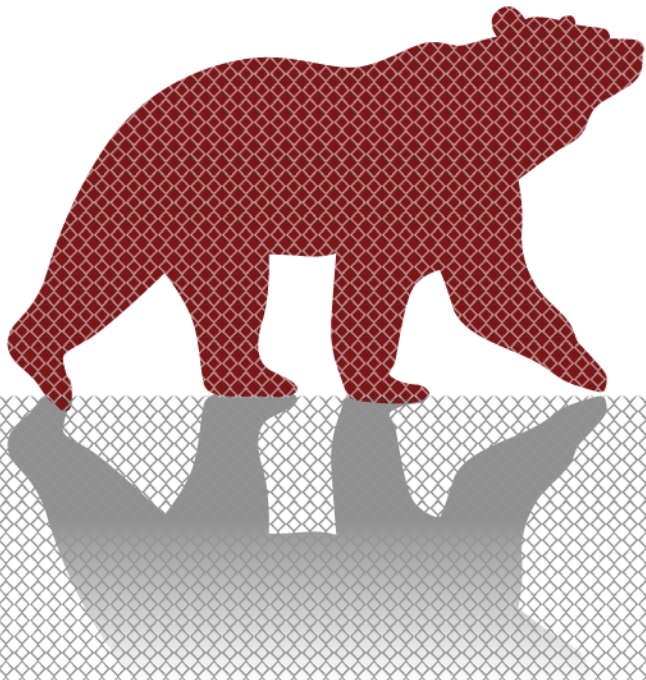


Defining Academic Writing



Audra Williams
Absent Professor Program

Missouri State
UNIVERSITY



High School v. Collegiate

- Writing at the collegiate level demands more
 - Sophistication of argument
 - Varied structure
 - Ready for “publication” (use of citation methods)



Three Concepts of Academic Writing

- 1- Academic writing is done by scholars for other scholars.
 - Is a college student a scholar?
 - Is a professor a scholar?
- Scholars:
 - Read
 - Write
 - Think
 - Argue



Three Concepts of Academic Writing (cont.)

- 2- Academic writing is devoted to topics and questions that are of interest to the academic community.
- Academic writing is more than a personal response
- The topic must be relevant, appropriate, and useful to others
- A writer should find a topic that will help their reader better understand the issue or see it in a new way.



Three Concepts of Academic Writing (cont.)

- 3- Academic writing should present the reader with an informed argument.
- Sort out what you *know* about a subject from what you *think* about a subject.



Constructing an Informed Argument

- What do I know about my topic?
 - Can I answer the questions who, what, when, where, why, how?
 - What do I know about the context of my topic?
 - What historical or cultural influences do I know that might be important to my topic?
 - Does my topic belong to any particular genre or category of topics?
 - What do I know about this genre?



Constructing an Informed Argument

- What seems important to me about this topic?
 - If I were to summarize what I know about this topic, what points would I focus on?
 - What points seem less important?
 - Why do I think so?



Constructing an Informed Argument

- How does this topic relate to other things I know?
 - What do I know about the topic that might help my reader to understand it in new ways?
- What don't I know about my topic?
 - What do I need to know?
 - How can I find out more?



Analytical v. Personal Writing

- In the process of thinking about your topic, the goal is to present a new observation.
- Adding something of your own does not equal a personal opinion.
- Your associations, reactions, experiences and theories need to be framed in a critical way



Analytical Writing

- **SUMMARIZE:** Make a summary of your main text.
- **EVALUATE:** Clearly articulate and support your personal response. What in the text is leading you to respond in a certain way?
- **ANALYZE:** Consider the parts of your topic and then examine how these parts relate to each other or to the whole.
- **SYNTHESIZE:** Look for connections between ideas. Create a larger argument under which several observations and perspectives might stand.



Choosing a Topic

- Report v. paper
 - Report= information; paper= argument
- Argument
 - Have you formed a question that requires a complex, thoughtful answer?
 - Is the question provocative? Controversial? Fresh?
 - Is your question too broad? If yes, how can you narrow it?
 - Have you considered the historical and cultural circumstances that influenced your topic?
 - Will your reader care about this question?



Finding a Rhetorical Stance

“Rhetorical stance”= your position as a writer in terms of the subject and your reader (audience)

- Consider your position
 - For or against?
 - Why have you taken this stance?
 - Is there any part of your response that your reader may see as biased or uncritical?
- Consider your audience
 - What biases might your readers have?
 - What effect do you hope to have on your reader?
 - Will the audience appreciate or resent your intentions?



Structure

- Introduction
- Thesis
- Supporting sections
 - Describe
 - Analyze
 - Persuade (Argue)
- Conclude



Tone and Style

- Avoid personal responses/experiences (unless they are part of the assignment)
- Use your own (formal) voice- do not attempt to use overly “flowery” language
- Rely on evidence, not feeling
- Avoid using personal pronouns
- Be aware of your citation method (MLA, APA, etc.)
- Avoid mechanical errors- proofread your paper



Questions?



- All material, phrases, and methods included in this presentation are credited to Karen Gocsik, Dartmouth University.
- http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac_paper/what.shtml



THANK YOU!

Missouri State
UNIVERSITY



1st Floor, Meyer Library
<http://bearclaw.missouristate.edu>
(417) 836-5006
[BearCLAW@MissouriState.edu](mailto: BearCLAW@MissouriState.edu)

Michael Frizell

Director of Student Learning Services

Meyer Library 112

MichaelFrizell@MissouriState.edu

(417) 836-5006

For questions about...

The Absent Professor Program & Prefects

<http://AbsentProf.MissouriState.edu>

Group-Led Educational Experience (GLEE)

Formerly:

The Supplemental Instruction Program (SI)

<http://SI.MissouriState.edu>

The Writing Center

<http://WritingCenter.MissouriState.edu>

WritingCenter@MissouriState.edu

Diana Garland

Director of the Learning Commons

Meyer Library 113

DianaGarland@MissouriState.edu

(417) 836-4229

For questions about...

Subject- Area Tutoring

Math Drop-In Tables

Focused Drop-In Tables

Study Skills Specialists