

Academic Writing @ Harvard Structure, Style, & Strategy

Fall 2019

Academic Writing and Research Support
Gutman Library

Zuhra Faizi, Simone Fried, Al Moore

***Materials available at:**

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/11528>

Today's Schedule



Structure

- Shape of a paper
- Thesis



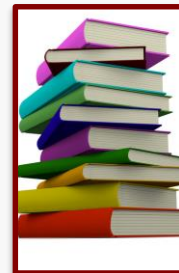
Style

- Audience
- Assignment Genres



Strategy

- Critical Reading
- Revising



Resources

- People
- Places

Today's Schedule



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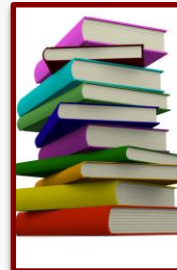
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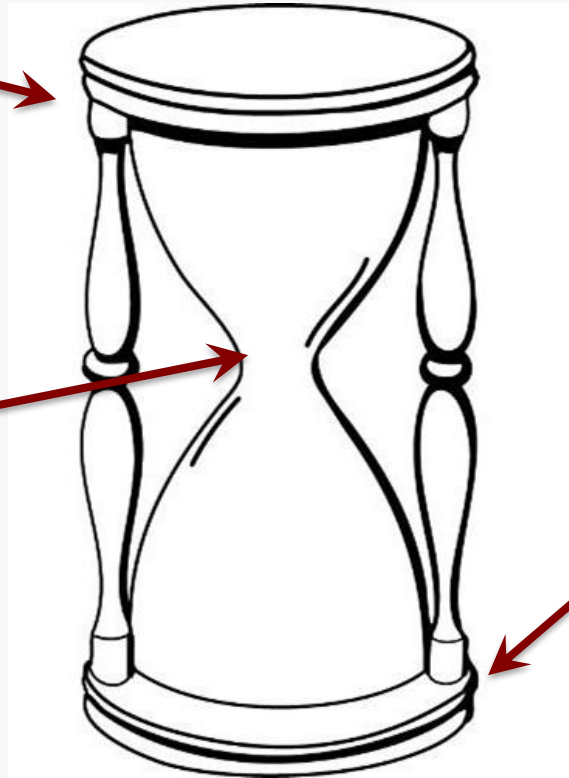
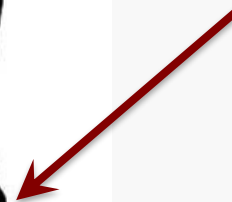
Introduction



