Outlining & Effective Argumentation

PWE Lunch Session 3/13/14
The Writing Process

- Writing takes time! (Or should)

- Task/Research question clarification
  - What am I supposed to learn? What is the purpose of this assignment?
  - What am I supposed to produce?
  - Who is my audience?
The Writing Process: Beginnings

- Brainstorm
- Summarize entire idea
- Elevator speech approach
- Diagram
- Outline
- Sleep!
Prewriting

- Ask yourself questions – “thought starters”
  - What does X mean? (definition)
  - What are the various features of X? (definition)
  - What is the essential function of X? (functional analysis)
  - What are the causes of X? (causal analysis)
  - What are the types of X? (classification)
  - How is X like or unlike Y? (comparison)
  - What is the value of X? (evaluation)
  - What are the essential major points or features of X? (summary)
  - What case can be made for or against X? (persuasion)
Creating a thesis statement

- Determine what kind of paper you are writing
  - Analytical: Breaks down issue or idea, evaluates
  - Expository (explanatory): Explains something to audience
  - Argumentative: Makes claim, justifies claim with specific evidence, convinces audience claim is true
Analysis statement examples

**Analytical:** “An analysis of the college admission process reveals one challenge facing counselors: accepting students with high test scores or students with strong extracurricular backgrounds.”

**Expository (explanatory):** “The life of the typical college student is characterized by time spent studying, attending class, and socializing with peers.”

**Argumentative:** “High school graduates should be required to take a year off to pursue community service projects before entering college in order to increase their maturity and global awareness.”
Why outlining is useful

- Aids in writing process
- Helps organize ideas
- Presents information logically
- Shows relationships among ideas in your writing
- Defines boundaries of information and argumentation
How to create an outline

- Determine purpose of your paper (e.g. research question, assignment prompts, etc.)
- Determine audience
- Develop thesis
How to create an outline

- Brainstorm: List all of the ideas you want to include in your paper
- Organize: Group related ideas together
- Order: Arrange material in subsections from general to specific or from abstract to concrete (evidence)
- Label: Create main and sub-headings
Main components of outlining

- **Parallelism**: If the first heading is a verb, the second heading should be a verb.

- **Coordination**: All information in Heading 1 should have the same significance as that in Heading 2 (same principle applies to sub-headings).

- **Subordination**: Information in headings should be more general, while information in subheadings should be more specific.

- **Division**: Each heading should be divided into 2 or more parts.
Formatting outlines

- Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV…)
- Capitalized Letters (A, B, C, D…)
- Arabic numerals (i, ii, iii, iv…)
- Lowercase letters (a, b, c, d…)
Creating arguments

- Debatable vs. non-debatable thesis statements

- Claims:
  - Fact or definition
  - Cause and effect
  - Value
  - Solutions or policies
Claim examples

- **Fact or definition**: “What some people refer to as global warming is actually nothing more than normal, long-term cycles of climate change.”

- **Cause and effect**: “The popularity of SUVs in America has caused pollution to increase.”

- **Value**: “Global warming is the most pressing challenge facing the world today.”

- **Solutions or policies**: “Instead of drilling for oil in Alaska, we should be focusing on ways to reduce oil consumption, such as researching renewable energy sources.”
Argument structure: Toulmin Method

- Claim: Overall thesis writer will argue
- Data: Evidence gathered to support the claim
- Warrant (bridge): Explanation of why or how the data supports the claim, the underlying assumptions that connect your data to your claim
- Backing (foundation): Additional logic or reasoning that is necessary to support the warrant
- Counterclaim: A claim that negates or disagrees with the thesis
- Rebuttal: Evidence that disagrees with the counterclaim
Logic

- Old Greeks use all three!

- Rhetorical strategies for persuasion
  - Logos: inductive vs. deductive reasoning, AVOID fallacies
  - Ethos: Ethical appeal of author (sources!)
  - Pathos: Emotional appeal (appeals to values, sensibilities)

- See: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/04/
End of writing process: Quality Control

- Reverse outlining
- Proofreading
Checking your logic: Reverse Outlining

- Repeatable two steps:
  1. In the left-hand margin, write down the topic of each paragraph. Try to use as few words as possible.
     - This should help you revise your paper by vetting whether each paragraph is focused and clear.
  2. In the right-hand margin, write down how the paragraph topic advances the argument of the text. Be BRIEF.
     - This should tell you if each paragraph fits into the overall organization of your paper.
Checking your logic: Reverse Outlining

- If you cannot complete each step in 5-10 words, the paragraph may need to be altered.
- You should be able to summarize the topic and the manner of support quickly.
- If you cannot, that will be an indication that revision is needed.
Proofreading

- ALWAYS take a break!!
- Double-space text
- Read aloud
- Role-play as audience
- Third party critique
Proofreading tricks

- **Diagnosis:** Underline the first few words of every sentence, ignoring introductory phrases.

- **Analysis:** Read underline words.
  - Is there a consistent series of related topics?
  - Will your reader see these connections?

- **Revision:** In most sentences, make the topics the subjects of verbs (e.g. put the most important piece of information FIRST – be ACTIVE!)
  - Avoid long introductory clauses or phrases.
Proofreading Tips

- Readers must feel that they move easily from one sentence to the next
- Readers must feel that sentences in a paragraph are not just individually clear, but are unified with each other
- Will your reader be able to quickly identify the “topic” of each paragraph?
- Try to detach yourself from what you have written (this takes PRACTICE)
  - Identify most successful part of paper and why
  - Identify least successful part of paper and why
Sources

- Purdue OWL: The Writing Process

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/1/