

Through Smoked Glass

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Through what?

by Jean-Paul Nadeau

Through Smoked Glass is a monthly publication written specifically for Bryant students. It originated about a year ago, our goal being to help students achieve their best in the classroom. The title stems from the authors' view of the unistruature. Located on the third and fourth floors of Hall 6, the staff of the Learning and Writing Centers enjoy a panoramic view of the Bryant campus. We only wish that we could help all of the students we see walking back and forth to and from class every day.

Our newsletter offers in written form what we make available to students on a one-on-one, personalized basis when they visit either center: advice about how to learn and achieve academic excellence. Each month we will offer a different theme; among those we've had in the past are maintaining balance, staying focused, and doing research. We happily respond to requests from students - - after all, this is a student-centered publication!

The theme for this issue is "Getting off on the right foot." It's important that you do well right from the start of your college career, and we have many suggestions to help you do just that. ❖

Village people

by Dr. Martha Ucci

Welcome back everyone! The campus is electric with so many new and returning students. It seems like everyone is adjusting quite well to college life.

There are always, however, a few persons for whom "adjusting" takes a bit longer and is often a more difficult process. If you are one of those persons, don't be alarmed. Not everyone gets along with his/her roommates or makes life-long friends during the first few weeks of college. Indeed, sometimes the friends you make at the beginning of your college career are not the ones you'll be clinging to as you walk through the archway at graduation.

Since the theme of this *TSG* issue is "getting off on the right foot," I urge every student to assist in making the Bryant community a friendly and caring environment.

If, for example, you notice a student lost or sitting alone at a meal, it would certainly be appreciated if you would reach out to that student to let them know someone cares. Hillary Clinton has said, "It takes a village," and I believe that every individual plays an important part in making Bryant College a "village" to be proud of! ❖

And they're off! . . .

But you're still at the starting line

by Shannon Naujock, Writing Consultant

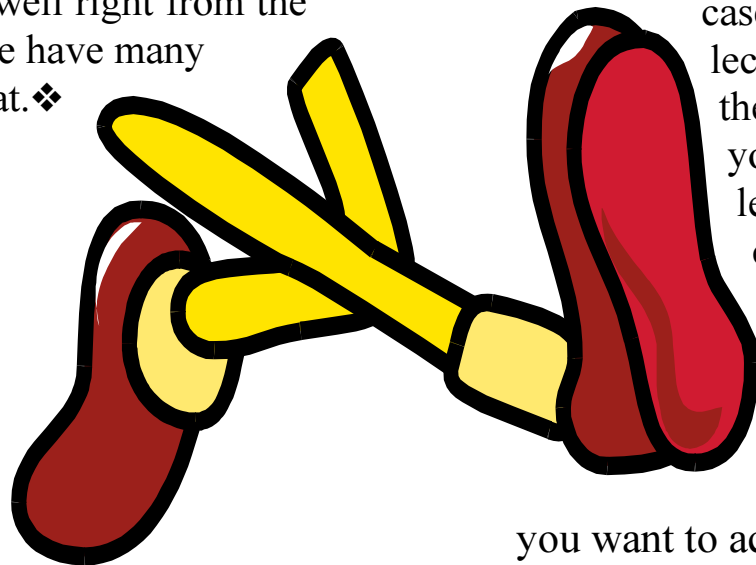
The start of a new semester is much like a race. There's the preparation period beforehand at which time you pack up your things, stock up on food and other necessities, and say your good-byes. Then comes the day before the race when you move in to your dorm room, meet with your friends, and settle down for the big event – the start of classes. The day of the race comes and you suit up in your brand new clothes, place your school supplies in your backpack, and eat breakfast. Moments before the starting signal, you walk into the classroom and take your position behind a desk. The seconds tick down and you hear the gun go off, or in this case, the voice of the professor as s/he begins lecturing. Dazed and confused, you watch as the chalk dust flies off the blackboard and your fellow students follow the professor's lead, taking notes and participating in the class discussion. Meanwhile, you sit there silent, motionless, and falling behind. Has this happened to you?

