OUTLINING, GENERAL WRITING TIPS, INTRODUCTIONS & CONCLUSIONS

Outlining: An outline presents a picture of the main ideas and the subsidiary ideas of any topics. Outlines help you organize your paper before you start writing. You should start with a **skeleton outline** that simply lists your main ideas in the order you wish to write them in. This is a very short outline. Over time, you can fill in this skeleton outline with subsidiary ideas that support your main ideas, direct quotations, paraphrasing, and transitions to make a **detailed outline**. This detailed outline can be very helpful in executing the writing process as all of your quotations, ideas, and organization are all in one place.

For your outline, you need to decide your:
- Main ideas- what are the different components of your argument? What are the big ideas that you want to support your argument? Generally you should limit yourself to two-four main ideas.
- Organization- in what order does it make sense for these main ideas to appear? Chronological? Thematic? Other? Think about what works best with the organization.
- Quotes/Paraphrasing- which quotes/paraphrasing are you definitely going to use?
  - What's your analysis of these particular quotes? Put that in your outline as well to remind yourself. You NEVER want to quote or paraphrase an idea without analyzing it or providing context.

An outline can take any form you want- bullet points, numbers, note cards, etc. The most important thing is that it is USEFUL TO YOU. It should serve as a **MAP FOR YOUR WRITING that you can easily refer to and use while writing. Spend a couple hours constructing and revising your outline before you even begin writing.

GENERAL WRITING TIPS:
- Use the ***PAST*** tense when you are describing events that happened in the PAST. The ONLY time you use the PRESENT is when you are discussing literature and authors (aka "literary present") or in providing analysis.
  - Examples: Einhard **was** a confident and advisor to Charlemagne and **wrote** the *Vita Carolini* after Charlemagne's death. From Einhard's *Vita Carolini* a clear picture of Charlemagne's personality **can be discerned**. Einhard **describes** Charlemagne as a personable, wise, and caring individual. However, Einhard's definition of "wise" **differs** greatly from our current perception. Einhard **writes** "despite his best efforts, Charlemagne remained unable to read or write." This definition directly **conflicts** with our modern definition of wisdom.
- Avoid the first person- both I and we. Also try to avoid the ambiguous "one" (i.e. one may think...)
- Use the ACTIVE voice. Try to avoid the PASSIVE voice. If you have problems discerning between the two, check the Undergraduate Writing Center's handouts.

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- ✄ Write your Introduction and Conclusion LAST. This includes your thesis statement. Make sure that your thesis statement matches up to the argument you made in the body paragraphs. If it does not, adjust your thesis statement to match your argument.
  - o Write a rough sentence or two of what you think your thesis statement will be at the very top of your paper to guide you and move onto your body paragraphs.
- ✄ Always FRAME your quotations- NEVER LET A QUOTE SPEAK FOR ITSELF. See the UWC handout on "Using Direct Quotations."
- ✄ Use paragraphs wisely- see handout on "Paragraphing."
- ✄ Keep track of your citations as you write. You don't have to format the citations while writing but put footnotes that will remind you where the different quotes came from so you can format at the end.
- ✄ Try to break up your writing to avoid writer's block. Try to limit yourself to an hour of writing at a time if possible.

INTRODUCTIONS & CONCLUSIONS

Your Introduction and Conclusion paragraphs are very important as they are the first and last things your reader will see and remember. You want to draw them into your paper and intrigue them with your introduction. With your conclusion, you want to leave your reader with a good impression of your paper and your writing.

INTRODUCTIONS: The introductory paragraph(s) of an essay serves the purpose of drawing a reader into the substance of the argument to follow. To accomplish this purpose, the introduction should include the following components:

1. ***Attention-grabber***: The first thing that the reader will see. It can be a quote, anecdote, description, definition, rhetorical question, etc. Whatever the form, it needs to make the reader want to read more of the essay and needs to explicitly relate to your topic.
2. ***Background info***: A quick summary of the context, relevance, or significance of your paper topic for an *uninformed* reader.
3. ***Thesis statement***.
4. ***Signals***: The introduction should set up the organization and tone of the rest of the paper. This can be accomplished by previewing aspects of the topic that will be discussed in the body of the paper.

In the introduction avoid these clichéd and ambiguous terms: "Since the dawn of time," "throughout our human history," and "since the beginning of history."

YOU *CAN* HAVE A MULTI-PARAGRAPH INTRODUCTION.

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CONCLUSIONS: The concluding paragraph should tie up loose ends and leave the reader with a sense of completion. If the paper is long, it reminds them of all the points they've just heard, and leaves them with a final thought to walk away with. Consider the following when writing conclusions:

1. ***Remind***: Restate the paper's main points in a different way. This is especially critical for longer, more complex papers, when the reader may not remember as far back as the first point made. The reader should be able to read just the conclusion and still understand the basic topic of the paper, the argument made, and the line of reasoning. The conclusion should remind the reader of the fundamental question
and clearly summarize the answer. **Do not restate your introduction or thesis word-for-word, *make sure to use different wording or this will seem redundant and forced.***
2. ***Contextualize***: The concluding paragraph is a useful place to tell the reader why they should care about the topic of your paper. Try to answer the question, "So what?" Give the larger, global context of your argument.
3. ***Consistency***: Try to tie the conclusion back the introduction. For example, if you opened with a story or analogy, come back to it at the end to give the paper a sense of overall unity.
4. ***End Big***: The conclusion is the last thing your audience will read, and is therefore the part they will remember the best. You have the chance to pick a main idea that you hope your reader will walk away with and drive it home. To do this, end with a very strong sentence that causes the reader to think about your topic more.

