




# HOW TO WRITE THE LONG ESSAY

Religion 274

Roger Graves

Director, Writing Across the Curriculum

# ROGER GRAVES



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Director, Writing Across the Curriculum  
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February 13, 2009


- wac
- c4w
- writing initiatives
- webmail
- efs

I'm new to the University of Alberta, having come from the University of Western Ontario where I was Director of the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. In my new position here I'll be working with faculty and students across the university as part of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. I will also be working with students and faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies.

I am the author, co-author, or editor of five books and 29 articles, including Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities. My current research interests include the development of doctoral student writing, writing assignments across disciplinary fields, and rhetorical approaches to text encoding. Currently I serve as co-Vice-President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW) and a member of the Executive Board of the Canadian

**Recent presentations**  
This page contains links to pdfs of slides displayed at presentations I've given.

**Books**  
This page displays the covers and descriptions of books I've authored, co-authored, or co-edited



**Blog: Thinking About Writing**  
A new blog on writing-related issues

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/index.html>

# WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Writing Initiatives  
University of Alberta

Writing Across the Curriculum

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Home > Home

WAC Faculty workshops in Winter 2010 start January 19.  
Click [here](#) to subscribe to the WAC newsletter.

Would you like to improve the writing of your students? Improve their learning of your lecture material?  
Are you looking for new ways to engage your students in your course materials?  
If this interests you, contact [Roger Graves](#): or 492.2169

What can we do for individual instructors:

- meet to talk about ways to incorporate informal (short, impromptu) writing assignments into any class, small or large
- review via email any assignment you give students that has a writing component to help make it clearer for students and to help develop grading rubrics to improve the speed and accuracy of grading
- visit your class to help students get started on your writing assignments

What can we do for departments:

- hold workshops on creating good writing assignments
- host discussions of how to improve the writing of students in your programs
- conduct reviews of writing assignments in your departments courses to identify exactly what your students are being asked to write—and to ensure that they have access to resources on how to write (online and on-campus)

**Upcoming Presentations and Workshops:**  
**WAC Events Calendar**

Today ◀ ▶ October 2010 Print Week Month Agenda

**Presentations to Classes**

C4W  
Writing@UofA  
WRS Courses  
Roger Graves  
Blog  
Academic Honesty

<http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/WAC/>



# CENTRE FOR WRITERS



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Centre for Writers at the University of Alberta. At the top left is the University of Alberta logo. To its right is the text "Writing Initiatives University of Alberta" and a green leaf-like icon. Further right is the text "Centre for Writers" in a green, cursive font. Below this is a green navigation bar with white text: "Home", "Appointments", "Contact Us", "Location", "Coaches", "Resources", "FAQ", and "WAC".

Below the navigation bar, there is a breadcrumb trail: "Home > Home".

The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a heading "Welcome to the Centre for Writers" followed by a paragraph: "We offer **free** one-on-one writing coaching and support to all students, instructors and staff at the University of Alberta - in any faculty or at any level of study." Below this is another paragraph: "Our writing coaches are available to assist clients with higher order concerns in their writing, such as thesis formation, organization and idea development, as well as more specific details, like grammar and documentation style. Clients can bring in any writing project at any stage of development: essays, lab reports, creative pieces, scholarly articles, thesis drafts, application letters - and more. Our coaches will also help students read instructor comments on already-graded papers. ESL and EAL students are welcome!" This is followed by a red link: "Request a class room visit by a tutor." and another paragraph: "Welcome back for the Fall 2009 term! Tutoring hours will begin on Monday, September 14. The online appointment-booking schedule will be available to clients as soon as possible prior to this date. We look forward to working with you!"

The right column has a timestamp "9/2/2009 10:34:15 AM" and a heading "Express News". Below this is a "Twitter Updates" section with a tweet: "The Centre for Writers will open for the fall term on Monday, September 14! 5 days ago" and a link "follow me on Twitter". Below the Twitter section is a "GramWOW" section featuring a YouTube video player showing a person holding a sign.

At the bottom of the main content area, there is a horizontal strip of four small images showing people in a classroom or office setting.



<http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/>

# THE WRITING PROCESS: 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS

## Getting started

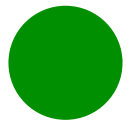
- Explore the assignment
- Make rough notes
- Pick a tentative topic

## Getting feedback

- Make an appointment at the centre for writers
- Get feedback on your draft/revise

## Revising

- Work on style and lower order concerns
- Proofread, consult checklist for assignment

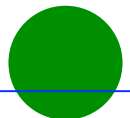


## TWO ASSIGNMENTS, BUT RELATED

- Annotated bibliography
- Feb. 14
- 10%
- 2-3 pages
- Citations in MLA or Chicago format



- Long essay
- 30%
- 6-8 pages,
- 2-part bibliography
- Include marked proposal assignment



## NOTE THE VERBS: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

- Examine
- Analyze
- Critically analyze
- Historically analyze
- Assess
- Interpret
- Debate
- Consider
- Illustrate
- Evaluate
- Identify

*LPH,*  
p. 17

What do these terms  
mean to you?



