

Through Smoked Glass

Volume 2, Issue 4

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A look back at our first year

Success is never solitary

by Dr. Martha Ucci

As I sit at my desk, I can hardly believe that another year has passed. As the Director of the Learning and Writing Centers, I have observed the positive effect academic support services have on students who wish to excel in their coursework. However, this could never be accomplished by one person alone; indeed, the success of these Centers is the direct result of the outstanding efforts of our staff.

We have several professionals who act as Specialists in Math, Writing, ESL, Learning Disabilities and Academic Skills. In addition, we have a wonderfully talented group of student tutors, writing consultants and receptionists who assist in the implementation of the Centers' services. Without these terrific people, the Centers simply could not function. This year, I am fortunate to work with J.P. Nadeau, whose creativity, vision and direction has shaped the Writing Center into a wonderful resource for the College.

Last, but NEVER least, we are grateful for the assistance of Louise Doumato and Donna Klepadlo. Their patience, good humor and caring nature makes students feel welcome and at ease from the second they come through our doors. Finally, the staffs of the Learning and Writing Centers would like to thank the Bryant community for supporting our efforts in helping students achieve academic success. ❖

Has it been a year already?

by Jean-Paul Nadeau

Much has happened this year. Many Bryant students have gotten 30 credits closer to graduation and a little wiser. One of the TSG staff's major accomplishments this year has been the publication of this student-centered, academically-oriented newsletter.

A total of 22 Bryant students, staff, faculty, and administrators have contributed articles containing thoughtful suggestions as to how students could get the most out of their educa-



tions.

Each issue has focused on a theme; these included "Doing Research," "Taking an Exam," "What is tutoring?" "Maintaining Balance," and "Staying Motivated." Together, these issues presented dozens of ideas to help students read, write, and study more efficiently and effectively. They suggested how to best use the available academic resources on campus, including, but not limited to, the Learning and Writing Centers. This issue is intended as a retrospective, a compilation of some of the best articles of the year. ❖

Timed writing

by Kristen Kennedy, Writing Specialist

Imagine this: Your English 121 professor asks you to write a critical analysis of a short story. You have two weeks to produce this masterpiece. No problem, you say to yourself. There's plenty of time. You repeat the mantra "there's plenty of time...plenty of time" each

THE LEARNING CENTER AND WRITING CENTER STAFF

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Through Smoked Glass welcomes submissions from students, faculty, and staff. Send submissions to the Writing Center, Hall 6, 4th floor. This newsletter is published monthly through the Bryant College Writing Center and Learning Center.

night before you rest your weary head on that matted foam-rubber pillow you just couldn't part with when you came to school last fall. You know, the one your roommate uses as a footrest when you're not around--but that's another story. You rest comfortably knowing that you have days, even weeks, to write this essay. The only thing that keeps you from completely enjoying those few moments of pre-REM nirvana is that nagging voice that reminds you to start early. Fortunately, that voice isn't loud enough to disrupt the lure of last night's dream you wanted to go back to--again, another story--and you drift carelessly into sleep . . .

SMACK!!!

That's the sound of a rapidly approaching due date. A week has gone by, and you haven't even started to think about your essay. You look at your calendar, and you're booked straight through until next Monday, the day before the essay is due. You ask yourself, "when will I have time to write?"

One strategy that has helped me is timed writing. It's simple, easy, and batteries aren't required. It's a great way to get into thinking and writing before you actually sit down to write a complete draft. How does it work?

- Set aside fifteen to twenty minutes a day, preferably a week before a writing assignment is due.
- Using a computer or a clean sheet of paper, write out a topic or assignment.
- Write everything you know about it for fifteen minutes. Don't stop to fix any errors.
- Take five minutes to see if any patterns or significant ideas emerge in your writing.
- Write down any ideas that are worth pursuing and use these to start your timed writing the following day.

After three days of this, you should have a substantial amount of writing. At this point, you could direct your timed writing by, say, creating a thesis statement one day and then finding evidence to support this thesis on another. By the end of the week, you'll be ready to put all of it together in a coherent draft. You can also adjust timed writings for longer projects, especially those major term papers that always seem to come out of nowhere.

The beauty of this method is that it doesn't require huge blocks of time, but it gets the job done.



Most experienced writers work in designated blocks of time; seldom do they sit down and write a masterpiece in an afternoon. And if they do, well, they're just not normal. And think of it this way, you can do other things while you're writing. Whether you're waiting for the nail polish to dry on your pedicure, for the ramen noodles to boil in the hotpot, or for that show between "Friends" and "Seinfeld" to end, timed writing can help you develop ideas and essays in a manageable and realistic way.