To avoid such a rocky beginning, I recommend that you think about what you want to accomplish and how you are going to do it. Whether you want to achieve a certain GPA or attend all of your 8am classes, it's important to know what you're striving for. How can you win a race if you don't know where the finish line is? ❖

Getting your foot (and other body parts) in the door

by Tracy Strauss, Writing Specialist

As the fall semester gets underway, many of you are becoming inundated with a variety of paper assignments that cover a cross-section of writing genres, from personal essays to analytical papers to business memos. Completing these assignments can be overwhelming, but



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.

writing well is essential to getting your foot in the door, not only in the classroom, but also to gain an interview, an internship, or a job. And, once you get your foot in the door, you'll be surprised at how easy it is to squeeze the rest of yourself through that threshold to success.

Sometimes beginning can be the hardest step, but it doesn't have to be. Start with the person right next to you: in class, at lunch, at a sporting event or during a social function. Introduce yourself. Get to know that person and his/her circle of friends. Explore new things. Experience as much as you can.

Networking is key. The more people you meet and get to know, the more people you will have to rely on as resources, both during and after your time at Bryant College. The Writing Center is a place for you to find people who can help you conquer your writing problems. We'll discuss the issues that concern you, from generating ideas to writing a thesis statement to revising. Perhaps best of all, this help is offered free of charge. So don't be reluctant -- open our door today. Good luck with your semester!❖

There's nothing wrong with starting early *by Mary Lou Wernig, Writing Specialist*

Have you ever stayed up until the wee hours of the morning or even all night to start and finish a writing assignment that is due the next day? If you have, then you know how unpleasant it can be. Writing under pressure is difficult, stressful, and not very rewarding in terms of your final grade. So why do we torture ourselves by putting off the inevitable?

The main reason we procrastinate is that we forget that writing is a process. This process involves developing ideas, organizing those ideas, writing a first draft, revising (with or without feedback from other readers), and editing (checking logic, wording, grammar, spelling, etc). Strong writers have developed their own writing process, usually involving a combination of these steps.

To make this writing process easier and less stressful, it helps to develop your own writing rituals or rules about when, where, and how you write best. Many people like to write with a pen and paper while others need to write on a computer. Some people prefer a quiet time during which to write while others prefer to have some background noise. Others even need to wear a favorite article of clothing, like a sweatshirt or baseball cap, in order to write. If it works for you, then do it! Anything that makes writing easier for you is a good thing. If you don't have any writing rituals yet, try some of the above; they may work for you too!

Writing can be hard enough without making the process even more difficult than it has to be. Remember: start your writing assignments early, discover your writ-

ing process, and develop writing rituals. You might even discover that you actually *enjoy* writing!❖

Better learning *by Sally Riconscente, Learning Specialist*

As a newcomer to Bryant, I'm feeling right at home with students who are visiting the Office of the Learning Specialist for the first time. Whether you are a student or a professional, first time experiences are often a mixture of excitement and apprehension. So, as you make that initial appointment to see me, rest assured that I will welcome you warmly as we both begin our unique journeys here at Bryant.

Although students come to me for helpful advice on a variety of study skills, time management often tops the list for many incoming college students. Bring your syllabi and we can create a semester schedule so you can see all of your course due dates at a glance. For so many of you who are balancing courses, sports, work, and some semblance of a social life, a master schedule of your week is indispensable.

Once your schedule is set, it's time to "hit the books." If you can't remember what you've read, bring your textbooks along and we can preview them together and work on strategies to improve reading comprehension. If professors lecture faster than you can write, let's overview some note-taking strategies. If you freeze when you look at that first major exam, let's get together before the ominous day to practice some relaxation techniques.

Here are a few additional tips to help you get off to a good start this semester:

- **Go to all of your classes.** As sure as the sun will set, once the initial enthusiasm wanes and the crisp air of autumn blows in, sleeping through that early class will be a dire temptation. Avoid it!
- **Keep up with your reading assignments.** Break down long reading assignments into manageable units of about seven to ten pages. Decide how many pages you must read for each course each day. Read them!
- **Learn to say No.** If the telephone is a distraction, if friends are constantly knocking on your door just as you have decided to study, staying on task may be a lot less fun than going along with the distraction. Remember, you've made a great investment in yourself here at Bryant. Just say, "No!"
- **Come to the Learning and Writing Centers when you need help.** Don't wait until it's too late. Sign up for tutoring early. Gather suggestions on how to study. Visit the Writing Center to plan papers and projects. We're here for You!❖

United we stand *by Saiyeda Khatun, Writing Specialist*

Hello there! I know a lot is going on and you are full of



hopes and expectations. You may also be worried about things like deadlines and grades. That's why I want to introduce myself early on in the semester. I am Saiyeda Khatun, your Writing and English as a Second Language Specialist at the Writing Center. Like most of you, I enjoyed the lack of school-related work during the summer, but I also love the challenge of Fall. I hear new murmurings in the air and I play with new ideas for my work. I do better when I have too much to do rather than too little.

