

The BC – WAC Research Paper Workshop

March 19, 2010

Schedule

This workshop will focus on teaching the research paper in its various forms. We will talk about how to break the project into stages and how to teach the skills necessary at each stage.

10:30 am **Introduction:**

The challenges of teaching research papers, step by step.

11:00 am Part One: **Writing in Stages**

How and why to segment and slow down the research process.

12:00 am Part Two: **Finding a Topic**

Preventing and dealing with plagiarism, and teaching your students to identify and develop good topics.

12:30 am Part Three: **Research and Note-taking**

Teaching your students to conduct efficient research.

1:00 pm LUNCH / Complete forms.

2:00 pm Part Four: **From Literature Reviews to Thesis Statements.**

Teaching knowledge synthesis using annotated bibliographies, summaries, literature reviews, and outlines.

2:20 pm Part Five: **Drafts and Disciplinary Conventions.**

Establishing the habit of drafting and revision, fostering the use of appropriate diction, and teaching proper bibliographic style.

2:40 pm Part Six: **Responding and Grading.**

Giving feedback that encourages revision.

3:00 pm **Wrap-up discussion.**

3:20 pm **Evaluations.**

3:30 pm FINISH.

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Writing the Research Paper

1. Getting Started

- Read the assignment carefully and make sure you understand it.
- Make sure to leave enough time to do the work. Create a schedule of steps for yourself.
- If it is up to you to find a topic, try writing to generate ideas.
- If the assignment calls for original research, find other articles on the subject to determine what has already been done. Even a short essay can make an original and useful contribution.
- Narrow down your idea until it is specific enough to be interesting and manageable.
- Having a very clear question in mind will help you organize your research. Write it down.

2. Gathering Information and Thoughts

- Start by searching the library, online databases, and the Internet for relevant sources.
- Make sure your sources are appropriate and reliable. If in doubt, ask your professor.
- When you find a good source, check the bibliography for other leads.
- You should read widely on the subject, but good research also involves knowing what not to read. Concentrate on those sources that are the most relevant and useful.
- Keep a working bibliography: record the details of every source you find.
- As you read, write down quotations or paraphrase ideas from the source. Highlighting relevant portions on copies of articles might also be useful. Be sure to cite the sources you use properly, even in your notes as this will save work later.
- You will probably have ideas of your own while you read – be sure to write those down too.
- It helps to write a short summary of the valuable information in each source.
- If applicable, keep careful records of the data from experiments and surveys.

3. Organizing Your Ideas

- Writing a review of the existing research will help clarify your understanding of the topic.
- As your research progresses, you may realize that your original idea needs to be altered.
- Formulate a tentative thesis once you have considered all aspects of the problem.
- Try writing a list of all the sub-topics you will have to address.
- Try making an outline that arranges the sub-topics in a logical pattern.
- Be open to revising your thesis and your organization throughout the process.

4. Writing a Draft

- Begin with the idea that intrigues you most or whatever motivates you to begin.
- Chances are your paper will start small, then gradually expand as you add evidence and quotations, and then finally shrink a bit in the editing process.
- Evaluate your argument as you go to be sure it makes sense.
- Make sure that each paragraph has a main point, that each point follows logically from what came before, and that they are linked by effective transitions.
- Ask yourself if each point is supported by evidence. Add material from your notes as necessary.
- You may find that you are missing important information, so further research may be required.
- Keep a working bibliography as you write.

5. Revising

- Once you have a complete draft, set it aside for a bit and then re-read it objectively. It may also help to have someone else read it, talk through the ideas with them.
- You will most likely want to rearrange some of your ideas or add new ones.
- Once satisfied with your argument, you can focus on editing: remove unnecessary asides and explanations and make your writing concise and readable. Vary your word choice and sentence structure. Use a thesaurus and dictionary.
- Watch for unprofessional diction.
- Double-check the accuracy of your citations and make sure that they adhere to the standard for the discipline (footnotes, or parenthetical citation).
- The final step will be to print out your paper and proofread it carefully.

Some Things to Consider

1. The Topic

- How much choice will you give your students in finding a topic?
- Will all students write on the same topic? Will all students use the same materials?
- Is the assignment practical given the class level and the timeframe?
- Could the essay easily be recycled? How will you guard against plagiarism?
- Are you giving your students a topic or a problem/question?
- What will motivate your students in responding to the assignment?

2. The Context

- What role do you want students to assume for this project? Do you want them to...
 - a. present a synthesis of current research on a subject?
 - b. answer a question or solve a problem with original analysis?
 - c. design and conduct an experiment or study and report the results?
 - d. evaluate a controversy and declare their own position?
 - e. persuade others to adopt their position in a controversy?
 - f. conduct a meta-analysis of the research methods in a certain field?

3. The Assignment

- Will you give your students a written version of the assignment?
- Is all the necessary information there, including due dates, length, format, bibliographic style guidelines, suggested resources, general expectations, etc.?
- Are you sure your students understand all the terms you have used?
- Is the assignment carefully revised and edited? What about having a colleague look it over?
- Will you set aside time in class to present and discuss the assignment with your students?

4. The Stages

- Will you set up a series of deadlines for various parts or drafts of the paper?
- Will you spend time in class explaining each of the steps?
- Will you have a chance to evaluate the process as well as the product for each student?
- For example, will each student pass in a working bibliography, summaries, or notes?

5. The Research Process

- What skills will your students need to conduct the research?
- Would it be helpful to visit the library with your class to practice finding sources?
- Will you explain to your students what should be considered a reliable source?
- Do your students need help in learning how to take notes?
- Are your students familiar with the citation style you expect before their note-taking begins?
- Do your students know how to collect, analyze/interpret, and present data?

6. The Community

- Do your students have access to appropriate models to emulate, such as exemplary professional articles?
- Have your students had sufficient practice with the stylistic conventions of your discipline? For example, would it help to spend time on professional diction?
- Would your students benefit from peer review of their thesis statements, outlines, or drafts?
- Do your students know what writing help is available to them if they need it?

