

The Paper Chase

The Newsletter of the Writing Center at Agnes Scott College

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Co-Editors: Betsy Morley and Rebecca Carefoot

Acting Up at the 1999 Writers' Festival

by Betsy Morley

What's all the uproar about writing this week on campus? It's Agnes Scott's 27th Annual Writers' Festival. Four nationally and internationally known writers will be visiting campus Thursday and Friday to give readings and discuss writing. Poets Memye Curtis Tucker and Eavan Boland, novelist Tim O'Brien, and playwright Frank Manley will give readings Thursday afternoon through Friday morning. Included in Manley's reading is a performance by local actors of several scenes from his works. These writers bring a variety of backgrounds and talents to Agnes Scott that are sure to entertain every campus member.

Thursday afternoon poets Memye Tucker and Eavan Boland will read from their works. Memye Tucker is this year's Distinguished Alumna Writer. She has published several poetry collections as well as having poems appear in many national journals. Her poetry addresses a variety of subjects. She has been involved in many Writers' Festivals at Agnes Scott, and has frequently served as a discussion moderator. She currently edits the *Atlanta Review* and teaches poetry.

Eavan Boland is a native of Dublin, Ireland and is now the Director of the Creative

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Writing the Scientific Research Paper

by Erika Blanchard

Is writing an English paper the same as writing a scientific paper? In many ways the two are similar because in each you are trying to present information that your reader can understand. No, scientific writing does not have to be elusive or "cryptic" as Dr. Doug Kain told the writing tutors. Similarly, Dr. Karen Thompson says that scientific writing should be presented in a way that even the most scientifically illiterate person could understand. But what exactly makes a *good* scientific research paper?

A scientific research paper should contain four major sections—the introduction, the materials and methods, the results, and finally the discussion. The introduction sets up the

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Topic Development: How to get there from here

by Hillary Wiggins

So you have been given an assignment: write a paper any topic of your choice. Panic! The possibilities are endless. Where to begin? Where to end? How to get to the middle? How to make it interesting?

The key to answering these questions and to writing a successful paper that both you and the professor will enjoy is topic development. In the midst of getting all of your work done, developing a great topic can often be forgotten. Ultimately, spending a little more time developing a topic that you like and that is well supported can make the difference between a paper you enjoy writing and one you loathe.

Topic Development is getting a paper ready to go, so make sure you are prepared for the trip you are about to take. Think about the following ideas and questions when you are developing your topic.

You

It is important to be aware of yourself and your likes before you begin to develop a topic. This helps you avoid topics you will not like. What are your interests? What have you enjoyed from class? What would you like to know more about?

Assignment

Look over the assignment to know where you want to end up after all of your work. Making sure you are aware of the assignment will help you avoid rewrites down the road. Consider type, length, due date and other requirements. Where are the areas for improvisation or creativity?

Audience

Knowing how familiar your audience is with your topic tells you how much background information needs to be provided or how in depth you can be. How will the audience influence

style and tone? For most papers, you want to convince an audience to see the matter from your perspective and to enjoy what they are reading.

Think

Brainstorm. Jot down ideas as they occur to you. Use your creativity. Freewrite, if it works for you. Look at all of the information you have already gathered about your audience, the assignment and your interests to guide you. Do not eliminate any ideas at this point.

Evaluate

Now consider where you want to go. Where is your brainstorming leading you? Is it narrow enough? Is it too narrow? Make connections between your brainstorming and the actual process of drafting. Draw a picture, chart or other device to show connections between ideas, details and courses of action.

Support

Now that you have an evaluated topic, look at the practicalities of writing about this topic. What is the best way to get from here to a completed paper? How do you support it? What evidence do you have already? Consider tone and purpose. Develop a working thesis indicating where you want to take the work.

Direction

So you know where you want to go, but how will you get there? Outline or choose some other organizational strategy and plot your path. Set a timeline based on your due date. Can you handle your topic in that amount of time?