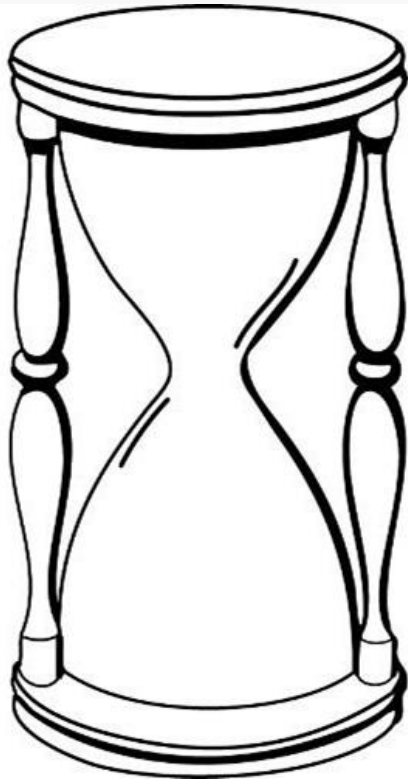
Body



Conclusion

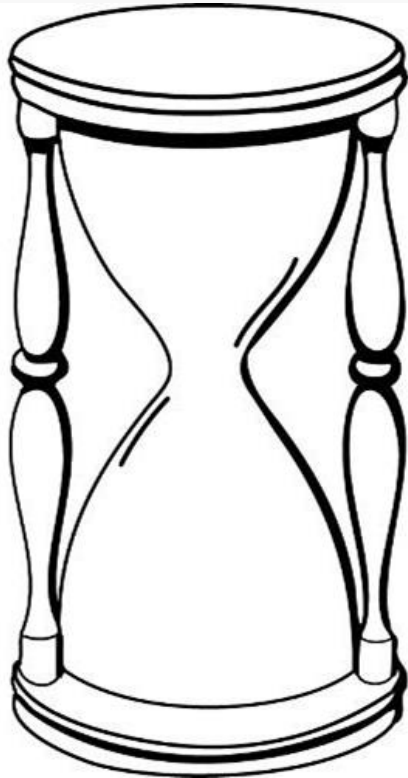


Structure: Introduction



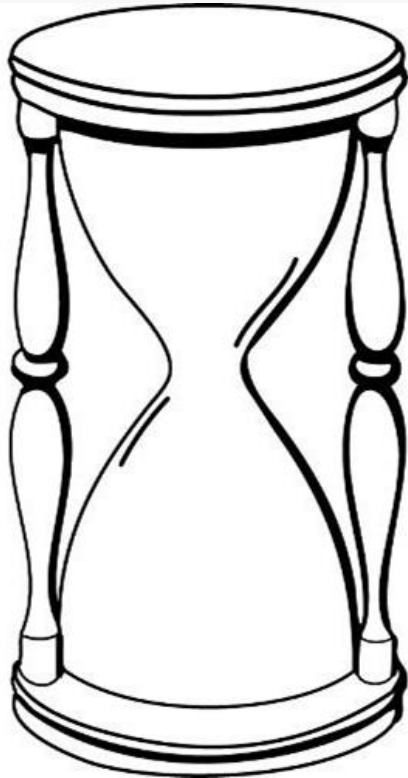
- Starts wide to set context
- May utilize a 'hook' to capture reader's interest
- Narrows to thesis statement
- Thesis explicitly states your argument
- Why is this work important? (so what)?

Structure: Body



- Narrow & specific
- Every paragraph should support your argument
- Use evidence intentionally
- Build your argument logically
- May use an outline to organize

Structure: Conclusion



- Not just a summary
- Broadens back out to apply your thesis to your context
- May propose action, policy or further research (so what?)
- Do not introduce new concepts here

Structure: A Closer Look at the Thesis



- Explicitly states your argument
- Creates expectations about what you will argue in the paper
- Is interesting
- Can be disputed

Thesis Activity

Critical analysis assignment:

High school students can struggle with college-level writing. From the perspective of many college instructors, such students simply are poor writers. Is this a reasonable conclusion? If not, what other factors might explain such struggles and what are the pedagogical implications for college instruction?

Thesis Activity



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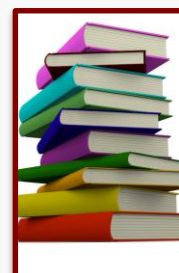
Style

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Strategy

- Critical Reading
- Revising



Resources

- People
- Places

Strategy: What is Writing?

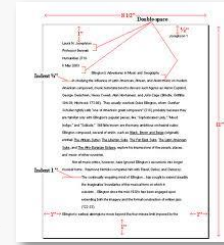
- Writing is a creative *process*
- Writing strategy depends on what you are writing and who you are writing for
- Writing is articulating and supporting your ideas

Critical Reading

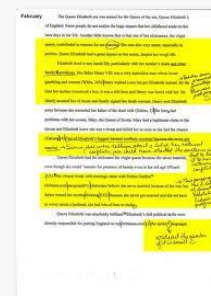


Avoiding Plagiarism & Citing Appropriately

Revision

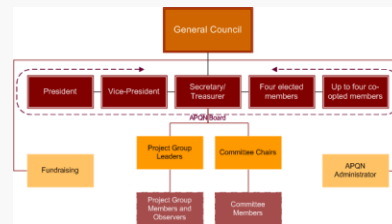


Submitted Paper



Writing Assignments

Critical Writing



Ideas



Strategy: Critical Reading

Kurland (2000) notes that “critical readers recognize not only what a text says, but also how that text portrays the subject matter.”

Goals of critical reading:

- (a) recognize author’s purpose and bias
- (b) evaluate sources and arguments
- (c) consider opposing viewpoints
- (d) understand context of study and/or paper



Kirszner, L. G. & Mandell, S. R. (2011). *Introducing practical argument: A text and anthology*. Boston, MA: Bedford.

Kurland, D. (2000). What is critical reading? Retrieved from http://www.criticalreading.com/critical_reading.htm

Image from <http://blogs.publishersweekly.com/blogs/PWxyz/?p=5555>

Critical Reading

NEWS IN BRIEF

New Statewide Education Standards Require Teachers To Forever Change Lives Of 30% Of Students

8/07/15 10:22am • SEE MORE: NEWS ▾

SPRINGFIELD, IL—In an effort to hold classroom instructors more accountable, the Illinois State Board of Education unveiled new statewide education standards Friday that require public school teachers to forever change the lives of at least 30 percent of their students. “Under our updated educator evaluation policy, teachers must make an unforgettable, lifelong impact on at least three of every 10 students and instill a love of learning in them that lasts the rest of their lives,” said chairman James Meeks, adding that based on the annual assessments, if 30 percent of students don’t recall a particular teacher’s name when asked to identify the most influential and inspiring person in their lives, that instructor would be promptly dismissed. “We are imposing these standards to make certain that a significant proportion of students in any given classroom can someday look back and say, ‘That teacher changed the course of my life, making me who I am today, and there’s no way I could ever repay them.’ Anything less is failure.”



Critical Reading



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Critical Reading Activity

Read the quotes *critically*...
whatever that means for you.