Some of you may already know me, although many of you are new. As you are exploring Bryant, I want you to put me on your must-see list. In other words, find out what I can offer to ease the difficulty of your approaching class assignments. We tend to stumble when we are in a new territory, and college is such a place for many of you. Why stumble when there is guidance available?

During these first weeks of the semester, some of you who come from overseas are struggling with more than just academics. You may wonder what to do about the class discussion that seems to go too fast for you. You may find it overwhelming to fix run-on sentences and/or tense problems. When you have a paper due, you may wonder how to begin or whether you are on the right track. Western ideas and concepts skimmed over in class or in textbooks may be more than a bit confusing.

While I believe that you can resolve these problems in time, why not ease your trouble sooner instead of wasting time worrying? So what is the moral of this tale? Drop by the Writing Center for your spoken and written English. Let us win the struggle together.❖

Eyes up

by Jessica Dodge, Writing Consultant

In 1964, before most of us were born, "Time Is On My Side" blared through the speakers of innumerable radios. Perhaps, back then, general consensus was that there was plenty of time, but today the majority of us feel time constantly nipping at our heels. Most students feel there's not enough time during the semester to get everything done: term projects, research papers, exams, and, not to mention, hundreds of pages of reading. Realistically, though, how could there possibly be enough time in a semester when there isn't enough time in a day?

So what can you do to ensure that time really is on your side? I've been told the key is to get off on the right foot. Often I find that getting off on the right foot isn't so much the problem as not having a third or fourth foot to keep me going. Realistically though, because those extra appendages would create more problems than they'd solve, you're better off sticking to the two feet you already have and focusing instead on keeping your eyes looking forward. How far forward? That depends on how many commitments you have, how long it takes you to get things done, and what goals you want to reach. This may seem too idealistic to work, but it actually makes

sense.

Think about it this way: if you're driving a car, what are your eyes looking at? You tend to drive with your eyes looking at the road ahead of you in order to know what is happening around you. As soon as you take your eyes off the road, that's when you're going to rear-end that out-of-state driver who suddenly slams on his brakes because he doesn't know exactly where he's going. By paying attention to what lies ahead, you know what to prepare for: the traffic light that's turning red, the guy who pulls out in front of you with no turn signal, or the merging of traffic from three to two lanes that causes patience-wearing congestion.

If you apply this same ideology to each semester, the next time you're scanning the radio stations while driving and hear that '64 classic, you'll know that Mick may have been right after all.❖

Promises, promises

by Aubry Bettencourt, Writing Consultant

With the beginning of each new school year, new resolutions are made. Everyone has experienced this phenomenon -- every fall, we promise ourselves that we are really going to buckle down, get organized, and do all of our work on time. At about the end of September, our reasoning changes. "It won't matter if I skip this class," or "I can finish this tomorrow." What can be done to start the school year off right? Well, I have always found it helpful to set aside certain times to do work and certain times to relax. If you give yourself rewards, you will be more inclined to finish that paper or study for that test now so that you can watch that made-for-TV-movie at 9:00.

In addition to a reward system, I find that if I start the year right, I tend to stick with it. Why spend the first month studying like crazy if you are just going to waste all of that hard work? Not everyone has such a mindset, however, myself, at times, included. As a senior, I can easily look back and see semesters that were not good indicators of my potential. There have been semesters for which I'd gladly take a "do-over." Thankfully, every semester opens a new opportunity to achieve those A's that we all long for.

