

Personal Work History Assignment

Due: March 16/30

The Academic Essay

- Primary means of communication between scholars
- Clearly important for career academics, but what about you?
 - Goal of essay assignments is to teach you how to think
 - Provides best and most prolonged opportunity to think deeply and precisely into a subject

- You will be evaluated not only on what you know, but on how well you can think about what you know and how well your writing communicates that thought
- You need to take control; choose what to emphasize; look for patterns and relationships emerging and show how your thesis casts light on the topic
- Don't expect your first draft to be your best

This essay...

- is an attempt at conducting primary research, thinking about and communicating with others.
- **The paper must involve more than simply narrating the stories of the life of your subject.** You should try to integrate a number of aspects of your work life into a coherent analysis and to isolate the main changes that have taken place in your experience, and of this particular occupational group. You will find it helpful to keep the categories of analysis we used in mind, but do not feel restricted to them.

Topics

- Your topic can be too broad and this will lead to problems
 - The strongest elements of your interview should be your first stop in deciding what you want to write about
 - Table of contents and indexes in books can give you ideas
 - Library catalogues suggest natural divisions of broad topics and progressively smaller subtopics
 - Journals in the discipline and indexes to journals will show what topics others have found interesting
 - Your own analysis of the topic; reduce it down step by step until it's not so broad it results in a shallow essay or so narrow it doesn't catch enough material to develop a good thesis

Analysis

- Recast the topic in question form
- Restate the topic in your own words
- Make sure you understand all the key words and concepts in the question
- Break the topic up into subtopics
- Imagine different positions that might be taken
- Brainstorm

Thesis Statement

- Something declared, a decision made, a direction found
- Think about what your thesis might be as you do your research and read your notes; what central idea bring it all together?
- Ask yourself why, how and what questions

- A good thesis will:
 - Answer the question or fulfill the assignment and
 - Present the argument that seems most significant and most interesting to you
- It is a proposition, not a question or a topic
- Its specifics will be material covered in the essay

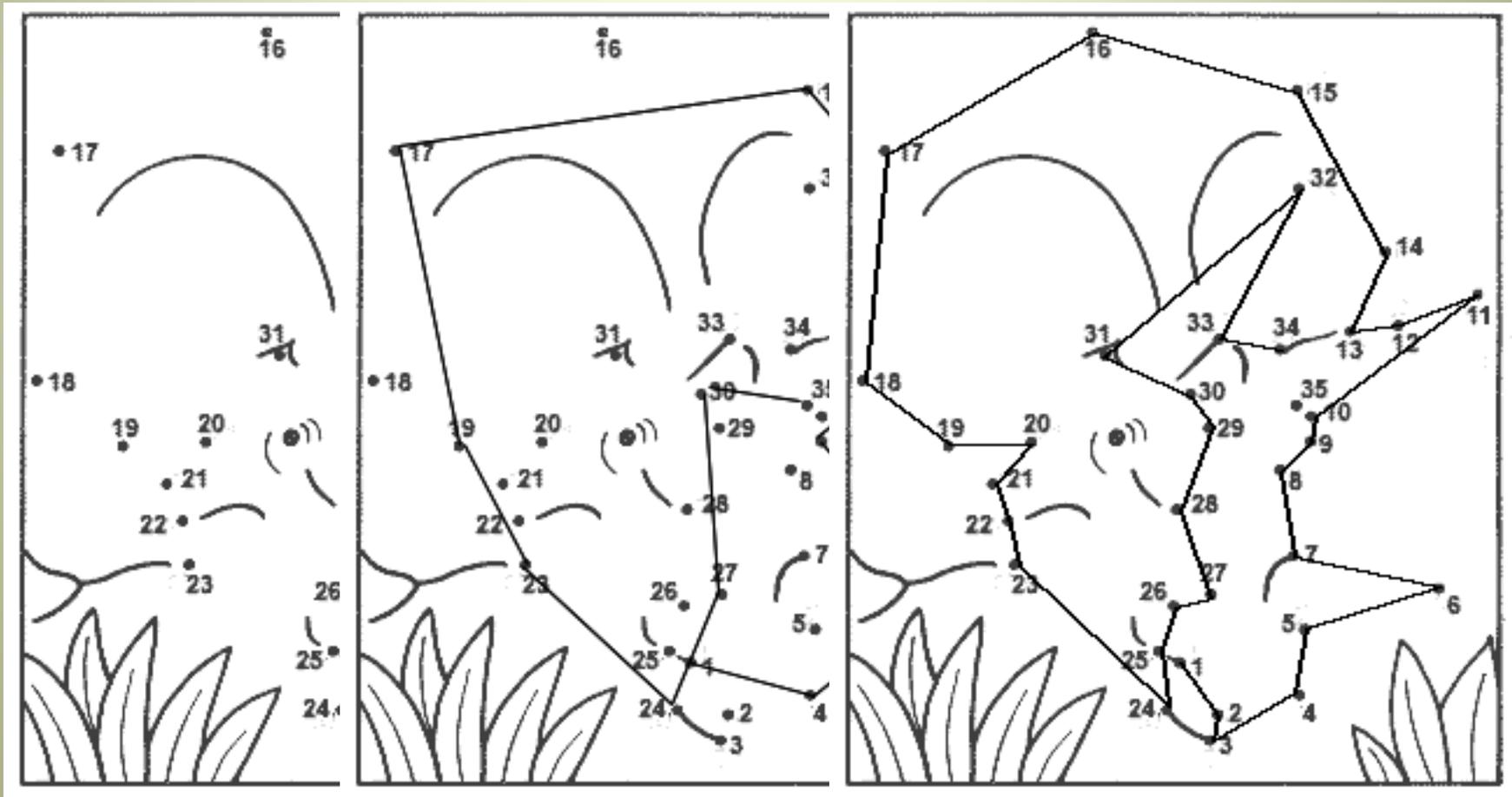
- **Topic:** Business Manager of Union Local
- **Question:** What work is involved in this job? How do you get into this position? What larger impact does this job have on the local and the rank-and-file?
- **Thesis statement:** The job of business manager in a union local involves long-term dedication and commitment to the local. Long hours are necessary to ensure the collective agreement is followed, negotiations are successful and that health and safety is observed. Doing this job well means that the workers you represent will be well-protected from employer exploitation.

