**Writing Expectations**

I once thought that college level students came to class with writing skills firmly established. Experience demonstrates that is not necessarily the case. This purpose of this document is to offer some information on what is expected for college level papers in my courses and to hopefully provide some writing tips to those who can use them. Becoming a better writer is a lifetime endeavor. Hopefully these tips will assist you in that goal.

1. **Structural Issues** – Papers should have a descriptive title. Be sure to include your name on the document. See APA for additional information regarding the set-up of the paper – having an introduction, references, etc. Thought papers in this class do not need all the sections of a formal research paper. Still, I expect and Introduction, appropriate headings, references, and APA citation style. One exception to APA for all papers in this class is the abstract. I do not require an abstract for your papers. All papers should be printed using 12pt font, lines should be double-spaced, and text should use a ‘standard’ style of font (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri).

2. **Introduction** - you MUST include a formal introduction in any paper you write. At a minimum, the introduction needs to state clearly the purpose of the document. It should also address why the topic is important to consider. It should also conclude with a ‘road map’ which you clearly and concisely tells the reader how the remainder of the document is structure.

3. **Following the prompt** – The assignment has asked for you to address specific questions and provide specific information. The paper must address all of that information! Sub-headings can be useful to keep you focused (and to help your reader understand what you are presenting). [Use APA!] This will give great organization and cohesion to your paper, your thoughts and also help you and the reader to stay on track throughout your exposition. Without a plan to address each part of the prompt, it is really easy to get side tracked in writing or get passionate about something and forget to address a key part of the prompt. While passion and exuberance are great qualities in academia and writing in general, they can't overtake the process and cause you to forget to fully address the prompts. The prompt is there to gauge your ability to not only read the text and other materials, but to determine your level of comprehension and to see how well you understand the concepts presented, and subsequently how well you can apply them to real world examples and synthesize material.

4. **In-text citations** – You must utilize in-text citations and use them properly (i.e., APA). I have offered you several sources of information for APA, so the failure to use it cannot stem from a lack of knowledge or materials. Most of the time, for in-text citations, there are two styles used (as I said – most of the time – verify you are using the proper style). When paraphrasing or presenting general ideas or concepts in a piece, the citations should appears as: (Author, Date), or (Surette, 2011). For direct quotations the citation should appear as: (Author, Date, Page #) or (Surette, 2011, p. 49). Please note long direct quotes are treated differently

5. **Language** - A frequent issue I see in papers is some improper use of words and language. First, remember that these are all college level, formal academic papers. Therefore saying things like, "I totally agree with that" or "That really makes no sense at all" are inappropriate for this type of paper. While the occasional use of first person (I blah blah blah…) is okay, in general, it should be avoided. In addition avoid the colloquial. Rather, simply state what you mean in clear, concise terminology. Wordiness is not generally a good idea as your thoughts can get lost and the reader can become confused. For example, this sentence- "When I was taking a look at this film that I had never seen before this class, I think that there is really no way at all for the actor to be a good portrayal of a stereotypical lawyer and basically wasn't believable at all, because she didn't focus on much of anything in the book." This could be condensed and rewritten to state, "In light of Surette's presentation of a stereotypical lawyer, the actor failed to believably portray her role in the film." Then you could go on to state, "This is the case because of X, Y and Z (Surette, 2011)." Rather, simply state what you mean using more formal, clear, and concise terminology.

6. **I will… - The use of ‘will’ is a personal pet peeve of mine. Often students state what they will do something when they’ve already done it. Remove the will! For example, consider this paragraph from a student:**

The public’s view of Crime Fighters unfortunately becomes misconstrued through things heard or seen via the media, TV series, entertainment TV and video games. In this paper I will give a summary of the movie Dirty Harry and utilize information from Chapter 4 of Surette (2012) to answer several questions. First I will discuss what type of individuals is drawn into law enforcement. From this I will next offer information on what types of individuals are drawn into law enforcement from the movies portrayal. And finally I will address what criminal justice policies would be advanced based off of the film.

Please note that the student provided the information they noted they “will” provide in that paper. Note how much cleaner and clearer the document becomes with the “will” (and first person language) removed:

The public’s view of Crime Fighters unfortunately becomes misconstrued through things heard or seen via the media, TV series, entertainment TV and video games. In this paper a summary of the movie Dirty Harry and information from Surette (2012) are utilized to answer several questions. First the type of individuals drawn into law enforcement is presented. Next, information on what types of individuals are drawn into law enforcement from the movies portrayal is outlined. And finally what criminal justice policies would be advanced based off of the film is discussed.

**I find it difficult to write without using “will”. My solution is to go back when the paper is completed and search and remove “will” when appropriate.**

**7. Pubic asses – It is a good idea to ALWAYS search for the words “pubic” and “asses” in your papers. It is quite common that I get papers where one is studying “Pubic Administration” and where they wish to “asses” a particular policy. ☺ Unless you are sending me a hateful document, I assume you wish to discuss “public” things, and to “assess” something about them.**

8. **Proof read!** Turning in a paper which you have failed to proof read results in a sloppy product. There is never a reason NOT to proof read your paper. Please proof read your work.