And one last suggestion for our friend from the first paragraph: While you're writing, have your roommate go out and buy you a new pillow. It's time.❖

Using sunshine to your advantage

by Bill Elward, Tutor

As the weather improves, and the snow begins to melt, it becomes impossible to concentrate on school. No one wants to go to the library to study statistics when it's 75° outside. Every year at this time I catch spring fever and lose my motivation to do schoolwork. I would much rather be outside enjoying the warm weather. Unfortunately, I've come to realize that life isn't always about doing what you really want to do. It's about balance.

As college students, we have certain responsibilities. Our parents remind us that they are paying for us to learn, while professors preach about the relationship between getting good grades and landing a good job. Personally, this motivates me to work hard even when there are more enjoyable things to do. However, as college students we have to find and maintain a balance between school and fun. If it is nice outside, there is no reason to study inside. Instead, I find it useful to make a schedule so I can enjoy myself for a while, and then reserve time to study later. The key to your happiness and success is balancing the things that you *must* do with the things you *enjoy* doing.❖

A Day without Jerry Springer

by Jessica Dodge, Writing Consultant

The ideal student faithfully attends class, cracks down on the books and resists temptation. Unfortunately (or is it fortunately?) many of us aren't ideal students. Realistically, we would even *create* a tempting situation if we had to, just to have an ex-

cuse not to be that ideal student for a day. However, none of us need to be “creative” this time of year because spring is full of distractions.

Each day that Bryant’s rain cloud disappears, we are forced to choose whether or not to give in to the sun’s temptations. Sitting on one shoulder is our morally correct conscience, reminding us to go to class because the professor is giving a test review. On the other shoulder is our morally correct conscience’s dichotomous counterpart, telling us to trade in our books for a volleyball -- we have tomorrow to study.

Going to that review session means losing an hour of fun in the sun but also means one less hour that you have to study on your own tomorrow. Who’s to say it won’t be nice out then? Besides, it’s unlikely that you’ll study on your own. Sure, you’ll sit at your desk with your book open, flip through the pages, and even read the chapter title, “Ethics in the Business Environment.” Then you’ll say to yourself, “Well...I know what’s right and wrong.” You’ll close the book, and that will be the extent of your studying. You’ll go to your exam feeling confident, and the first question will be: “What is the difference between deontology and teleology?” Well, at least you got a good start on your tan, right? Wrong. Compromising would have left you better off.

Compromise means going to that review and *then* playing volleyball with your buddies. It means getting up an hour earlier on that day that’s supposed to be nice so that you can study *and* have an afternoon in the sun. And, yes, it also means missing Jerry

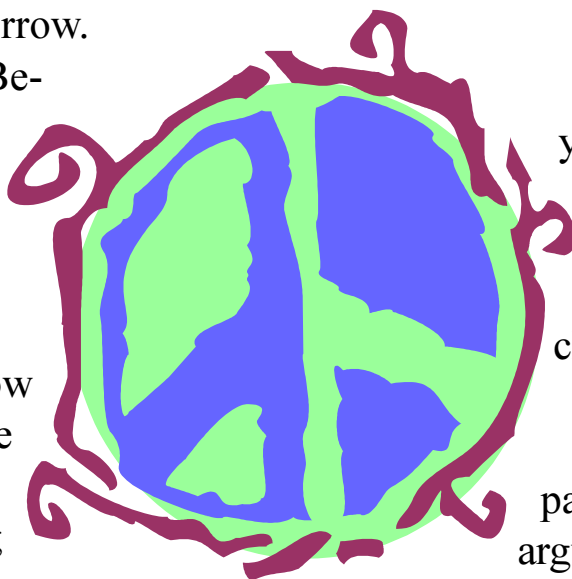
Springer’s “I’m having an affair with my transvestite cousin” episode in order to review your notes one last time before your one o’clock exam. Making compromises will enable you to enjoy the warm weather and still know the difference between deontology and teleology.❖

Less pain, more gain

by Saiyeda Khatun, Writing Specialist

“Don’t tear up the page; start over again when you write a bad line - try to write your way out of it. Make mistakes and plunge on...Writing is a means of discovery, always”

- St. Martin Guide to Writing, 5th edition

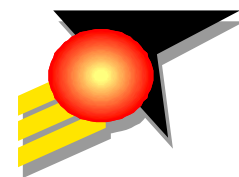


Do you remember anyone saying to you “one thing at a time?” Actually, this is a good piece of advice for research writing. The best way to deal with your project is to break it down into chunks.

