STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE OUTLINING, PART II

REVERSE OUTLINING

February 12, 2014
12:30-2:30pm
GRAPHOS, McGill Writing Centre
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Learning Goals

You will learn how to use reverse outlining to:

1. diagnose gaps in logic
2. improve the flow of your work-in-progress
3. inform your revising and restructuring to advance your argument
How We’ll Get There

1. What is reverse outlining?
2. How do I make a reverse outline?
3. How do I analyze a reverse outline?
4. Putting strategies into practice
   1. Sample reverse outline
   2. Your work-in-progress
5. Peer feedback
6. Wrap up
The Writing Cycle

Initial Outline → Structuring → Articulating
# The Reverse Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>What does it do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An outline created from an</td>
<td>Reveals structure, and structural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existing text or work-in-progress</td>
<td>problems, of your text</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How to Create a Reverse Outline

1. Number the paragraphs in your text;
2. On a separate page, write numbers in a list;
3. Include headings or sub-headings in your reverse outline;
4. Identify topic (5-10 words) of each paragraph
   1. What is the paragraph about?
   2. What point is it trying to make?
   3. What is the gist of the paragraph?
5. Write topic on your reverse outline.

You now have a reverse outline of your text.
Identifying a Topic

In response to several studies showing these adverse effects of mercury exposure, programs were launched in both the United States and Canada to provide safe eating guidelines for locally caught and commercial store-bought fish. Vermont is a state that has mobilized such educational efforts in the form of informational brochures and posters.

Analyzing my Reverse Outline

1. Is there a clear topic in each paragraph?
2. Is there more than one topic in a paragraph?
3. Are there extraneous ideas in a paragraph that can be deleted or moved?
4. Are there repetitions of ideas in different paragraphs?
5. Is the order of ideas logical?
6. Are there key words in your thesis statement that are NOT in the reverse outline?
7. How much space is given to each element?
Deinstitutionalizing mental patients in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century transformed the hobo to the homeless person.

1. Introduction
2. Image of hobo pre-WWII
3. Image of homeless person today
4. Effects of deinstitutionalization
5. History of deinstitutionalization
6. History of the Great Depression; how the Depression is related to the period of deinstitutionalization; beliefs about causes of deinstitutionalization
7. Policies on deinstitutionalization
8. Realities of life as a homeless person vs. romantic notions of “riding the rails”
9. Conclusion
Create your reverse outline, and use it to diagnose the structure of your work-in-progress.

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4. Are there repetitions of ideas in different paragraphs?
5. Is the order of ideas logical?
6. Are there key words in your thesis statement that are NOT in the reverse outline?
7. How much space is given to each element?
Wrap Up

- What we did:
  - Learned about what reverse outlining is, how to create a reverse outline, and why it is a useful practice
  - Put strategies into practice
  - Received feedback
Resources

Websites on Reverse Outlining

- https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/support/writingcenter/resourcesforwriters/revision/reverse_outline
- http://harvardwritingcenter.wordpress.com/2013/03/08/do-you-know-what-a-reverse-outline-is/
- http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/21/outlining-in-reverse/?_r=0

Article on Reverse Outlining

THANK YOU!

Questions? Comments?
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