## INVENTION: GENERATE IDEAS

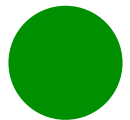
- You may write on any topic related to witchcraft, magic, and the occult, including non-European topics.
- Brainstorm, idea maps, questions

Topics:

Chaos magic vs other magic—not a religion

Link religious practice and mental health

Clowns in drama shamans in religion





# ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

*BPH*, p.  
207-10

- **One paragraph** (100-200 words) summarizing your proposed topic – what you are going to do, and how. This paragraph will include an underlined, *working* thesis statement. By working, I mean that you may end up changing your thesis statement as you work on your essay. This is fine.

## An annotated bibliography

1. Summaries of 3+ secondary sources; Summarize each reference in two to three sentences and give qualifications of the author.
1. 1+ primary source: summarize the reference; identify the author, their position/title/relationship to the topic, and the year the source was written.



### 3. ANALYTICAL/CRITICAL ANNOTATIONS

*BPH*, p.  
48-49

An objective evaluation of a work's contents, quality, and limitations. Length is typically between 100-200 words.

- Gives full bibliographic information for the work.
- Gives the authority and the point of view of the author.
- ~~Evaluates the contents, scope, and quality.~~
- ~~Points out the merits and deficiencies.~~

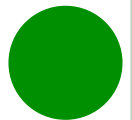
From <http://guides.library.ualberta.ca/annotations>

# ANNOTATIONS

Summarizes the article (2-3 sentences; 45-60 words)

Evaluates:

- give qualifications of the author;
- identify the author, their position/title/relationship to the topic, and the year the source was written



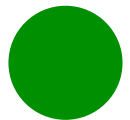
## SAMPLE SUMMARY

- In this article the authors question whether or not Alzheimer's patients are less likely to be restrained or medicated as a result of residing in Special Care Units (SCU) in nursing homes. They found, however, that these patients were no less likely to be restrained and, in fact, they were more likely to receive psychotropic medication. (56 words)



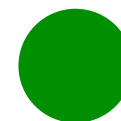
## SAMPLE SUMMARY

- The researchers compared the effects of obedience training on three groups of canine/humans: 1) dogs/humans in a dog obedience class; 2) a training group were instructed to do 20 minutes per day or training; 3) a group that was given no instructions. The obedience group showed less separation anxiety and improved obedience behaviours, but the group that did training on their own also showed improvements. (65 words)



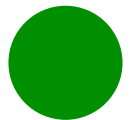
## SAMPLE EVALUATION

- This study looked at a large amount of data (1100 residents in 48 SCUs) from a small geographical area—only four U.S. states. The extent to which the findings of this study apply to Alberta are unclear, particularly since these standards vary considerably from state to state. Nevertheless, the authors speculate that SCUs led something of a revolution in Alzheimer's patient care—these units demonstrated that the use of physical restraints could be avoided, and that may account for the similarity in use in both SCUs and regular units. (89 words)



## THE ESSAY

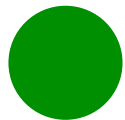
- Write an interesting and well-argued paper, based on scholarly sources.
- Use the work in the annotated bibliography as your sources



*BPH, p.  
6-7*

## THE AUDIENCE

- This time you are writing for a scholar of religion knowledgeable in the area of alternative spiritualities, trained as an historian. To repeat, this means I am looking for a cogent argument, well supported by appropriate sources.
- Instructor knows lots about alternative spiritualities; trained as a historian
- Values historical research and evidence: what does that mean? What evidence counts in history? (rubric says “Provides evidence to support arguments: Ideas clearly informed by readings and properly cited” and “Uses direct quotations sparingly and effectively”)





# THESIS STATEMENTS

- Specific
- Manageable
- Interesting

*BPH*, p.  
14-16

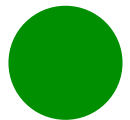
*LPH*, p.  
18-19



## A SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENT

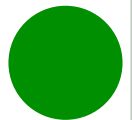
According to new approaches in pain management, nurses must obtain **three kinds** of knowledge if they are to **respond effectively** to a patient's pain: **knowledge of self, knowledge of pain, and knowledge of standards of care.**

[original/passive voice] New approaches to pain management stress three kinds of knowledge for nurses to obtain if they are to respond effectively to a patient's pain: knowledge of self, knowledge of pain, and knowledge of standards of care.<sup>1</sup>