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/11528/files/6425250/download>



Goals:

- (a) recognize author's purpose and bias
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Kirszner, L. G. & Mandell, S. R. (2011). *Introducing practical argument: A text and anthology*. Boston, MA: Bedford.

Image "[Reading a Book](#)" by CollegeDegrees360 is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

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Critical Reading Activity



2

Read the quotes
critically...whatever
that means for you.



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Critical Reading Activity



1

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Strategy: Critical Reading

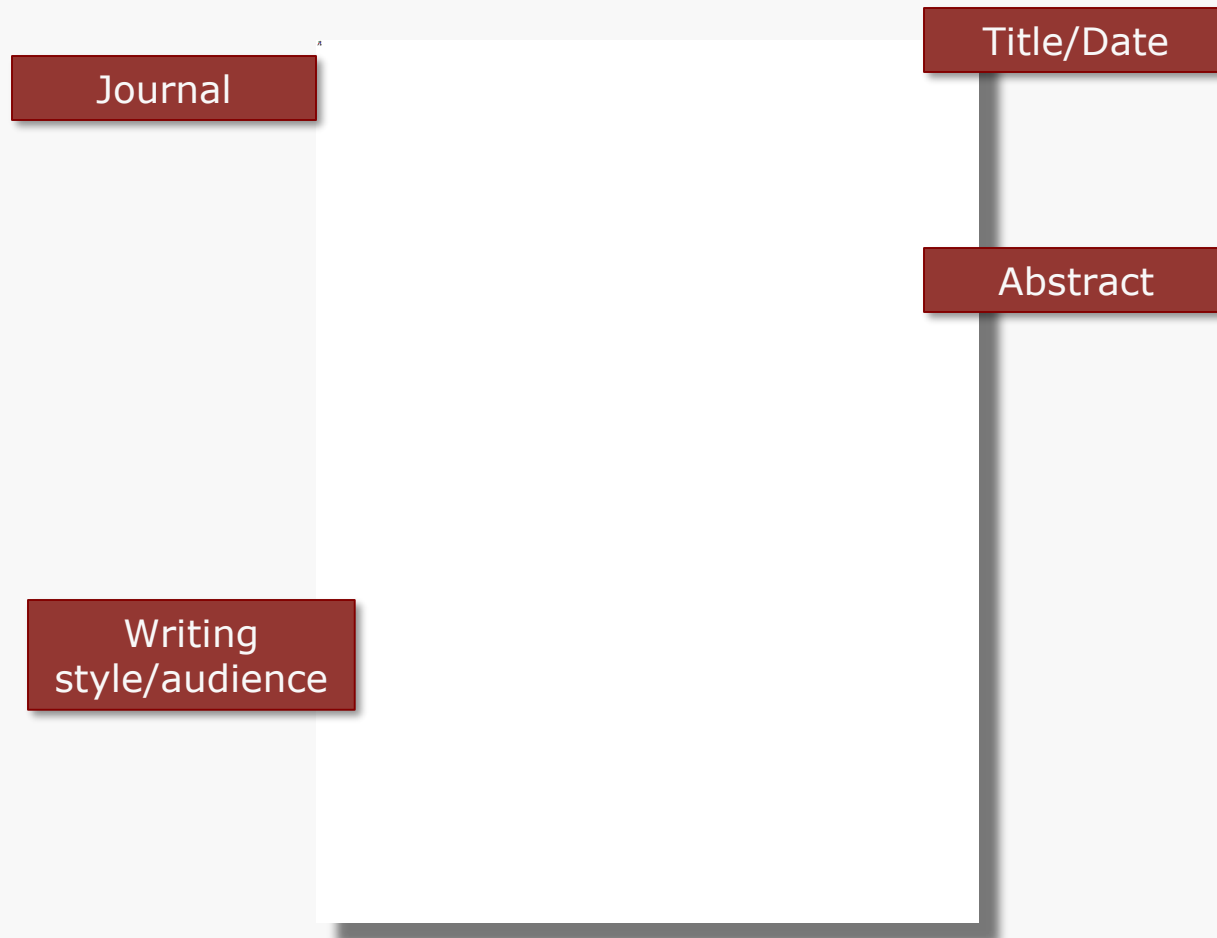
Micro Processes

- Previewing
- Annotating
- Repetitions & Patterns
- Outline/Summarize

Macro Processes

- Contextualize
- Compare/Contrast

Strategy: Previewing



Strategy: Annotating

Dialogue with yourself

Questions

Tone: Celebratory
Admiration

Language: technical
Colloquial/
Conversational
monosyllables
Penetration
Opening - coming to terms with self?

