

Workshop on Documented Essay Rough Draft 1: Strengthening your Argument

1. Look at the comments on your third essay, returned in class. Write down:

a. The most positive comment you received. What you are doing well?

b. The comment indicating the most serious need for further revision in terms of your argument (not mechanics). What is making your ability to write convincingly least effective at this point in the semester?

c. What problematic sentence-level error(s) in the essay 3 will you seek to remedy on essay 4? Using the index of the Hacker handbook, work together to find the section offering rules and suggestions to help you with those issues and record the page number next to the error.

2. Focus. At this Essay 4 first draft stage, you may not have a clear claim statement yet, but you probably have a tentative idea of where you think the argument will go.

a. Record your “working claim” below:

b. On your draft, briefly sum up the main point of each paragraph. If you find that your paragraph has many points, break that paragraph into smaller units, each with one main point. Then re-number your paragraphs and continue your paragraph summary. [If your paper so far is mostly plot summary, you will need to condense that to one or two paragraphs and fill up the rest of the paper with other ideas in support of your claim. What will they be?]

Par. 1

Par. 2

Par. 3

Par. 4

Par. 5

Par. 6

Par. 7

3. Organization. Switch worksheets with your partner. Take a look at the tentative claim statement and the main points of the paragraphs (or paragraphs-to-be) as summarized above.

a. Create the most logical sequence for organizing the points into a workable argument.

Claim:

Par. 1

Par. 2

Par. 3

Par. 4

Par. 5

Par. 6

Par. 7

b. Switch back and discuss your findings. Decide which method of organization will work best in draft 2: yours, theirs, or a combination of the two?

4. Coherence. Most of you are pretty good at introducing new ideas as you move from point to point with some sort of linking transition statement. However, in many cases your transitions can be made more informative for your readers and more likely to help them connect ideas in a meaningful way. Ultimately, substantive transitions propel your readers toward the point in your claim statement and

lead them toward insights about the literature they may not have had on their own. Work with your partner to do the following:

a. Looking at the paragraphs you have so far, does each one start with an idea of your own rather than a quotation or reference to someone else? As much as possible, replace other people's words and ideas with your own voice at the beginning of paragraphs. If you have ideas without paragraphs yet, create good topic sentences for the paragraphs you are going to write between today and Thursday.

b. Any transitional word or phrase is better than no transition at all, but some are less helpful than others. The weakest links are the ones starting with "In addition,..." or "Another thing,..." Underlying this method is the idea that $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 =$ main point, but there is no real relation between one point and the next. Do you have any transitions like this so far? If so, in the margins or between paragraphs, or using your new outline strategy, create new ways to end and begin paragraphs that actually help the reader see how one idea flows into the next. Why does one point come after another? Make that clear by the way you introduce the idea.

c. Check that you have solid textual references in your paper rather than just general summary. Without actual details, you are asking the reader to believe what you say is true "because I said so...." That is something we all find unconvincing! Where do you need more specific details?

d. Check that you are introducing each quotation with a signal phrase indicating who is talking and then ending it with a citation. Mark up the draft where this is needed.

e. Check that after quoted passages which might be confusing to your reader, you provide a re-statement of what they mean in your own words. This will not just help your readers understand the passage; it will help them see it the same way you did, strengthening your argument.

f. Whether you restate a passage in your own words or not, you should follow each reference to another person's ideas or words with discussion of your own linking that reference with the point you want to make. Without this connecting discussion, you run the risk of your readers losing track of your argument.

If we run out of time in class to finish this workshop, continue it at home and use it as you turn draft 1 into draft 2. Bring two paper copies of draft 2 to class next time. Attach this worksheet and your first set of peer reviews to the copy of draft 2 you hand in to me.