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Overall Comments on Essay #1 Rough Drafts

1. Introduce all the main ideas so the reader knows what you are talking about

It is absolutely essential when writing papers in college and beyond that you introduce the majority (or all depending on how many) of your main topics early in the paper so the reader has a context from which s/he can understand what you mean in the paper. If, for example, you are interested in using the ideas surrounding the theory of remediation, then you should briefly mention what that idea means in your introduction. Example: “In his book, Jay David Bolter discusses the concept of remediation, which is when characteristics of older, perhaps no longer used, writing spaces appear with the structures, processes, and functionalities of newer writing spaces.” Certainly the definition is more complex than that, but this is in the introduction; and when you briefly define terms early in the paper, you are then able to define them more and more specifically without the reader getting confused. Do not assume that the reader can follow your train of thought—be clear with what you are trying to say. It is always better to over-explain and then delete some then to under-explain and not be able to add. When introducing ideas in your introduction, you **MUST** make sure those ideas remain consistent throughout the essay. For example you cannot begin the essay by saying that word processors remediate typewriters and conclude that word processors don’t remediate typewriters; the two are not the same. Essay writing is circular; if you find that you come to a conclusion at the end of the paper that contradicts what you have written at the beginning you have to do either of two things: 1) change the beginning so its fits with the middle and end; or 2) change the middle and end so they fit with the beginning.

2. Introduce and discuss quotations

When using quotations and paraphrase in your essays—which you **MUST** do and will become more and more comfortable doing—you must introduce them and then discuss them in at least two ways. Example of using a quote:

According to Bolter (2001), “remediation involves both homage and rivalry, for the new medium imitates some features of the older medium, but also makes an implicit or explicit claim to improve on the older one” (p. 23). The fact that the newer technology is now being used in place of the old, remediated technology is where we see rivalry, the battle between which technology is going to be used by the current generation of writers. However, because the newer technology is remediating the old (for example, when word processor pages look like typewriter pages or the text is entered using a similar QWERTY-style keyboard) the new technology is honoring those features of the old by incorporating and improving upon them. Indeed, the development of writing spaces is reflective in that it is constantly looking back to what was successful and thinking about how to improve upon it in the future.

The above example does 4 things: a) it gives Bolter credit for his part and places the quote in the context of the essay; b) it gives the full quote; c) it explains the quote in the sentence after the quotation; and d) it alludes to the over-riding idea of the essay in the last sentence,

which is, in this case, the implications of remediated technologies. All 4 parts MUST be employed each time you use a quotation in your essay.

3. Narrow down your subject matter and then expand on it

Because the essays we read and the essay topics that you are given are so broad in scope and in idea, it is very easy for you to get overwhelmed by all the ideas and in your panic to choose the important ones, use all of them instead. Using too many examples or ideas or terms is NOT a good thing. Only choose the ones that are going to best help you make your point in your essay. Your essays will be more interesting if you use one or two main ideas that the author gives you. For example, the idea that the link headlines of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (notice the spelling of Inquirer) online front page remediates the print version is quite broad enough for a 4 page paper; you do not need to discuss the overall goals of the Internet, the field of advertising, etc. However, do bring in a brief discussion of the writing space that is being remediated. When you do that the links headings section is still your main subject; the other writing space is just a helper. It is always better to explore and expand on one idea as much as you can then to list 5 examples and not discuss them enough. Furthermore, when introducing an ambiguous point, such as whether or not a particular feature of a writing space is an improvement on the former writing space, you must define what you mean by improvement. Certainly you can see that defining it as “making the functionality more user-friendly” and defining it as “speeding up the process of completing a task” will lead to two different conclusions in your essay. The reader needs to be aware of how you are reading technology and the texts; be as specific as possible.

4. Don't merely summarize

Many of you have written book reports, which were essentially summaries of the books you read. You might have written similar pieces in CCI and CCII. In this class summary (or, more specifically, undirected summary) is a bad—very bad—thing, as is any discussion if your own personal reaction to a piece. When you summarize an author's ideas throughout your essay you show me that you have read the text, but that really is about it. Remember, I have read the text as well and know what the author says. I am much more interested in reading your own ideas about the subjects. That does not mean, “I liked this and not that because so and so. . . .” or “This is how I define writing spaces in my own words. . . .” What it means is that you take an idea or term from one essay and use it to discuss another essay or topic. For example, when you use Bolter's ideas on remediation to discuss how the *Philadelphia Inquirer* online front page attempts to remediate the print version, but fails, you are using your own ideas because (and this is key) Bolter does not discuss the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in any way. Or, you can do it another way. You can take your observation of the technology and show how Bolter's definitions are too narrow and that we cannot pigeonhole technologies into set writing spaces. In either case, it is YOU doing all the work and you who is putting the pieces together in order to make a point. When you do that you are not summarizing; you are exploring and discussing.

5. Use proper format

All papers must be written in Times New Roman font size 12, double spaced, with 1 inch margins all around. All papers must have the author's name on it in the upper left hand