These ideas are suggestions that I hope will help as you begin to write a paper. Adapt them as best fits your writing style and personality, but most importantly, think about what you want to write before you write. That extra thought could save time in the end. And of course, please visit the Writing Center for help

The Course Tutor: More than "The Girl in Class who Doesn't Turn in Papers"

by Lee Hayes

She is the history major in your English class or the person who's repeating a course without receiving credit. Not an Agnes Scott student with too much free time, this woman is a Writing Center tutor. Instead of only working in Buttrick 306, however, the course tutor tries to help students with their writing by branching out to second floor Buttrick, Campbell, and Dana. A course tutor attends each session of a course, reads the assignments, and participates in class discussions. This means that when an essay is due, she can better work with students on their papers.

Course tutoring began at Agnes Scott College in the spring of 1997 with two courses and has since expanded. This semester, there are ten women course tutoring classes. The program reaches beyond the English department; course tutors have been involved in classes ranging from history to philosophy to anthropology. The advantage of having tutors in various classes is that each tutor combines her knowledge of the basics of good writing with the unique characteristics of writing in different disciplines. She also learns enough of the course's ideas while in class to discuss the information without the student explaining everything.

If you are fortunate enough to have a course tutor in one of your classes, be sure to take advantage of this opportunity. Make an appointment outside the Writing Center, or ask your course tutor when she is available. Come to the Writing Center at any (or every) stage of writing, from an outline to a polished draft. Even drop by to brainstorm with your course tutor - she has a good idea of what the professor covers in class, even if she doesn't have to take that midterm!

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Writing Program at Stanford University. Aside from her numerous poetry collections, she has also published one prose work, *Object Lessons: The Life of the Women and the Poet in Our Time*. Many of her works are set in Ireland and address the role of women as writers in Irish literature.

Thursday evening fiction writer Tim O'Brien will speak in Presser Hall. O'Brien won the 1979 National Book Award for his novel *Going After Cacciato*, and his related collection of works, *The Things They Carried* was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Best known for his works dealing with issues surrounding the Vietnam War and its aftermath, O'Brien breaks with these themes in his most recent novel. *Tomcat In Love* comically tells of the downfall of a professor with questionable office hours activities.

Frank Manley, a professor at Emory University and renowned playwright, will present Friday morning. Along with reading from his works, Manley will bring local actors Tim McDonough, Jan Akers, and Brenda Bynum to perform several scenes. Manley has written not only plays but also poetry, fiction, and literary criticism. He co-won the 1985 Humana Festival of New American Plays. *The Cockfighter*, adapted from his novel about a boy and his father in the rural south, has been selected for the 1999 Humana Festival.

With writers from a variety of backgrounds and genres, this year's Writers' Festival is sure to hold something for everyone. Look for the Festival Magazine with works from student writers this week. And Thursday and Friday, come find out what the Writers' Festival is all about.

I would like to thank Dr. Chris Ames for providing the information for this article.

We would like to welcome Betsy Morley back to the Writing Center after a semester studying in Senegal.

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experiment or presents the problem that you are trying to solve. Your hypothesis should come toward the end of this section and be explicit. Remember the base word in *hypothesis*: like a thesis, it should also form the foundation of your paper.

The second section, materials and methods, gives a complete description of your experiment. Anyone who reads this section should be able to successfully duplicate your experiment. Materials and methods should be written in the past tense and should not contain any of your results.

The third section, results, gives a basic presentation of your data, however, without interpreting them. This section can contain any graphs or tables you feel will help the reader better understand what occurred in your experiment. However, if you do incorporate graphs and tables into your paper they must be accompanied by a written explanation. Simply including the material is not enough.

The discussion is the final section of your paper, and it is here that you present an interpretation of your experiment's results. Was your hypothesis supported or rejected and why? What do you conclude from the experiment? Did anything odd occur in your experiment that may have affected your results (i.e. a beaker broke)? In this section you can expand on your hypothesis and experiment. You may want to suggest other experiments that would support or refute your hypothesis. How can your results be applied to other scientific areas?