So how can you get off on the right foot? Study hard and stay organized. It may sound easy, but we all face temptations. After all, it has been three months since we have seen our friends and we'd rather catch up with them than figure out how a derivative security works. Again, we must try to use those temptations as a reward. If you don't give yourself the necessary breaks, you might have a breakdown and say "forget it" to the whole idea of staying on top of your work. If you know what needs to be done and roughly how much time you have, you should be able to plan your days accordingly. Remember, it's still early in the year -- just the right time to eliminate any bad habits.❖



A map, a marriage, and a moral

by Tony Amore, *Writing Specialist*

I am at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee and a road map. The initial route seems obvious, the proverbial straight line between two points. However, a secondary route shows itself after some consideration to be more interesting and its rural winding involves a ferry ride across a rather large New England lake. This is something I'd rather do than drive across some anemic interstate. The problem is this detour will cost time and there are people to see, a ceremony to attend, and congratulations to offer.

"What are you doing," my wife asks.

"Thinking," I respond.

"Oh, no." She's been down *this* road far too often. "Thinking what," she asks with some trepidation. So, I tell her about the rural route, covered bridges, turning leaves, a ferry ride and the promising snowcapped peaks beckoning across Canada's border.

"But, it's longer," she informs pointing to the map and ignoring my poetic musing. "We have to be at your aunt's place and there isn't time."

Time. Everything narrows down to time and the distances we have to bridge when being afforded only a finite fraction of that time.

We set out with the car packed and the route agreed upon. At my side the irregularly folded map is tucked close by, our highlighted route a yellow line cutting through several New England states. Smiling sympathetically, my wife acknowledges my concession and remarks, "On the way back we'll ride your ferry." I check the dashboard clock; we're on schedule. My aunt will see us arrive as expected. I'll be able to tell her how glad we are to be there, and then she'll add something about how she's glad we could come to the wedding and all this will remind me why I like visiting her place.

What can you take from my story? Prioritize; focus on the task. Do first things first and the rest will work out. It may not always work the way you intended, but who said things always go as planned? Remember the main reason you got started in the first place: to get somewhere. In other words, be certain about what is required of you when professors assign essay questions, exams and other tasks such as group projects. Avoid distractions away from what you must accomplish in order to succeed and "get somewhere" with your education. ❖

So it's the beginning of the new fall semester...

by Marianne Miller, *Writing Consultant*

If you're like me, you come into the new semester

highly motivated and enthusiastic about your new classes. You're shooting for that 4.0 GPA and this time you're going to get it! You swear you'll be organized, on time, and have perfect class attendance. You dream about having a wonderful social life, a lucrative part-time job, and time to get all of your work done perfectly and submitted by the deadline.

This is how the first couple of weeks of every semester seem to go for me. After I join every campus organization, apply for several jobs, work on my social life, study diligently, and go to all of my classes, I come to the horrific realization that I really *don't* have time.

Accomplishing all of these things has meant getting less than 6 hours of sleep a night. As a result, I can't pay attention in class, so I need to spend more time studying. I spend less and less time with my friends because I am tired and busy. My club activities take up all of my free time, and, slowly but surely, the stress hits.

There is hope, however. There is a way to maintain balance between studying, work, a social life, and personal time. I have found that a daily schedule works best for me. It may sound simplistic, but it truly works.

Figure out your prime time; that is, the time that your mind is most creative. This is the time that you should be working on assignments, reading, or studying. You'll learn faster, pick up more information, and finish sooner. For me, this time is in the morning. None of my suite-mates are awake to distract me, and I have the rest of the day to play when I am finished.

Another good piece of advice: pace yourself. Do a little bit of work every day. Doing so will pay off in less stress and less time spent studying the night before a test or quiz.

Also, don't over-involve yourself. If you enjoy participating in school events, that's great, but don't stretch yourself thin. If you're spending more time in school activities than you are on class work, you are over-involved. Try picking one or two campus activities or organizations to join -- you will be more thoroughly involved in these clubs and have more fun participating.

A very important part of staying ahead is getting enough sleep, something most college students neglect. Try to get at least 7-8 hours of sleep a night. I know my suite-mates love *me* more when I get 8 hours of sleep! I find that classes aren't as boring, people aren't as annoying, and work is not so difficult when I get enough sleep.

Figure out the times you work most productively, pace yourself, don't stretch yourself too thin, and get enough rest and personal time. Above all, have fun and enjoy the semester. If you take the time to plan, you're going to have a great one! ❖

