

School of Nursing

UG Writing Workshop #1

February 9, 5-7 p.m. PST

When something can be read without effort, great effort
has gone into its writing. ~Enrique Jardiel Poncela

Agenda

Check in and introductions

Reading academic articles - strategies

Essay Basics :

- ◎ The assignment – fulfilling requirements
- ◎ Three prewriting strategies & the dynamic outline
- ◎ Genre – types of writing: anecdotal & self reflective, summaries, paraphrase, synthesis, argument
- ◎ Thesis statements/ statements of purpose
- ◎ Content: using examples and secondary sources
- ◎ Strong paragraphs and transitions
- ◎ Organization and flow – using APA headings
- ◎ Circular and spiral conclusions.
- ◎ Resources and your suggestions for further topics

Reading academic articles

- Academic writing may be an unfamiliar genre to many of you : dense prose filled with new words and concepts. Two suggestions:
- 1. Pre-read – skim the article, noting headings and abstract – jot down some associations with the content and what you already know about the topic.

Reading academic articles, cont'd

- ② 2. Read twice (time permitting) – the first time for context and to get the “gist.” Note unfamiliar words and annotate with question marks where you don’t understand. The second time you read, look up words you don’t know and try to paraphrase difficult bits in your own words. Write “sentence summaries” of each paragraph.

The assignment

- Pay close attention to the language of the assignment – what are you being asked to do?
- As you work through your first and subsequent drafts, refer to the assignment and check off items to ensure you have fulfilled the requirements.
- If you veer away from the purpose of the assignment, you will receive a lower mark; instructors want you to be able to follow instructions carefully.

Three prewriting strategies

- Strategy 1: *Read* – if you don't think you know enough about your subject, then read about it. Read assigned articles, but also skim other books and articles on the topic.
- Try to get a “birds-eye” view of your subject so you enter it with more confidence. Take notes as you read, carefully noting where you got your information so that you can cite later.
- Or, use 3X5 post-it notes or index cards to make up “sentence summaries” on each of the items/ articles you read or skim.

Three prewriting strategies: #2

- Strategy 2: *Freewrite* – write freely about your subject for 10 minutes without stopping – don't edit – just write.
- Go through your writing afterwards; most of it will be unusable but don't worry.
- Sometimes you will find a strong idea, and this might be the starting point for your paper.
- Freewriting helps to loosen up your thoughts and can help free up writer's block. Some writers use it every day.

Three prewriting strategies: #3

- ◎ Strategy #3: *Draw*. Use graphics to help you on your way. Mapping, webbing, and clustering are visual tools to help you get started and organize your thoughts.

The Dynamic Outline

- Elbow (2006) encourages writers to use a “dynamic” outline with full sentences that express what you are trying to achieve in each section, for example,
- Here I want to show how my negative experience at hospital X made me suspicious of nurse managers.
- Next I want to connect my suspicion to Hunt’s theory about trust in nursing.

The Dynamic Outline, cont'd

- The dynamic outline helps you to think through each section.
- Use “verbal” language (use of verbs rather than simply phrases, and use of speaking voice) to get down what is going on in each part of your paper.
- These sentences help to show what is missing or where you need to clarify.
- Making outlines, like writing essays, is a recursive process – you will go back and forth, adding and

Genre

- Genre refers to the *kind* of writing you are being asked to do.
- Sometimes you will be asked to write *self-reflectively* about your own experiences in anecdotal or story formats. This kind of writing requires an “I,” so you need not worry about hiding yourself. On the other hand, even in self reflective writing, you can vary your sentences so that not every sentence contains an “I.”

Genre

- Other times, you will be asked to *summarize*, *paraphrase* or *synthesize* the work of other writers.
- This kind of writing requires that you set aside your own story or opinion, and try to gather up the ideas from materials you read and distil those ideas into fewer words.
- A summary (or *précis*) condenses the meaning of written material into a shorter form, and in your own words.

Genre, cont'd

- *Paraphrase* means to translate material from an article or book into your own words – often difficult language into simpler language.
- Paraphrases are never shorter than the original, and are often longer.

Genre, cont'd

- ◎ A *synthesis* is when you take the “birds-eye” view of several books or articles and show how they are inter-related. Writing a *synthesis* requires that you take control over the material by understanding meaning and providing the threads that tie the ideas together. A literature review requires *synthesis*: an overview of all of the material available about a topic.