Form: Heavym
Broken down
resembles
Sonnet

Digging: extended metaphor of digging and roots.
Heaney digs into his roots, his heritage

Manual labor
digging with
the mind?

home
power
Violence?
Protection?
A natural extension?

rasping connects a
living thing

Speaker - male
patriarchal traditions
resistent attitude

Memory #1
his window -
ownership
threshold to
his heritage

Under my window a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down - remembering / to look down on has negative con.
but the poem is positive +
celebratory

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging. - connections with the past, former
generations, traditions

In rhythm =
in touch with
in agreement
with

survival
potatoes
Symbol: peat
living roots
digging
squat pen
Why squat?
crossing
ownership

the coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly. - in control, precise
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

skill, pride, dignity
-bragging rights

Transition
Admiration
Colloquial
language

By God, the old man could handle a spade,
Just like his old man.

Memory #2
My grandfather could cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, digging down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

worked hard - work ethics
strength - technique

Turning Point
heritage

The cold smell of potato mold, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them. - negative images
traditions / livelihoods destroyed
no longer available

an awakening
of what? Follow in what way?

Closure
Acceptance

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests. - weapon - tool
I'll dig with it. Follows tradition of fathers
using the tools available
to him.

Reminders of home
= hearth
rests, snug,
nestled

Seamus Heaney

2 separate memories:
Father digging potatoes
Grandfather digging turf - peat bogs

Chronotope:
rasping
squelch
slap

The pen is mightier than the sword.

Concerns

Highlight

Color-code

Strategy: Repetitions & Patterns



Strategy: Outline & Summarize

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
 - a. Historical Foundation
 - b. Growth Over Time
 - c. Current Trends
3. Methods
 - a. Research Question
 - b. Participants
 - c. Materials
 - d. Analysis
4. Results
 - a. Interviews
 - b. Surveys
5. Analysis
6. Conclusion

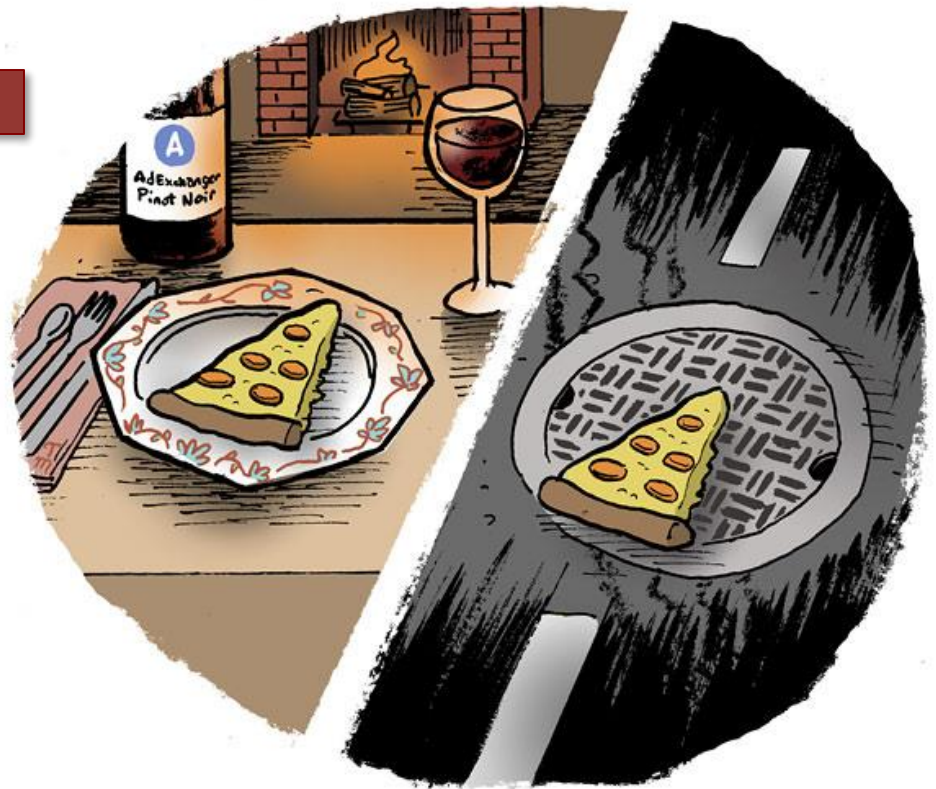
Strategy: Contextualize

Publisher?

Date?

