Assignment # 3

Astro 597 – Spring 2018
Writing Workshop

As with the previous assignment, please do the writing and editing in #3-5 on different days, to keep up the practice of writing consistently.

For this week, you will want to do some advance planning about what you will write about, but then, when you write, do so under a fixed time limit. Separate your "deciding what I want to say" step from your "writing down what I want to say" step.

Please turn in both the unedited and edited versions, and *include how long you worked on each*.

1: Tracking progress

One of my goals for this class is to have you increase the rate at which you generate text. For *every assignment here on out*, please note how many words you wrote on each of 4 different days. Write me a short sentence or two about how it's been going, what's been working for you, what changes in your writing process you're experimenting with? etc — basically anything where a bit of feedback, self-reflection, and/or accountability could be useful.

2: Preparing to write an introductory paragraph

If you haven't read the "Finding your story" and "Science Writing as Storytelling" chapters yet, you may wish to do so before starting this assignment.

Pick ∼3-5 papers that are in the same general field as your chosen writing project and that will help you develop the background needed to help with "Finding Your Story". It is ok if some of these are papers that you're already familiar with. However, you should also be working continuously on reading the literature to help you frame your own work, so please use this assignment as an excuse to do some of the reading you should be doing anyways. In addition, for this exercise you may want to focus on papers that were written by a native english speaker, as best as you can judge.

Read the first several paragraphs of each paper, noting how the authors choose to frame the big picture, then gradually narrow down to the specific focus of the paper.

For at least one of the papers, write and hand in a 1 sentence summary of the main point of each paragraph, which will help you better see the flow. For example: "(1) Young galaxies are interesting, but distant. (2) Distant galaxies are hard to study because of redshift, but JWST will help. (3) In particular, JWST spectroscopy will be useful for emission line diagnostics. (4) This paper will calculate JWST-appropriate emission line diagnostics."

3: Write another paragraph for the "I did stuff" part of your paper

Last week you wrote a paragraph describing a plot ("Figure 1 plots x against y"). Now write the next paragraph, which will describe the first, most obvious take away from the plot ("Figure 1 shows that x and y are highly correlated. This correlation implies..."). As with the previous assignment, *Do not edit the paragraph! Just get the ideas down.* Do not worry about references or calculating specific values — just make notes for Future You to clean up.

4: Write the next paragraph...

On a different day, please write yet *another* paragraph about your plot, this time describing a more subtle feature of your plot ("Although x and y are correlated, the value of y plateaus for large x. This saturation suggests..." or "This saturation was seen by (Ref) but at lower values of y"). If your plot is really soooooo trivial that you have nothing more to say about it, find another plot for the paper and write a paragraph describing it and a "what's the most obvious thing a reader should notice about the plot?" paragraph.

5: Edit the paragraphs

On a different day, reread the paragraphs from #3 and #4. Concentrate primarily on fixing the sentence structure at this time. (Reminder from last time: Are the sentences as short and declarative as possible? Are they efficient? Have you separated phrases and clauses with commas? Are the subject, verb, and object as close together as possible? Are the tenses (past versus present) the same throughout? If you read the sentences out loud, do they sound unobjectionable? Do they follow the Gopen & Swan advice?)

6: Read the Gopen & Swan paper.

If you haven't read it yet....