Genre, cont'd

- ◉ Sometimes you will need to be self-reflective and more objective in the same essay. You might have to introduce a topic and the purpose of the paper, then perform summaries and synthesis, and then write reflectively about how the ideas of others mesh with your own experience (or the other way around).
- ◉ I encourage you to be aware of the requirements for different kinds of writing—even in the same assignment. Note that all writing that borrows ideas or words from other writers needs citation.

Thesis Statements and Statements of Purpose

- The introduction to your paper is a preview of the paper: it provides context for your topic, states your purpose in writing, and sometimes mentions your main points. It must be clear, well written, and show that you have a handle on your subject.
- Some professors say that they know after reading the first two paragraphs of a paper whether it will be an A, B, C, or D paper.
- Make a great first impression. But how?

Thesis statements, cont'd

- Even if you are not writing an argumentative paper, you will need to state your purpose up front. This can be as simple as “The purpose of this paper is to explore hierarchies in nursing.”
- You could go on to say how you will do this: “I will do this by comparing three recent articles in the nursing literature. Finally, I will comment on the literature by comparing my own nursing experience to those written about.”

Tip #1: Don't anthropomorphize

- Frequently students believe that they must avoid “I” (as mentioned before), so they “anthropomorphize”: they make their essay or paper take over the role of exploring or critiquing or discussing.
- For example, “This paper will discuss the role of nursing in palliative care.” But how can a paper discuss anything? This is giving human or “anthro” qualities to a non-human subject.

Thesis statement, cont'd

- ◎ The thesis statement is slightly different from a statement of purpose.
- ◎ A thesis statement declares an argument where you make a claim.
- ◎ Example of a thesis statement: In this paper, I argue that implied curriculum in hospital nursing should be made explicit so that nurses can better understand organizational expectations.

Thesis statements, cont'd

- An argumentative paper like this will try to persuade the reader of something.
- A paper that does not necessarily try to persuade, but rather explores certain ideas and theories, will include a statement of purpose rather than a thesis statement.
- Whether you use a thesis statement or a statement of purpose will depend on the type of assignment.

Introduction

- Your introduction should include
- Background/ context/ hook (be specific, use detail, engage your reader- avoid generalizations and abstractions)
- Statement of purpose or thesis statement
- Sometimes a preview of your main points
- You can write a rough intro before you write your paper, but go back and revise your introduction after you are finished.

Content of your essay

- Content will depend on the assignment, but for many of the papers you write you will be consulting, summarizing, and evaluating the work of others.
- As you gather material for your essay, keep good records about where you found quotations and information so that your citations are complete and accurate.

Content: the paragraph

- Paragraphs are the building blocks of your essay.
- A strong paragraph has a topic sentence that contains the main point of the paragraph. Two or three sentences will follow, fleshing out the main point with examples.
- Examples often contain citations. Use signal phrases that name the author, followed by the date OR follow the example by (author, date).

Citing the work of others

● Examples:

- Hooks (1994) believed that respect in teaching is of the utmost importance.
- The ideology of patriarchy has greatly influenced nurse education over the last fifty years (Moccia, 1990).

Direct quotation

- If you quote, repeat the author's language exactly and follow with the page number:
- Pesut (2009) claimed that “establishing a single ontology for nursing based upon claims about the nature of reality or persons in an age of spiritual pluralism is a questionable endeavour” (p. 23). Note placement of period *after* the citation.

Quoting

- Note: In the original article, the word “establishing” started with a capital at the beginning of the sentence. APA allows you to change the first word in a quotation to uppercase or lowercase, depending on your requirement.
- Note the use of past tense: APA requires use of the past tense when discussing a researcher’s work (see 3.18).

Quoting, cont'd

- Two quotation rules-of-thumb: Do not “drop” quotations into your essay – always introduce quotations with a signal or introductory phrase.
- Use quotations carefully and always spend as many words explicating or commenting on your quotation (not paraphrasing) as there are words in the quoted passage.

Tip #2: Write in the active voice

- In a sentence using **active voice**, the subject of the sentence performs the action expressed in the verb: The dog bit the boy.
- In a sentence using **passive voice**, the subject is acted upon; he or she receives the action expressed by the verb. The agent performing the action may appear in a "by the..." phrase or may be omitted. The boy was bitten by the dog.