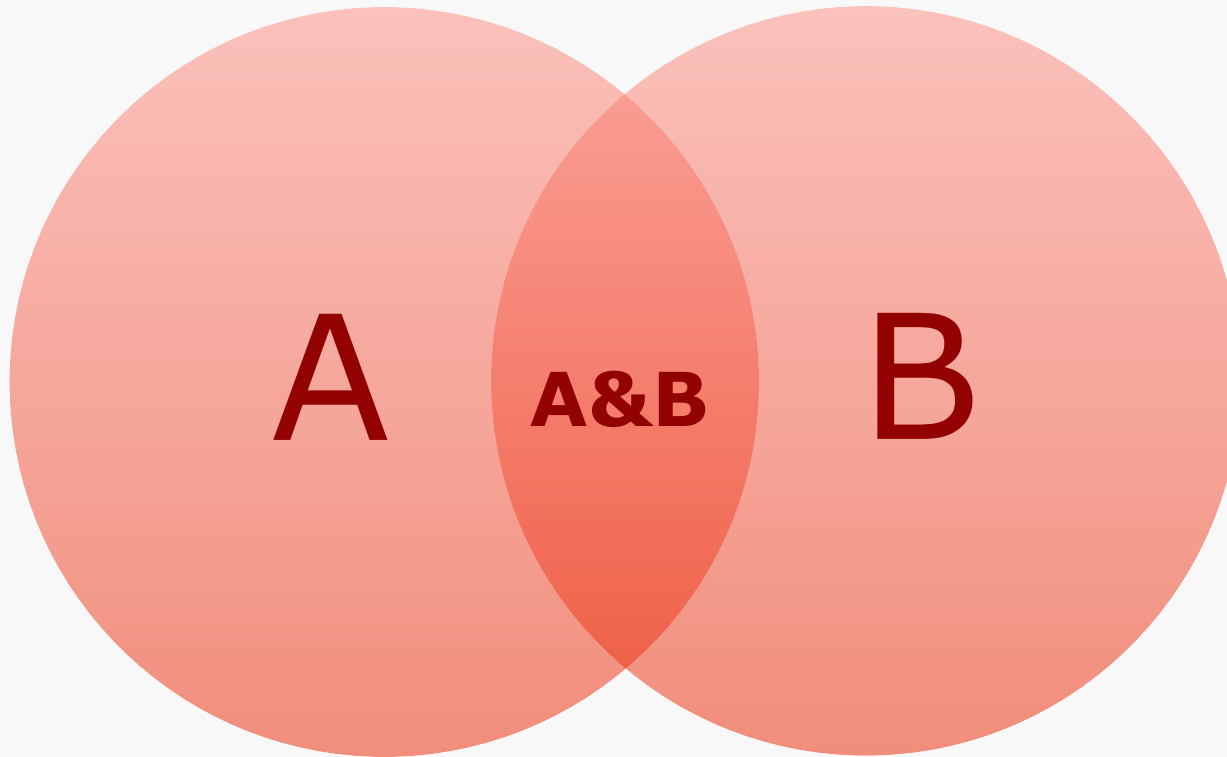
Author?

Purpose?



Context Matters

Strategy: Compare/Contrast



Break Time!



Break Time!



9

Break Time!



8

Break Time!



7

Break Time!



6

Break Time!



5

Break Time!



4

Break Time!



3

Break Time!



2

Break Time!



1

Today's Schedule



Structure

- Shape of a paper
- Thesis



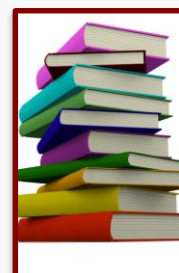
Style

- Audience
- Assignment Genres



Strategy

- Critical Reading
- Revising



Resources

- People
- Places

Strategy: Revising

- Read the paragraph
- Make a note of suggested revisions

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/11528/files/4473614/download>

Strategy: Revising

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Strategy: Revising

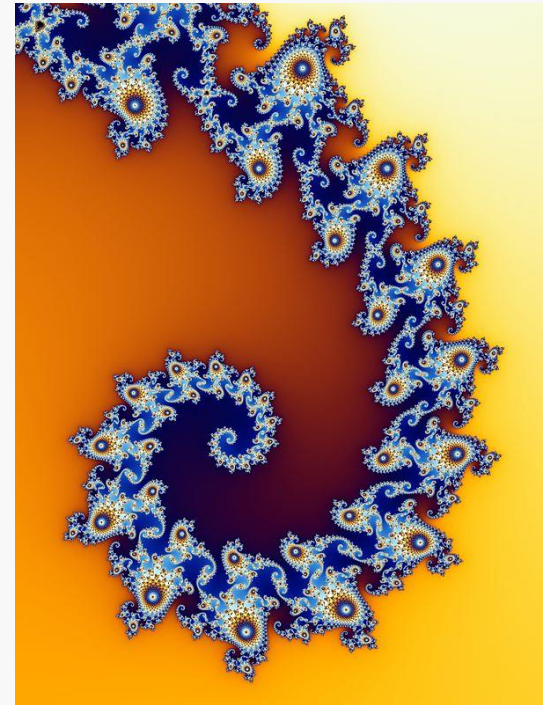
Writing like an educator isn't as hard as one might imagine. In fact, it would seem to be as easy as riding a bike – once you learn, you never forget. However when you haven't ridden in awhile, it's a challenge to start pedaling again and when you do, it might be a little painful, slow starting, and exhausting. With the right tools and consistent practice, educators can become strong writers. In fact, writers “make this job harder than is need to be when they think that there is only One Right Way to do it, that each paper they write has a preordained structure they must find. They simplify their work, on the other hand, when they recognize that there are many effective ways to say something and that their job is only to choose one and execute it so that readers will know what they are doing.” (Becker, 1986, p. 43). This task is often easier said than done. Writing in graduate school takes lots of practice. As Goldberg explained in her book, *Writing Down to the Bones*, “the more you do it, the better you get at it.” This reminds me of a PD I once attended on raising AYP and API scores for my high school students. The purpose of the PD was to help our students to become better writers and we learned how to teach paragraph structure, topic sentences, syntax and tone in order to help the students pass the writing portion of their CSET, which only 14% were passing in a typical year. In order to encourage students to practice for the exam, we also used a sport analogy – encouraging them to practice like students do on the basketball court. We learned how to lead practice drills, writing “sprints”, and how to teach students to exercise their writing power as much as they practice their hoops. It was really something!!! We didn't ever imagine that students would start practicing their writing like they practiced their dribbling. But low and behold, they did! Students writing began to really improve quite dramatically. I guess what they say is true, practice makes perfect!

