



ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

NEWSLETTER

The case for passionless writing

By Ben Montgomery
Writing Center Staff

It's probably safe to say that most writing assignments students work on at Athens State University are at least a little analytical in nature. If you're a business, education, or liberal arts student, your writing is usually going to be a little subjective, even if it's backed up by research.

There's a lot to be said in favor of analytical writing. But, there's another kind of writing out there, a kind that doesn't have an agenda. It's instructive, descriptive, and entirely objective. Many Athens State students, especially College of Education students, will find uses for analytical writing in their careers.

But, almost *all* students will use professional, research-based writing. Maybe you'll write reports for your supervisors, or create how-to manuals, or document experiments. This style can feel a little cold, but it has some important uses.

There are entire career paths based on technical and scientific writing. Most involve taking large amounts of complicated information and re-forming it into a digestible format, *much like students do when writing research papers* (except this style of writing doesn't always have a point or a thesis). The classic example is journalism, but even it often has a point to make. The cleanest, purest example of a practical, research-dependent discipline is technical writing.

(istockphoto.com)

Continued on page 2

The Writing Center is located in the Athens State library next to the magazine racks. Check www.athens.edu/writing to make an appointment and to see what times consultants are available. The Writing Center is a free service to all Athens State students, regardless of whether the writing help is related to a course or not.

Visit us today!

In a 2013 survey of employers:

- **93%** said “a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a candidate’s] undergraduate major.”
- **75%** said they want to hire employees skilled in critical thinking, complex problem solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.
- **80%** said all college students should acquire as much knowledge in liberal arts and sciences as possible, regardless of their major.

(Source: Association of American Colleges and Universities)

*“If there is a book you want to read but isn’t written yet, write it.” - Shel Silverstein, poet and author of *The Giving Tree**

Have you met our tutors?

Jennifer Bravo moved to Huntsville two years ago after earning associate degrees in English and General Studies with an emphasis in Social & Behavioral Sciences from Los Angeles Valley College. She is pursuing a bachelor's degree in English. She likes to spend time with her family, visit wineries and breweries, and work on *Athena's Web: The Journal of the College of Arts and Sciences*.



How does writing fit into your academic life and your future career? Writing *is* my academic life. Well, reading and writing are my academic life. Being an English major, it kind of comes with the territory! I will admit that I don't love the idea of writing a paper any more than the next student, but once I start writing - once I realize what I want to say - I thoroughly enjoy the work and find it very rewarding. I plan to do more creative writing after college, but I know that in my career, I'll need all of the skills that I've learned in college writing to succeed in any field that I choose.

How would you describe your writing?

I am a creative writer at heart. That style tends to permeate my academic writing in the form of adjectives and relatively long sentences; I'm not a journalist. I love language, and I hate that there are so many words out there floating around in the universe that don't get used as often as they should. That fact harasses my brain as I write, and I tend to use multiple descriptors in order to give those less used words a chance to shine. I write academic papers most often, although not by choice. I really love writing poetry and have recently begun what looks to be the groundwork for a short novel. (That's been put on hold for school, though, sadly.) I'd say my "one specific thing" would be description. With my poetic affinity, I strive to describe things precisely.

Tell us one good writing tip.

Preparation is key! When you do the research and figure out what you have to say before you sit down to write, it makes the whole process go a lot quicker and easier. The more you prepare to write, the less painful the process will be. It's just like playing sports. If you don't practice before the game, then you run out of breath quickly and you don't know the plays, so you're lost on the field and the other team scores.

Continued from page 1

In his essay, "How to Write with Style," author Kurt Vonnegut said good technical writers "reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writing. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to the reader" (para. 1). Technical writers take information from engineers and other qualified individuals called Subject Matter Experts (often abbreviated as "SME"), usually by directly interviewing them. They then convert the engineer-speak into clear, concise documents that are more accessible to non-SMEs. Unfortunately, technical writing jobs aren't as numerous as they once were because technical and manufacturing companies cut them in favor of engineers or scientists producing the documentation themselves.

This usually does not go well.

Too often, professionals in scientific and technical career fields only know how to talk like a scientist or a technician. Sometimes a professional might only know how to report data in a way they themselves understand. The ideal scenario would be to restore jobs for technical writers or other document specialists, but that probably won't happen. So, instead, it is *extraordinarily important* for students at Athens State studying technical and scientific disciplines to learn to write well. Being able to construct field reports, Standard Operating Procedures, or well-documented code will stand out, because these skills are rare in these fields.

Workshop Series

Annotated Bibliography

Monday, Nov. 9th & Tuesday, Nov. 10th; 4:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Facilitator: Victoria Baker, M.S.L.S. & Jennifer Wolfe, M.L.I.S., M.A.

What is an annotated bibliography? How can creating one help your research? This quick workshop will go over the fundamentals of the how-tos of annotated bibliographies, whether you have been required to create one for a course or are searching for techniques to manage research for a paper.

<http://www.athens.edu/workshop-series/>

