

B. Formal Writing on the Blog

An Essay in Several Steps

WESTERN CIVILIZATION, FALL 2010

Writing an essay requires several steps. We can conceive of these steps in terms of types of writing and types of editing. They are as follows:

1. **Free writing.** This kind of writing focuses your attention and allows you to find unique points of entry into a subject or allows you to explore the range of topics and arguments a subject can inspire. Audience: yourself.
2. **Blogging.** Because the audience of a blog post includes your teacher and your classmates, what you write will be a step more formal than that which was produced during the free-write. Requirements for this exercise are listed below.

Deadline: You must post it on the website:

www.historiesofcatastrophicdreaming.wordpress.com by midnight on Sunday, November 7, 2010

Audience: your teacher and your classmates

3. **Summarizing a variety of points of view.** In order to attend the essay-writing workshop, you will write a paragraph that responds to the blog responses made by your classmates. You can only begin this exercise after midnight on Nov. 7. Your paragraph can either summarize, narrate, or analyse the discussion that occurred on the blog. You will be demonstrating your knowledge and engagement with everything that was written there about your chosen topic (you respond to about 10 blog posts)

Deadline: November 10, in class.

4. **Drafted Formal Writing.** Professional writers know that it is imperative that they get their peers to edit their work before they submit it. In order to replicate this process, we will do a peer-edit of your essays on November 24. You may participate *only* if you have completed a draft of at least 750 words. Word counts must appear at the bottom of the last page. Students will give feedback suggesting either revision (in which ideas must be re-thought in order to correct errors of logic or reasoning) or editing (in which grammatical errors are discussed and eliminated from the text).

Deadline: November 24, at the beginning of class.

5. **Final Draft.**

Deadline November 26, at the beginning of class.

This may look like a lot of work.

It is and it isn't.

It is more work than doing nothing.

It is easier than sitting alone at your desk like a Romantic poet, dreaming up a brilliant way to write a paper at two in the morning, the night before it is due.

What I am outlining above is a process of writing, a way of easing your way into inspiration. Marks are awarded for much of this process, so it is worth it, if not for your sanity, then for your grade, to do all of the steps. The alternative is, as you know, a lot of mindless googling and facebooking and hoping and stressing and crazy-making. Each of the above steps provides you a way to escape the traps of procrastination. You'll still procrastinate, but maybe for less time. When lost, return to the free-write. Do another one. You'll discover something.