust your sources; why?
b. Will your audience trust your sources; why?
c. Do your sources include the most up-to-date information and ideas? Give an example.
d. Are your sources, examples, and data representative of the norm (in relation to your audience)?
e. Do your sources provide data that is sufficient to prove your case?
f. Are you partciularly enamored with any of your sources? If so, work to consider the opposition &
alternatives.

5. quality of evidence

a. What personal experience do you have that gives credence (or vitality) to your claim?
b. Can you locate expert/first hand testimony to support your claim? Who might that include?
c. Are there primary sources (documents) or first hand accounts available?
d. Are secondary sources (writings about/analytical works) plentiful? Do the secondary sources disagree
with one another? Why?
e. Can you identify the "secondary-source-experts"?
f. How are the controversies in the secondary sources related to your claim?
g. Would interviews (performed by you) add to your argument; who might the subjects be? What would
you seek to find out from them?
h. What could surveys help you to discover? Who would you survey? What surveys already done could
aid you in your work?
i. What facts and examples are integral to your claim?
j.What sort of statistics, numbers, etc. will support your claim; how will they be best represented in your
paper?

6. Truth-seeking: consider your issue/claim in terms of truth-seeking.

a. What questions do you seek the answers to in your research?
b. How might a truth seeking narrative effect your argument/your audience?
c. How effective or interesting will your essay be if you don't discover one final answer?

7.Persuasion.

a. To what extent are you engaged in persuasion? Why?
b. Who are you trying to persuade?
c. What do you hope to accomplish?
d. How will you know if you've been successful?
e. How are avoiding manipulating your reader?

8. Educating the reader.

a. Give an example of information that you may have to give your reader to help them to understand your argument. Describe how this information will fit into the paper without distracting from the argument and the issue.

General and Specific Advice on Writing + Fallacies

Consider your audience.Your audience for seminar papers is your peers and faculty. Having this limited audience means only one thing: your audience has at least read the book you are writing about (and the previous books this quarter). However, you may be the only one who really understands it, at least, understands it the way you do. Don't presume, therefore, that you don't need to summarize ideas from other books, support your claims with direct quotations, or define your terms clearly—you DO. A useful paradox when writing these papers is to write for a hypothetical someone who knows much less than you do AND another hypothetical someone who knows much more than you do. The challenge is to be simply brilliant, brilliantly simple.

Spell things correctly. **Use a dictionary** —do not trust your spell-checker.

Avoid the word "this" at the beginning of a sentence. It is a vague reference to something in the previous sentence, but the reader can't always tell what. It is never necessary at the beginning of a sentence. Appropriate use of the word "this" at the beginning of a sentence means following "this" with a clarifying or deepening renaming of the thing you are talking about: "... and I realized that my feces was just as good as any painting. *This remarkable insight* lead to...."

Don't write "I think" or "I feel." Your readers already know that you are a thinking, feeling being and don't need to be reminded. It *is* important to identify the difference between opinion and fact (and your opinions vs the opinions of others). But don't do it with "I think" or "I feel."

Generally, put ending **punctuation inside quotation marks:** "....That's all folks." If a citation follows, however, consider the citation as part of the sentence: "...That's all folks" (Bugs Bunny, 45). One exception to the rule is when you are writing a question which happens to end with something in quotations: Who said "that's all folks"? The question is yours, not part of what is being quoted.

Write in complete sentences unless making a clear and important stylistic choice to do otherwise. Sometimes what we think is our style or our voice (a popular excuse for

awkward sentence structures) can lead to writing that is unclear or difficult to follow. Your **writing voice** is very different from your speaking voice. There's a reason for this difference. Speaking is a very utilitarian form of communication. 99% of the speaking we do is really about as deep as "Look out!" Most speech fails to convey the complexity of our thoughts & feelings, and it usually gets us into trouble. Writing is a way of clarifying and deepening thought, and the "rules" of grammar and of essay writing are designed to help. More often than not, incomplete sentences and disorganized paragraphs are the product of incomplete thoughts and disorganized ideas. Your job as a writer and thinker is to use writing as a tool to revise your ideas.

Writing is a process of inquiry. Though it is important to produce an essay for seminar, you should not lose sight of writing as a process of investigating an idea— not just a mechanical exercising of your bullshit machine. If you are tempted to bullshit your way through a paper or to avoid turning something in because it isn't "perfect," stop; and, 1) Wherever you are in the writing process, you should visit your tutor (or any tutor) with whatever genuine material you've got (or turn in *something* typed at seminar). If you've gotten yourself into a tangle of words and ideas, that's the perfect time to have someone else read what you've got and give feedback. In general, give yourself plenty of time to get ideas on paper, leave them alone for a while, then come back. Coming back to your work later is a bit like having someone else read it. In this way, writing literally allows you to think more (having written down thought X, you can concentrate on figuring out thought Y). Ultimately, I'd rather read your genuine mutated messy struggle of an essay than some neat and tidy hollow shell of an essay.

