**Reading and Writing class advice (2018 class)**

**By Nousmonkey**

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\*In 2020, the teacher for Reading and Writing changed… but I hope that this writing advice will remain helpful.

**Key points from books and texts on writing:**

From Jan Bransen (“How to Write a Philosophical Essay”)

**What is the problem you are writing about?** Be as specific as possible, choose a small problem connected to a big issue—in this way you are able to cover it into an argument.

**Why are you writing it?** To show that the world is taking a wrong turn due to wrong intuitions, correct them.

**For whom do you write it?** Picture the reader and adapt to his/her assumptions—explain important elements step by step.

**How do I make my case?** You need to have a hypothesis which you defend it with arguments.

Introduction—present what you write about/bait to the reader🡪present the problem🡪present content of paper. In conclusion—state what are the broader implication in your text.

From Lambuth (*The Golden Book*):

Writing is like a guidepost, guide the reader along the road. Do not stop at each sentence to make it perfectly, go with the flow and afterwards edit it. It is important to be dynamic in style, use verbs, and the subject needs to be near the verb. Short sentences are preferable over complicate and boring style. (but not only short sentences, don’t be boring)

From Sinzer (*How to Write Well*):

Style comes naturally out of you (no need to artificially build it). Be aware of clutter—revise + revise and revise—you would be surprised how many of the words used could be cut out from a paper draft (look over your text and put with red the words deemed useless). It is important to be attentive with words, to look at how other writers use words. The readers lose their attention easily, the introduction (first & second paragraph are especially important) to hook the reader… also the conclusion is important (it is that which will stick with the reader). Avoid unnecessarily complicated words, such as: “this junction in time” instead of “now”.

From Andrew Bennet and others (*An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*):

The text/world divide is an illusion; the literary text is expressing the world. See the post-structuralists (e.g. the quote by Foucault: ‘if language expresses, it does so not in so far as it is an imitation and duplication of things, but in so far as it manifests . . . the fundamental will of those who speak it’ (1970, 290).

“Poststructuralists ask what it means to say that a literary text is different from, separate from the world. Shouldn’t we say, rather, that such texts actually make up our world? How can an act of inscription or an act of reading *not* be part of the world? Is there a world without such acts? In a later chapter, we look at the ways in which texts may be considered as performative, as acts of language which themselves *do* things, as well as just talk about things. In this chapter, we shall explore the idea that literary texts are acts that destabilize the very notion of the world and that disturb all assumptions about a separation between world and text” (Andrew Bennet, page 29) —think about writing as the act *of doing something to* the world.

From Claire Colebrook (*Routledge Critical Thinkers: Gilles Derrida*):

I just started to read about Derrida, and his “deconstruction” is really interesting, also the advice of slowing down (especially important during reading a text). Do other tasks faster in order to have the proper time to *read and write academic* texts properly. The whole introduction, to the handbook, is about deconstructing a simple question: “Why Derrida?”. Reading this introduction will give you knew tools, a sharp look on thinking about any though/text/discourse. I find this an interesting advice for academic writing.

Here are my notes on the “Why Derrida?” chapter from this handbook + the next chapter on deconstruction:



**My own advice on structuring a text**

* For technical and grammatical elements use Grammarly and seek *The Elements of Style*.
* In my view, another important element is logic—when reading philosophical texts be attentive at language, argument patterns etc. It is obvious, but a worthy reminder.
* Errors can spring either from improper empirical research/argumentation or from misunderstanding between writer and reader. If it is the latter, it is likely that the writer did not made explicit their *implicit* assumptions.
* Some paragraphs can seem clear for the writer, but they are not for the reader. A sentence can be interpreted in more ways than one would first think of. [E.g. you can refer to causality at least in these two ways: one is *the concept of causality* (which can be affirmed or denied) and the other is *ontological causality* (that thing which is not a concept to be wondered about, but a physical fact that, if it exists, waits to be discovered)].
* After you write a text, always give it to one of your friends/relatives to look at it. Most likely, they will give advice you did not think of.
* Order — Logic —special attention to word usage and underling intuitions behind the propositions emanated through sentences (proposition=conceptual content; sentence=the form, the words through which the proposition is expressed).
* Using websites like Mindmup/or the Mindnode app can aid in structuring arguments. Mindmup is focused especially on argument structure. For a site focused more on linking concepts, download Mindnode.