

UVic School of Nursing

Welcome!

“Fail. Fail again. Fail better.” Samuel Beckett

November 26, 2009 6-8 p.m.

Writing Workshop #5

Agenda

- -check in question– how do you feel about your writing; do you see progression?
- -developing your writer's voice
- -cohesion and topics for strong writing
- -revision – principles
- -APA & mechanical details
- -group revision
- -close

Your voice

- Voice is important in all kinds of writing.
- Voice emerges from truth; as you explore and express what you think, your voice or informed opinion will become evident.
- It's much easier to write when you believe in what you are saying, and not simply writing to fill the word count.

Making it your own. . .

- Merge your personal and academic selves in private writing to figure out what you think.
- Use freewriting or “morning pages” (Julia Cameron) as a powerful tool.
- Private writing in response to your readings can help you find your *real* reactions and assumptions—you are free to write what you think and not just what you think you should think.

Next...

- While writing freely about a concept or in response to a reading think about how the material connects to your own life.
Examples?
- When we can translate difficult or seemingly distant material into the familiar, we can begin to comprehend it better.
- Use the awareness you gain through free-writing as the foundation for your zero draft.

Making it your own. . .

- So – try this exercise. Think of someone very close to you - write a sentence about how you know when that person is feeling sad or upset. . . Write quickly, from the gut.
- Read your sentence.

Making it your own. . . Cont'd

- Now think about epistemology – all that you've learned about ways of knowing.
- Re-write your sentence in academic language, using your knowledge of philosophical discourse.
- Your sentence may have no place in your essay, but it helps to bridge the personal and the academic.

Cohesion and topics much of this from Joseph Williams' *Style*

- To make your writing cohesive (hang together, flow), you need coherent *topic strings*.
- First – a bit of terminology.
- The topic of a sentence is its *psychological subject* – the idea that we announce in the first few words of a sentence. Usually it's a noun phrase that the rest of the sentence says something about.

Cohesion and topics

- In most English sentences, psychological subjects are also grammatical subjects:

Leaders are seriously concerned about population trends through the end of the century.

Cohesion and topics

- But we can create topics out of the object of the verb or in introductory phrases:
 - The reasons for this decision to end the treaty, I cannot explain.
 - As for abortion, it is not clear how the Supreme Court will rule.

In both of these – the topics (reasons/ abortion – what the sentences are “about”) do not coincide with their *subjects* – i.e. “I” and “it”

Cohesion cont'd

- But in cohesive writing, the psychological subject or topic – what the sentence is *about* – is *also* the subject – they coincide.
- And when you have a consistent series of such topic strings in a paragraph – that focus on just a couple of ideas – you get clearer writing.
- We need topics as *thematic signposts* to guide us through a multitude of ideas.

An example of cohesion with bolded topics:

Topics are crucial for a reader because **they** focus the reader's attention on a particular idea toward the beginning of a clause and thereby notify a reader a **clause** is "about." **Topics** thereby crucially determine whether **the reader** will feel a **passage** is coherent. Cumulatively, through a series of sentences, **these topicalized ideas** provide thematic signposts that focus the reader's attention on a well-defined set of connected ideas.

Revision is the rule

- Revision is essential – not even a genius can write a great first draft!
- If your essays suffer from disorder, here is one very useful organizational technique: anticipate and answer your imaginary reader's questions as you go.
- Think of a piece of writing as a conversation with a reader who interrupts and asks for clarification:

Revision, cont'd

- “How come?”
- “How do you know that?”
- “Says who?”
- “I don’t get it.”
- “What do you mean?”
- “Whoa – back up – I don’t understand.”
- Inexperienced writers don’t hear half of the conversation. . . Effective writers hear the questions and answer them as they arise.

Questions your reader might ask. . .

- I don't get it - what does argument (or philosophy, for that matter) have to do with nursing?
- Why is argument so important in philosophy?
- What does it accomplish?
- What are the main assumptions about argument? What are your assumptions?
- What are the assumptions of some other writers and thinkers about argument?
- What do the differences in points of view tell us about argument?
- Is this useful to the everyday practice of nursing?

Another way to revise your draft

- Sometimes when we feel hopeless about a draft, it helps to share with a friend who can read your writing and tell you what “works” and what doesn’t.
- Again – it is easy to get too close to your prose and forget that it needs to be keyed to the reader.
- Your job is to make your writing clear to the most reluctant and critical reader.

How do you revise?

- Let's take the time now to let each student share his or her most effective revision technique.

APA

- Much of the material you obtain for research is in the form of journal articles on the internet.
- APA shows us how to cite such electronic sources in Chapter 6 (see p. 187, 6.31).
- The principle for citing such material is that you use the same elements, in the same order, as fixed media, but add as much electronic retrieval information as needed for others to locate the resource.

APA – urls and dois!

- A URL is the acronym for a “uniform resource locator” and a DOI is the acronym for “digital object identifier.”
- The URL (p. 188) shows the host name, path to document, and file name so that others can locate your source.
- Because all content on the Internet is prone to change, scholarly publishers have begun to assign a DOI to journal articles.

APA – the DOI

- The DOI is a system of persistent identification – documents are registered with a number that gets embedded to articles.
- This unique alphanumeric string is often located in the top right hand corner of a document (see figure 6.2, p. 189). Sometimes the DOI is hidden under a button labeled *Article*, *CrossRef*, or another vendor name (see p. 191).

APA – the DOI cont'd

- You should provide the DOI if one has been assigned.
- When a DOI is used, no further retrieval information is needed to identify the content.
- If no DOI has been assigned, provide the home page URL of the journal.
- Examples of how to reference the DOI are on pp. 202-3.

Mechanics

- A few persistent mechanical problems. . .
- 1. Single quotation marks are *used only for quotations within quotations*.
- For example, Williams (1993) writes that “prose seems ‘turgid’ when topics do not coincide with subjects” (p. 144).
- 2. In quotations, periods and commas should be placed within the quotation marks:
- Moliere wrote, “I always write a good first line, but I have trouble writing the others.”

Mechanics, cont'd

- Are there any other pesky mechanical issues that you would like resolved?

Recommended texts

- Some of my ideas about revision are from a good book by Donald M. Murray, *The Craft of Revision*.
- Julia Cameron has written several books on writing. Her well-known *The Artist's Way* and its accompanying workbook have helped many writers get unblocked. If you think this applies just to “art” or fiction, it does not. Her techniques are immensely helpful to free our minds to write anything.

Group revision

- Let's look at a page of student writing and share ideas about how to improve.