Scaffolding Complex Assignments

WRPR 0202  M.E. Bertolini  Spring 15

Paper #5—Comparison Essay—4-6 pages  Due: Wednesday midnight, April 22nd on Moodle and 3 copies in class on Thursday, April 23.
Write draft two of Paper #5: Upload by midnight on Saturday, May 2.

• Write a 4-6-page essay in which you discuss two of the following: a section of *Angela’s Ashes*, a section of *The Year of Magical Thinking*, a section of *A Grief Observed*, which you find particularly moving or memorable.

• What is similar or different in these situations? What is similar or different in the writing? For each of the two books you choose, discuss both the situation in itself and the way Didion, McCourt, or Lewis write about this situation. For example, you might look at their choice of words, use of humor, use of repetition, use of structure, use of detail, use of other texts, or use of recurring themes (Choose one or two of these).

• Now consider your own life. Have you found yourself in situations similar to or different from the situations you have chosen in Didion, McCourt, or Lewis?

• If similar, have you ever written about your situation before? If so, what did you learn from your writing? If not, write about it now, or discuss why you are not ready to write about it.

• If different, discuss a memorable or moving moment in your own life (this could be happy or sad). Have you written about this moment in your life before? If so, what did you learn from your writing? If not, write about it now, or discuss why you are not ready to write about it.

• Finally, look at yourself as a memoir writer. Have you learned techniques or ideas from Didion and/or McCourt and/or Lewis that you have used in your own writing?
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Specific Goals for WRPR 0202 Writing to Heal (cw)
- Review organization skills and thesis development from FYS
- Develop literary analysis and creative non-fiction writing skills, specific to each genre, and develop ability to work intelligently with multiple texts
- Introduce and develop style* elements for more sophisticated writing
- Develop advanced research and oral presentation skills
- Develop ability to complete independent research and to sustain arguments with evidence and research
- Encourage critical and perceptive reading skills and empathetic and active listening skills
- Build trust and create safe space for sharing personal writing
- Introduce students to writing to heal theory
- Work on lingering problems of grammar, punctuation, etc., individually

Paper 1—Literary analysis /optional personal (Begin to build trust, share stories).
Workshop: Consider the organization, thesis, and argument of the paper.

Paper 2—Literary analysis /optional personal (Continue to build trust, share stories).
Workshop: Revision by Rearrangement, Clarity, Cohesion, Emphasis

Paper 3—Literary analysis /optional personal/optional creative/ optional work with multiple texts (Continue to build trust, share stories, experiment with creativity).
Workshop: Emphasis and Coherence

Paper 4—Personal essay
Workshop: Elements of Creative Non-Fiction (subject, slant, beginning, time and space, balance, character, detail, center, form, end, title, questions)

Paper 5—Hybrid assignment: literary analysis +self-aware analysis of own writing style + work with multiple texts
Workshop: Concision, citation, parallelism, elegance

Final Assignment: Research-based oral presentation
Each student will present his/her work to our class in a 10-12 minute presentation. An annotated research bibliography (MLA) will be due on the day of presentation. Each bibliography will contain at least four sources. Some of these may be traditional research sources; others may include interviews, personal letters, and personal diaries.
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*Most of my ideas for teaching style come from this text: Williams, Joseph. *Style: Towards Clarity and Grace.*

**Paper #5 Workshop Focus:** Balancing sources while achieving elegance, style and grace.

- Read each paper aloud. Ask these questions about each paper you read.
- Discuss each paper. Make positive 😊 suggestions for improvement.

Quickly review these goals from the beginning of the semester

**Thesis Statement:** IDENTIFY THE THESIS STATEMENT.
1. Does it commit the writer to a single line of argument?
2. Does it predict the major divisions in the structure of the paper?
3. Is it clear, direct and concise?
   - How would you rearrange this sentence to make it more effective?

**Argument:** FOLLOW THE LINE OF ARGUMENT IN THE PAPER.
1. Does the argument keep within the boundary set by the thesis statement?
2. Do the main points of each sentence follow logically from the thesis statement?
3. Do specific examples and details back up the main point of each paragraph?
   - How might rearranging the order of the arguments help?

**Clarity:** MAKE IT CLEAR!
1. Do most subjects of sentences name the cast of characters?
2. Do strong, active verbs show how those characters act?
3. Are nominalizations (abstract nouns like discovery, movement, and resistance) kept to a minimum?
   - Instead, does the writer use the verb forms (resist, discover, move)?
   - Would rearranging the position of modifiers improve clarity?

**Cohesion & Coherence:** BEGIN WELL & MAKE IT ALL ADD UP!
Does the beginning of each sentence connect logically to the sentence before:
1. By beginning with the last idea in the previous sentence, or
2. By using words that place the reader in time, or
3. By using words (moreover, therefore, on the other hand) that connect the reader to the previous idea, or
4. By beginning with new information?
5. Is there one sentence in each paragraph that clearly states the point of that paragraph?
6. Are paragraphs united around themes as well as points and examples?
7. Does the title of the paper unite the most important key topics and themes of the paper?

**Emphasis:** END WITH A BANG!
1. Are endings of sentences, paragraphs, but most importantly, your papers--strong?
2. Is the most important or the new information at the end of a sentence?
3. Is the end of each sentence, paragraph, and paper--spare and trim?
4. Does your conclusion end with a bang?

**Answer these new questions in writing:**

**Concision:** CUT THE FAT!
1. Does the writer compress meaning into the fewest (and shortest) words? ________________________________ ________________________________

2. Does the writer avoid redundancies or avoid stating what the reader can infer? ________________________________
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3. Is writing in the affirmative rather than in the negative? __________

Using sources: CITE IT RIGHT!

1. Does this paper cite *Angela’s Ashes, The Year of Magical Thinking, A Grief Observed*? ______
2. Does the writer cite correctly? ________________________________
3. Are the sources and the personal material well integrated into the paper? ________________________________

Length: DON’T LOSE YOUR READER: Keep in Shape!

1. Does the writer make sure parallel coordinates have the same grammatical structure such as two infinitives (I like to ski and to climb—not to ski and climbing)? ________________________________

2. Are modifiers or pronouns so far from the word modified or referred to that the reader gets befuddled and has to stop and ask for directions? ________________________________

Elegance: BE BEAUTIFUL!

1. Do coordinate elements in a series move from shorter to longer rather than from longer to shorter? ________________________________

2. Does the writer use deliberate repetition to help orient the reader? ________________________________

3. If the writer uses nominalizations, are they at the ends of sentences? ________________________________

*Final Comments or Advice to your Writer? ________________________________

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