

Second lecture

Course book: *Research Writing Simplified* by Raymond H. Clines & Elizabeth R. Cobb

Dear students,

We shall move forward to another concept regarding how to deal with the topic of any research paper. Again, I am going to concentrate on certain passages taken from your course book. You need to read these passages very carefully.

First chapter: The Research Process – Researching a topic

Many students mistakenly think that a research paper is a “report.” Often students are told to research topics they are unfamiliar with and about which they have little to say – broad topics such as the golden age of Greek culture, the United States space program, or the causes of the Civil War. Such research involves little more than paraphrasing information from another source – often encyclopedia or Web site.

The kind of research expected in college, and later in professional life, goes beyond mere “report” writing. Genuine research takes existing information and uses it to *advance* knowledge and create new insights from it, not merely report on it. For example, in science, research is carried out to advance medical treatments, develop new drugs, predict earthquakes, or increase agricultural production. In college, good research writing involves *advancing* knowledge, coming up with original conclusions about a topic. Unless there is something new to be said about the subject, why write about it? Unless there is something you want to say, and some unique and original insights that *you* want to

share, your research will be little more than a “report” like those written by younger students.

In college research, you will be expected to use a wide range of sources, such as professional journal articles, government documents, Internet sites, or interviews conducted in person, over e-mail, or at online Newsgroups. Using a variety of sources will help you to understand the numerous sides to an issue and allow you to develop your own hypothesis or conclusion. After carefully evaluating your sources and weeding out dated, irrelevant, and biased information, you should use credible source information to advance an arguable thesis or assertion *of your own*. Your job is to present your ideas and the ideas of others in a responsible manner, using accurate and complete documentation.

Writing a research paper can be one of the most valuable learning experiences of any college course. More than any other activity, writing helps us to internalize what we learn. What you write about will become your own and you will remember it – long after you have forgotten the lectures or the reading material.

In college, research tends to proceed in an overlapping and recursive manner; however, there are distinct steps involved:

- 1- Familiarize yourself with the library and the various online database and electronic sources available to you.
- 2- Select a subject you care about and that is appropriate to your assignment. Be able to answer the question, “why is this subject important to me?”
- 3- Check the *Library of congress Subject Headings* or encyclopedia indexes to identify appropriate keywords. Without appropriate search terms your research may be limited or unsuccessful altogether.

- 4- Explore articles in general information sources such as encyclopedias or newspapers to become familiar with important names, dates, and the overall scope of your subject.
- 5- Move from general information sources to specific articles in periodicals and specialized journals. Continue reading and taking notes.
- 6- Form a tentative thesis: What is the main point you want your readers to get? What unique, fresh perspective can you give to the topic?
- 7- Continue reading. Revise and refocus your thesis as necessary.
- 8- Develop a plan and general outline for writing the paper.
- 9- Write a first draft and, if possible, get feedback on it.
- 10- Revise your draft and get more feedback from your instructor.
- 11- Write a final draft and prepare a Work Cited or Reference list.

That will be all for our second lecture. I hope you would read the above passages thoroughly, and underline the thoughts you found difficult to comprehend, until I meet with you and be able to explain them again.

Thank you.