If you don't have a writing process, it's time to get one. **A good writing process**, like all artistic processes, is infinite. It never really ends, and it never really wants to end. A good writing process might involve: brainstorming, clustering, outlining, drafting, redrafting, revising, revising.... editing, revising... and so on ad infinitum, absurdum, and nauseam. Each of these stages involves a significant amount of thinking and conceptual development that would not happen otherwise.

Don't ask questions. Many writers think that asking questions is a good way to make readers think. That's insulting. Of course your reader is thinking; not only that, but your reader will think whatever they please. What the reader needs to see in your writing are ideas developed, answers defended, boldness. You may ask gobs of questions in your notes, journals, and preliminary drafts. But they are the first thing you should weed out of your essay. For each question you are tempted to ask, consider the possibility that you are asking

because you can't yet answer it yourself. Or try to answer it and see how much further you push your ideas by pursuing answers and not dwelling on questions. Now, of course, we have this wonderful notion that seminar is supposed to leave us with more questions than answers, and the wise man is the woman who knows how little she really knows. In your essay, your "try," all of those pleasantries and aphorisms are irrelevant. Instead, take on the responsibility of a generator of ideas, answers; prepare to be wrong, to contradict others, to find out how little and how much you know. Don't be content to simply know the right questions.

Rhetorical questions, by definition, are questions that need no answer, like "Who would want to stick an angry wasp up his nose?" is a rhetorical question (presuming the speaker is not seeking volunteers). Rhetorical questions are therefore appropriate because they already imply the answer.

Don't write the word "you." Never write it in your essays. I say this not because it is sinful or wrong but because removing the word "you" will generally lead to better writing. "You" is rarely effective, and tends also to be a habit that keeps writing (and your writing voice) from developing beyond the conversational. To explain: first of all, you don't really know who "you" is. Second, most often, when a writer writes "you," they mean "me;" nine times out of ten, "me" would be better, more interesting to a reader: "I really hate people who break traffic laws. Sometimes you just want to kill someone." In this example, the writer is attributing his own outrageous attitude to everyone in order to distract from his irrationality. It is a false appeal to universal experience.

In addition, most readers, in most situations, do not enjoy being led around by an author pretending to know what they would think, do, feel, or say —using "you" is the language of the advertiser, the manipulator, pretending to be your buddy.

Finally, we use "you" most often in conversation. When you are writing, you are conversing with paper; it's bound to be a bit dull. What can occur in writing is not a dialogue between people but a dialogue between ideas, but only if you eliminate "you."

Use "I" only when you mean it. What most readers are looking for in an essay are ideas, sometimes pretty descriptions. Your reader doesn't really care that they are your ideas or to know anything about you that isn't essential to the ideas. Every time you write the word "I" in an essay, you take the attention off of your ideas and put it directly on you, the writer, thinking your ideas: you step between your reader and your ideas (your ideas are eclipsed). So only use "I" when you really want to be present as a person or a writer in your paper and when your experience, your presence, adds to the reader's understanding of the ideas you are trying to communicate.

Also be wary of "it." "It" is another pronoun that is often used for little or no reason and can cause confusion. As you proofread your writing, check each occurence of "it" —could you say the same thing without "it"? Does "it" actually refer to something in your paper, or is it just a habitual way of saying something.

Also be wary of "we" and "people." For instance: "We should all just jump off a cliff" or "People need to start taking other people's needs into consideration!" Who is being written about? If you're not writing about anyone in particular, you need to reconsider what you're writing or what you know about a situation. If you are thinking about a particular group or type of person, specificy who. Usually, underneath this faulty rhetoric, "we" is really "I," and "people" is "people I don't like."

Avoid beginning sentences with "there is" or "there are." Not evil, but usually more can be said about something than that it exists. There is a cat on my lap. —> A cat is draped across my lap.

Look out for strings of short, dull words like "there are some in it that would at times be more likely as well as interested in going to go to the place..." blah blah

Distinguish between "that" and "which." Use "that" when the phrase it introduces is restrictive, meaning it is necessary to the definition of the noun that immediatly precedes it. "Which" is most often used as a non-restrictive pronoun and will therefore introduce a phrase that should be set off by commas.
Examples: Correct use of "that" — "I am going to wear the shirt that you like." The phrase after "that" is restrictive because the listener wouldn't know which shirt was being spoken about otherwise.
Correct use of "which": "I am going to wear the blue shirt, which has always been your favorite." In this case, if we presume that there is only one blue shirt, then the "which" phrase is unnecessary and is therefore set off with commas.

