

UNIV 100 Essay #1 Discussion: From Elegant Prose to Persuasive Argument

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to help structure the discussion of various issues that arose upon reading Student Essay #1.

Discussion Issues

1. Errors in Composition

Please review my marks for errors or omissions in composition (language use, grammar, mechanics, etc.) on the course outline for Monday, September 17, 2012. Specifically, see:

<http://www.csun.edu/~wsmith/private/csun/univ100/essay-writing-errors.xls>

Please log in with your full CSUN email address and your CSUN password.

Everyone makes errors. One of life's secrets is to learn how to not make the same error *twice*. In your future careers and professions, you will likely manage a few individuals who cannot accomplish that task.

2. Composition and Organization

Elegant topic sentences at beginning of the essay set the tone for the entire essay. Often, such sentences represent the *thesis* of the essay.

“The expectations for student athletes go far beyond the regular students’ struggles.”

Elegant topic sentences set the tone for the paragraph.

“Sports have also been a major part of my life.”

Elegant transition sentences usually appear at the end of a paragraph. A transition sentence describes a “signpost” for what is yet to come.

“Many people think that a student is just anyone who is enrolled in a school or college, or attends a class that furthers her or his personal education. I would have to say that I agree and disagree with these opinions.”

3. Prose Writing – “Parallelism”

Parallelism is saying like things in like ways. It is accomplished by repetition of words and syntactic structures in planned symmetrical arrangements and, if not overdone, has a place in day-to-day writing. (Tufte, 2006)

“Hopefully, I will come to find what things I like learning about, what things I would prefer not to spend my time on, and what things I absolutely need to have in my daily life.”

How do we learn to write this well? Can we replicate this work in our own writing without copying it verbatim?

4. Prose Writing – “Subordinate (Dependent) Clauses and Free Modifiers”

A free modifier that appears *before* a base clause is referred to as a “left-branching” sentence; a free modifier that appears *after* a base clause is referred to as a “right-branching” sentence. (Tufte, 2006)

“Even though I’ve been a student practically my entire life, I know that there is so much more to learn, and that I can improve myself by attending college.”

This student uses both a left-branching subordinate clause (“Even...life,”) and right-branching subordinate clause (“and...college.”) in the same sentence. Educated individuals (i.e., all of class) can write well—*very* well indeed.

5. Prose Writing – “Interrogative, Imperative, Exclamatory”

An interrogative (question) calls for an answer, an imperative calls for an action, an exclamation calls for experiencing an emotion. Interrogatives, imperatives, and exclamations can set an expressive tone, accent a point, serve as summary or transition, create a structure for a paragraph, and function in parallel to structure several paragraphs. (Tufte, 2006)

“As far back as I can remember, I was taught to go to school, get good grades, and find a job that interests me because there is no career that can pay enough for unhappiness. Why is it only possible to obtain one’s goals through an education? Why can’t we find happiness in something that does not require a high degree from an Ivy League School?”

In some classes, the purpose of the essay is answer questions. In the kind of essay appropriate for this assign, raising questions is just as important. A question that is asked but is not intended to be answered is often referred to as *rhetorical*

question. As used here, rhetorical means to generate a purposeful impact or to stimulate novel thinking.

6. Rhetorical Trope (“argumentative pattern”) – *Antanaclasis*

Antanaclasis is a Greek word. It is the stylistic scheme of repeating a single word, but with a different meaning each time. It is similar to a pun. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antanaclasis>)

“Whatever you decide in your mind what makes you a student, makes you a student.”

Such sentence affects the reader (or hearer) in a visceral manner. As such, it is soon not forgotten.

7. Intrinsic Linkages to Readings – “Motivation”

We read a chapter in the textbook on motivation. All instructors want you to use ideas from your various readings in your work. Perhaps this is easier to do when the instructor states her or his intention *expressly*, but as you matriculate through your studies, instructors will increasingly not state it expressly (they will just assume that you will do this *instinctively*).

For example, can you link each answer you gave to the question “What makes me a student?” to one or more elements of the textbook chapter on motivation?

8. The Intellectual Beauty of Motivational Diversity

While each student likely knows her or his own motivation, it is difficult to know others’ motivation. Perhaps this is why higher education is so important: it speeds up the learning experience. We don’t have enough time in our short lives to meet and learn from many other people (even on Facebook!). The following are some of the reasons one student provided in response to the question: “What makes me a student?”.

“...desire to want to improve my education”

“...get a better job”

“...my mother would not allow me to not go to college...”

“...I’ve seen my father’s side of the family...their lives are a constant struggle”

“...I’ve never been satisfied with doing the bare minimum”

“...I like to stand out whether it’s for my athletics or for my academics...”

“...I appreciate the opportunities given to me”

“I am a student because I will not stop learning”

What reasons are due to *intrinsic* motivation? (i.e., pushed internally by character)

What reasons are due to *extrinsic* motivation? (i.e., pulled externally by circumstance)

Also, an educated person is a person that can see correlations (relationships between two or more things), and more important, causality (A causes B). As you will learn later in college, correlation does not imply causation.

From this student's reasons, can we develop a working model; that is, can we develop a model that suggests 1), one reason is correlated with another reason, or 2), one reason causes another reason?

9. Further Explanation of Claims – “Reasons based upon Evidence”

In logic, all claims need one or more reasons based upon one or more pieces of evidence. In addition, any reason given needs a “warrant” (i.e., a theory that explains or predicts). (Williams and Colomb, 2006)

“How far I get is down to myself: down to how much work I put into reaching the goal, and how I plan my schedule. I do believe though that genes have an effect on how far one can get.”

What sentence or sentences might appear after this last sentence to provide a reason, evidence, or warrant?

References

Tufte, V. (2006). *Artful Sentences*. Cheshire: CT, Graphics Press.

Williams, J., and Colomb, G. (2006). *The Craft of Argument (3rd ed.)*. New York: NY, Pearson.