- Does your thesis statement do more than restate the topic or question?
- Does your thesis statement reflect the restrictions that your essay will impose on the subject?
- Is your thesis statement written clearly, so that it states the central idea of your essay precisely?

- Is your thesis statement brief, written preferably in one and no more than two sentences?
- Does your thesis statement present a proposition that can be supported with evidence?
- So what?

Transition phrases

- Use transition phrases to make your essay flow more smoothly from one point to the next



Transition phrases

- Introduce each section by explaining what your main point will be
 - “The most immediately visible example of Dixon's effectiveness can be seen in his writing style.”
- Expand on your point, providing examples and references
- Conclude the section by summarizing your arguments, and tying the point back to your thesis
 - “By using a combination of academic language and a clear, straightforward tone, Dixon is able to present his arguments in an accessible manner without sacrificing the validity of his message.”

Using quotations

- Quotes should never be presented on their own: you need to relate them to your essay
- Always introduce the author of the quote:
 - “According to X, [...]”
 - “X justifies his methodology by arguing that [...]”
 - “In a recent interview, X elaborated on his earlier work: [...]”
- In addition, explain what the quote means and how it relates to your essay:

Using quotations

- Radcliffe-Brown (2009) writes from a stridently Eurocentric perspective, speaking uncritically of “native peoples subjected to the dominance of the civilized nations” (p. 12), and of the need for “field studies of the simpler peoples” (p. 13), as though only one type of civilization – his – mattered, and such dominance were simply a matter of historical inevitability.

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▪Don't always use direct quotations; sometimes, paraphrasing is more effective

Writing your essay:

- Please avoid plagiarism and use a reference guide to help you document your sources
 - [APA-style citation](#)
- Proof-read and revise your essay

Proofreading

- Are your words spelled correctly?
- How are numbers represented in your text?
- Have you indicated which words and phrases in your text are titles?
- Have you avoided using contractions?
- Have you used the proper form when quoting?

- Do you cite all your sources using APA-style documentation, and are you using it consistently?
- Does your reference list mention all the works you have cited?
- Does your title page include all the information necessary?