7. The Feedback

- How much feedback will you give your students?
- Will you use minimal marking techniques?
- Will you allow your students to rewrite the paper after it has been graded?

Sample Time Table for Research Paper

Task	Due Date	Completed
Topic Approved	September 16 th	_____
Prospectus & Working Thesis	September 27 th	_____
Preliminary Bibliography	September 30 th	_____
Research Notes	October 11 th	_____
Revised Thesis and Working Outline	October 27 th	_____
Revised Outline	November 2 nd	_____
Introduction	November 8 th	_____
Rough Draft	November 20 th	_____
Works Cited Page	November 26 th	_____
Complete Draft #2	December 1 st	_____
<i>Final Draft</i>	<i>December 16th</i>	_____

There will be no acceptable excuses for late research papers. You must meet all deadlines!

Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism

According to Brooklyn College policy, plagiarism is representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise. Examples include:

- Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and citation to attribute the words to their source.
- Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the source.
- Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source.
- Submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the Internet without citing the source, and "cutting and pasting" from various sources without proper attribution.

It is easy to avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by following the guidelines outlined below. As always, if you have specific questions about whether something is plagiarism or not, ask your instructor.

Quotation: Whenever you copy something directly from another text, put it in quotation marks. Also, document the source according to the standard documentation style in your discipline.

Example: According to journalist Kevin Sack of the *New York Times*, "The insurance lobby has said that if Washington required coverage for all, it would end the practice of denying coverage to those with pre-existing health conditions."¹

Footnote: ¹Kevin Sack, "One State's Lesson on Health Care," *New York Times*, 29 March 2009, Week in Review section, p. 4.

TIP: Be especially careful to indicate a quotation with quotation marks when you are taking notes during your research, so that you don't forget and think that you wrote the passage yourself.

Paraphrase: Sometimes you want to state another person's ideas, but in your own words. You must still acknowledge the source of the information. Be sure you aren't just rearranging or replacing a few words.

Example: A *New York Times* journalist has noted that the insurance industry would cover people with pre-existing conditions if the government required everyone to have insurance.¹

Footnote: ¹Kevin Sack, "One State's Lesson on Health Care," *New York Times*, 29 March 2009, Week in Review section, p. 4.

Check your paraphrase against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words and that the information is accurate. Remember that the source of each

idea you use must be cited separately; it's not enough to simply refer to an author once if you have used his or her ideas throughout your paper.

TIP: Read over what you want to paraphrase carefully and then cover up or close the text so you aren't tempted to use the text as a "guide." Write out the idea in your own words without peeking.

Common Knowledge: You do not need to document the source of facts that can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people.

Example: John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.

However, you *must* document facts that are not generally known.

Example: Kennedy was elected by a margin of only 0.2%, according to the website of the National Archives.

You must also cite interpretations of facts made by specific people.

Example: Many Americans believe that JFK was elected in 1960 as a result of widespread electoral fraud, but political scientist Edmund F. Kallina has argued that while the election may not have been completely clean, the amount of fraud was not significant enough to change the results.¹

Footnote: ¹Edmund F. Kallina, *Courthouse over White House: Chicago and the Presidential Election of 1960* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1988).

This is not a fact but an interpretation; consequently, you need to cite your source.

TIP: When in doubt, ask yourself if what you are saying is agreed on by many readily available sources. If so, it is common knowledge. If the information is disputable, then your readers will want to know where you are getting that version of the facts and therefore you need to cite your source.

Plagiarism Quiz

Part 1. True False

Please indicate whether each statement is true or false.

1. Plagiarism is using the ideas and words of someone else as my own work without citing the original work.
2. If I download something from the Internet and change a few words and phrases, I can use that information as my own for class assignments.
3. If I find a newspaper article on the Internet, I can use it in my work without reference because it is in an electronic form.
4. It is actually getting very easy for someone else to do an electronic search to find the sources of information I used from the Internet.
5. If someone said something in a lecture or on TV, I don't have to cite it because it is not written.
6. It is acceptable to use text from Wikipedia in my paper without citation because it is anonymously edited, and it is difficult or impossible to find the author.
7. Paraphrasing is rewording someone else's ideas or facts. It is acceptable to paraphrase in a paper as long as the source is cited.
8. If an article is anonymously written it still must be cited.
9. Paraphrasing information from the Internet and using it as my own work without citation is considered plagiarism.
10. If I am unsure about how to cite a source, I should consult a style manual to find the correct citation style.

Part 2. Identifying Plagiarism

The following are quotes from sources and excerpts from student papers that somehow employ the source quote. In each case, ask yourself: **Is this plagiarism?**

❖ Example 1

Original Quote:

“To be sure, Atlantic Africans made important contributions in forging the interconnected, mutually influencing entanglements of the Atlantic world; yet they were also ensnared by them—through slavery, through racism, through colonial subjectivity.”

This quote comes from page 305 of the following:

Sweet, James H. “Mistaken Identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domnigos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 2 (April 2009), pp. 279-306.

Student paper excerpt: As one historian has written, people from Africa played an important role in creating the interconnectedness of the early modern Atlantic world even though they were often victims of slavery and racism.

Footnote reads as follows:

NO FOOTNOTE

Is this plagiarism? YES. This passage paraphrases the idea of another author without providing a specific citation. Even though the student acknowledges that the idea is not her own by writing “As one historian has written,” the source information is not provided. A specific citation for the source is needed to be completely free and clear of plagiarism.

❖ Example 2

Original Quote:

“In France the first bottles of Coca-Cola had been sold to American serviceman in 1919. Yet, except for some cafés in major cities that catered to American tourists, the beverage was rarely served in France during the 1920s and 1930s.”

This quote comes from page 100 of the following:

Kuisel, Richard F. “Coca-Cola and the Cold War: The French Face Americanization, 1948-1953.” *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 1991), <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed October 19, 2009).