Strategy: Revising

- Revise often
- Focus on specific things for each revision
- Start wide, narrow progressively
- Get a second opinion
- Allow enough time to revise

Strategy: Revising

- Structure & Organization
- Paragraphs & Sentences
- Wording & Style
- Grammar & Mechanics



Structure & Organization

- Assignment criteria
- Logical organization
- Clear (& relevant) thesis
- Introduction & Conclusion
- Clear, coherent, logical & reasonable

Paragraphs & Sentences

- Topic sentences
- Supporting details
- Transitions
- Sentence structure, run-ons & fragments

Wording & Style

- Simplify
- Remove/define jargon
- Clarify ambiguities
- Remove clichés
- Revise passive voice & contractions

Grammar & Mechanics

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Verb tense
- Number agreement
- Headings and table formatting
- Citations
- Reference list

Today's Schedule



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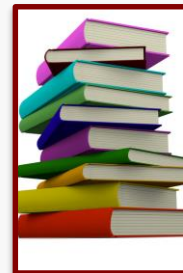
Style

- Audience
- Assignment Genres



Strategy

- Critical Reading
- Revising



Resources

- People
- Places

Style: Audience

Who are you writing to?

Topic: Writing Instruction in High School

Audience: CEO vs. classroom teacher

- What to include (e.g. context)
- What not to include (e.g. redundant information)
- Appropriate use of jargon (Affiliation vs. Accessibility)
- Tone & Style

Style: Audience

Academic

Policy

Practitioner

Style: Audience

Academic

Policy

Practitioner

- Other scholars (e.g. Journals)
- Identify your framework/perspective
- Clear thesis/argument
- Vocabulary and syntax may be complex
- Some jargon is OK
- Organizational roadmap
- Dialogue with other authors

Style: Audience

Academic

Policy

Practitioner

- Executive summary
- State the problem
- Clear & brief
- Jargon-free
- Memorable language
- Bullet points may be OK
- Propose clear action

Style: Audience

Academic

Policy

Practitioner

- Teachers, those 'on the ground'
- Use real-life examples
- Memorable language
- Connect with 'big issues'
- May use graphics/images
- Focus on 'so what' and 'what now'

Thesis Activity, Revisited

Critical analysis assignment:

High school students can struggle with college-level writing. From the perspective of many college instructors, such students simply are poor writers. Is this a reasonable conclusion? If not, what other factors might explain such struggles and what are the pedagogical implications for college instruction?

Revise your thesis with a specific audience in mind:
Academic, Policy, or Practitioner

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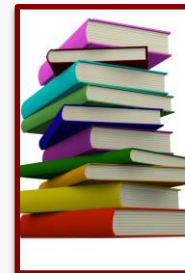
Style

- Audience
- Assignment Genres



Strategy

- Critical Reading
- Revising



Resources

- People
- Places

Assignment Genres

Policy Memo

Reflective Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

- Short, clear, and to the point
- Often 3-5 pages or 1000 words
- Summarize and analyze ideas
- Make recommendations
- Role play position
- Use bullet points to group ideas
- Little outside research

A-205

Policy Memo

Reflective Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

The North Carolina Taxpayers' Association published a report stating that the average salary of North Carolina's public school teachers increased from \$9,500 in 1976 to \$20,000 in 1986, an increase of 111 percent. The Association's report is part of an effort to stop proposed tax increases, part of which would be used to increase teachers' salaries.

