

# RWU WRITING CENTER

## *The Independent Clause*

Fall 2008

### Student to Student

#### Peer Tutor Column

Peer tutor Greg Souza writes in this issue about the thesis statement. One of the most important stages in the writing process is crafting the thesis statement. First, let's be clear that these guidelines are just that—a general overview of the most common techniques used to generate a thesis statement.

Here are some of the basics for a thesis statement for an argument paper up to about 20 pages:

- The thesis statement is generally one sentence. For papers over 20 pages, including a Senior Thesis, the thesis statement could be the length of a short paragraph.
- Most of the time, your thesis appears as the last sentence of the introduction.
- The thesis statement presents your position about some issue or topic.
- The thesis can't be fact. Test your thesis statement's viability by trying to argue against it. If you can't do so logically, then your thesis is probably a truism ("murder is bad"), or expressed too vaguely or subjectively ("Michelangelo's *David* is a powerful sculpture").

According to *The Bedford Researcher*, there are 4 keys to creating a thesis:

1. Use key terms and phrases in your thesis to establish a clear focus.
2. Make the purpose for writing the paper clear in your thesis statement: identify the causes of some dilemma; argue that readers should change their views; prompt your readers to act; convince readers of the validity of your argument.
3. Consider your audience in your thesis! For example: Is your audience familiar with specialized terminology or is your audience the general reader? Will your audience find your thesis statement interesting?
4. Establish your ethos: prove your credibility by presenting yourself in the introduction as knowledgeable and having goodwill.

### Writing Centered

#### Grammar Workshops – Fall 2008

**Place: SE 126; Time: 2 – 3 PM**

- 9/17 - Fragments, Comma Splices, and Run-ons  
9/26 - Coordination and Subordination  
10/1 - Pronouns  
10/8 - Punctuation  
10/22 - Modifiers  
10/29 - Parallelism

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The Writing Center is located on the second floor of the Main Library, within the Center for Academic Development. We are open 56 hours per week: Monday through Thursday, 9 am – 8 pm; Friday 9 am – 3 pm; and Sunday 2 pm – 8 pm. Our mission is to help all RWU students with any writing-related assignment. The tutors work with students to help them become better writers, not just to produce better papers. It is a fundamental belief in the Writing Center that students learn through the writing process; they learn about the subject they are exploring, and they learn about what they believe and what they know.

Students can walk in and see a peer tutor without an appointment. To see a faculty tutor, students should sign up in the appointment book on the secretary's desk in the front reception area of the CAD.

The Writing Center also offers an e-mail tutoring service, E-Help. Students can go to the following web address and e-mail their papers:  
<http://writingcenter.rwu.edu/ehelp>. We will attempt to respond, Monday through Thursday, within 48 hours.

All of the services of the Writing Center are free.

### Writing Happens

In this column, we attempt to answer any questions faculty or staff might have about the Writing Center. Please email questions to [kbilotti@rwu.edu](mailto:kbilotti@rwu.edu).

Dr. Jessica Skolnikoff, Associate Professor of Anthropology, asked us the following: *Can Writing Center tutors help students with research writing assignments in any discipline?*

In a word: Yes! There are two ways students can receive help with research writing assignments. First, as part of the collaboration between the Writing Center and the Library Commons, we now have Barbara Von Villas, Writing Studies adjunct instructor, serving as a faculty tutor within the Library Commons. Barbara is stationed along the front windows, ready to help students with their writing concerns. Her hours in the Library Commons area are Wednesdays 1-4 pm and Fridays 1-3 pm. Students with any writing-related research assignment from across the curriculum are encouraged to see Barbara. There is a sign-up sheet at her station in the Library Commons.

In addition, of course, students can come into the center and work with a peer or faculty tutor on all aspects of a research paper. Tutors can help with issues including but not limited to narrowing a topic; constructing a research question and thesis; creating an outline; getting started on a draft; building paragraphs with unity and focus; evaluating sources; integrating quotations; citing information according to the appropriate documentation system; and editing, formatting, and revising a draft. Sessions are most productive when students come in early in the writing process and when they come in with a specific area they would like to work on.

*The Independent Clause* is published through the Roger Williams University Writing Center. The newsletter is published twice a year, fall and spring. Questions or comments, contact Karen Bilotti at [kbilotti@rwu.edu](mailto:kbilotti@rwu.edu).