Student paper excerpt: French people generally did not drink Coca-Cola before World War II.¹

Footnote reads as follows:

¹JSTOR database accessed 10/19/2009.

Is this plagiarism? YES. While this example is a step in the right direction in that it attempts to provide a citation, the citation is incomplete. Noting that the citation comes from the JSTOR electronic database is not enough. The student needs to cite not only the database, but also the full journal publication data as well. The proper citation in a *Chicago Manual of Style* footnote would be as follows:

¹Richard F. Kuisel, “Coca-Cola and the Cold War: The French Face Americanization, 1948-1953,” *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 1991), <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed October 19, 2009)

❖ Example 3

Original Quote:

“On April 12, while the Union fleet lay helpless offshore, the Confederates began bombarding Fort Sumter, and after thirty-four hours Anderson and his garrison were forced to surrender.”

This quote comes from page 292 of the following:

Donald, David Herbert. *Lincoln*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Student paper excerpt: The Confederates started the American Civil War in April 1861 when they bombarded Fort Sumter.

Footnote reads as follows:

NO FOOTNOTE

Is this plagiarism? NO. The fact that the Confederates started the American Civil War by firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861 is considered general knowledge. While a member of the general public might not know this exact date off the top of his or her head, any scholar or instructor of United States history will know this. Thus if you are writing an academic paper, you do not have to cite this well known fact.

❖ Example 4

Original Quote:

“In 1893, the city’s star rat catcher was Frederick Wegner, who arrived from Bavaria and made his name, first, by ridding Brooklyn’s Prospect Park and then Greenwood Cemetery of rats. When there was a rat infestation in the Central Park Zoo—the rumor was that the elephants had been attacked by rats—he was immediately called in and caught 475 rats in his first week; he used traps because the zookeeper was worried about poison around elephants.”

This quote comes from page 97-98 of the following:

Sullivan, Robert. *Rats: Observations on the History & Habitat of the City’s Most Unwanted Inhabitants*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004.

Student paper excerpt: The journalist Robert Sullivan has noted that New York City’s most successful rat catcher of the 1890s was a Bavarian immigrant named Frederick Wegner, who rid the Central Park Zoo of a major infestation without the use of poison.¹

Footnote reads as follows:

¹Robert Sullivan, *Rats: Observations on the History & Habitat of the City’s Most Unwanted Inhabitants* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 97-98.

Is this plagiarism? NO. The student paraphrases the source author, and then provides a full citation in a footnote.

❖ Example 5

Original Quote:

“Just as some advocates viewed Central Park as the future rendezvous of the polite world, so some enthusiasts imagined a zoological garden as a place for their socializing.... The private society’s projected zoo would be open to the public but closed to the general public on Sundays. (London’s Zoological Garden admitted only subscribers on Sundays, ‘the fashionable day’ to visit.) The *Herald* warned that ‘such class regulations’ ‘in favor of the wealthy few’ would not be tolerated in republican America.”

This quote comes from page 342 of the following:

Rosenzweig, Roy and Elizabeth Blackmar. *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Student paper excerpt: When Central Park was founded some advocates viewed the park as the future rendezvous of the polite world, and they wanted to restrict admission to the zoological garden to subscribers on Sundays.¹

Footnote reads as follows:

¹Google Books, 2009.

Is this plagiarism? YES. The student quoted directly from the source without the use of quotation marks and did not accurately cite the source. A corrected version might read:

When Central Park was founded, “some advocates viewed the park as the future rendezvous of the polite world,” and they wanted to restrict Sunday admission to the zoological garden to subscribers.¹

Footnote reads as follows:

¹Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 342.

❖ Example 6

Original Quote:

“Though no deed of sale exists, the event is generally accepted as having taken place. In a 1626 letter, a Dutch merchant reported he has just heard, from ship passengers newly disembarked from New Netherland, that representatives of the West India Company had ‘purchased the Island Manhattes from the Indians for the value of 60 guilders.’ In 1846, using then current exchange rates, a New York historian converted this figure into twenty-four U.S. dollars.”

This quote comes from page xiv of the following:

Burrows, Edwin G. and Mike Wallace. *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Student paper excerpt: The legend that Manhattan was purchased for twenty-four dollars does appear to have some historical evidence to support it. According to a Dutch merchant, the West India Company gave sixty guilders for the island.

Is this plagiarism? YES. While the author acknowledges that the information comes from “a Dutch merchant,” no source is cited. A corrected version might read:

The legend that Manhattan was purchased for twenty-four dollars does appear to have some historical evidence to support it. According to a Dutch merchant, the West India Company gave sixty guilders for the island.¹

Footnote reads as follows:

¹Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xiv.

Strategies for Preventing Plagiarism in Student Papers

1. Teach about plagiarism. Don't just warn against it. Make sure your students know what it is and give them help in avoiding it.
2. Give the students a "plagiarism quiz" (counting toward their grade) on defining plagiarism. Some professors have students sign an agreement stating that they are clear on the definition of plagiarism.
3. Give assignments that are not easily satisfied with plagiarized papers. Make the topic specific to the individual student's experience, or require a unique combination of topics.
4. Probably the best way to discourage plagiarism is to insist that students show their work to you. Have them pass in notes, outlines, drafts, etc.
5. Schedule interviews with your students to discuss the issues they are facing in dealing with their topics.
6. Hold a brainstorming session in class, so you can actually see the students putting their own ideas down on paper. Then have the students pass in that paper for comments.
7. If possible, demonstrate in class the appropriate and inappropriate uses of Google and other Internet search tools. As an assignment, have students Google a phrase related to their topic, and then produce an annotated bibliography of the top results.
8. Have your students comment on the Wikipedia article related to their topic, and challenge them to add to it or correct it as a step toward the completion of their project. This may discourage direct copying of the Wikipedia article and related Internet sources.
9. Make sure your students submit summaries of at least two major sources on their topic, so you can see that they have done the research, understand the material, and are able to summarize it.
10. After they have handed in their papers, have your students write in a journal or in class on the process they went through in writing them.