REMEMBER, WRITE YOUR INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION LAST. WRITE YOUR BODY PARAGRAPHS FIRST AND <u>MAKE SURE YOUR OVERALL ARGUMENT MATCHES UP WITH YOUR THESIS STATEMENT, INTRODUCTION, AND CONCLUSION</u>. IF YOU HAVE A PAPER WITH A THESIS STATEMENT THAT DOES NOT MATCH YOUR OVERALL ARGUMENT, IT WILL RESULT IN A LOW GRADE!!

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EXAMPLES OF "GOOD" AND "BAD" INTRODUCTIONS:

<u>Witchcraft-craze: Medieval Rise of Witches</u>
Witchcraft was not always associated with the devil. There was a time before 1000CE when there was a great distinction between white (good) and black (bad) magic. The concept of witchcraft as harmful Is normally treated as a cultural ideology, a means of explaining human misfortune by blaming it either on a supernatural entity or a known person in the community. To really understand why the witch-hunting craze began in medieval society we have to look back into the religious, political, and social conditions at the time. There were many people and events that attributed to the increase of witch persecutions in medieval times and the rise of witch persecution in the early modern era. Witchcraft was finally looked at as an evil form no matter whit or black when it was defined as a combination of maleficium and diabolism.

<u>The Development of the Medieval Chainmail</u>
The Medieval Era was a time of intense and increased violence and war. People were constantly fighting battles against different adversaries. With so much warfare going on, it is only natural that advancements in weapons and defensive measures would have been made. This paper will ask why chainmail was created and how it stood up against different weapons new to the period including crossbows, longbows, and maces.

<u>Vlad the Impaler, Prince of Wallachia: The Monster, or Medieval Military and Public Genius?</u>
In our human history there have been many tales of violence and barbarism which pass on through generations. Medieval Europe seemed to foster dark tales, but one ruler's actions yielded literature's most famous monster: Dracula. This is no fabrication or accident, but is the result of Vlad's purposeful ruling of Wallachia. He seemed to have a deep love for his land but killed anyone who crossed him, including members of the Boyar aristocracy. He was not blinded by rage or a thirst for blood, but made logical decisions. His brilliance spans from his war tactics used against the Ottoman Turks to publicly impaling enemies of Wallachia. His public displays of violence frightened off his potential enemies but the stories that spread seem to give Vlad even greater credibility as a ruler with commanding physical appearance. Vlad III was not a monster, instead he was a capable ruler who did what he saw was necessary to serve his people and in the process created an infamous legend.

<u>Vikings: The Real Pioneers of North America</u>
Nearly five hundred years before Columbus in the 11th century, a group of burly Norsemen climbed into their great sea-dwelling vessels and ventured west across the unscathed North Atlantic Sea. Before long they founded colonies in Iceland, Greenland, and eventually proceeded even further westward, landing on the lush coast of North America. The Noresemen explored the rolling landscape vivaciously, observing the vast amounts of wildlife and trading with local inhabitants. However, this is not the story told regarding the discovery of North America. Instead, we are told of how Christopher Columbus, a Spanish explorer, sailed the Ocean Blue in 1492 to found this great land for you and me. Has this anecdote, so vital to our American heritage, all been a colossal misrepresentation? Was Christopher Columbus the "true" North American discoverer? Or do we owe thanks to another group, the Vikings, for the discovery of North America? In examining the Norse Sagas of the thirteenth century as well as archaeological evidence, it is clear that the Vikings were the true discoverers of North America. Furthermore, the proliferation of Norse Sagas throughout Europe during the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries suggests that the idea that

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Europeans, including Columbus, did not know about North America prior to the fifteenth century may also be a historical fallacy.

A Closer Look at Piety, Power, and Other Motives Behind the Crusades

At the Council of Clarement on November 17, 1095, in an effort to organize a pilgrimage across Europe to reclaim the city of Jerusalem from the Moslems, Pope Urban II called on all Christians for their assistance in reclaiming Jerusalem from the pagan Moslems. His dramatic plea for war was backed by a deep sense of religious responsibility and was met with great enthusiasm by the crowd. This religious fervor quickly spread across Europe as Christians of all social classes of Europe enthusiastically banded together in "taking the cross" and marched eastwards to take back Jerusalem. Crusaders were initially inspired by intense piety and duty to the Catholic Church during the first crusade. However, while the crusades were advertised as religiously-inspired pilgrimages, as the crusades went on it is clear that they were sustained and driven by far more secular forces such as political and monetary greed.

The Evolution of St. Thomas Becket's Character

"A Christian martyrdom is no accident. Saints are not made by accident." As an honor that insured everlasting fame and glory, sainthood was a coveted position in medieval and early modern Europe. Although many saints were awarded their canonization as results of truly pious acts, there were a number of medieval saints who politically and socially positioned themselves for prominent positions within the church that would most likely lead to saintly positions at the end of their lives. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, is a prime example of a secular man who transformed himself into a seemingly pious clergyman in order to achieve the status of a saint. Although many medieval historians argue that Becket was truly a religious man, in many ways the epitome of a devoted churchman, there is significant evidence that Becket was actually a secular, political actor who strategically positioned himself to become the Archbishop of Canterbury. Examining his personal correspondence and various canonization notes, it is clear that Becket always saw his position as Archbishop more as a political position that would ensure temporal power and eventually everlasting notoriety as a saint. He did not see his position as Archbishop as the result of deep religious fervor or sentiment; while he might have seemed pious and exuded a religious character, in his personal life that was shielded from medieval society, Becket was a worldly-man with secular dreams of ambition, power, wealthy, and glory.