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WRITE WHAT MATTERS

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8I. Considering Multiple Views & Avoiding Bias

Considering Multiple Views

Are multiple views being considered through depth and breadth?

When writing or speech is deep, it covers the complexity of a topic. It doesn't skim the surface. It dives deeply into the profound knowledge and substantial understanding of a topic. This detailed explanation along with examples is **depth** which

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When analyzing the depth of any essay, including their own essays and those of their peers, students can ask these types of questions:

- How deeply does this essay go into its topic?
- Is it detailed enough?
- Did it go far enough into the research and reviews of other texts to demonstrate a deep knowledge about the subject? (**Digging into what others have said about your topic, a particular text you're working with, or the people involved is often where you can often find opposing views.**)
- How thoroughly have specific subtopics within a major been researched?

Breadth is how broad or wide a topic has been discussed in writing or in speech. For example, to attain breadth in a persuasive essay, a writer must consider not only one point of view, but all the multiple major perspectives about an issue. Breadth also entails considering multiple contexts of an issue and multiple analytical approaches to solving a problem.

Breadth means reading more than a handful of articles supporting one side of an issue; it means reading more articles supporting various perspectives so the writer can truly understand all viewpoints about the issue and can discuss the issue with breadth that builds a deeper understanding and fairness. When analyzing the breadth of any essay, students and instructors ask questions such as the following:

- Is the content of an essay sufficiently comprehensive enough to cover a wide range of perspectives and angles on a given topic?
- Is anything missing that should be included in the scope of the topic and which would help the essay achieve enough breadth?
- **Has the opposing view (i.e., the “naysayer’s” perspective) been explored so as to strengthen the writer’s own argument? (This consideration is particularly key in the development of a fully supported and wisely composed persuasive or argumentative essay.)**
- What has not yet been considered to make this idea or essay complete?

Avoiding Bias

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The word “fair” is often used synonymously with “just” or “judicious” and is related to “justice.” Especially in essays that are meant to persuade through logical argumentation, topics and points of view (POVs or “perspectives”) need to be treated fairly and diplomatically. A fair, even-handed treatment doesn’t necessarily mean agreeing to opposing (or “naysayer’s”) POVs, but strong, college-level writing must acknowledge the opposing POVs, then must either accommodate or refute them. For example, an essay may state, “The opponents have valid points regarding X and Y. They are right about this and that. However, they are inaccurate about this specific point about X, and their argument doesn’t negate A and B, which remains the most accurate ideas and still strongly support this argument.”

When analyzing the fairness of any work, students and instructors ask questions such as the following:

- Does the writer of this essay exhibit the ability to fairly assess the viewpoints of others, even opposing viewpoints?
- Are there any fallacies, such as ad hominem that unfairly label opponents rather than speak directly and precisely about the opposing argument or POV itself? (Note: The term “ad hominem” is short for “argumentum ad hominem” and is a fallacious argumentative strategy whereby genuine discussion of the topic at hand is avoided by instead attacking the character, motive, or other attribute of the person making the argument, or persons associated with the argument, rather than attacking the substance of the argument itself.)
- Does the writer or speaker have a conflict of interest? Does that conflict of interest appear as **bias** in the text?

When analyzing our own work (discussions and writings), these questions are crucial:

- What about our own biases? Are we aware of and addressing our own biases? How can we move beyond those?

Check out this video on implicit vs. explicit bias:

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Implicit Bias vs. Explicit Bias: What's the difference?



Check out this video on avoiding biased language:

02:42

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