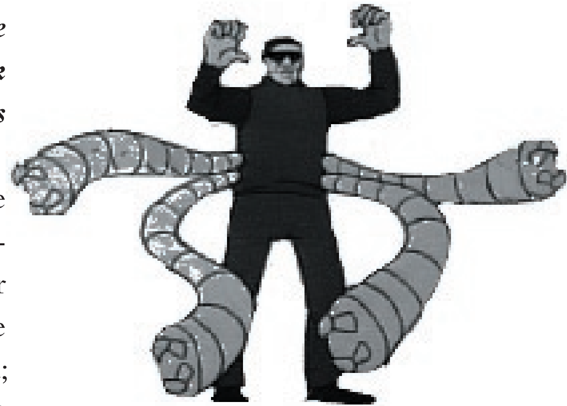
Avoid repetition and redundancy. The two are different. Repetition is a word repeated needlessly that draws the reader's attention away from what's being said. Redundancy is when the writer is trying to say something new but is really just saying the same thing again, or, in a fit of over-explanation, says more than needs to be said by telling the reader the same thing again with different words.

that's enough for now.

fallacies

Fallacies are thinking errors. They are common.
You think them. I think them.
Politicians master them. Advertisers take advantage of them.
Fallacies make the world go 'round. Understanding fallacies and identifying them in your world is like seeing the naked emperor in his new (invisible) clothes.

The first two fallacies are faulty appeals to emotion ("pathos"). Like the others, they are not fallacious in the sense that they don't work —they work all too well. They are fallacious because they are in essence a form of lie.



Provincialism/Irrational Premises: These fallacies can be summed up in the ever popular sayings: "We've been doin' it this way n'ar abouts as long as I can remember, why change it?" and, "Those small town folk are so stupid; here in the big city, we just don't do that sort of thing." It includes the idea that the known is always better than the unknown, that if lots of people, or even "everyone else," is doing something, or if we have always done it this way, then it is good.

Appeal to Stirring Symbols: a politician draped in the American Flag. Not all use of stirring symbols is fallacious. It's only when the symbol is at core unrelated to the issue or idea being attached to it, or when the symbol is so overblown as to be manipulative.

The next fallacies are fallacies of ethos; they reflect a lack of ethics in argumentation or the representation of reality.

Ad Hominem (to the person): attacking the person who holds a certain belief or idea instead of the belief or idea itself. Think of any political campaign or debate.

Similarly, **Appeal to False Authority:** promotes an idea or belief through an authority who really has no reason to claim such. False authority is the premise behind most advertising...Britney Spears advertising for Pepsi, etc. Also, referring to God, for instance, when arguing a case before the supreme court would be an appeal to a false authority be-

cause no deity is meant to have any in that circumstance.

StrawMan: Strawman is one of the easiest fallacies to commit. Basically, it means summarizing the ideas and opinions of your oposition so that they sound stupid or ridiculous or otherwise easy to defeat (you turn your opposition into a straw man). Any reduction of the opposition can be considered a straw man. Sometimes, we commit this fallacy out of ignorance. If we are poorly informed as to the arguments and beliefs of our opposition, we might miss their strongest points. Avoiding strawman means having a genuine understanding of, even empathy for, our opposition, its beliefs, and its best possible arguments.

These last fallacies are faulty in their logic (logos).
Confusing Correlation for Cause (*post hoc ergo proctor hoc*) means thinking that just because one event preceded another then there is a causal relationship between the two. Even in cases where you are reasonably certain that a causal relationship exists, or the cause-effect relationship makes sense, events merely correlate until you can make a truly good case for their direct connection.

The **Slippery Slope** fallacy is very common; it is the presumption that once we begin down a certain road we won't be able to stop. Someone arguing with a slippery slope will use the "likely" horrible results of a decision to argue that it is a bad choice now. So, if we start cloning humans today, fifty years from now we'll all be the same and there will be an army of clones taking over the world. A common appeal is the frantic, "What's next?"

Hasty Generalization is pretty self explanatory. Taking a small fact, example, or anecdote and extrapolating (too simply or quickly) from it a broad conclusion about the world.

A **Faulty Analogy** is, of course, an analogy that doesn't work well. Unless you spend time really working out an analogy in your head or in your paper, faulty analogies are easy to make. Remember that the point of an analogy is to show a meaningful and usually complex connection between two things, situations, ideas. Usually a faulty analogy stems from things being similar in one way, but quite different under further examination or from a different perspective.

for quick advice and instruction
on the details of writing essays,
grammar, and so forth, visit
Purdue University's Online Writing Lab:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/