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Writing 100

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Craft Journal #1

My writing process is a slight mixture between Zinsser and Dr. Brock’s writing styles, but ultimately has a greater lean towards Zinsser’s calculated methods. For any writing assignment, I think of it as a responsibility that I must complete and do not necessarily wait for inspiration or enlightenment to begin the writing process. That being said, I do have tendencies to delay my writing and begin later as I believe the pressure makes me work much harder and usually write out the entire paper in one sitting. I will do my editing as I write, continuously rereading my previous sentence and previous paragraphs with regards to structure and clarity. This has worked well for me and I consider this to be my natural writing process.

In my academic career, I have come across writing that would match Zinsser’s definition of cluttered writing. This writing, was usually an academic research paper and would usually try to convey too much information as the same time and would focus on overloading the reader with content. Now, although adding many details and clarifications is very important to clear writing, it is also necessary for the writer to consider the readers perspective and also plan out or strategize how to best convey his/her argument. This occurs because there are many ways for a reader to interpret writing due to their natural thinking or behaviors. The best way to go about avoiding this error of cluttered writing, is to condense your writing into the bare essentials as the writer’s responsibility is only to address his/her argument. As a student, I will always try to utilize an academic voice and style as it is the most professional and can address a wide range of readers. This writing is usually clear and concise as I use the traditional process of writing my topic statement, then my concrete details, then my opinions, and finally argue how this proves my original thesis.

In the field of Computer Science, the Council of Science Editors writing style is commonly used as it is concise and allows the reader to quickly locate and review individual statements and results. This style uses superscripts to refer to sections of the bibliography where the fact or assertion is derived from. This makes peer reviewed research much more simple and streamlined as it is easy to verify the evidence that the writer is using. For most of my classes, I will write in a similar fashion, but will only change the way that I cite my sources. This change could be as simple as writing in APA, CSE, or MLA as it depends on the audience as well as the topic at hand. Other than this, I will stick to my formula which states**:** Topic sentence 🡺 Evidence 🡺 Opinion 🡺 Address differing opinions 🡺 How it relates back to my thesis 🡺 Transition. This formula is universal and can be used effectively by anyone in any discipline.

With respect to stylized writing, I have been taught to make sure that my sentences flow smoothly and also utilize tools such as analogies and comparisons to keep my reader interested and engaged. Also, I have learned that it is better to use a professional tone and make sure that my wording inspires confidence in my thesis. This means that although I may be writing an opinion piece, I should phrase my statements as truth, not simply beliefs that I share. I tend to follow this as this usually keeps my wording strong, and in that, makes my thesis even stronger. Although it is beneficial to take a strong stance, I do understand when it is appropriate to acknowledge faults in my thesis. By acknowledging these faults, I allow the reader to understand that there is no inherent bias, and I will then be able to take on their perspectives and use that to strengthen my own argument. Zinsser’s ideas about style, although purposeful, do not translate well through all writing styles. This style of stripping down text to bare bones and drafting afterwards does well in an academic/analytical setting, but does not do well when writing prose, poetry, or non-fiction stories. It’s with these genres of writing which use very descriptive and aesthetically pleasing sentences that cannot apply Zinsser’s ideas about style. Since the main objective is not necessarily to convey a point or argument, but to simply enjoy the text and appreciate its artistic crafting, we cannot emphasize being concise in this sense.

Within my own writing, I tend to appreciate clarity and conciseness. In this, it is always interesting for me to first lead up to my thesis by introducing an issue or observation and then transition to my thesis. It’s within these first starting sentences that I emphasize style as it is what truly attracts the reader and gives them an impression of my writing skill. By keeping my words concise and relevant to my thesis, I find it a challenge to stylize my writing as I still need to make it aesthetically pleasing as well as factual. This usually leads to very basic but smooth sounding words such as emphasize, clarity, impose, highlight and so on. I try to avoid ‘thesaurus writing’ as it is too wordy and tends to lose meaning. There are issues with my writing style as I do not directly address the reader. This often loses a personal touch and leaves the reader without a memorable experience. In this class, I would like to find a way to develop a more casual writing style that still has an academic/professional taste. I believe that a blend between these two will be more efficient in addressing and supporting an argument. Within my major, I would like to begin to write research papers not necessarily about the very broad topic of Computer Science, but instead choose and use research to write about specific topics such as Big Data and how this couples with cloud computing.

Prompt:

* Describe your writing process and stylistic values. Consider your attitudes as well. Do you have more in common with Zinsser or “Dr. Brock” (the surgeon) in “The Transaction”?
* In your academic and personal reading, have you come across writing that Zinsser would call cluttered? As a student writer, do you try to cultivate an academic voice and style? What does this look like?
* What kind of writing style does your discipline (major/field of study) value? Do you write differently for different classes? Why and how so?
* What style “rules” have you been taught? Do you follow them? Do you think Zinsser’s ideas apply to all writing, or just certain professional modes of writing?
* What do you like (and dislike) about your writing style (or lack thereof)? What do you want to learn or develop this semester when it comes to writing within and beyond your major?