Writing Exercise: Introductions

Today I want you to focus on writing a draft of your introduction. This is just a draft and is not set in stone, but is designed to get you thinking about how to structure your intro and your thoughts.

Before Writing an Introduction

An introduction is generally the first part of your paper a reader will encounter. If they are doing research, they will skim the intro to see if it is relevant to them. If they are a more casual reader, they will skim the introduction to see whether the essay will be interesting or not. Your goal with an introduction is to set up your paper, explain your argument, and catch your readers' interest.

- An introduction should (not necessarily in this order):
    - define the topic (issue, question, or problem) and why it matters
    - frame and define the scope of your essay (i.e., the conversation you're entering, the main ideas you'll explore, etc.)
    - get the reader invested in the paper—why should they keep reading?
    - show method of approach to topic
    - provide necessary background information or context
    - state the thesis the paper will develop (usually the last sentence or two of the introduction)
- What types of intros are there?
    - Inverted triangle—starts broadly (but still on topic!) and narrows to the thesis statement
    - Narrative—starts with a story or anecdote to draw your reader in
    - Interrogative—starts by posing questions to invite your reader into the conversation
    - Paradoxical—starts by pointing out an aspect of the topic that runs counter to common expectations
    - Minding-the-gap—starts by pointing out what is missing or hasn't been addressed in the conversation
- Things to avoid:
    - Starting too broad and general to the point of losing all meaning: "Since the dawn of time. . ." "People have always traveled. Today, we use cars." "Words are very important in literature. . ."
    - Start going one way, then sudden zag and go another direction
    - Taking too long to get to the point—your reader wants to get to it
- Pro-tips:
    - You don't have to start writing your paper with the introduction—you can start anywhere!
    - The best way to start writing an intro is to just start writing. . . And then you come back and revise.

- Write your first draft with a crummy intro just to get started, then take your rough conclusion and reshape that to be the new intro and revise the paper adding a new conclusion. Repeat.
- Your introduction can be the last thing you write/revise!

Writing an Introduction

1. Write an interesting opening that draws your reader in (make sure it is not too broad, but instead gets right to your specific topic).
    a. Perhaps this means starting with an anecdote or a staggering statistic, a paradox, or could just be a straightforward statement of the current state of affairs with your topic.
    b. EX: *A recent study by The Trevor Project—a non-profit organization dedicated to suicide prevention of LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) youth—found that 60% for transgender and nonbinary youth engaged in self-harm in the last year and over 50% considered suicide.*
2. Provide some brief background on your specific topic and establish the issue/problem that needs to be addressed.
3. Provide a definition of any terms or explanation of your methodology that might need to be made clear.
4. Provide exigence (i.e., the urgency and/or the importance of the topic/issue/problem and why it needs a solution)
    a. EX: As the leading causes of suicide in trans and nonbinary youths is a sense of isolation and exclusion, it is important that colleges offer an inviting and inclusive environment.
5. Write your thesis statement. This should be a statement of your claim and your reasons why it is the best solution/idea and should explain how you're supporting that solution (plan of development).
    a. EX: Given the growing recognition of non-binary gender identity, Auburn University should include voluntary questions about applicants' LGBTQ status on applications in order to increase gender diversity on campus by fostering a sense of openness, to identify further needs of incoming freshmen to provide support and services, and to gather more data on incoming freshmen to help provide more scholarships promoting diversity.