You are an analyst working for the North Carolina Superintendent for Public Instruction (the chief state school officer in the state). The Superintendent believes that teacher salary increases are necessary to improve the quality of public education in the state. He has asked you to write a brief memo (no longer than 425 words) explaining why the Taxpayers' Association figures may be somewhat misleading.

One of the first things you do is to collect information on starting salaries (for teachers with a B.A. and no experience) and maximum salaries (for teachers with an M.A. and at least 15 years of experience) in each of the state's 140 districts. The following table provides the average starting salary and the average maximum salary in each year (these are nominal dollar earnings).

Year	Average Starting Salary (\$)	Average Maximum Salary (\$)
1976	8,312	11,757
1977	8,954	12,540
1978	9,525	13,343
1979	10,091	14,131
1980	10,592	14,847
1981	12,616	16,553
1982	13,227	18,207
1983	13,219	18,396
1984	13,881	18,401
1985	15,930	20,065
1986	15,936	21,992

One of the several points that you should address in your memo is how it is possible for the average salary teachers were paid to increase by 111 percent over the decade, while starting salaries only increased by 92 percent and maximum salaries increased by 87 percent.

Assignment Genres

Policy Memo

Reflective Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

- Reflections
- Often only a few pages long
- Tend to be slightly more informal
- Limited need to do outside research
- Personal experiences and connections
- Connect to course content, discussions, or guest speakers

Assignment Genres

S997, Fall 2014

Policy Memo

Reflective Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS

THE REFLECTION JOURNAL

Each of your journal entries should be at least one-page (and no more than two pages) – typed and single-spaced (with 12 point font and 1" margins). While you may use an informal tone, you still must appropriately cite any sources you use that are outside of your personal experience.

Directions for Writing Reflectively

The Reflection Journal serves three purposes.

1. **Reflection.** The journal allows you to distance yourself from course activities and the day-to-day work of your internship so that you can learn from them. Through the journal, you will synthesize and analyze your experiences to determine what you are learning about the profession, yourself as a professional, and yourself as an ongoing student of professional practice.

The readings for Class #1 emphasize that a good reflection is not simply a summary of your work or a decontextualized opinion piece. *Deep* reflection requires you to explain (make visible) 1) the “why” of *what* you have accomplished and *how* you have accomplished it and 2) how your beliefs and assumptions frame your assertions. To ensure deep reflection, you will need to *substantiate* each assertion you make with examples (e.g., from your internship, journal reflections, readings, other course activities, and/or your past experience) – providing citations for your evidence, as required. (See: <http://sites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k106284>, “journal entry samples” for examples of previous students’ journal entries.)

2. **Preparation for Class.** All but one of your journal entries ask you to prepare for a class by reflecting on that class’s overarching questions. (Your TF will read these entries; but, because you will discuss your entry in class, s/he will not respond to them in writing.) The topic for journal #4 is your choice (and your TF will respond to this entry in writing.)
3. **Preparation for the Student Practitioner Conference and Final Paper.** You will review your journal to hone a focus for your Student-practitioner Conference presentation (outlined below). To complete the Final Paper, you will analyze and synthesize your journal reflections and your on-site experiences through the lens of one of two topics (outlined below).

Assignment Genres

Policy Memo

Reflective Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

- Analyze an incident or a report
- Mimic real life situations
- Critical thinking on complicated issues
- Discussion of what was done well, what could have been done differently, and why

Assignment Genres

A109, Fall 2015

Policy Memo

Reflective Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

2. Written Case Analyses – For any two of the assigned cases, prepare a 5-6 page (double-spaced) analysis that: (a) outlines the central issue(s) or problem(s) the case presents; and (b) describes a recommended course of action and rationale, support by readings beyond those assigned. In brief, your case analysis should answer the following questions: What are the key problems, challenges, and/or opportunities here? What is at stake for whom? Who should do (or not do) what, and why? It is not necessary to restate the basic facts or context of the case. You may choose any two cases, however, you must submit your analysis no later than just before the start of class on the day we discuss the case that you have chosen to analyze.

Today's Schedule



Structure

- Shape of a paper
- Thesis



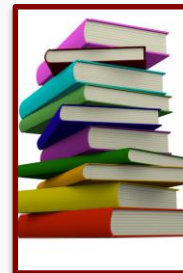
Style

- Audience
- Assignment Genres



Strategy

- Critical Reading
- Revising



Resources

- People
- Places

Assignment Genres

Policy Memo

Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

- Critique theoretical framework (or) examine how process/program works
- Compare/critique ideas
- Represent working knowledge of many ideas from different places
- Must cite readings from the course or outside research

Assignment Genres

H700, Fall 2013

Policy Memo

Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

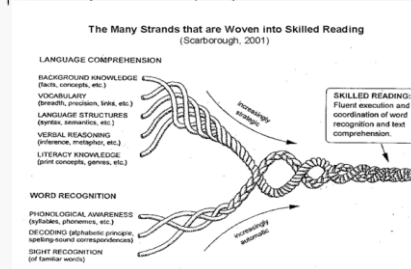
Literature Review

Research Project

Topic: Over the course of the semester, we have read about and discussed children's development of the various components that contribute to skilled reading (e.g., phonological awareness, vocabulary, language structures), the forms that develop within each component, and the functions those forms serve. One representation of the relationship among these components was offered by Hollis Scarborough in 2001 (see attached diagram). In the decade since then, though, there have been many advances in our thinking about literacy outcomes and about the array of skills that successful readers and writers have mastered. For this essay, we ask you to reflect on what is missing from the Scarborough model, and how it would need to be elaborated to encompass insights the field has generated since 2001.