Using Writing to Read Difficult Texts

Inspired by J. C. Bean's Engaging Ideas Ch. 8. Designed by Writing Fellow J.M.C. Dow (WAC Fellow 2007-2009)

A Difficult Text:

“...Virtue is distinguished by the pleasure, and vice by the pain, that any action, sentiment or character gives us by the mere view and contemplation. This decision is very commodious; because it reduces us to this simple question, *Why any action or sentiment upon the general view or survey, gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness*, in order to shew the origin of its moral rectitude or depravity, without looking for any incomprehensible relations and qualities, which never did exist in nature, nor even in our imagination, by any clear and distinct conception?”
(David Hume *A Treatise of Human Nature* III.1.ii).

Ways to Improve Reading: Writing To Read

- Ask your instructor to provide information about the author, the audience, the occasion, the influences, and the author’s purpose.
- Write in a notebook next to you: Don’t merely copy what the text says, respond in your own words.
- Do not use a highlighter; instead, when you want to highlight, WRITE in the margins why you think that passage is important.
- Draw diagrams, flowcharts, maps, or outlines of the text.
- Play the game of believing and doubting: read a text and try to agree with everything the author says; then, the second time, read the same text and try to disagree with everything.
- Read with a dictionary close by, or if you do not have a dictionary, write ‘dict.’ in the margins, and look the word up later.
- Translate difficult texts into your own words.
- Read something with different amounts of engagement: first, skim, then read again with more concentration for detail.

Challenges Students Face with Reading

1. *Understanding the Reading Process.* Texts require various reading speeds and levels of concentration; most importantly, the number of times you need to read a text varies.
2. *Understanding Different Reading Strategies.* There are different purposes for reading, for example: to get the gist, to abstract the argument, to analyze meanings.
3. *Perceiving Structure.* There are different functions of different parts of texts, for example: conclusions, premises, rhetoric, examples, introductions.
4. *Assimilating the Unfamiliar.* Don't assume that writers are using words, allusions, or ideas that are familiar to you. Assume that you will need to become familiar with the unfamiliar.
5. *Appreciating Rhetorical Context.* Every text has a political, cultural, or literary context in which it was written.
6. *Cultural Literacy.* Writers come from all varieties of different cultures and do not always have the same background assumptions and references.
7. *Inadequate Vocabulary.* The vocabulary required differs with different texts. Students should use a dictionary to look up difficult words.
8. *Complex Syntax.* Often texts present difficult syntax.
9. *Differences between Disciplines.* There are various formal and stylistic differences between disciplines.

Evaluating Sources

Sources can be primary (original data or original sources) or secondary (texts that comment on primary texts). In either case, you should provide a proper citation. Any text can be quoted and analyzed, but in an academic context only certain kinds of sources are considered reliable. How do you know whether a source is reliable and therefore appropriate to include in your research paper?

A source can be considered dependable if:

1. It is a recognizable academic journal or publisher: a reputable university press, or any publication or person associated with a university; well-known publishers like Little Brown, Penguin, Pearson, McGraw-Hill etc.; major newspapers or magazines like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Guardian*; websites associated with universities or major newspapers and magazines.
2. The author and/or the source is cited in many other texts.
3. A teacher or professional tells you that the source has a good reputation (if in doubt, ask).
4. Generally, if you find the source in a serious context (in an academic library, for example), it is likely dependable, unless you spot any of the following warning signs.

A source may not be dependable if:

1. There is no identifiable author, no date, or no apparent publication data.
2. The author does not belong to any clearly identifiable, respectable organization, and has not been published by any respectable medium.
3. The author has no credentials to indicate any expertise in the area he is writing about.
4. The author is not mentioned by any other academic texts on the same subject.

***TIP:** Investigate the author's reputation by checking a "Who's Who" publication, or simply look for the author's name on Google or Wikipedia to see where else he or she has published. Reading book reviews of the author's work may also be helpful.*

5. The content of the article is extremely biased or emotionally loaded.
6. The claims of the article aren't supported by or go beyond the evidence provided.
7. The article vilifies alternative viewpoints.
8. The article is trying to sell something.

***TIP:** Check the content against other sources. Dependable articles make arguments backed up with evidence, and acknowledge that others may disagree.*

9. The publisher is not well known among experts in the field.
10. The publisher is a strongly partisan organization.

Other Things to Consider: If your subject matter is evolving, your sources should not be too old. Look for newer editions or newer publications. Also, ask yourself who the target audience of the text is. It could be that it's too simple or too sophisticated for your purposes. Finally, when you are finding sources through Internet searches, you must be more skeptical than you would be with print sources.

Researching and Writing in the Sciences: A Guide for Students

Prepared by Siobhán B. Cooke, BC Writing Fellow Spring 2009

Writing a research paper in the sciences requires knowledge of the different types of sources available. This guide will help you to find and identify reliable sources.

❖ Choosing Sources

The rules for finding “reliable” sources in the sciences are about the same as in other disciplines; however, sources that come from peer-reviewed journals or books tend to be more reliable than popular science articles. Frequently, popular science writing simplifies research and subtleties are lost. That being said, it is generally fine to peruse popular science writing as a way to get to know your topic and to find non-technical information, but always be vigilant of reporting that seems overly simplified. It probably is!

❖ Types of Academic Articles

When most scientists conduct research, they eventually disseminate their results and analysis through publication. Different types of research result in different types of papers. There are two main types of papers: **research articles**, which publish new information, and **review articles**, which summarize the results of the research that has been conducted on a particular topic.

1. Research articles

Most scientific articles are descriptions of new information that has been discovered either through fieldwork, laboratory experiments, or a combination of both. These types of articles almost always follow a specific format. First, an **introduction** summarizes the problem being researched and may briefly review what other scientists have thought about the problem. The next section describes the **materials and methods** that were used in the research. The third section explains the **results** of the research. Fourth, the scientist explains what he or she thinks that the results show and states their importance in the **discussion** section. Finally, some papers will end with a **conclusion**, which summarizes the findings of the research, although this section can also be combined with the discussion.