Let us say that you have to write a paper about smoking. You decide to argue that it should be banned because you feel that way based on your experience and knowledge. Do you need to do research? Well, when you are writing a paper on that topic, you are joining others who have already talked about it. You are joining a conversation. When you join a conversation, you listen to others’ ideas, share your ideas with them, agree or disagree, talk, and reply. In other words, you acknowledge others. For your paper, you need to know what others have said and why. Moreover, you may add what others have not

Some tips for taking in-class essay exams

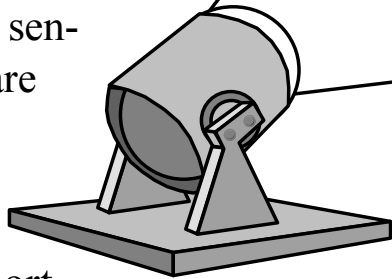
by Aubry Bettencourt and Jessica Dodge, Writing Consultants



1. If given the question ahead of time, prepare a “trial” essay in advance. While you won’t be able to bring this essay to the exam, you will have had the benefit of going through the thought process at least once.
2. If you are given a list of questions to choose from, read through them all before you decide which you want to answer. Time restrictions often tempt students to choose the first or second question; you may find that you’d have a much easier time answering the last one listed.
3. If you must write more than one essay, begin with the one you feel most comfortable with. The others will be easier to do once you have some writing behind you.
4. Take time to gather your thoughts. This may take the form of a quick brainstorming, clustering, or outline. Yes, this does take up valuable time, but this step will save you time once you begin to write.
5. Try to get the most important ideas down first. You can always add information if there is time left.
6. Leave enough time to re-read your essay(s) to check for mistakes. You are expected to use the time allotted to produce a well-written essay; avoid skipping out early.
7. Relax! Prepare adequately for the exam so that you can avoid anxiety once the test has been distributed.

said or have forgotten to address. Your teacher will love to see that you have contributed something to that talk. Besides, your view will be taken more seriously if you support yourself from expert sources with relevant, documented information.

Now, what kind of research should you look for in order to write a paper on banning smoking? If your emphasis is on the harmful effects of smoking, articles and books which deal with cancer related death caused by smoking will definitely be relevant. If you quote from these sources, it is a good idea to choose sentences which are very vivid and striking as well as relevant to support your point. A quote is like a piece of jewelry; careful selection can enhance the appearance of your argument. If, on the other hand, the jewelry is not suitable for the occasion, it becomes a point of distraction rather than attraction. By the same token, too much jewelry can look clumsy.



Congratulations to our CRLA certified tutors: Aubry Bettencourt, Greg Chrin, Jessica Dodge, Jen Howard, and Matt Condos.

tune cookie or a Hallmark card, however, let's face it: you've got other things to do! Paper and project deadlines, studying, working, bathing, eating, and sleeping all take up a great deal of your time. So when your friend who is always there for you needs a favor of some kind, what's a person to do?

Now, no one is suggesting that you rudely dismiss your friends, resulting in your becoming as much of an outcast as Marv Albert at a National Organization for Women convention, but it is possible to say "no" and still preserve the friendship. Phrases like, "Not right now, but maybe later," or "I'm sorry, I wish I could, but I can't," show that you care but are simply not available. Saying "no" doesn't mean that you can't be counted on or that you are a selfish person. Sometimes saying "no" only means that you're taking care of yourself. And what's wrong with that?❖

Bryant's best kept secret

by Greg Chrin, Tutor

Lurking in a distant corner of the Bryant campus is one of the friendliest facilities around, the Learning Center. You may ask, "What goes on in the Learning Center?" Well, the answer is quite simple. Students help students. There is nothing to be afraid of; we understand what it means to be a student. There are many advantages to coming to the Learning Center:

1. We've already taken the class. We can give you clues as to what to expect in the coming weeks. We can provide a guideline for you to follow that will maximize your study time.
2. The professor must teach to thirty students. We only have to teach a single person or a small group.
3. We have very flexible hours. We are open late every night except Friday and Saturday.
4. We are extremely friendly.

The list could go on and on. The point is that the staff of the Learning Center is here for your benefit. If you are feeling helpless or lost in your studies, come on in and visit. Just call extension 6746 or walk in to the Learning Center to make an appointment.❖

Nice people say "no" too

by John Charette, Academic Skills Specialist

One of the most rewarding things we can do is help out a friend. That statement is fine for a for-

As of April, 50% of Bryant students had visited either the Learning Center or the Writing Center for a total of 2,416 tutoring sessions!

