

# 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
    - ◆ Claims: Opinion, Policy Proposal, Evaluation, Cause-and-Effect statement, Interpretation

# Thesis 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 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/>