Tip #2 cont'd

- APA encourages use of the active voice (3.18) because it makes your writing more vigorous.
- Use the passive voice only when the agent is unknown or you want to emphasize the recipient of an action.
- How would you revise the following passive construction into active?
- The survey was conducted in a controlled setting.

Tip #2, cont'd

- The authors conducted the survey in a controlled setting.
- OR
- The researchers conducted the survey in a controlled setting.

Let's look at the parts of a good paragraph . . .

- ◎ Informal or implied curriculum is the material that nurses learn on the job. [topic sentence expressing a clear idea] Such curriculum is not administered formally, yet is essential to nurses' job success and personal health. [2nd sentence extends the idea, demonstrating its importance] One example of informal curriculum is learning how to negotiate relationships with nurse managers (Purkis & Haylor, 2009). [3rd sentence gives an example]

Parts of a good paragraph, cont'd

- ◎ When nurses quickly master informal curriculum, both nurses and organizations benefit: nurses are healthier and organizations run more smoothly. [Final or 4th sentence refers back to the topic sentence—the role of informal curriculum—and adds information about its importance]

Transitions & Flow

- ◎ Each paragraph should connect to the next paragraph—the topic sentence from one paragraph to another should signal global connections.
- ◎ For example, if the next paragraph in our essay about implied curriculum is about some problems with such a concept, we could start like this:

Transitions and flow

- However, the problem with implied curriculum is that nurses have to figure out on their own how to master these skills.
- The “however” signals a turn in the discussion to a contrasting idea, while referring the reader back to the topic sentence of the previous paragraph.

Transitions and flow

- ◎ Some transitional words and devices:
- ◎ List a series of points: First, Second, Third
- ◎ To add information: furthermore, also, next
- ◎ To give examples: for example, for instance, to illustrate
- ◎ To contrast: however, in contrast, yet, although
- ◎ To summarize or conclude: in other words, in summary, in conclusion, therefore.

Organization – use APA headings

- Another important organizational tool is the APA heading.
- Use headings as mini titles in your essay to signal a new topic.
- Headings assist your reader in following the path of your essay.
- In a short paper, you might want to use two levels of headings:

APA headings (3.03)

- Main headings are centred and bolded. There can be several main headings throughout.
 - **Implied Curriculum in Nursing**
- Your subheadings will announce different topics within the main topics, and are flush left, bolded. Three examples:
 - **Assumptions about Implied Curriculum**
 - **Problems with Implied Curriculum**
 - **Making Implied Curriculum Explicit**

APA headings, cont'd

- There are further levels of heading (see the manual, 3.03), but main headings and one level of subheading seem to work well for papers under ten pages.
- Use headings to work for you and your reader – remember the best essays convey your meaning clearly, so your reader does not have to work hard to understand your points or your path. Use good organizational tools to map out your paper.

Examples?

- ① Do you have an example of an organizational tool you are using in your current assignment?
- ① Are there any strategies that work really well for you?

Conclusions: circular & spiral

- Some writers find it difficult to end an essay: do you summarize? Restate the introduction? Add new information?
- In a circular conclusion, you remind the reader of the main purpose of the essay and draw attention to the substance (main points) of the essay.
- In a spiral conclusion, you may do all of the above, but you also comment on the wider significance of your topic.

Narration and voice

- Good essays are a pleasure to read: the reader gets pulled along in your “story” and moves from point to point in a logical, smooth flow of ideas.
- Don’t worry if you aren’t there yet – it takes lots of practice to achieve this effect.
- Here are some tips:
- Maintain a natural writing voice – do not strain to “sound academic” with long words and complex sentences.

Tips . . . Cont'd

- Write successive drafts – one draft is NEVER enough.
- Check for logical transitions by reading the first or topic sentence of every paragraph – you should be able to follow the gist of the essay.
- Read your final essay aloud to yourself or a friend – does it make sense? Do you find yourself bumping up against certain phrases or ideas?
- Put it away for a day then look at it with fresh eyes. Revise.

Resources

- A good handout on paragraphs from UVic's Writing Centre:
- <http://lrc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/twc/documents/WritingStrongParagraphs.pdf>
- Owl at Purdue University is a great writing website:
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
- Your APA manual has lots of good writing advice – especially chapters 3 & 4.

Your ideas? Group revision

- Do you have suggestions for the last E-session on March 23 (March 2 is on APA style)?
- Email ideas to me at son@uvic.ca
- Next we will turn to a word document and revise sentences and a paragraph for concision and clarity.