Please be sure to include the following in your critical reaction:

Provide a commentary on Scarborough's model. Discuss what is valuable in it and identify anything you think is missing. Explain how you would modify this model in light of research and of the demands of the Common Core State Standards. Feel free to discuss its relevance (or failure of relevance) to the full range of children in schools you are interested in. If you think the Scarborough model is wrong or too limited, you might consider designing a completely new model (and if you choose to use a diagram to illustrate your model, this will not count toward your page limit). You can make use of any of the readings on the syllabus, as well as any relevant literature that you have reviewed as part of your final project or in other language and literacy courses.



Assignment Genres

Policy Memo

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Research Project

- Research what has been written on a given topic (requires citations)
- Synthesize the research (not just annotated bibliography)
- Critique the literature
- Identify areas for future research
- Explicit thesis and reasoning

Assignment Genres

HT121, Spring 2004

Policy Memo

Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

For our course on learning disabilities, you will have the opportunity to write a final paper on the disability of your choice. This paper will be a review of the extant literature in the field, focusing on three distinct domains: neuroscience, cognitive/behavioral, and intervention strategies. The key points will be for you to integrate the findings in these domains to answer the following question: How are theory and intervention tied together for your particular disability?

Assignment Genres

Policy Memo

Journals

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Literature Review

Research Project

- Design & conduct a small study to report on the findings
- Pose the research question
- May sometimes include pre-determined hypothesis and methods
- Discuss methods and findings
- Discuss implications of the findings (e.g. areas for future research, policy implications)

Assignment Genres

H-700 Research Project Deadlines and Guidelines

Policy Memo

Proposal_1st
draft

10/2/2013

- Identify a question or a problem space to be studied
- Brainstorm research methods to approach the question
- Provide a thesis statement that narrows the problem space to a specific and manageable topic.
- Articulate and justify the research question.

Journals

Proposal_
2nd draft

10/14/2013

- Provide brief review of a few relevant research articles
- Describe all essential information about the steps that will be carried out (e.g. resources, materials, participants, instruments, protocols, etc.) to the extent you have been decided
- If applicable, provide hypotheses about likely or hoped for results

Case Analysis

Critical Analysis

Workshop

11/13/2013

- Bring your preliminary findings to class so we can help you think about how to present them in a poster format

Literature Review

Final
Presentation

12/4/2013

- See poster presentation rubric (TBA)

Research Project

Today's Schedule



Structure

- Shape of a paper
- Thesis



Style

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- Assignment Genres



Strategy

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Resources

- People
- Places

Resources: People

Teaching Staff

- Clarify assignments
- Clarify content
- Discuss & refine ideas

Classmates

- Brainstorm
- Proofreading
- Discuss & refine ideas

Resources: Gutman Library

Gutman 2nd floor

- Drop-In consultation, M-F, 9am-5pm (ask at Library Main Desk)
- Library Main Desk
- Research Services
- Writing Services
- Additional computers and printing
- Quiet study space
- Group study rooms



Resources: Gutman Library

Librarians

- Research consultations by appointment
- By phone: 617-495-3421
- Online form: <http://gse.harvard.edu/library>
- By email: reference@gse.harvard.edu

Resources: Places

- Access and Disability Services
 - Chronic & temporary needs
 - Confidential
- Academic Writing Services Center
 - One-on-one writing consultations
- Bureau of Study Counsel (Closing Dec 2019)/Academic Resource Center at Harvard
 - University-wide
 - Workshops
 - Study resources

Today's Schedule



Structure

- Shape of a paper
- Thesis



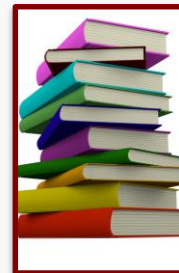
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Wrap-up

- Writing Workshop Feedback Form
 - <http://bit.ly/AWWfeedback>
- Handouts
- Q&A

This workshop has been brought to you by
the **Academic Writing Services Center**
And by the coaches:

Zuhra Faizi, Simone Fried, & Al Moore

For more information or to schedule an appointment with a writing tutor,
please visit the Academic Writing Services Canvas site.

Materials available at:
<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/11528>