2. Review articles

Review articles are critical summaries of research that has been conducted on a particular topic. A review article will summarize many different research articles on the same topic. To write this type of article, a scientist will read and study many different researchers’ work on a particular problem. Occasionally, review articles will contain new data, but for the most part, they reanalyze data that has already been published.

❖ Types of Academic Publications

1. Peer-Reviewed Journals

When a scientist decides to publish his or her research in an article, he or she usually submits the article to a **peer-reviewed journal**. When the editors of a peer-reviewed journal receive a new article, it is sent to many different scientists in the same discipline: the author’s peers. These scientists will read the article and comment on the research. If the author has conducted good research and has not made serious errors, the article will then be published. If the author’s research is flawed, the article will not be published or will be returned to the author for clarification and revision.

2. Edited Volumes

In addition to journals, many researchers publish their work in edited volumes on a particular topic. Edited volumes generally follow the same peer-review process that peer-reviewed journals do; however, chapters are solicited from researchers by the editors.

3. Books

The majority of new scientific research is published in article form rather than in a complete book by one author. There are however, many excellent books published on scientific topics each year. These tend to be aimed at a more general audience than articles published in peer-reviewed journals or volumes.

❖ Finding Sources

Scientific sources can be procured from many different databases libraries and indices. Likely, it will be necessary to use all of these options to fully explore your topic.

1. Indices and Databases

Finding sources generally requires the use of scientific and general indices and databases, which contain lists of articles, books, and other publication on a particular subject. Some are very specific such as *Animal Behavior Abstracts*; others are much more general such as *JSTOR*. Databases and indices can provide lists of articles that you then must retrieve yourself, either from the library or from online sources, or they can contain the full text of the source. You can access indices and databases through the college library website. In addition to library indices and databases, Google has introduced a search option called Google Scholar. This is available to anyone and is generally quite thorough.

2. Library Hardcopy Resources

Libraries maintain hardcopies of books, journals, and edited volumes in their stacks. These resources can be located by using the online card catalogue. In many libraries, books and journals are catalogued on the shelves by their call number, which is related to the subject of the text. Some libraries catalogue journals separately by title, however. Be aware of this variation across libraries when looking for sources.

3. Online sources

Today, virtually all scientific journals and many books are published online in addition to hard copy. Many libraries that do not receive a journal or book in hardcopy will have access to it online. Most library websites have an “online resources” section where the online journals and books can be found. These are generally stored as pdf documents, but some journals publish articles online in html. Another excellent resource is Google Books, which has virtual copies of many publications.

❖ Useful Websites

Brooklyn College Library Resources

Brooklyn College Library <http://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/>

The Brooklyn College Library website also has links to the CUNY card catalogue, online databases, online journals, and e-books.

Google

Google Books <http://books.google.com/>
Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com/>

Researching and Writing in the Sciences: A Guide for Professors

Created by Siobhán B. Cooke, BC Writing Fellow Spring 2009

Below are a few questions to ask yourself about your class research assignment. While these questions were developed with the hard and social sciences in mind, some are likely useful in other disciplines.

1. Formulating the Assignment

- Will you allow the students to pick their own topic?
- Will you give a list of possible topics?
- Will the assignment be structured such that the final paper may be submitted for presentation at a conference or for publication?
- Will you break down the assignment into smaller sections with individual due dates?
- Will you require a series of drafts from your students?
- What measures will you take to guard against plagiarism?

2. The Research Process

- Will the paper include original research from laboratory or class assignments?
- Will the paper be based solely on previously published research?
- Will you allow the students to use non-peer-reviewed sources?
- Will you take the class on a visit to the library?
- Will you dedicate class time to teaching your students to use electronic library resources?

3. Style

- Will you require your students to structure their paper in a specific way (e.g. introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions)?
- How much emphasis will you place on grammatical correctness?
- How much emphasis will you place on overall style?
- Will you allow your students to use the passive voice or will you suggest that they avoid it?

4. Grading the Assignment

- Will you provide a grading rubric for your students?
- If you read rough drafts or other portions of the assignment before the final due date, how much will they count toward the final grade?
- Will your students be allowed to rewrite their paper after you have graded it?

Brooklyn College Library Resources

The Library hosts instructional sessions that teach students about the Library's resources and services.

The Brooklyn College Library encourages faculty to include library sessions in their courses, as appropriate. They can introduce your students to:

- resources relevant to a specific assignment
- discipline-based scholarly communication
- discipline-specific library access tools
- tips for finding relevant material on the internet
- citation formats and how to avoid plagiarism
- and more

To schedule a session, send a note to a subject specialist or contact Prof. Mariana Regalado at regalado@brooklyn.cuny.edu. You can also call the Information Services office at (718) 951-5340.

Subject Specialist Contact Information

<http://dewey.brooklyn.cuny.edu/resources/?view=specialists>

Form Guide for a Literature Review

Prepared by Writing Fellows Jessica Hammerman and Corey Frost

A. The introduction.....

1. Defines and identifies your topic.
2. Gives an overview of the state of research on the topic.
3. Establishes your reason for reviewing the literature.
4. Explains the criteria used in analyzing and comparing literature.

N.B. You may wish to write the introduction last, after you have written the body of your paper.

B. The body of the review....

1. Groups research studies (articles) into clusters or subtopics.
NB: Each cluster will likely comprise one paragraph. Arrange them in a logical order: by the publication date, importance, subtopic, etc.
2. Summarizes the main findings or arguments of each article.
3. Places each article in the context of the field as a whole.
3. Points out trends in what has been published about your topic.
4. Identifies conflicts or gaps in the research.