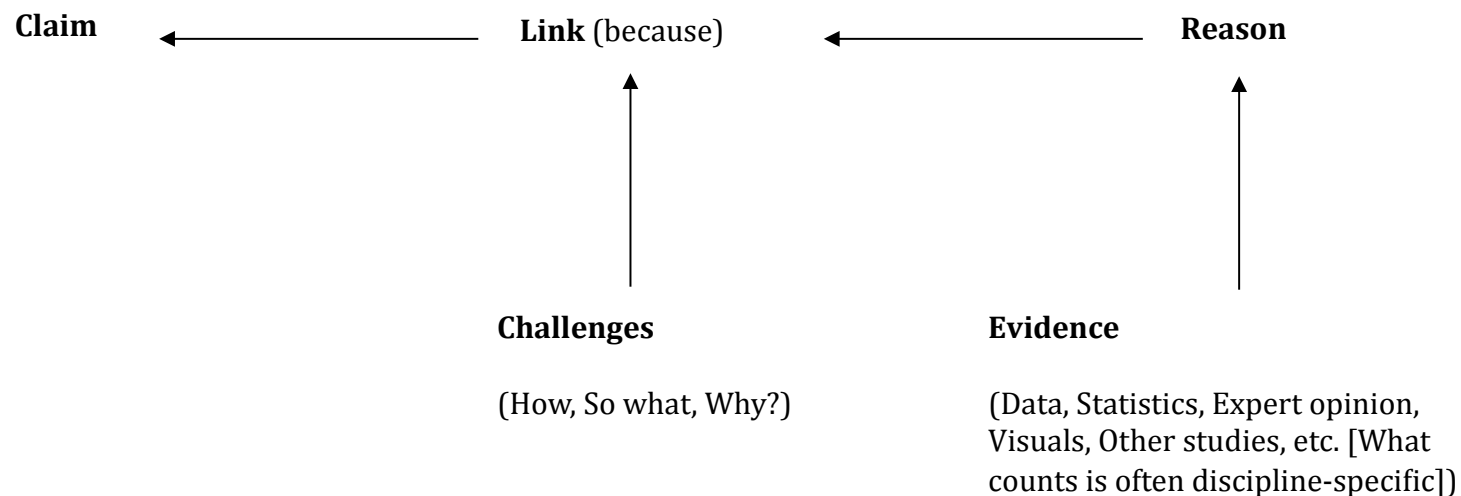
## FROM THE WINTER CLASS

- Many of the traditional practices of the Christian holidays—the date, the tree, the star—arose from pagan traditions. Evidence for this comes from many sources: . . .



# INFORMAL ARGUMENT AND ACADEMIC WRITING

*BPH, p.  
88*

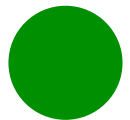


Ex. [this study] will be a unique scholarly contribution as very few studies genuinely combine oral history and the documentary record.



## TURN A TOPIC INTO A THESIS

- Witchcraft was defined as someone using otherworldly powers to bring down other people, including using spells, alchemy, divination, and astrology. To the average person living in the time of the black plague, this view of witchcraft would have seemed reasonable because . . .



## YOUR ARGUMENT

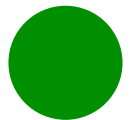
- Main claim
- Subsidiary claims

*BPH, p.*  
90-91



## CLAIMS AND ASSUMPTIONS

- Claim + stated reason rest upon an unstated reason
- Both the stated and unstated reasons rely on shared assumptions of value between the writer and the reader
- Evidence demonstrates the validity of the stated or unstated reasons
- When values are shared, less evidence is needed to convince the reader



## A CLAIM IN 3 PARTS

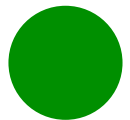
- By engaging in historical/archival research, by reviewing the vast amount of public information now available on [this topic], and by conducting interviews with policy makers, researchers, activists and industry representatives, **my research will develop a systematic assessment** of [topic] and the conditions in which it has become finalized.





## GETTING ORGANIZED

- Thesis= main claim, argument  
The absence of traditional social hierarchies in this time and place, combined with the fuel of easy money and masculinity, accounted for this new conception of leisure
- Body: subsidiary claims
  1. Free enterprise capitalism in the Klondike contributed to a dominant ideological stance that valued the free choice of the individual to pursue whatever leisure activities they wanted—including gambling, drinking to excess, and womanizing—with few, if any, restraints.
  2. Leisure in the Klondike boomtown created and enforced a particular kind of masculinity in contrast to the “rational recreation” of more established cities and towns in the Northwest.

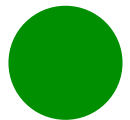


## BODY—PART 1

- Free enterprise capitalism in the Klondike contributed to a dominant ideological stance that valued the free choice of the individual to pursue whatever leisure activities they wanted—including gambling, drinking to excess, and womanizing—with few, if any, restraints.

Implied in this claim is the structure (order) of the next part of the essay:

1. A section or paragraph on gambling
2. A section or paragraph on drinking to excess
3. A section or paragraph on womanizing/sexual debauchery



# WHAT TOPIC WILL YOU STUDY?

- Identify a topic of inquiry
- Translate that topic into a thesis by stating what your attitude is to that topic
- I believe that the history of religious practices is not progressive from one religious practice to another because . . .

