

ENV 2073  
Global Warming: Science and Politics of a Contemporary Issue

Writing Assignment #2  
Stage 1 – Opening paragraph(s)  
Due Thursday, March 7, 2019

University of South Florida  
Spring 2019  
Prof JA Cunningham

The first part that is due for the second paper assignment is a rough draft of the *opening paragraph(s) of your paper*. Here are the parameters:

- It is due on Thursday, March 7, at the beginning of class.
- The opening paragraph will count for 10% of your grade for the paper.
- Each student should submit one hard copy of the paper's opening. A single sheet of paper is fine (i.e., no cover sheet is required). Please make sure your name is indicated clearly.
- You can decide how much of the paper you want to submit at this point. The idea is to submit your paper's opening or introduction, which may be as short as a single paragraph or may be up to several paragraphs long. In most cases, the opening will be a single paragraph – it is quite possible to write an effective opening in just one paragraph.
- The main criteria for evaluating your opening will be:
  - Does it appear that you are addressing the assignment?
  - Is it clear which of the questions you are answering?
  - Is the topic introduced appropriately so that the reader can understand why this is an issue worth addressing?
  - Is the main idea or main thesis of the paper apparent from the paper's opening?
  - Is the opening written well? (See ENV 2073 writing rubric for what constitutes “written well.”)
- I will offer some advice on crafting a good opening paragraph. Of course, writing is an art, not a science, so there is no one “correct formula” for a good opening paragraph; but here is a structure that is generally quite effective. First, give a general introduction to the problem you are addressing (in this case, global climate change). Then, establish more specifically what question you are trying to answer, *and why it is important to answer that question*. If you are picking a side in a debate, then *establish what the debate is about, and why it is important to resolve it*. Finally, end the paragraph with a clear statement of your paper's main thesis (which you will then prove throughout the remainder of the paper).
- Here are some tips based on what students often do poorly on this assignment.
  - Don't lead off with your thesis as your very first sentence. If you do that, you have nowhere to go for the rest of the paragraph. Instead, start by establishing the question or debate, then *finish* the paragraph with a clear statement of your thesis. Your last sentence or maybe your second-to-last sentence should be your *thesis statement*.

- *(tips, continued)*
  - Make sure that it is clear from your paragraph which of the two possible questions you are answering. If it is not clear to the reader, that often indicates that you have some confusion that needs clearing up.
  - Be sure to establish the debate. By this, I mean make sure that it is clear what question you are answering, and make a compelling case that the question is worth answering. Historically, this is the part that students do the worst. Most students do not make it clear why their question is worth addressing, and/or what the opposing points are in the debate. There is no single right way to establish the debate, but a couple effective ways are to use quotes from prominent public figures (important person #1 said “\_\_\_\_\_,” but important person #2 said “\_\_\_\_\_”) or to use figures like survey results (xx% of Americans think that \_\_\_\_\_, but yy% think that \_\_\_\_\_).
  - Don’t spend a lot of time foreshadowing the rest of your paper. It is not necessary and often it just wastes space. If you want to *\*briefly\** give a preview of what lines of argument you will use, that is fine. However, there is no need to spend several sentences previewing your lines of argument. If your paper is written clearly, your lines of argument will be obvious and apparent when I read the whole paper – you don’t need to spend much space (if any) previewing it in the opening.
  - Make sure that your paragraph has a clear articulation of your central thesis. The thesis statement should probably be the last sentence in the paragraph (maybe the second-to-last in some cases). Your thesis statement should clearly respond to the debate that you established earlier in the paragraph.

If you have questions about the requirements...ask!