Questions to ask yourself about each article or source

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ___ In what context did this appear?
(And how is that significant?) | ___ What are the main ideas?
(What does the article say?) | ___ What is the focus?
(And what is left out?) |
| ___ Who is the author?
(And is s/he credible? How?) | ___ Is the article convincing?
(Are its points well articulated?) | ___ Is the article current?
(If not, is it obsolete?) |
| ___ What does the article attempt to do?
(Inform, debate, propose...?) | ___ Is the argument sound?
(Any omissions, errors?) | ___ How is this article an
original contribution to
the discussion of which
it is a part? |
| ___ What strategies does it use?
(Logic, history, emotion...?) | ___ What bias do you detect?
(Is the language slanted?) | |

Words and phrase and phrases you might use in relating arguments to one another:

on one hand	in agreement with	more specific / more general
on the other hand	in opposition to	in the same vein
contrary to	in confirmation of	in a different sphere
in line with	in response to	adapts
parallel to	in reaction against	goes beyond
related to	in contrast to	misses
linked to	influenced by	misinterprets
responds to	rejects	supports
elaborates	confuses	criticizes
undermines	reinforces	revisits the same subject
explores / investigates new territory	a similar focus/approach/tone	revolutionizes the field of
contributes to the research on	a slightly different focus/approach/tone	bypasses the debate
enters the debate	a broader scope	breaks out of the paradigm
re-emphasizes the categories	a narrower scope	

Creating a Thesis Statement

Lesson Instructions

1. Discuss the characteristics of a good thesis statement (5 minutes). A sample script follows:

"A thesis statement is a single, complete sentence that succinctly expresses your view concerning a particular topic. It will generally be included in the introductory paragraph of your essay, and you must be sure that you can support the statement in the body of the essay.

To get a better understanding of what a thesis statement is, it helps to imagine it in the context of the paper writing process. During the research process, you will encounter a lot of information pertaining to your topic. The nature of this information will vary by discipline. For instance, it might be composed of data from a scientific experiment, it might be information from important texts within your discipline such as literary and cinematic works or philosophical treatises, or it might be composed of historical facts. After you have uncovered this information (i.e. conducted the experiment, watched the film(s), read the book(s), spent time in the archives), **your thesis statement will almost always be a direct answer to this question: what does this information mean?** So, your thesis statement will be an interpretation or argument *explaining the significance of this information*, not a restatement of the actual information itself. Therefore, the main body of your essay will be your attempt to convince other people, by way of a more extended argument, that your interpretation of the information is correct. In this way, the information you initially uncovered will be transformed into evidence supporting your thesis."

2. Give students the first handout containing tips for constructing a thesis statement.

3. Work through good and bad thesis statements together with the students. (5-10 min.)

4. Give students the second handout containing problematic thesis statements in need of correction.

5. Have the students break into groups to correct the thesis statements. (5-10 min.)

6. Discuss the corrections as a class. (5 min.)

Tips for Constructing a Thesis Statement

- A thesis statement should not contain two conflicting ideas. If two ideas are in conflict, it is impossible to support them both.
- A thesis statement should never be so broad that it's difficult to discuss all of the relevant information.
- A thesis statement is an assertion that requires evidence and support, not a universally agreed-upon fact or an observation.

A universally agreed-upon fact or an observation: People use many lawn chemicals.

Thesis: People are poisoning the environment with chemicals merely to keep their lawns green.

- A thesis takes a stand rather than announcing a subject.

Announcement: The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.

Thesis: Solving our environmental problems is more difficult than many environmentalists believe.

- A thesis is the main idea, *not* the title. It must be a complete sentence that expresses in some detail what claim you plan to support.

Title: Social Security and Old Age.

Thesis: Continuing changes in the Social Security System make it almost impossible to plan intelligently for retirement

- A thesis statement is narrow, rather than broad. If the thesis statement is sufficiently narrow, it can be fully supported.

Broad: The American steel industry has many problems.

Narrow: The primary problem of the American steel industry is the lack of funds to renovate outdated plants and equipment.

Handout I

- A thesis statement is specific rather than vague or general.

Vague: Hemingway's war stories are very good.

Specific: Hemingway's stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and strong Anglo-Saxon words.

- A thesis statement has one main point rather than several main points. More than one point may be too difficult for the reader to understand and the writer to support.

More than one main point: Stephen Hawking's physical disability has not prevented him from becoming a world-renowned physicist and his public appearances have brought important attention to neurodegenerative diseases while also bringing popular attention to the field of theoretical physics.

One main point: Stephen Hawking's status in the public eye has helped to revive a previously waning interest in theoretical physics.

Identify the Problems in these Thesis Statements:

1. The World's Fair in New Orleans was a disaster because of the way the press criticized the way it was run, but it was exciting for little children and had many good food booths.
2. TV commercials are obnoxious to the person who is intent on watching a good show; on the other hand, they provide entertainment in the antics of the performers and they provide a good opportunity to take a snack break.
3. Since politicians are constantly bombarding each other, how do they expect anyone to know who is right and who is wrong?
4. Unless people are conscious of pollution, the world will be destroyed by the year 2050.
5. Rap is both a creative and original form of music; it also has its roots in American jazz.

How could you turn each of the above sentences into an acceptable thesis statement?

Using Professional Diction

A. Compare the two versions of these sentences from the articles you read.

Informal version	Academic version
1. "Urban theory says that money matters a lot more than what people do for fun, and stuff like that."	"Traditionally urban theory presumes a division between the economy of cities and their culture, with culture subordinate in explanatory power to the 'work' of the city." (Lloyd/Clark, p.357)
2. "Chicago used to have lots of factories, but now it's basically overrun with tourists. They spend money in going to restaurants and staying night after night in hotels."	"Even in a former industrial power like Chicago, the number one industry has become entertainment, which city officials define as including tourism, conventions, restaurants, hotels, and related economic activities." (Lloyd/Clark, p.357)
3. "In my opinion, I believe it is just a factor in the economy of cities to have people who are willing to move around and who graduated from college. Cities need the money that these richer people will bring."	"Urban enterprises involve attracting mobile, well-educated workers who in addition to professional training are well-trained participants in the mature consumer economy." (Lloyd/Clark, p. 358)
4. "They are as stubborn as treehuggers are about Mother Nature. Only they want to keep neighborhoods the way they were."	"Like environmentalists who seek to preserve nature, social preservationists work to preserve the local social ecology." (Brown-Saracino, p. 438)

B. Look at the sentences below. On another sheet, explain in a few lines why each one is unsuitable for an academic essay.