Now, how can you polish your paper? Remember that scientific writing is only useful when your audience can fully understand what you've written. Therefore, don't try to be creative and use flowery language. Use as few words as possible to get your point across; be succinct. Dr. Christine Cozzens suggests checking your word count and then decreasing it. Try to use the active voice as much as possi-

ble and avoid using first person pronouns such as *I* or *we*. Grammar, diction, and syntax are just as important in scientific writing as in any other discipline. However, unlike a history or English paper, quotes are not usually acceptable and are considered redundant in scientific writing. If you find outside information that supports your paper, restate it in your own words, but remember it must still be cited. For more information on citing your sources check the Biology or Chemistry folders located in the Writing Center, which contain examples of scientific research papers. There is also a great article in The Chemistry folder entitled "The Science of Scientific Writing" that discusses simplifying your paper for better understanding and clarity. Remember that the tutors in the Writing Center are there to help you with papers of all disciplines, including the sciences.

Good luck on your next scientific research paper!

So Far So Good
Writing Center Statistics
from August 1998 to the Present
Compiled by
Laura Brandon & Kristin Carlson

~ The Writing Center has seen **20%** of the student body and held **520** tutorials since the beginning of the school year

We have tutored students in all but 2 majors.

~ So far, the top six majors of students who visit the Writing Center are:

English	13%
Economics	11%
Political Science	7%
International Relations	6%
Biology	5%
French	5%

Tutoring Schedule, Spring 1999

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
9:15-9:45	KT	HW		HW		
9:45-10:15	Tutors' Meeting	HW		HW	LB	
10:15-10:45		HW	KC — EB	HW	LB — EB	
10:45-11:15		EB	KC — EB	EB	LB — EB	
11:15-11:45	KT	EB	KC	EB		
11:45-12:15	KT	EB		EB		
12:15-12:45	KT					
12:45-1:15	KT					
1:15-1:45	KT		LH		KC	
1:45-2:15	LH	KT	LH	KT	KC	
2:15-2:45	LH	KT		KT	KC	
2:45-3:15						RC
3:15-3:45						RC
3:45-4:15	KC	LH		LH		RC
4:15-4:45	KC	LH		LH		RC
4:45-5:15	KC	LH — KT		LH		
5:15-5:45	KC	KT				
5:45-6:15						
6:15-6:45	RC		RC	RC		
6:45-7:15	RC		RC	RC		
7:15-7:45		LB — LMB		LMB		BM
7:45-8:15	HW	LB — LMB	HW — BM	BM — LMB		BM
8:15-8:45	HW	LB — LMB	HW — BM	BM — LMB		BM
8:45-9:15		LB — LMB	BM	BM — LMB		BM
9:15-9:45		LMB		LMB		
9:15-10:15		LMB		LMB		

*Writing
Center
Tutors*

EB
Erika Blanchard

LB
Laurie Boggs

LMB
Laura Brandon

RC
Rebecca Carefoot

KC
Kristin Carlson

LH
Lee Hayes

BM
Betsy Morley

KT
Kristen Toth

HW
Hillary Wiggins

The 27th Annual Writers' Festival

March 25-26, 1999
Agnes Scott College

Memye Tucker

Poet and
Distinguished Alumna Writer

and

Eavan Boland

Poet

Thursday, March 25, 1999
4:00 p.m.
Winter Theater
Dana Fine Arts Building

Tim O'Brien

Fiction Writer

Thursday, March 25, 1999
8:00 p.m.
Gaines Auditorium
Presser Hall

Reception and booksigning following reading.

Woltz Reception Room

Rebekah Scott Hall

Frank Manley

Playwright

Friday, March 26, 1999
10:00 a.m.
Winter Theater
Dana Fine Arts Building