C. Now try writing your own academic version.

Informal version	Academic version
5. "Some really weird middle-class white people want to keep others like them out of their neighborhood."	
6. "I'm going to talk about four things about how these people decide who should stay and who shouldn't."	
7. "The folks who want to keep the neighborhood the way it is think it's great that the old-timers have been there longer than anyone and know it better than anyone."	
8. "You can tell from the photo that this is a poor neighborhood."	
9. "My paper is going to be based on trying to show how Flatbush is changing."	
10. "I believe that drug use is a significant sociological issue."	

Writing an Introduction: One Approach

Problem, Thesis, Overview {P.T.O.}

A good scholarly introduction might contain these three main elements: a presentation of the problem, a thesis statement, and an overview of how you will proceed.

1. PROBLEM

State the problem clearly. You could either ask it in the form of your “big question” or ask your question implicitly. You can then explain why the problem is significant or worth pursuing.

My Example: “What were the differences between Jean Domat’s and John Locke’s ideas about the lower classes?”

Your Example:

My Example: “Both men were opinionated about the structure of the social order, but they came to opposite conclusions. By focusing on their views of the lower classes, we can better understand Locke’s and Domat’s motivations for the structure of the social order.”

Your Example:

2. THESIS

In this second movement of the introduction, you can state what your paper is trying to prove. Your thesis doesn’t always need to be expressed in the introductory paragraph, but you should know what it is. It may not be clear to you until you have written the paper; you can always go back later and fill it in.

My Example: “Domat’s view of peasants as socially inferior was directly opposed to the views of Locke, who believed that all men and women are created equal.”

Your Example:

3. OVERVIEW

Finally, your introduction can give the reader an overview of your paper. In a short paper, you may not need much.

My Example: “First, I will examine Domat’s views about peasants and human nature. Then I will focus on Locke’s ideas about freedom. Finally I will demonstrate how the two views are contradictory and discuss the political ramifications.”

Your Example:

TIPS:

- You may want to write your introduction last after you have worked out your ideas in the paper.
- Keep it clear and simple. Snappy, creative introductions won’t necessarily get you an A.
- Keep it small and focused. The easiest way to get your professor to roll his/her eyes is to begin a paper with something like this: “Peasants have existed in history throughout time.”

Summarizing a Source

Lesson Description

1. Have students read the article below. (5 min.)
2. Discuss summaries with the students. It might be helpful to mention that summaries must be Accurate, Brief, and Comprehensive. The summary should represent what the original text says (you can give your opinion later). To cue the reader that you are summarizing another person's views, you will likely use signal words such as: according to, claims, declares, holds, believes, argues... (5 min.)
3. Ask them to spend a few minutes writing a list of what they would include in a summary of the article. (5-10 min.)
4. Ask students to read the five sample summaries below and determine which is best. The first summary is not accurate, the second is too long, the third too short, and hence not comprehensive. The last two are OK, though the fifth is probably best. (5-10 min.)

When summarizing an article it is important to be:

Accurate

Brief

Comprehensive

Your summary should isolate the most important points and should represent what the actual text says. Often signal words such as according to, claims, declares, holds, believes, and argues are important clues to the reader that you are summarizing someone else's work.

Part 1. Summarizing an Article

Read the article below and then write your own summary. It may be helpful to list the most important points before writing a summary.

“California Should Not Ease Rules for Illegals”

Herb Klein

San Diego Union-Tribune Editorial December 10, 2004

At least some of the Sept. 11 terrorists, all Arabs, obtained illegal driver's licenses and used them to board airliners on that horrific day. Which is why the issue of granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants is a matter of pressing national security concern. The truth is, a driver's license is America's national identity card, proof that the holder is who he says he is, which is why airline agents ask to see your driver's license before you board a plane. Under new federal legislation, the Department of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the Department of Transportation, is directed to develop uniform national criteria for issuing driver's licenses. The measure calls for the implementation of “standards for the verifiability of documents used to obtain a driver's license.”

Governor Schwarzenegger, sensibly citing the new intelligence bill, has declared that the question of driver's licenses for undocumented Californians should be put off until the new federal guidelines are developed. That is expected to take up to 18 months.

Apart from national security concerns, there are other reasons why illegal immigrants should not be given driver's licenses. One is a simple matter of fairness. Extending the privilege to undocumented residents would reward them for their illegal conduct. What's more, it would severely undermine enforcement of America's immigration laws. Gov. Schwarzenegger should stand firm against this ill-advised attempt to legitimize illegal immigration.

Part 2. Choosing the Best Summary

Now that you have written your own summary read the summaries below and identify the best one. What are some of the problems with the other summaries? Now that you have seen some example summaries, return to your own work and revise it.

1. Herb Klein says that illegal immigrants should not get driver's licenses because it would pose a security risk for the country. For example, everyone needs a driver's license to board a plane. He says that giving licenses to illegal immigrants would be unfair to people without licenses and that the federal government should wait before making a decision on this important issue.
2. Since terrorists are likely to use driver's licenses to board planes or perpetrate other terrorist acts, it is important that they not be issued to someone unless that person's identity can be positively ascertained. Therefore it is dangerous to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. The federal government is making plans to increase the security and usefulness of driver's licenses across the country, but until this legislation is passed, probably more than a year from now, California should not allow illegal immigrants to get licenses. Furthermore, there are other reasons why granting licenses to illegal immigrants is a bad idea: one is that it would be unfair because it rewards illegal behavior, and the other is that illegal immigration is legitimized by giving illegal immigrants the privileges of citizens.
3. In his editorial Herb Klein claims that giving driver's licenses to illegal immigrants would be a threat to national security because a driver's license is often used as a form of identification. For this reason he urges Governor Schwarzenegger not to allow licenses for illegal immigrants in California.
4. According to Herb Klein, a driver's license is an important form of ID that currently is not secure; therefore he argues that driver's licenses should not be granted to undocumented immigrants because it would endanger national security. Furthermore, he worries that it would legitimize illegal immigration.
5. In his December 10, 2004 editorial, Herb Klein argues against granting driver's licenses to people he terms "illegal immigrants" because he worries this would pose a national security threat. He suggests that California should wait until the federal government has made driver's licenses into a more secure, verifiable form of identification. He also thinks that the issue is a "simple matter of fairness" and that granting licenses to undocumented immigrants would legitimize illegal behavior.

Peer Review

Theater History, October 31, 2007

Step #1: Silently and attentively read through your partner's draft without making any marks on the paper.

Step #2: Reread the draft one paragraph at a time. On a separate sheet of paper, state the topic of **each** paragraph. If a paragraph seems to cover more than one topic, list each one. If a topic appears in multiple paragraphs, list it separately each time.

Step #3: Indicate why you listed the topic(s) you did. If you thought that there was more than one topic in a paragraph, write down what made you think so. Were there two sentences in the paragraph that seemed to be about very different things? If so, underline those sentences.

Step #4: Discuss any areas in the text where you were confused or where you think more support would be helpful to back up a general statement. Perhaps ask questions to prompt the author to provide the kinds of evidence you, as a reader, would like. (You may do this directly on your partner's paper or write your comments/questions on the back of this page.)

Step #5: Let your partner know if any quotes seemed clunky or too extensive. You may help him or her cut down the quote to the essential point that s/he is trying to make. Also circle any glaring errors in style or grammar, just to notify your partner. Don't dwell on these too much, though, because this is a first draft.

To be done in a group of 3:

Debatable statements: Your research paper is your particular and creative perspective on your play. It should contain a thesis statement, with paragraphs of evidence to back the statement up.

- List one debatable statement that your partner has made. (Remember: this doesn't mean that you have to choose a statement that you disagree with. You can choose a statement you are in complete agreement with, as long as it is a statement that someone *could* reasonably disagree with.)
- List two different pieces of evidence that your partner has listed. Are they convincing?
- Now, list every argument you can think of for the opposite viewpoint. What questions would an opponent of this viewpoint ask? What arguments might he or she make?

Top 9 Tips to Cut Writing Assignment Grading Time

By Melissa Kelly, About.com

1. Use Peer Evaluation

Distribute rubrics to students asking each to read and score three of his or her peers' essays in a specific amount of time. After grading an essay, they should staple the rubric to the back of it so as not to influence the next evaluator. If necessary, check off students who have completed the required number of evaluations; however, I have found that students do this willingly. Collect the essays, check off that they were completed on time, and return them to be revised

2. Grade Holistically

Use a single letter or number based on a rubric such as the one used with The Florida Writes Program. To do this, put your pen down and simply read and sort assignments into piles according to score. When finished with a class, check each pile to see if they are consistent in quality, then write the score at the top. This allows you to grade a large number of papers quickly. It is best used with final drafts after students have used a rubric to grade one another's writing and made improvements.

3. Use Portfolios

Have students create a portfolio of checked-off writing assignments from which they select the best to be graded. An alternative approach is to have the student select one of three consecutive essay assignments to be graded.

4. Grade Only a Few from a Class Set - Roll the Die!

Use a roll of a die to match numbers selected by students in order to select from eight to ten essays that you will be grading in-depth, checking off the others.

5. Grade Only a Few from a Class Set - Keep them Guessing!

Tell students you will make an in-depth evaluation of a few essays from each class set and check off the others. Students will not know when theirs will be graded in-depth.

6. Grade Only Part of the Assignment

Grade only one paragraph of each essay in depth. Don't tell students ahead of time which paragraph it will be though.

7. Grade Only One or Two Elements

Have students write at the top of their papers, "Evaluation for (element) " followed by a line for your grade for that element. It is helpful to also write "My estimate ____" and fill in their estimate their grade for that element.

8. Have Students Write in Journals Which Are Not Graded

Require only that they write either for a specified amount of time, that they fill a specified amount of space, or that they write a specified number of words.

9. Use Two Highlighters

Grade writing assignments using only two colored highlighters with one color for strengths, and the other for errors. If a paper has many errors, mark only a couple you think the student should work on first so that you don't cause the student to give up.

Adjunct Workshop – Research Paper Evaluation Form

How useful were the various parts of the workshop? Check the appropriate box.

	Not Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Scaffolding Research papers/ Writing in Stages			
Plagiarism and finding topics			
Research and Note-taking			
Lit Review & Thesis Statements			
Draft, Revision, Disciplinary Conventions			
Responding and Grading			

On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), how would you rate the following:

Organization of day's activities	1	2	3	4	5
Presentation of principles and techniques	1	2	3	4	5
Selection of topics covered	1	2	3	4	5
Coverage of important topics	1	2	3	4	5
General discussion	1	2	3	4	5
Resource materials distributed	1	2	3	4	5

What was most useful or interesting to you?

What was the least useful or interesting to you?

What would you have liked to discuss that was not addressed (or not addressed fully)?

If offered, would you attend future workshops? Yes/ No

If so, what topics would interest you most? (Please check.)

- Avoiding Plagiarism
- ESL Issues
- Designing a Syllabus
- Using Informal Writing
- Grading
- Using Writing to Help Students Understand Difficult Texts
- Conferences with Students
- Using Group Work
- Writing in Stages

Other:

Please provide any other comments you may have on today's workshop in the space below